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SEEDS OF NEOCOLONIALISM IN DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE: A STUDY OF NEOLIBERAL “MEGARHETORICS” OF GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AND ECOFEMINIST RESISTANCE

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Dedication

To Layla, Babushona, ChitChit, Mr. Blue Panther, and John
SEEDS OF NEOCOLONIALISM IN DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE: A STUDY OF NEOLIBERAL “MEGARHETORICS” OF GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AND ECOFEMINIST RESISTANCE

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MOUSHUMI BISWAS, B.A., M.A.

DISSENTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at El Paso
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

This paper is based on a case study of www.monsanto.com, the official website of biotech company Monsanto, and transnational voices of resistance as exemplified by eco-critical activist Vandana Shiva. My rhetorical inquiry concerns the future of the global farming sector and allows for an interdisciplinary exploration of transnational development discourse through the overlapping but complementary lenses of ecofeminism and critical discourse analysis (CDA). The purpose of my study – spanning rhetoric, composition, critical theory, cultural theory, communication studies, business ethics, and postcolonial studies – is to trace new notions of discourse creation in the 21st century using a combination of textual, visual, and critical analyses of digital text. My study notes how Monsanto, a multinational corporation, crafts business and advertisement rhetoric on its website for the geopolitical practice of capitalism with the ultimate objective of economic colonization of nations – also referred to as “neocolonization” – in a postcolonial world. I examine how the “megarhetorics” of development and social responsibility form the bulwark of Monsanto’s argument as it seeks to justify and legitimize its systemic intrusion into the workings of agricultural communities around the world. Monsanto’s use of the notion of corporate social responsibility to tie the higher, socially benefic goal of “development” with its business undertakings is especially evident when it faces negative critique and resistance from consumers, activists, and the media. Thus, I trace the seeds of a new form of colonization germinating through the neoliberal discourse of agricultural development for food sufficiency. I also note resistance to such colonizing efforts by people who are ecologically conscious, and who believe in the ecofeminist ideology. I look at eco-activist Shiva’s weblog, Navdanya, as an act of such discursive ecofeminist resistance as it reaches out transglocally to audiences who have a common cause against Monsanto. My research is relevant to future scholarship in transglobal, multicultural rhetoric and text creation in a digitally connected neoliberal, capitalist world.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

As a journalist from India who has been following the activities of biotech corporation Monsanto for several years, I am fascinated by the public rhetoric crafted by the company to justify its research and business, particularly in the face of opposition. Since the last quarter of the 20th century, Monsanto has been steadily gaining control of the world’s agricultural sector – indeed, control of the livelihood of farmers – with the promise of Green Revolutions in resource-strapped countries. They pledged to do this through the development of farming. However, even as the global agricultural market was swamped by products resulting from the company’s biotech research which, ostensibly, was proof of Monsanto’s corporate social responsibility (CSR), its promise of plenty did not quite materialize as an unmixed blessing. Within a few years, farmers began losing their crops, lands and even lives, as heavy losses and debts drove many of them to commit suicide. This caused an international uproar with farmers, along with activists, protesting the operations of Monsanto and its control over their lives. My aim in this study is to see, in an ecofeminist light, how the multinational corporation has been trying to wrest control of people’s food supply using the neoliberal capitalist rhetoric of development and how this has generated a transglobal phenomenon of resistance through digital dissemination of discourse.

The topicality of my research stems from the fact that corporate control of people’s lives is a relatively new, postcolonial form of colonization, perpetrated through neoliberal rhetorical strategies often using digital affordances. The purpose of such colonization, also referred to as “neolcolonization,” is to gain economic control of a nation. President of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah coined the word “neocolonialism” in the 1960s when African nations were
going through the process of decolonization. Nkrumah propounded that in times of capitalism, colonization is achieved through globalization and cultural domination. This is in contrast to territorial or political colonization of the past that employed military means. In the context of Monsanto’s corporate activities, economic colonization (instead of political power) is attained by acquiring control of a nation’s food production system. However, thanks to activism by a section of ecologically-conscious people, or ecofeminists, an entire body of discursive resistance has germinated in response to Monsanto’s neoliberal rhetoric. Furthermore, owing to the worldwide reaches of digital technology, this resistance movement has gathered momentum across continental boundaries from the Americas to Asia and Australia. I look at how today’s ecofeminists, like the colonized peoples of yore who opposed Western colonizers, are engaged in resisting global corporate forces. Using the affordances of digital technology, these eco-activists have made their voices heard across the oceans, generating a “transglocal” (term coined by Rebecca Dingo and J. Blake Scott) wave of discursive resistance that challenges neoliberal economic colonization.

Dingo and Scott came up with the term “transglocal” (7) by combining “glocalization,” or the blending of global and local, with the prefix “trans” as they examined Arjun Appadurai’s notion of the “megarhetorics of developmental modernization” (10). In my research, Monsanto serves as a case study of how corporate megarhetorics of development can face transglocal resistance comprising ecofeminist voices that have transcended localized settings to unite as a worldwide discursive movement. I look at how a global surge of eco-activism has been possible due to the common, connected space of expression provided by the media and digital technology. Specifically, I look at the official websites of Monsanto and its prominent critic,
Vandana Shiva, for a comparative study of corporate persuasive rhetoric and resistance to it. Using Kenneth Burke’s dramatistic pentad to map the rhetorical situations in the two websites over five basic elements (hero/villain, secondary characters/chorus, plot/script, backdrop, and stage props) that comprise theater or drama as presented on the stage, I explain how Monsanto and Shiva perform their rhetorical acts. I also note how Monsanto’s self-promotional rhetoric based on corporate social responsibility (as exemplified by figure 1) hinges on what Michel de Certeau called a “myth” (102). What Monsanto crafts is a myth of food insufficiency, hunger, and the need for agricultural development, while the rhetoric of resistance draws from ecofeminist values.

![Monsanto CSR Image](http://www.monsanto.com)

Figure 1. Image of an African boy in a village school from the page entitled “Who We Are” in http://www.monsanto.com. The company says it is committed to corporate social responsibility (CSR). Accessed 7 June 2016.
My analysis uses the overlapping but complementary lenses of ecofeminism and critical discourse analysis (CDA) to see how digital spaces of resistance, which were created in different parts of the world in response to the neoliberal rhetoric of development and corporate social responsibility, transcended local exigencies to unite as a common cause on a “transglocal” platform. Such research will help scholarship in Rhetoric and Writing Studies set new milestones in ecofeminist resistance discourse and the transglocal implications of digital text creation. My analysis of the online rhetoric of Monsanto and the ensuing discourse of resistance intends to build on the work of eco-critical scholars such as Dingo, Scott and Eileen Schell who have already indicated how the megarhetorics of development have “implications about the material conditions of citizens, their health and well-being, and implications about sovereignty” (Scott and Dingo 4). Schell’s work lays the foundation for researchers to use development rhetoric as a “toolbox” (149) to help interpret as well as intervene in the hegemonic functions of development discourses. While the existing research discusses how development functions as a “commonsense rhetoric” meant to be perceived as a positive term indicating onward movement from an “economic, social, and cultural state of weakness and danger to one of strength and security” (Scott and Dingo 5), my aim is to develop a research method based on ecofeminist strategies to trace the emergence of a new form of colonialism in neoliberal times. This is a new direction that research on the neoliberal megarhetorics of development can take.

The ecofeminist aspect of my study is important because it can help draw new “eco-frontiers” representing a new area of research that connects environmental matters with political spaces. As Joo-Hyun Ha notes, “Consumers in (political and economic spaces) of
emerging countries, in particular, are more invested in eco-products due to environmental degradation and high consumer distrust of existing hazardous products” (94). As my analysis of Vandana Shiva’s website, *Navdanya*, will show in chapter 7, Monsanto’s “hazardous” genetically modified products are at the center of such ecofeminist discourse at this precarious juncture in the history of our planet. Given this exigency, my study will (a) throw light on how the multinational corporation situates itself in 20th-21st century business, advertising and publicity strategies and (b) examine how ecofeminist discourses try to deconstruct and disprove Monsanto’s market-centric rhetoric to lay bare its plan of economic colonization. I pay special attention to the use of words and expressions such as “hunger,” “food insecurity,” and “sustainable agriculture” by both sides of the argument due to their implications for a projected “catastrophe.” For instance, a highly favorable *Forbes* article published online on January 18, 2010, says that Monsanto is just “too good” as a corporation, engaged in “efforts” at genetic engineering that can avert a catastrophic food shortage not too far in the future. Such strategic use of news media is obviously meant to reverse the company’s spotty record related to genetic engineering.

The other significant word in this discussion, related both with genetic engineering and efforts by Shiva in the opposition camp to resist Monsanto’s activities, is “seeds.” Given the importance of seeds in this discussion, in the literal sense as the primary, life-giving object that Monsanto wants to control and in the metaphoric sense as the source of power for sides in the battle over control, I have included it in the title of my paper, “Seeds of Neo-colonialism…” While Monsanto tries to justify creating genetically modified seeds, patenting them and selling them worldwide to apparently prevent an impending food shortage or “catastrophe,” critics of
Monsanto (such as Shiva and journalist-filmmakers P. Sainath and Marie-Monique Robin) look at the environmental impact of its global agribusiness and say it is actually helping create the “catastrophe” by grabbing control of indigenous seeds, modifying them genetically, and monopolizing their distribution back to farmers. In Navdanya, Shiva calls this “biopiracy,” which is an unethical neoliberal practice designed to achieve globalization of business and ultimately, colonization of the world’s agrarian economies. In short then, my case study of Monsanto’s business and advertising rhetoric brings to light how it is crafted with the purpose of financially colonizing farming communities around the world. My study of Shiva’s weblog elucidates the transglocal ecofeminist resistance to such a neoliberal corporate practice.

1.1 Corporate megarhetorics of development and neocolonialism

Neoliberalism, a capitalist concept of the last quarter of the 20th century, opens doors to free market practices across geo-political boundaries that enable economic colonization of developing as well as developed nations by multinational corporations. I call such economic colonization “neocolonialism.” As Marxist scholar David Harvey explained, the state is in cahoots with multinational corporations to enable such economic colonization, and privatization of public services is one of the strategies used to achieve it. According to Harvey, “part of the neoliberal project has been to subsume greater chunks of the state so that public services (including those in the agricultural sector, such as seed banks in India) . . . have become privatized” (qtd. in Primrose 24). This kind of privatization allows corporate players to have a free hand in a market that had traditionally been monitored by state laws and the interests of people/consumers. Harvey laments that it is impossible to avoid such an institution and that
there is an essential part of the state that is completely entrenched in the process of capital accumulation. It is this “state-financial nexus” (24) that needs to be challenged.

Analyzing this state-financial nexus further, Calin Cotoi shares her perspective on “power, politics, government and knowledge” and shows how, since the 1980s, the view of political power has changed; it is not considered to be a “hegemonic, thoroughly structurant, state dwelling power” (110) any more. This is because the rise of corporations and the capitalist mechanism in the last quarter of the 20th century opened new ways of power sharing between the state and commercial institutions. However, Stuart Hall invokes Antonio Gramsci to infer very eloquently that even though “in ambition, depth, degree of break with the past, variety of sites being colonized, impact on common sense and shift in the social architecture, neoliberalism does constitute a hegemonic project,” (27) this project is not quite finished. In other words, hegemony needs to be to be worked on constantly in order to be “maintained, renewed, revised.” Thus, social forces that have been left out – whose consent has not been gained and whose interests have not been considered – serve as the foundation of “counter-movements, resistance, alternative strategies and visions” (26) and the struggle over a hegemonic system starts all over again. Monsanto’s public rhetoric and the counter rhetoric of its critics exemplify this continual struggle over a hegemonic system.

I examine how Monsanto’s approach to global business embodies a capitalist philosophy promoting unregulated markets (except when it is self-regulating to serve its own interests), urging states and policy makers to support free market capitalism and potentially colonizing stratagems such as the development of global markets for global trade. Such capitalist plans, which look at the entire world as a prospective consumer base, aim to seize control of national
economies and ultimately, the global economy. This new form of colonization that works by holding the purse strings of nations is at the center of my study. In addition to examining Monsanto’s public rhetoric, I consider the fact that while there is a tendency among critics to see corporations as the ones preying on people, companies are often allowed to operate unchecked by governments and supranational bodies like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Thus, the new form of economic colonization is enabled by a system of networked exchange between hegemonic political and commercial/market forces that run the global economy.

In order to understand hegemony and the constant inherent struggle, I look at resistance rhetoric by transnational resistive thinkers, and their intervention in the hegemonic functions of multinational, capitalist forces. Such resistance is essentially ecofeminist in its philosophical grounding since it stands up for the cause of an oppressed section of people, namely farmers, whose traditional mode of growing crops is under threat due to Monsanto’s business practices. According to Gramsci, hegemony “must necessarily be based on the decisive nucleus of economic activity” (76). The nature of this nucleus of economic activity is highly complex since, as Arjun Appadurai indicates, “the disposition of global capital is now a more mysterious, rapid, and difficult landscape to follow than ever before” (34). Moreover, the use of electronic capabilities to “produce and disseminate information” (35), as demonstrated by the use of digital media by both Monsanto and the resistance camp, further complicates the way in which negotiations take place between the two sides at the global level.

This is not least due to the fact that other stakeholders such as national governments, trade bodies, and their political networks contribute to the transaction of ideas, formulation of
policies, and implementation of agendas. In addition to using Gramsci and Appadurai’s theories to understand hegemony, it is important for me to locate power in social relations and in discourse. This is because power emerging from the different sections of society helps understand how on the one hand Monsanto has been able to impose its capitalist, hegemonic agenda on the farming community, and how on the other, some critically thinking people have resisted such corporate moves. I look at resistance rhetoric that critiques the so-called “development” rationale behind industrialized agriculture and its attempts to justify and legitimate the worldwide existence of an agribusiness giant.

1.2 Ecofeminist resistance

Connecting feminism with ecology and eco-critical discourse, eco-feminism explores how the domination of women is connected with exploitation of the environment by modern science in a patriarchal capitalist society, thus arguing that the mistreatment of women and nature are connected. I use the eco-feminist lens to promote the assumption that civic and global governing bodies need to be ethical stakeholders in matters related to agriculture and those whose livelihoods are dependent on it, including women in the farming community, when in reality the governing bodies often act in collusion with corporate forces against the interests of the farmers. This is where NGOs have stepped in to fill the breach, like Vandana Shiva’s work with Navdanya, which is a network of seed keepers and organic producers in India countering the industrialization of plant reproduction. Navdanya’s work is a form of resistance rhetoric, critiquing modern science and neoliberal capitalism’s value-free practices while implementing the Gandhian rhetorical strategy of satyagraha or non-cooperation in a non-
violent way. In this context of postcolonial India, Shiva represents the ecofeminist whose opposition of a corporation is based on eco-conscious or earth-friendly values that align perfectly with the Gandhian principle of non-violent resistance.

Non-cooperation is an indigenous movement specific to the context of India that, in the post-Independence era, has manifested itself through the eco-feminist work of women. I examine how such a rhetorical strategy has a dynamic of its own, deriving its strength from the fact that when people suddenly withdraw consent and cooperation, the system finds itself in the doldrums. The effectiveness of this strategy in a specific rhetorical situation (India) shows how eco-feminism considers the ethos of a land, as it were, the way it is defined by its history, culture, local perceptions, knowledges and wisdom, and how such locally-focused strategizing can help dismantle structures of oppression around the world. As Shiva points out, rhetorical tools of resistance should be devised according to local ethos and wisdom instead of mindless imposition of western discourses of resistance. In other words, local sciences need to be utilized to counter multinational corporate food politics around the world, and this in turn necessitates a recovery of epistemologies that have been lost, destroyed, or left to near oblivion during colonization.

*Navdanya*, the online artifact of resistance selected for this study, shows how to situate resistance rhetoric in the local context and local sciences, using local actors (farmers and other stakeholders in local agriculture) to discuss their location-specific problems as well as suggested solutions, which renders credibility to the counter-Monsanto argument. At the same time, Shiva uses her activism savvy, her stature as an internationally known activist, and the reach of digital technology to spread her message to a global audience. Thus, she helps create a
transglocal cross-national and cross-cultural discourse that can challenge Monsanto’s CSR-based rhetoric claiming commitment to global economic growth, progress, and development.

Shiva’s eco-critical feminist rhetoric in *Navdanya* includes but is not limited to issues faced by women in the farming community as it looks at the larger context of the planet and its environment. Similarly, in my study, I apply the lenses of ecofeminism and critical discourse analysis to read texts about the environment and environmentalism with the purpose of revealing concealed agendas, assumptions and meanings. Since at heart eco-critical discourse analysis has an environmental purpose, my study has the potential to contribute toward future scholarship on rhetorical analyses regarding ecosystems, the impact of neoliberal development rhetoric on the environment, and discursive constructions of consumerism, gender, politics, agriculture and nature. Thus, the eco-critical discourse analysis method in my study serves a double-pronged purpose, bringing to light the hidden objectives of neoliberal corporate-speak and also looking at resistance-speak that can help prevent, check, and undo damages done by profit-seeking capitalist ideologies.

1.3 What does this study mean for scholars in Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS)?

For scholars in RWS, this study indicates the opening of a whole new set of rhetorical situations based on several topical notions that are unique to a neoliberal capitalist world. These notions are: “neocolonialism” by means of development/CSR rhetoric in a postcolonial world, arrival at new eco-frontiers of resistance by ecofeminists, and an unprecedented degree of agency gained by ordinary, organic individuals and groups through the extraordinary reach of transglocal discourse. Furthermore, the cross-disciplinary nature of these above concepts point
to the trans-disciplinary potential for the application of RWS to understand how persuasive strategies are crafted for various purposes in many different contexts.

In the context of my study, “translocaal” refers to both the global business of a multinational company involving local/national agricultural interests and the resistance movements generated in different parts of the world that were united on the virtual/digital platform to fight for a common cause. Monsanto's business model supports the corporate movement to have a global, uniform system of plant breeders’ rights that began in the 1980s, which also means trying to eliminate the traditional, local farming practices of using, reusing and preserving indigenous/native plant varieties. Monsanto now sells its genetically modified seeds in practically every continent, systematically destroying the local seed assets and farming practices. The discourse crafted by Monsanto to encourage (and sometimes coerce) local farmers to convert to industrialized agriculture, as seen in India, Chile, and several African nations, along with the counter-discourse of resistance constructed by those who are concerned about the future of the planet’s biodiversity, offer RWS scholars the chance to apply a combination of complementary lenses such as ecofeminism and CDA to address a host of topical exigencies. For example, a study of this discourse and counter-discourse can lead to findings that suggest how ecofeminism can effectively resist global corporate forces, or explain how ecofeminism can empower resistive individuals with agency, or define how digital technology can enable ecofeminists in different continents to establish transglocal connections. All of these above applications of ecofeminism and CDA serve the important purpose of resisting hegemonic capitalist forces, which in turn serves the causes of social justice and equality in a democracy. In fact, these applications draw on the British cultural theorist Paul
Willis, who believed capitalism is not an immovable system and just like any other “structure” (27) it simultaneously limits and enables agency. By showing how ecofeminist discourse analysis can help enable agency for natives in a neoliberal capitalist society, its application in RWS (as in my study) provides fertile grounds for new theorization that will be relevant to the evolving situation of neocolonization in a postcolonial world.

1.4 Research questions and limitations of the study

The primary question on which this research is founded is: How can scholars of rhetoric trace new notions of colonization (“neocolonization”) in a postcolonial, neoliberal world through the study of development discourse and resistance to it? To keep the study topical in this digital age, I look only at online corporate and resistance rhetoric. The official website of the multinational corporation, Monsanto, serves as a case study for neoliberal persuasive strategies while prominent ecofeminist activist Vandana Shiva’s weblog, Navdanya, is selected for the study of resistance.

The secondary questions that help explore the important areas touched by the primary question are:

a) What role does the socio-political situation in a former colony play in enabling a foreign corporation to set foot in it?

b) What are the transglocal implications of rhetoric created digitally by corporations and resistive ecofeminists?

After exploring the above questions, my analysis leads toward locating new and emerging areas of study for scholars of corporate persuasive strategies, ecofeminist rhetoric,
and transglocal discourse. Significant areas covered by my research are:

a) Monsanto’s persuasive strategies: The corporation’s public media campaigns and corporate image management make extensive use of digital technology, through which it has been able to gain access to the world’s food culture and distribution. Equally important, Monsanto uses the digital platform to disseminate rhetoric that serves the first step toward colonizing the minds of the audience. Therefore, I analyze Monsanto’s official website as the primary text showcasing its public image management strategies, particularly in response to negative publicity, scandals, and opposition from activists.

b) Eco-feminist resistance to corporate efforts at neoliberal colonization: I review the resistive ideology of ecofeminism, which is a combination of eco-criticism, feminism, and discourse analysis propelling the movement behind opposition to corporate hegemony. Such ideology also takes on the economic and political forces that enable Monsanto to spread its business globally. My study of resistance to the rhetorics of neoliberalism looks at how ordinary individuals and non-governmental groups are able to join forces on the digital platform and stand against global trade agreements endorsed by the World Bank and IMF and supported by national governments, thus thwarting the hegemonic plans of global companies.

c) The cross-fertilization of resistive voices on the digital platform resulting in transglocal movements against a common cause: An example of cross-fertilization of voices of resistance from different parts of the world that I discuss in the study is the transglobal response to Chilean farmer Jose Pizzaro Montoya’s lawsuit against Monsanto in January 2014. The worldwide outcry against Monsanto’s harsh treatment of the landless farmer eventually led to a settlement wherein the company paid a small but rhetorically significant compensation to
him. While this story is an instance of the powerful making small concessions to the apparently powerless to maintain power, it also shows the constant give-and-take between opposing forces in a hegemonic system.

Limitations of study: The main limitation related to this study is the number of web texts being analyzed for insights into the topic of neocolonization and resistance to it. There are only two websites under focus in my analysis: http://www.monsanto.com and Navdanya. However, both sites contain several links to related sites that, seen together, constitute a very large corpus of study. For instance, Navdanya leads to Shiva’s blog-journal, Navdanya Diary and her other official sites, vandanashiva.com and vandanashiva.org, which have a steady stream of updates and additions (just like http://www.monsanto.com). While I looked at every page and every external source linked with http://www.monsanto.com and Navdanya for the purpose of an insightful analysis, an exhaustive exercise, still my study only covers one corporation and one voice of resistance that are taken to represent all others. I do mention works by journalist-filmmakers P. Sainath and Marie-Monique Robin (in addition to Shiva) in my analysis, but only by way of supporting Shiva’s stand and not as primary objects of analysis.

Furthermore, the insights I obtained pertain to how Monsanto devises rhetorical strategies to colonize agrarian economies around the world, which is representative of the way multinational corporations operate globally, but does not show specifically how companies dealing in other kinds of products, such as electrical or beauty or clothing, operate. Even though I look at previous studies on Chevron, Coca-Cola, Google, and Enron, the core of my analysis does not include specific variations in the way these companies devise persuasive strategies through their online rhetoric. While analyses of the rhetoric of other industries may have
enriched my study greatly with a variety of insights on corporate behavior and responses in different rhetorical situations, such an undertaking would have been unwieldy and highly time-consuming. Similarly in the section on resistance, voices of activists other than Shiva may have provided new angles from which to view ecofeminist activism in different contexts around the world, but I leave them to serve as the subjects of other studies that might complement mine.

Finally, given how the websites in my study are constantly updated and sometimes redesigned, and the fact that a cutoff date was necessary to meet my research deadline, it was not possible to regain access to some of the pages I mention in my analysis. However, this does not change the essence of my findings and conclusion. What does need to be mentioned here is that Monsanto was in the process of being sold to the German company, Bayer, in 2016-17, and this change of ownership may have a significant impact on the way its business is run in the future. While this may render some of my insights outdated, the shifting of headquarters from North America to Europe and the possible changes in business culture and ethics may actually open up a new area of study on neoliberal ways of running a global corporation. My research provides the heuristic and prepares the grounds for such a future area of study.

1.5 Overview of chapters

My paper contains eight chapters, the content of which is summarized below. In addition, there are the title and dedication pages, the table of content, and my vita.

Chapter 1: Introduction. The opening chapter describes my plan of study, its fit in the RWS discipline with reference to its topical nature, my research questions, and the limitations of my research. The section explaining the fit in RWS discusses how my research finds its place
in the discipline by locating a new and growing space in critical discourse on the colonizing potential of contemporary corporate rhetoric, the resistance generated in its wake, and the expansion of ecofeminist activism from the empowerment of women to concerns about environment and the planet’s future. The transglocal implications of online rhetoric – both corporate and resistance – is yet another emerging area of scholarly exploration as I mention in the Introduction.

Chapter 2: Previous studies on corporate persuasive strategies and resistance. This chapter revisits existing scholarly work on trans-disciplinary research on corporate rhetorical strategies, the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the public documents of companies, and ecofeminist resistance to corporate rhetoric. While the articles on CSR show how a variety of companies use the concepts of benevolence and service to further their public images and thereby take the first step toward colonizing the minds of people, studies of resistance groups and individuals show how critically conscious citizens see through the screen of altruism in corporate rhetoric. However, not all studies on resistance present positive evaluations. This chapter features a few reviews of resistive voices (of Shiva and Greenpeace) in a negative light.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework. This chapter mentions the theories that I invoked from a variety of disciplines to analyze the emerging processes of neoliberal economic colonization and ecofeminism in order to understand discourse as a transglocal phenomenon in the digital age. I draw these theories from rhetoric, composition, critical theory, cultural theory, communication studies, business ethics, and postcolonial studies since my purpose is to trace new goals and means of discourse creation in the digitized 21st century when words are
communicated not just on paper but through a combination of written, visual, and aural elements that can be entirely virtual yet with an instantaneous global reach.

Chapter 4: Method. This chapter describes the critical lenses I use for my analysis (eco-feminist and CDA supplemented by Burke’s concept of the dramatistic pentad), details of the nature of the study (using both data and visual analysis methods), site maps of the texts in the study, and a description of the corpus. I explain how my lenses are suitable for reading the online artifacts produced by Monsanto and its critics, given their interdisciplinary scope and ability to study multimodal texts (written, visual, and aural). Furthermore, I describe how these lenses enable a comprehensive understanding of Monsanto and Shiva’s texts as a form of social practice when their online rhetorical performances are mapped over the stage for drama/theater as envisioned by Burke.

Chapter 5: Common and contrasting key concepts in the websites of Monsanto and Shiva. In this chapter, I identify the common notions of hunger, growing populations, food insecurity, sustainable agriculture, and seeds as seen in the websites of the corporation and its staunch critic. Obviously, they project the concepts in very different and contrasting lights, with the corporation using them in the light of CSR to justify and legitimize its GMO-related research and worldwide marketing operations, and Shiva trying to debunk such a need/service-based argument for legitimacy.

Chapter 6: Monsanto crafts a myth with facts, figures, and silences. Expanding on the previous chapter that examines how Monsanto uses the concepts of hunger, food shortage, and apparent worldwide need for its biotech research and products to avert an impending starvation catastrophe, this chapter analyses the myth crafted by the company to project itself
as a savior of famished millions. This analysis looks at Monsanto’s presence and track records in India, continental Africa, and Chile for a worldwide view of its business practices.

Chapter 7: Shiva and resistance by ecofeminists. Coming on the heels of an exploration of Monsanto’s efforts to justify and legitimate its business practices, this chapter observes how today’s eco-conscious resistive individuals, as represented by eco-activist Vandana Shiva, counter corporate rhetorical strategies. Thus, this chapter also finds out how the new ecofeminist gains agency through her use of the digital platform for rhetorical acts of resistance. Moreover, this part of the analysis notes how the transglocal reach of discourse in digital times brings with it a renewed understanding of the importance of the classical appeal of ethos, arising from the need to have a credible public image when trying to persuade a global audience.

Chapter 8: The concluding chapter summarizes the highlights of the study and discusses its significance for future research on the topic of neocolonialism by corporations and resistance by ecofeminists. Here, I provide an overview of new spaces for research that I identified through my analysis of Monsanto’s megarhetorics global development and corporate social responsibility and also from my examination of transglocal resistance by ecofeminists as showcased in Shiva’s Navdanya. Colonization of the new native’s mind through promises of development and seeking new frontiers in ecofeminist activism when resisting such neocolonization strategies are among the highlights of my findings that I present in this chapter. In addition, I suggest some questions related to the above two emerging areas that scholars in RWS may consider exploring. Finally, I also note how the need for credibility as a rhetor, as I had discussed in the previous chapter in the context of Shiva’s public image
management strategies, also applies to Monsanto as it tries to forge a global market for its business. The purpose of this observation is to compare and contrast the rhetorical devices of the two sides and identify additional areas of exploration for future studies on the public performance of rhetoric.
Chapter 2: Previous Studies on Corporate Persuasive Strategies and Ecofeminist Resistance

Corporate rhetoric of persuasion has been the subject of academic interest and research since the closing decades of the last century, when neoliberal capitalism made its presence felt worldwide through the business dealings of multinational companies. While Marxist scholar David Harvey located turning points in the evolution of capitalism during the emergence of the phenomena of economic liberalization and free market economy, others, such as social scientist Paul Willis, looked at how the new consumer-centric business strategies of major, globally-operating companies impacted the process of cultural production. Such studies of capitalist practices vis-à-vis global consumers helped turn the scholarly spotlight on large companies like Monsanto, Chevron, Coca-Cola, Google and Enron, resulting in a corpus of research on their persuasive strategies and how they opened up new markets in developed as well as developing countries. A highlight of the findings of such research is the linking of social responsibility with self-legitimization by corporations as they tied the otherwise truly socially benefic goal of development with their business undertakings, especially when facing negative critique and resistance from consumers, activists, and the media.

For example, Monsanto claimed it was supplying genetically modified seeds to farmers to help develop food production and, thereby, national agricultural economies. In and of itself the effort to produce high-yielding seeds is genuinely benefic for a growing world population. However, Monsanto critics such as Shiva say the company’s rhetoric is basically a defensive strategy to counter negative publicity caused by allegations of unethical business practices. In other words, Monsanto crafted this rhetoric to persuade people that it serves a legitimate need
in society, thus legitimizing its own existence. By openly handling controversies even if only for selective audiences and contexts as this study will show by comparing websites crafted for different countries, a “technology risk” company such as Monsanto tries to achieve what Fanny Domenec calls a “restorative purpose” in the community, which is “meant to rehabilitate the biotech industry as a whole” (67). It can be inferred then that the company’s official website, www.monsanto.com, is used practically as a tool for advocacy and marketing with the purpose of presenting a case of need/demand in the community.

Keeping the defensive-restorative-rehabilitative purpose of “technology risk” corporations in mind, this chapter examines scholarship from a cross section of disciplines – including rhetoric and composition, communication studies, and business ethics – on corporate persuasive strategies, noting how companies carefully select their audiences and messages while founding their cases for legitimization over an underlying theme of global development and social responsibility. To reiterate then, this discussion is in the context of corporations’ inventive persuasive strategies to counter allegations of ethical malpractices, questions regarding corporate motives, and the ensuing public resistance against multinational corporations. In this chapter, I will also discuss how social responsibility has become a highlight of current neoliberal corporate rhetoric and how forces that resist such rhetoric – including activists, consumers, and the media – have found a suitable ideological foundation in ecofeminism for their common cause.

2.1 Transdisciplinary research on corporate persuasive strategies

Since the turn of the century, agribusiness/biotech and oil companies have been among the most controversial, with a section of scientists, eco-activists, and the news media protesting
their activities worldwide. Domenec performs CDA of Monsanto and oil giant Chevron’s websites for the U.S. and U.K. websites with a stand similar to Harvey’s, siting the online text in their socio-cultural contexts to show how rhetoric is influenced by local factors. The author discusses the values and expectations of the audience of the two companies in two countries, thus showing how websites can be analyzed in light of the cultural capital and technological orientations of target audiences. Domenec’s stand is based on the premise that studies of company discourse contribute to the understanding of “a specialized culture” resonant with “the values of a given period (51). This approach also shares a key concept promulgated by Willis regarding the consumption-production process: that consumption is in fact “production in use” (21). Willis shows the way to trace period-specific cultural production, or the emergence of certain production-consumption practices, through negotiations between the cultural/societal values of any given place and the business goals of a company.

Following this approach, Domenec’s probe of company discourse also draws attention to a “specialized community” of audiences, constituting both media and the public, that is formed when the companies in question are at “technological risk” (51). This probe shows how the audiences of the same two companies (Monsanto and Chevron) are impacted differently in different countries, the United States and the United Kingdom. According to Domenec, the difference is due to the variances in the socio-cultural contexts, which in turn brings to the fore the fact that companies try to devise different rhetorical strategies to “counter negative perceptions” by including “legitimacy strategies” (54) in their communication. These “legitimacy strategies” are based on a “social contract” (54) with a given audience, depending on their
socio-cultural values, with the result that public concern and the location-specific nature of controversies influence the form and content of corporate web pages.

Thus, Domenec infers that company discourse should be seen as a “reflection of social trends since the rhetorical strategies implemented by Monsanto and Chevron vary depending on the local audience” (51). Commenting on how the company home pages, in particular, represent “a capital showcase” (52) of their identities, Domenec argues that different approaches to the concept of “technological risk companies” in U.S. and U.K. have led to different rhetorical choices by the companies on their home pages (www.monsanto.com, www.monsanto.co.uk, www.chevron.com, and www.texaco.co.uk). The author comments that home pages are “highly flexible tools” used with a view of local cultural values, underscoring a “localization strategy” (68) that is evidenced by country-specific features such as different kinds of pictures, search bars, and social networks. Recalling John Swales, she claims her findings support the theory that a single genre “can adapt to different communicative practices” (69).

Domenec also observes that the communicative purposes of Monsanto’s home pages for the U.S. and U.K. were “Information/Promotion” and “I/P/Legitimization” respectively, while that of Chevron’s (below), were “I/P/Defense” and “I/P/L/D/Restoration” (68), respectively. This is in the context of controversies over the contamination of non-genetically modified seeds by Monsanto’s hybrid seeds that threatened biodiversity and the environmental damage in Ecuador due to Chevron’s practice of hydraulic fracking. Farmers and environmentalists in the U.S. and Europe protested such “risk” practices, prompting the two companies to respond in their websites.
What is obvious from the rhetorical strategies in Monsanto and Chevron’s web pages, remarks Domenec, is that the companies are actually depicting their activities as beneficial to mankind. They are essentially feeding the narrative of need, whether in food or energy production. Their way of countering negative publicity is by including legitimacy strategies, the myth of need being used to legitimize their activities. Headlines such as “Better Seed for a Brighter Future” and “Data-Driven Exploration,” which allude to research ostensibly supporting the products and policies of “risk” companies, are further geared toward self-legitimization before a skeptical, critical, and resistive audience. The idea is to mitigate the potential risks, whether health-related or environmental, by directing the audience repeatedly to hopes of sufficient and sustainable agriculture and energy.

When Domenec describes a home page as restorative, it is precisely this effort at restoring the faith of critics and clients to regain social legitimacy that is in focus. In other words, the purpose of the rhetoric crafted by the companies is reputation management in the face of what Campbell and Beck (2004) call “public allegations of specific ethical malpractice or faux pas” (100). Again, such reputation management needs localization, or adaptation to the values, trends, practices, and even the language and writing system of a particular locale, which is why Monsanto and Chevron have different websites custom-made for different countries. Owing to the differences in values, as Levy and Kolk (2002) point out, “European consumers and regulators are [believed to be] more concerned than their American counterparts about the natural environment, and are more likely to make economic sacrifices for environmental benefits” (280). This degree of concern extends to news coverage of, and public reaction to, biotechnology and environmental issues as well. Furthermore, given the U.S.-centric nature of
globalization, Monsanto and Chevron’s “.com” websites are expected to be of more interest to stakeholders in the U.S. and most other parts of the globe – therefore considered to be their global websites – while the “co.uk” websites are created specifically for British stakeholders.

Domenec notes that even though repeated mention of the farmer and presenting arguments about agricultural need serve as the common themes for both the global and British websites put up by Monsanto, the British version emphasizes more on innovation. This is probably because of the British audience’s perceived prioritization of technological advances and products that can address farming challenges and lead to environmental benefits. In addition, the website for the U.S. seems to be more creative with a large picture of seeds pouring out of a person’s hands, while the British website is more text-heavy.

Moreover, the former has a horizontal layout with hyperlinks positioned for random reading, while the later has a vertical layout with only the linear, straitjacket reading option. Domenec also comments on how Chevron uses a different name altogether, Texaco (www.texaco.co.uk), for its British website, which harkens back to the merger of Chevron and Texaco in 2001. The rhetorical choice of the name Texaco, which is now only a brand of the company, speaks of the intent to utilize the brand perception among local consumers, which includes the history or symbols associated with it. As Domenec comments, Texaco is an “everyday brand” (61) regardless of mergers, and therefore logically relates with British audiences. This is a very obvious example of the localization strategy, along with the fact that the company’s rank on the local market is mentioned.

Regarding the matter of addressing controversies and the “risk” they are feared to be posing for people and the planet, Domenec notes that a very interesting difference is seen in
the websites for U.K. and the U.S. of the two companies. Both companies seem much more willing to approach controversies directly and engage with “risk” matters in their websites for the U.S. than U.K. While monsanto.com has an entire section entitled “News and Views” with a sub-section called “Issues and Answers” that addresses fears and critiques from plaintiffs, activists, and the media (including testimonials of consumers endorsing the company’s products and, thereby, proving the need for their existence), monsanto.co.uk merely refers to such matters as “opinions” and “concerns” in the course of the topics under discussion on a given web page. In the case of Chevron, only the U.S. home page has mention of the Ecuador hydraulic fracking controversy (at the bottom right) while the British website avoids controversies altogether. Domenec concludes from the above examples that these “technology risk” companies adapt their responses and rhetoric to the audience and the impact of the controversies in question.

In another analysis of corporate websites, David Campbell and A. Cornelia Beck who are scholars of business ethics and financial accounting, write about the “increasingly ambitious and elaborate...functionality” of company websites, providing information to an unprecedentedly broad “range of stakeholders” (100) for purposes including marketing, selling, reporting, and reputation management. The authors developed a method for the purpose of “testing for website responses to public allegations of specific ethical malpractices or faux pas,” with the additional purpose of exploring “qualitative and quantitative aspects of content analysis method relevant to website interrogation” (100). They selected only the “.com” websites (most likely URL used by interested stakeholders) of eight large organizations that faced public allegations of violation of ethics. Upon examining their websites, Campbell and
Beck noted that all of these companies provided voluntary “disclosures pertaining to the allegations although the ‘quality’ and ‘quantity’ of the responses were not consistent,” (100) apart from the fact it did not matter how old the allegations were. The authors inferred that threats to otherwise good reputations could last a long time.

Whenever they found a “disclosure,” the authors “captured” it “by volume” through word count and measured its quality using a Likert scale classification (where 5 was the most meaningful response and 1, the least). In the case of Unilever, however, this method of analysis led to an interesting result. Unilever is a company accused by Greenpeace of “taking advantage of low environmental controls in a developing country” (104). Campbell and Beck record four counts of “specific allegations” against the company (dating 2001) that involve “‘Shameful negligence’ in allowing an Indian subsidiary to dump several tonnes of highly toxic mercury waste” (105) and selling mercury-bearing waste to unsuspecting recyclers. The authors comment that it is a matter of “personal judgment” as to the extent to which the allegation could be considered evidence of “sin” (104). They derive this conclusion from an absence of response to this allegation on Unilever’s website, which could be construed by some as “cynical contempt” for the accusers and by others, as simple exploitation of “national comparative advantage” that is, and should, be common practice among global companies “seeking to configure activities to optimize value added” (104). In sharp contrast, UK/Netherlands-based oil company Shell, which has seven allegations against it stemming from activities in Nigeria including arming the police to kill and quell displaced Ogoni demonstrators in 1994, posted 20 documents referring to the charges. Of these 20 documents (totaling 22,771 words), 17 rated at 4-5 on the Likert scale (106), showing how proactive the company was in response to the
international outcry against its activities. This finding underscores the fact that the seriousness with which an allegation is taken – and whether it is labeled as ethical malpractice or not – depends on social and individual viewpoints in a given context.

Tim Jensen and Wendy Hesford provide yet another example of adjusting rhetoric to fit a volatile/adverse situation as they analyze Coca-Cola’s sponsorship of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. The authors examine Coca-Cola’s statement – paying particular attention to key words – to understand the company’s official explanation for sponsoring the Games in the middle of a highly resistive rhetorical situation involving human rights activists and the liberal media. Fending off criticism for working with an authoritative regime while simultaneously justifying its Olympic-related business activities in China, Coca-Cola said it was helping “develop” the nation’s economy to ultimately benefit the Chinese people. Jensen and Hesford’s study supports recent research on the self-promotional rhetoric of other companies (including Monsanto) that shows how “development” has taken on a whole new connotation in the neoliberal scenario, sometimes through collusion between corporate and political powers. The authors mention how in its effort to clinch the 2008 Olympic Games, China used “development” as a “key term,” linking “economic expansion with human rights, taking advantage of the neoliberal logic that suggests the latter naturally follows the former” (129).

The purpose of the authors is to show that through this process, China “invoked a discourse that effectively resisted contextualization through concrete, particularized examples [of human rights violation], retaining a context of purity and universalism” of the benefits of economic expansion.
Where multinational corporations fit into this situation is the fact that the event was sponsored by several of them, including the U.S.-based Coca-Cola. Jensen and Hesford point out how Coca-Cola declared it was the company’s “resolute belief” that the Olympics was a “force for good,” or for the sake of development and socio-economic progress, and this was obviously “in response to criticism of sponsorship of the games hosted by an authoritarian regime” (133). Setting an example of the “megarhetorics” of neoliberal capitalism, corporate representatives thus labeled human rights as a subjective matter that had to do with politics, which was an area they were “ill-equipped to handle” (133). Furthermore, it was not just Coca-Cola but also Lenovo, Manulife, and McDonald’s who insisted that the games and their sponsors be separated from politics with McDonald’s specifying that political issues [such as human rights]… need to be resolved by governments and international bodies such as the United Nations.” Based on this event, Jensen and Hesford comment that “Cosmopolitan and humanistic narratives mobilized under the humanistic banner will serve as both sword and shield for the expansion and further entrenchment of neoliberal ideologies and economic doctrines” (134). This observation is founded on the premise that corporate rhetoric packages profit-centric, capitalist goals with popular humanitarian causes in order to generate goodwill among critics, consumers, and all other stakeholders in the community.

Moving from tangible products to information technology, IT giant Google provides a prime example of using the humanistic narrative and banner to justify and legitimize its presence as a public service in an information economy. Technical/corporate communication scholar Jaigris Hodson uses CDA and techniques drawn from corpus linguistics to probe the narratives about technology and information presented by Google. The purpose is to explain
the role such narratives play in the lives of technology users. Hodson looks at how, by crafting these narratives, the company builds a case of legitimacy based on the needs and demands of digital age consumers. Ranked by comScore.com as the most popular search engine in North America in February 2012, Google seems to have a persuasive case, although this case is not beyond critique due to the company’s cultural values and the “profound influence” its filtering power potentially has “over the ways people consume online information” (125). Google has indeed been accused of favoring its own sites in search results.

Hodson examines Google’s blog posts (2006-2011) in response to this adverse critique, describing blogging as “one of several corporate communication tools that reinforce and transmit corporate values to a broad audience” (126). Thus, Hodson’s study demonstrates how blogs can be seen as discursive message delivery systems – featuring videos and music in addition to written text – directed at worldwide audiences. Hodson argues that the experience of browsing Google “will be influenced by the same value systems from which the blog discourses are produced” (126) and that the “decisions made by thought leaders at Google shape how information is presented in the search results” (127). It needs to be mentioned here that while the author presents an in-depth analysis of the blog and detailed findings, she does not actually cite or quote from any of the blog posts. Interestingly, however, her findings can be mapped over the five key objectives that Domenec discovered in the websites of Monsanto and Chevron: “information,” “promotion,” legitimization,” “defense,” and restoration.”

This is how Hodson’s findings echo Domenec’s: Hodson detects “collocation” of the words “market,” “transaction,” “exchange,” “enterprise value,” “consumer,” “company,” “ads,” and “business product” with the word “information” 117 times (128) in the blog posts between
2006 and 2011. Not only does this show an attempt at providing information to readers but also in a fashion that commodifies it (that is, seeing information as any other commodity in the marketplace, just like news), which, through repeated reading “promotes” and perpetuates a socially accepted narrative about the company itself. Thus, Hodson’s study points the way to understanding how the perpetuation of a narrative or myth ultimately serves the purpose of “legitimizing” a corporation. In the case of Google, this legitimization is achieved through projecting the company as a socially valuable information service provider while simultaneously “defending” its activities and “restoring” its benefic image and goodwill among consumers.

The theme of generating goodwill in the community shows up in Shannon Bowen and Robert Heath’s case study of Enron too. They question the company’s principles of public relations underlying efforts by the senior management to maintain a good image even while the company was mired in a scandal over fraudulent trading (2001 until bankruptcy in 2004). Bowen and Heath's analysis brings to the fore the distinction and the potential conflict between legal and ethical guidelines on issues management. The authors’ purpose is to show how the substitution of legal standards for ethical principles ultimately led to the much-publicized bankruptcy and collapse of Enron in 2004. They use systems theory and rhetorical rationales to argue that “an organization must be good internally and make decisions from an outside-in perspective” (84) to ensure ethical and socially responsible choices, but that the Enron management did not heed such ideas. According to Bowen and Heath, organizations with long-term viability need to have certain attributes, two of which are “(1) the means to acquire information that helps management to monitor how well the organization fits into the environment in which it operates; and (2) the ability to interpret this information in a way that
does not confuse what is legal with what is ethical” (84). However, say the authors, Enron fell short of their “ethical responsibilities needed for management in the public interest” (85), which reflects defects in the company’s issue management strategies.

Drawing on systems theory, the authors say that every part of a system needs to be in equilibrium with the other parts in order to operate over the long term. To be able to achieve equilibrium, a company needs “senior public relations counsellors in management positions” who are able to take not just an inside-out view of things but also outside-in view and “balance organizational interests with those of its publics” (85). However, say the authors, one of the reasons Enron failed as a system was the management’s inability to acknowledge – let alone overcome – a bias built into its corporate culture that hid failure instead of admitting it as a learning curve. An instance in point the authors cite is a plea bargain entered by a former trader at Enron’s West Power desk acknowledging efforts to drive up energy costs in California through fraudulent trading practices, which had the support of the company’s Chief Financial Officer Andrew Fastow. In defense of Fastow, his attorney said he was only following the company’s culture as created by the senior management [and being rewarded for it], thus failing to admit wrongdoing and systemized malpractice at Enron. According to Bowen and Heath, this failure “to take a systems perspective by considering the larger social environment” (86) and disregard for ethical ramifications in its decision-making impacted public evaluation of the company, something the management neglected to foresee or ignored.

From the rhetorical perspective, the authors point out it was an example of the (so far) good organization not communicating well, as Enron had enjoyed an excellent reputation until then. Since public relations focuses on meanings created internally (corporate culture) as well
as externally (reputation and relationships), it reflects the attitudes of the organization and its stakeholders but is also necessarily dialogic in nature. Bowen and Heath quote Burke to explain how such dialogic exists as a “wrangle” (86) in the marketplace of ideas, which in turn means the values and opinions of the consumer and the community cannot be excluded from the process of communication. It was this disregard for public values (and ethics) in favor of legal loopholes in Enron’s rhetoric in the aftermath of the scandal that eventually brought it down, conclude the authors. Thus, this case study of Enron emphasizes the importance of “strategic issues management” by corporations “when wrestling with conflicts of ethics and legality” to serve the interests of both “stakeholders and stakeseekers” (87) in a responsible way.

Finn Frandsen and Winni Johansen also conduct a case study – focusing on the top three car producers in Denmark in 2009: Peugeot, Ford, and Toyota – to see how automakers craft their rhetoric for corporate identity management before external key stakeholders. The authors use theories “stemming from neoinstitutional organizational studies, especially the Scandinavian research tradition, where organizations are active ‘translators’ that adopt new rules, norms, and ideas in accordance with their local organizational contexts” (511). While the local is highlighted yet again in this study, what the authors discover is that these multinational car sellers have geared their rhetoric toward audiences in different parts of the world keeping in mind the “ongoing institutionalizing of climate change” (511). This adds a whole new corporate environmentalism dimension to the findings of other studies mentioned above, showing how the discourse of the good company has been adapting itself to topical matters by “adopting a new institutionalized superstandard” (512). As the authors observe, environmental management has grown beyond being merely “technical” or a matter of “managerial
compliance” to becoming reconceptualized as “proactive management” (512). In this context, the authors inquire about the nature of the impact that “new external organizational rhetoric” may have on companies and also on society in general. In addition, they ask if organizations actually “become what they claim to be” (511) in the course of time.

Frandsen and Johansen clarify early on that the conversation has shifted from broad environmental themes to more specific climate themes. The theoretical framework of their rhetorical analysis – new institutionalism in sociology with “special reference to the complex relationship between organisms, organizational fields, and society” (512) – takes this into account and looks at (a) a U.S. version of institutionalism that sees organizations as “passive collective actors yielding to normative pressure... becoming more and more alike in their organizational field” and (b) a Scandinavian version that considers organizations to be “active actors ‘translating’ and adopting the organizational recipes they receive from society to their own context” (512). Accordingly, Frandsen and Johansen’s study of the text in the three car manufacturers’ websites (www.peugeot.dk, www.peugeot.com, www.ford.dk, www.ford.com, www.toyota.dk, and www.toyota.com) is based on the query if the rhetoric embodies location-based corporate identity management strategies. Finally, this query leads the authors to postulate whether organizations eventually become what they say they are, thereby helping or hindering society from functioning better.

Referring to risk communication discourse as employed by governments, Frandsen and Johansen trace how civil servants and politicians make policies and bills to contribute toward environmental regulation and how this ultimately draws automakers into the discourse by requiring them to follow guidelines to help abate climate change. Depending on the seriousness
with which the local government, scientists, activists, NGOs, and the media treat the climate change issue, private companies (such as automakers) “can be said to act between a marketing discourse and a more pervasive corporate communication discourse,” which is not just about promoting environment friendly products and services but also about “purposefully and strategically advocating (even demonstrating) responsible behavior” (515). The authors add that complicating matters further, there are “antidiscourses” generated by “antienvironmentalist groups” (such as those with the American Wise Use movement) who contend that environmentalism “harms free enterprise and economic growth” (516). In such a marketplace of ideas, say Frandsen and Johansen, actors like automakers have the choice of collaborating with other stakeholders to enter into strategic alliances or communicating past each other or directly against each other.

Taking the “neoinstitutional perspective” of such a rhetorical situation, the authors define climate change as a “set of ideas embedded in a complex process of institutionalization” (516) wherein private companies can take “action-producing initiatives such as climate strategies, climate-friendly products or production processes, and new related forms of external and internal communication” (517). As they claim, Frandsen and Jensen add to the neoinstitutional study of organizations by researching how companies embrace new institutionalized rules and manage their corporate identities before external and internal stakeholders “before, during, and after” (519) the process of institutionalization. Their study of the websites of Peugeot, Ford, and Toyota show that the rhetorical positions of the three car producers have both similarities and differences in terms of “symbolic constructions” (521): while all three agree that climate change is a serious but resolvable problem caused by humans,
they differ in the “rhetorical staging” (521) of their long-term strategies and initiative to solve the problem. Frandsen and Jensen note how Peugeot specifically mentions reduction of CO₂ emissions, fuel efficiency, and a better environment; Ford is relatively vague saying “We all have the duty to care for the environment—we constantly make an effort...”; and Toyota shows a strong, well-integrated strategic approach including both a vision and a management philosophy, referring to “360 degrees environmental leadership” in the Toyota Earth Charter and articulating “a new institutional vocabulary” with words such as “sustainable mobility” and “the ultimate green environmental car” (522). The authors interpret the approaches and emphases of the three car manufacturers as (a) the rhetoric of competition for Peugeot, (b) the rhetoric of responsibility for Ford, and (c) the rhetoric of a new responsibility logic for Toyota, speaking of growth through reduction of consumption (sustainable mobility via the development of the green car) rather than the traditional production-consumption logic of growth by means of consumption.

Frandsen and Jensen conclude that (a) a new, partially known and even disputed phenomenon called anthropogenic climate change has been incorporated into the old and accepted context of environmental management by car producers, (b) rhetoric is carefully crafted to “mediate and combine conflicting logics” such as competition between the brands, consumption in a given market, and social responsibility; and finally (c) institutionalization of the concept of climate change has not yet left any “important rhetorical traces” in the “identity bound” sections of the website where the mission, vision, values, and history of the organizations are described. This study shows that while the process of institutionalization of a new idea (climate change) has begun in the car industry and a new institutional vocabulary is
under construction to incorporate the phenomenon “into the external organizational rhetoric in accordance with the local organizational context” (527), it is still too early to say how new policies, norms, and practices will impact corporate identity management at the three car companies, and if they will eventually become what they claim to be in their websites.

The above studies show how corporations devise persuasive strategies with a double-pronged purpose: (a) to obtain justification for existence and legitimacy by showing they serve a global demand through community involvement and social responsibility and (b) manage their reputation to restore goodwill (if it has been damaged for some reason) or present a benefic image in the global market. In the next two sections I will discuss the way social responsibility is featured in neoliberal corporate rhetoric and how forces that resist such rhetoric have found a suitable ideological foundation in ecofeminism, which brings together activists, consumers and the media alike through a common cause.

2.2 Social responsibility in corporate rhetoric

Corporate discourse is a rich area for research into the way companies try to seek legitimacy for their operations. Since the turn of the century, organizational theorists and scholars of business ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR) have been looking into the reasons why a large number of resistance groups emerged globally against corporations and, specifically, why some NGOs that once supported the so-called CSR movement, became disenchanted and started suspecting it was only a ploy to divert the attention of critics from rampant violation of ethics and flouting of laws, necessitating the need for stricter, effective regulations. Thus, even while there is scope for the articulation of a strong case for the
benevolent principles underlying CSR, corporate initiatives related to it have been the subject of criticism and campaigns by international non-governmental development groups such as the World Development Movement, Action Aid, and War on Want.

In his online article for Opposing Viewpoints in Context, Jem Bendell mentions how these groups (along with a few others) had once formed the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) to work with companies with the objective of “improving labor conditions in corporate supply chains.” Given this positive approach and goodwill in the past, Bendell suggests that instead of becoming “defensive,” leaders of CSR “should engage the dialogue and reflect on their practice.” The idea is to reestablish CSR as something beneficial to society and also heed to valid criticism that can prove to be constructive. In this section, I will look at studies that may be seen as useful/constructive critiques, on the ways in which Monsanto, the automotive industry in South Africa, and a variety of companies in Asia use (or abuse) the concept of CSR to advance their business goals as well as public relations.

Sociology scholars Jenna Lamphere and Elizabeth East note how biotechnology has steadily grown to dominate much of the world’s agricultural market since its advent in 1995, and so have concerns about human and ecological safety. These concerns led to political battles both at the local and global levels, which goes on to show how corporate/capitalist interests have become enmeshed with political interests around the globe. The authors look at the gap in research on how the industry has “historically promoted and legitimized this swift proliferation” (75). Quoting van Dijk they refer to management studies and theories in social sciences to define legitimization as “a complex discursive practice” (76) that often necessitate a blend of varied strategies. Explained in a different way, legitimization is a “socially constructed
perspective that is sought between the entity and its surrounding social environment to promote the continuity and credibility of its actions” (76). With this objective, add Lamphere and East, legitimization strategies are most evident as “justificatory practice” (76) when a company faces credibility crisis or gets involved in a conflict, such as British Petroleum’s aggressive portrayal of itself as an environmentally conscious and responsible organization that generously compensated the victims of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon catastrophe. The authors note, “…corporate actors use a variety of promotional materials, such as brochures, publications, and stakeholder letters, to pre-empt or mollify criticism by discursive constructing favorable images and evaluations” (76). The company at the center of Lamphere and East’s research, however, is Monsanto. The authors conduct a case study of the biotech seller and through a discourse analysis of a total of 1210 live and archived web documents produced by the company, they assess the legitimization strategies it has employed over the years to expand its influence over global agriculture.

In addition to exploring Monsanto’s current homepage, http://www.monsanto.com, Lamphere and East retrieved the company’s archived websites using the “Wayback Machine” system, which is a project of the nonprofit organization called Internet Archive (IA). The IA’s mission is to build an Internet library and to this end, it archived Monsanto’s website 1117 times between October of 1996 and February of 2014. Lamphere and East’s findings from these web pages bring to fore how, for 18 years, Monsanto used “discursive resources” to “conceal details about actors and action, reflected trends among experts in global sustainability discourse, and reshaped narratives to promote itself, products, and biotechnology in general” (75). For example, between 1996 and 1999, Monsanto underwent a huge (and controversial)
organizational restructuring that involved divesting its chemical operations and acquiring the life-sciences business, which left around 2000 people without jobs. However, say the authors, the company’s website described the restructuring as a “commonsensical” (81) move to “maximize potential and value for stakeholders” (80), linking it with apparent “critical differences” in markets, products, research needs, investment needs, and plans for growth (Monsanto 1996c). Using discourse analysis, Lamphere and East comment that “terminated employees were discussed in aggregate numbers and without detail” (81) and action was attributed to objects such as scientific studies rather than people (decision-makers in the company). By using “discursive resources like abstraction and aggregation,” say the authors, Monsanto “was able to frame the reorganization as commonsensical and a natural direction for progress” in the larger context of an “apocalyptic narrative” that delineated the company as a “heroic” intervener (or savior) “in a world historical struggle for the future of humanity” (81).

The authors also mention Monsanto CEO Robert Shapiro’s 1999 speech at the State of the World Forum addressing an environmental crisis and prospect of starvation that harkened back to an earlier speech in 1995 when he stated the need of the hour was “a different model of development” and “brand new technologies” (quoting from Monsanto 1995b). Invoking David Harvey, the authors infer that Shapiro thus connected the company’s new life-science direction based in biotechnology with organizational restructuring in a way that justified both, reflecting the perspectives of neoliberalism that had by then “gained political and economic primacy” (81) and influenced the global sustainability discourse.

Furthermore, say the authors, Monsanto’s word choices and expressions such as “continual innovation,” “global marketplace,” and “growth to new areas” show a “lexical field”
related to the neoliberal discourse “favoring commodification, open competition, and free-market globalization,” which aligned well with its own values (81). As an indirect critique of the way CSR evolved over the turn of the century, this study by Lamphere and East shows how discursive resources have been utilized to link sustainability with corporate strategy, promote biotechnology, associate the benefits of such technology with the activities of corporations, and thereby legitimize corporate power. It needs to be mentioned here that while Lamphere and East’s focus is on “industry actor” Monsanto’s use of “discursive resources to construct legitimation claims over time” (85) to gain, exercise, and maintain corporate power (particularly during periods of crisis), my study takes the research a step further to see how such legitimization also helps colonize vast stretches of the world through proliferation of local agricultural economies.

If “sustainability” is a key word in today’s CSR rhetoric helping justify and legalize corporate proliferation of the various areas of people’s lives, the South African automotive industry exemplifies the differences between companies’ approaches to integrating the concept with their core activities. Kehbila et al. present the results of a self-administered questionnaire survey (conducted between July 2006 and March 2007) on the state of corporate sustainability within international automobile manufacturers operating in South Africa, comparing and evaluating the degrees of “voluntary environmental initiatives” (453) among companies of all sizes. The survey considered what sustainability meant to the companies and how relevant it was in their schemes of business practices, as reflected in the way they implemented it. A total of 150 questionnaires were administered and 89 companies
returned them. Seven of the returned questionnaires were rejected due to missing or inconsistent answers.

The authors observe that while the majority of the companies have drawn up standardized environmental management systems (EMSs), there were notable differences in the “extent to which procedures were formalized and documented behind the corporate rhetoric of a high commitment to sustainability” (453). In such a scenario, the authors recommend several measures to engage South African automobile manufacturers in the cause of the environment. Yet another important observation the authors make pertains to voluntary efforts by large companies to modernize ecological systems, going beyond the improvement of industrial production. This includes supporting biodiversity and cleaning up rivers. The authors explain that large companies have more financial resources than small and medium companies (SMEs) and can afford to try and enhance their public image through such initiatives. Since not all managers returned the completed questionnaire, the authors assume that those who responded were the ones most engaged in environmental matters.

The contribution that Kehbila et al. make toward scholarship on CSR is the data they provide on the uptake of sustainability by some of the most successful companies in Africa representing the commercial interests of the automobile industry. Their review of the automobile companies is mostly positive in the area of intent, although no so much in terms of the implementation of EMS. The survey results are presented in three subsections: (a) characteristics of survey respondents (manufacturer or involved in sales, designing, and refurbishment), (b) evolution of vehicle manufacturing (since 1920), and (c) corporate environmental knowledge and practice (456).
The salient points of the authors’ findings include:

(i) About 50% (a total of 40) of the respondents had environmental policies published in certified environmental reports, with just 15 (about 19%) of similar policies published in non-certified environmental reports.

(ii) About 3% (a total of 3) of the respondents did not have environmental policies for various reasons.

(iii) Contrary to early presumptions that only large companies would adopt EMS, companies of all sizes were seen to have implemented it.

(iv) About 69% (a total of 56) of the respondents required their suppliers to comply with specified environmental standards.

(v) About 49% (a total of 40) of the respondents were engaged in one or more voluntary measures to modernize ecological systems (including supporting biodiversity).

(vi) More large firms (35%) supported biodiversity and helped clean up rivers than small and medium firms (just 8%) since “large companies have more financial resources than SMEs and thus seek to enhance their public image” (460).

The authors conclude that when it comes to the uptake of EMS ISO 1400 (that is, the EMS recommended by the International Organization for Standardization, or ISO) in the South African automotive industry, a majority of the companies have in fact tried to improve their environmental performance. In other words, drawing up an EMS was not just a rhetorical ploy to look good in public. The survey results show a wide variety of corporate environmental knowledge and practice, which includes drafting of standardized environmental policies, ISO 1400 certification, environmentally oriented supplier management, and voluntary steps to
“modernize ecological systems that go beyond the improvement of industrial production” (463). However, while this article contains a lot of data on companies that implement EMS and ones that don’t, what is missing is a critical commentary on the existing state of EMSs and how the companies use the available discursive resources to showcase sustainability for the purpose of public image management. Furthermore, the authors are not particularly critical of the companies that do not implement EMS in their daily operations. Nevertheless, the statistics that Kehbila et al. provide on the percentage of EMS ISO 1400-compliant companies in South Africa is valuable for a snapshot of the state of corporate sustainability in the country and perhaps also draws attention to the possibility that the optics of sustainability is not so important there as compared with Europe or the U.S. The authors conclude with the hope that their findings and recommendations will help persuade more automobile-makers to believe in the long-term benefits of EMS and comply with environmental regulations.

To shift the focus to Asia, Itziar Castello and Roberto Galang conducted a discourse analysis of more than 750 projects of Asian firms over six years to identify two main forms of CSR rhetoric: symbolic and managerial. The authors state that both lead to legitimacy strategies, albeit different, that reveal the paradoxes inherent in managing sustainability projects. These paradoxes vary by the characteristics of the companies. Going beyond studies that examine the relationship between communication logics and legitimacy, Castello and Galang seek to fill the gap in scholarship on how “new communication mechanisms such as CSR reports and awards are used by firms to overcome legitimacy challenges,” particularly in the Asian continent, and how such rhetoric helps firms “define” their role in society (1) and legitimize their existence. The authors are also mindful of the legitimacy challenges that Asian
companies face when competing globally. Given the prolonged time period of this research and its scope in terms of the number of projects included, the authors are able to trace the evolution of CSR rhetoric through a wide cross-section of companies representing diverse institutional and cultural contexts in a continent that remains “understudied” (1) in management literature.

Castello and Galang refer to two theoretical perspectives of organizational legitimacy: through the lenses of institutional theories and strategic theories. They explain that while the institutional tradition looks at ways in which “sector-wide structuration dynamics generate cultural pressures” that are beyond the control of any single organization, the strategic tradition takes a managerial point of view and “emphasizes the ways in which organizations instrumentally manipulate and deploy evocative symbols” to gather societal support (2). Both traditions consider how agency and cultural embeddedness factor into the crafting of legitimacy strategies, although their assumptions regarding the two factors are different.

Castello and Galang introduce a third perspective into their theoretical framework: through the lens of political theory. They believe it is relevant to use political theory because it takes into consideration the conditions of today’s “pluralistic and post-national society” (2), re-embedding the economy in a broader ethico-political context, while also going beyond the instrumental perspective to understand an organization’s responsibilities towards human beings.

With the help of this complicated theoretical framework, the authors try to answer the following questions: How do companies express their engagement in CSR projects (the constructs used and their structures of signification)? How do they relate to different legitimacy approaches? How are the different expressions of legitimacy related to firms’ characteristics as
determined by country of origin, size and industry? The authors analyze the language used in reports submitted by companies when applying the Asian CSR Awards, since these reports reflect organizational “values and culture” as well as “different forms of normative evaluation” that inform and shape legitimacy strategies (3). The database created by the Asian Institute of Management was the source of these application documents.

Using thematic analysis, the authors identified 10 rhetorically significant themes underlying the company reports: management, accountability, philanthropy, strategic links, innovation, social contribution, stakeholder dialogues, sustainability, CSR, and partnership (4). Castello and Galang then divided the themes into two categories of “argumentation repertoires” or, put simply, rhetorical strategies, which are managerial logic and symbolic logic. The category of managerial logic emphasizes the argument that CSR projects are liberal in nature aiming to improve the efficiency of an organization, with the ultimate purpose of increasing shareholder value. The authors infer that such argument helps legitimize a firm’s role in society by creating market value. Themes that are perceived to increase a firm’s efficiency and are “semantically related to the function of management” (4) are innovation, accountability, strategic link (between firm’s projects and its core processes), and philanthropy (referring to projects not related to a firm’s core operations). The authors found the themes of philanthropy, strategic link, and accountability in more than 40% of the reports. Innovation appeared in 36% of the reports. Themes that are featured under the second category of symbolic logic have the underlying thread of “social contribution” (4). These themes include CSR (showing commitment the environment and society in general), stakeholder dialogue (associated with partnership and a firm’s willingness to collaborate with stakeholders other
than shareholders, such as NGOs and local communities), and sustainability (proving a firm’s concern for social and environmental futures). The authors found the themes of partnership, stakeholder dialogue, and sustainability in more than 40% of the reports. CSR is used in about 30% of the reports, supporting the argument that it helps gain moral legitimacy.

The authors conclude that there exist many simultaneous legitimization dynamics that depend on a given firm’s characteristics. On the one hand small, local firms in Asia tend to use rhetorical themes associated with the managerial logic to maintain their legitimacy and on the other, large, multinational corporations relate better with the symbolic rhetoric of sustainability and social responsibility. A final point to note here is the authors do not mention the names of the companies they studied, whether in Discussion, Findings, or any other section of the article, which might be part of the agreement they made with the companies to protect their privacy. What the reader takes away from the study, however, is the fact that CSR has turned into an award-winning theme that could lead to a win-win situation if companies incorporated it into their core processes, augmenting market value and at the same time generating some genuine benefits for society. Bendell would agree.

2.3 Ecofeminist resistance to corporate rhetoric

In the second part of my study, which looks at resistance to Monsanto’s public rhetoric, ecofeminism serves as an ideological and ethical position concerned about the health and wellbeing of the environment and the rights of individuals, especially women, in capitalist times. As such, ecofeminism opposes the corporatization of areas of life that were once run by individuals or local communities. Studies on resistance groups, individuals, and movements
such as Greenpeace, Vandana Shiva, and Occupy Wall Street illustrate how ecofeminist principles counter corporate objectives in a variety of rhetorical situations such as the environmentalist activism in West Germany, uprising against greed, injustice, and inequality at Tahrir Square, Madrid and NYC, and the farmers’ movement against GMO in India.

Frank Zelko traces the history of Greenpeace, a non-governmental organization (NGO) concerned with the environment, in the light of its brushes with political, corporate, and also other resistive forces around the world. Here is an example of a North American organization trying to uphold and implement Western liberal values in various localized rhetorical situations in every continent with the help of activists who are usually from the local chapter of the NGO. Depending on the cause of the day, the activists have devised plans such as placing themselves between harpoons and whales in the Pacific to stealing whale meat from a delivery depot in Japan (to expose apparent embezzlement of the meat) to signing up fashion brands with factories in China to stop the discharging of toxic chemicals into the Yangtze and Pearl rivers. The rhetorical strategies in the various situations, while always dramatic and sometimes successful, have been controversial too, and the activists were occasionally arrested on charges of theft or trespassing. Zelko traces Greenpeace’s activities over the years noting how, since its inception in Vancouver in 1971, it has been growing in influence beyond North American shores and contending with different environmentalist and social movement cultures in the process. The author focuses on the West German environmentalist culture that believes in upholding “grassroots democracy and consensus politics” and how that clashed with the hierarchical internal structure of Greenpeace, which was an increasingly professional body by the early 1980s.
Describing Greenpeace as a “high-profile, dramatic, and – arguably – successful” organization with a record of media-savvy “spectacular non-violent protests,” Zelko invokes Habermas’ concept of “lifeworld” or the “everyday world of citizens” (397) and the need for any institution working on behalf of civil society (such as Greenpeace) to have open communication with the public. The author contends that such openness or transparency with the outside world and commitment to a democratic way of functioning in its internal matters is of paramount importance in the case of Greenpeace since it claims to practice grassroots activism for the environment. Zelko laments that even though Greenpeace had been founded by a group of older peaceniks and younger countercultural activists with democratic values, with time and expansion its power structure became more and more centralized along with the development of a professional ethos that was contrary to the idealism of grassroots movements. In an ironic vein, he calls this current state of the organization “Umweltmulti” (397), which is a blend of the German words “umwelt” (meaning the “environment”) and “multi” (meaning “multinational corporation”).

Michael Roose expresses the same concerns about a lack of democratic values as he examines the organizational policy of Greenpeace in the context of its claims of valuing democratic ways of decision-making around the world. It needs to be mentioned here that Greenpeace denounced the World Trade Organization in 2003, accusing it of having an undemocratic voting structure. However, says Roose, while the NGO’s own “developmental republican model of democratic governance” (347) is very effective in producing leaders committed to serving their organization, it does not do enough to involve the global community outside the organization to participate in its activist mission. While drawing attention to the
fact that in its website, About Greenpeace, the NGO claims to “speak for 2.8 million supporters worldwide,” Roose adds that Greenpeace’s much-publicized demos involve only registered members. The author goes on to suggest that using the Internet, specifically social media, to invite people’s opinions would help Greenpeace become more democratic in its policies of self-governance and global activism by involving the very people whose lives it ostensibly aims to improve.

This critique of the NGO is in line with questions in the media about its well-publicized “demos” (348), their connection with the intended beneficiaries and also their relevance to its own purpose/objectives. The core of Roose’s criticism consists of his comment that Greenpeace’s internal governance resembles a bureaucracy where low-level members must silently accept the decisions of the top management (or leave), which undercuts its ability to promote activism or address environmental issues at the grassroots. Drawing on democratic theory, Roose analyzes the NGO’s “representational” governance structure wherein a select few members belonging to Greenpeace International (GPI) formulate policies and run day-to-day operations. The author describes Greenpeace as “republican” because its goal is to protect the “common good” (349) of the global environment, and “developmental” because it emphasizes service to environment-related causes or groups that oppose powerful political and corporate interests. Nevertheless, Roose points out, the matter of democratic participation remains a problem within Greenpeace’s own structure of governance, with only a few people arbitrating the issues toward which its resources are directed. According to the author, even though the organization’s activities influence global commons, a form of “paternalism” (253) discourages potential activists from joining in and voices of dissent have no chance of bringing
about change. Under the circumstances, Roose says that starting a web-based forum to deliberate on policies and other decisions would not only comport to “deliberative democratic theory” by allowing citizens from different backgrounds to enter the conversation, but would make it a truly global dialogue by adding a “diversity of perspectives” (358) on a matter regarding a common cause. It is indeed ironic that Greenpeace has been accused of being so undemocratic since it undercuts the basic purpose of its rhetorical strategies to usher in change at the local level, for the local people, with the help of local activists.

Eduardo Romanos offers a comparative perspective of transnational resistance movements from Tahrir Square in Egypt to Puerta del Sol in Spain to Wall Street, NYC, in the U.S. with the objective of analyzing the process of “social movement diffusion” (103). The rhetorical situations here were initially based in a semi-conservative Islamic country and the western shores of Europe, but culminated in a fusion of the ideologies of freedom, fairness, and justice in NYC across the Atlantic. Noting the differences in the content and channel of diffusion in the three movements, Romanos comments that while the “Spanish indignados” were indirectly inspired by the “collective efficacy” of the Arab Spring, the latter benefitted from third parties including social media (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube). Compared with the relatively liberal Spanish socio-political situation, protesters in Egypt and other Arab countries faced strict political forces that operated with the help of the military. In such a context, the Internet served as their means to reach out to the external world and often live stream their version of the story, which proved to be an extremely effective rhetorical strategy for garnering global support for their cause. The entire world watched on television or mobile devices as massive gatherings of demonstrators camped at Tahrir Square, often clashing with the military.
In contrast, the gatherings at the Occupy Wall Street (OWC) movement in NYC, even though influenced by the other two movements, were usually much smaller, freely broadcast by the media, and police intervention was much more humane and effective.

In terms of content, Romanos describes the “collective” action frames of the Arab Spring as a combination of three things: “injustice” that caused moral indignation expressed though political consciousness, “agency” as seen in the awareness that it is possible to elicit change though collective action, and a sense of “identity” that defined “we” as opposed to “they” who espouse different values (107). This combination of three key elements first fuelled civil disobedience in Tunisia and then moved to Egypt and Israel. In the Mediterranean region, however, the main factors behind the movements were banks that were out of control, inadequate access to housing, declining public services, and high rate of taxation and military spending. The main issues at OWC were corporate greed, its adverse effects on people’s democratic rights, and the lack of legal action against people and corporations who caused a national financial crisis.

To return to the subject of rhetorical strategies for diffusion, the Spanish protesters heard about the Arab Spring through online social networks which, says Romanos, proved to be highly inspiring, especially boosting their faith in the power of the collective. The contribution of online media in this case was unprecedented, its power of diffusion by far surpassing the reach of conventional media. According to Romanos, the diffusion phenomenon also helped transfer “agency” from Egypt to New York, “propelled” along the way by the winds of international visibility of Spanish protesters. Spanish immigrants in New York had a part to play in this process of diffusion too, says the author, given how they were already demonstrating at
Washington Square on May 21, 2011, in conjunction with protests in Madrid and other places in Spain. The first big Occupy Wall Street demonstration took place in Manhattan three months later on September 17, 2011, organized by *Adbusters*, a Canadian anti-consumerist, pro-environment magazine.

While still on the topic of the rhetorical situations of social resistive movements but focusing particularly on the area of ecofeminism, Sherilyn MacGregor states that the neoliberal narrative sees nature as no more than a threat to be put up with, and tries to replace democratic debate on the topic with deft administrative moves and individual behavior changes. With reference to the “10:10” campaign in the UK (started in 2009 and ongoing) that urged people as well as organizations to reduce carbon emission by 10 per cent per year, she wonders if counter-hegemonic political theories and social movements have any hope left in such a sociopolitical rhetorical situation. MacGregor is alarmed by the fact that 10:10 vows to stay out of politics and does not use the word “citizen” in its published material. Such a rhetorical strategy of omission to dissociate environmental activism from politics worries her. She says that a complex political issue such as climate change has been framed in an “apocalyptic” way in dominant discourse, which suggests it is only a “the post-political condition” (618) as some European theorists put it. MacGregor sees this situation as a result of many years of neoliberal hegemony during which “manufactured agreement” on matters related to the economy, ecology, and politics led to “expert administration and consensual governance” (618) supplanting democratic politics. In the context of this new hegemonic frame, she considers what a post-political analysis of climate change might mean to feminist green politics and then goes on to weigh the scope for political action.
To summarize the highlights of this study, while the bulk of ecofeminist scholarship on climate change and the environment are gender-focused and theorize about the risks, responsibilities, and results associated with gendered divisions of labor, MacGregor seeks to find out the rhetorical implications of a “depoliticizing climate consensus” (618) for ecofeminism in the context of hard facts in a neoliberal world, the real meaning of feminist green politics to those who believe in it, and what they actually want to do about it in terms of activism.

Speaking in the same critical vein as Roose about ecocritical activist Vandana Shiva, Keith Kloor says the connection Shiva draws between Monsanto’s genetically modified cotton seeds and the reported suicide of 250,000 farmers in India is at best problematic. In this rhetorical situation too, just like Greenpeace, Shiva employs the ethos of local people by prominently featuring farmers and other members of the local farming community in her demonstrations against the global corporation. However, citing Ronald Herring, a political scientist at Cornell University, and India’s agricultural minister who said in 2012 that the country harvested 5.1 million tons of cotton every year, Kloor argues that farmers would hardly want to use a technology that kills them. Kloor lays the blame on India’s agricultural sector instead, saying that it is “highly insufficient, wasteful, and hobbled by inconsistent government policies” (66). Kloor also quotes the World Bank as saying that a large section of the rural poor in India do not have access to efficient formal financial institutions and suffer in the hands of private moneylenders who charge high loan rates in the absence of a strong regulatory framework. In addition, he states that in the early- and mid-200s, “counterfeit Bt seeds were being sold by unscrupulous parties” (69), which were cheaper and did not contain the
advertised Bt pest-resistant gene. What all of this means, according to Kloor, is that Shiva’s critique of Monsanto is baseless, and that her charges of bio-piracy and genocide against the company only serve as an effective theme for films such as *Bitter Seeds* (2011, directed by Michael X. Peled) that, “like every moral fable” (68), need a villain. Monsanto’s GM cottonseeds have fulfilled that negative role very aptly with Shiva helping shape the narrative, says Kloor. Aiming his criticism at Greenpeace as well, Kloor says that the “proliferation of GMO fears” is due to what Herring calls “knowledge claims” spread by “transnational advocacy groups and activists (such as Greenpeace and Shiva)... funneled through the media and high-profile sources (such as the *Daily Mail* and Prince Charles and Bill Moyers),” not to mention the “socially conscious” (70) filmmaker, Peled, as well. However, what needs to be noted in such a rhetorical situation is the perceived credibility of global celebrities that works in tandem with compelling narratives from local, everyday people and the way NGOs and activists can tap into the potential of such a combination as a resistive rhetorical strategy.

Communication scholar Priya Kapoor examines the transnational feminist politics of Shiva by mapping it over “gendered theories of resistance” (2) in the context of countries where the World Bank and the IMF dictate state planning, thus impacting the lives of the poor through debt-based structural adjustments. In addition to seeing Shiva as a celebrity of sorts who also mingles with locals (mainly in northern India) as one of their own, Kapoor looks at the activist’s grassroots movement and inquires how transnational feminist scholarship may connect with issues at the local level to address economic disparity and deprivation in a postcolonial world. Compared with Kloor, Kapoor takes a tolerant view of Shiva’s strategies to resist the forces of globalization and commercialization of agricultural communities in the
Indian Subcontinent. Finally, Kapoor takes the stand that in times of “transnational feminist alliances,” it is not enough for a feminist activist to just oppose the state, or corporations, or other globalizing forces (16); it is a complicated situation wherein the activist needs to “negotiate her stakeholder standpoint” in the face of powers that may, “at different historical moments,” be “allies” or “adversaries” (16). It is also important for the transnational feminist activist to bear moral leadership, says Kapoor, given the fact that “the burden of activism and agitation” (1) often falls on the shoulders of women as they take care of farmlands as well domestic spaces while men look for more lucrative work in big cities.

The ultimate purpose of transnational feminism, says Kapoor, is to find a model of social justice as it works through problematized ideas of gender and sexuality and intersections of nationhood, class divisions (based on economic criteria), and race and ethnicity. With this in mind, Kapoor selects Shiva for the purpose of a case study of an internationally known activist whose fame and stature, paradoxically, situates her in opposition to grassroots workers and activists in the community. While this situation recalls the critiques against Greenpeace as an organization that is not in touch with its lowest level members and also those it is supposed to help, Kapoor points out the advantages of “celebrity-ism” and the attention that can be drawn to a “fledgling grassroots struggle” (4) by means of a “famous advocate” (3). The author concludes that Shiva exemplifies an effective, “noticeable” (4) bridge between lofty discourses on transnational, eco-critical feminism on the one hand and local, grassroots politics on the other. In this context, Kapoor also mentions celebrity writer Arundhati Roy (of The God of Small Things fame) who took up the cause of people displaced by dams funded by the World Bank and the IMF and drew global attention through her efforts. Thus, in the cases of both Shiva and
Roy, their celebrity status proved useful when it came to catapulting the issues of a local rhetorical situation to the global level. In my study too Shiva serves as a case study of a well-known activist who voices the grievances of Indian farmers before an international audience. However, going beyond that my research also notes her contribution toward expanding the scope of eco-feminism beyond the cause of disempowered women to include the cause of a planet ravaged by toxic industrial farming.

In all of the above studies on resistance, the authors perform in-depth analyses of the rhetors, or those who resist oppressive forces, and the rhetorical strategies they devise under the circumstances of their rhetorical situations. For example, in practically every situation, local actors (or the local chapter of an international NGO) spearhead the movement, which lends ethos/credibility to the cause. Such analyses of activism during the Arab Spring, or in NYC, or in India are extremely helpful in showing the way to understanding the values, principles, and thinking behind resistive actions. However, the gap that still exists in the above studies lies in the area of a rhetorical analysis of the evolving purposes, goals, and modus operandi of the objects of resistance as the socio-political and economic conditions of a rhetorical situation change over time. For example, how should a scholar of rhetoric interpret Monsanto’s use of the doctrines of neoliberal capitalism and the way it impacts small farming economies in a postcolonial world? My research aims to explore this emerging area of study and unpack the new colonial implications of aggressive, invasive and pervasive business strategies of a global corporation. As will be shown in the next chapters, I describe current corporate practices that enable neocolonialism in neoliberal times and the efforts of ecofeminists to resist such colonization.
Chapter 3: Method

I have examined the texts in monsanto.com and Navdanya using critical discourse analysis (CDA) through the eco-critical feminist lens. The purpose of using such a method is to understand how the online texts created by a multinational corporation and one of its most prominent critics have generated a trans-global phenomenon of development discourse and resistance to it. Given the fact that CDA offers an interdisciplinary scope for the study of texts, whether written, visual or aural, it enables a comprehensive understanding of the above-mentioned web texts as a form of social practice. My analysis draws from the fields of capitalist/corporate rhetoric, feminist/eco-critical rhetoric, composition studies, and communication studies. I have looked at language not only as a written form of communication but also as visual and aural practices (considering the videos and infographics posted by both Monsanto and Shiva) that are rooted in various disciplines and rhetorical situations.

The analytical tools I used in conjunction with CDA (to make sense of the different rhetorical situations) are Kenneth Burke’s dramatistic pentad and Michel de Certeau’s concept of myths. The reason I use dramatistic pentad is the idea of seeing a rhetorical situation as drama presented on the stage – complete with the five basic components of hero/protagonist, villain, secondary and or tertiary characters, stage props, and sound/light – that helps with understanding the websites as performances by the rhetors, albeit on the virtual/digital stage. This is in line with the objective of CDA to critically analyze rhetorical choices made by rhetors, which in the case of Monsanto and Shiva include presenting narratives about people in distress (secondary characters) who need to saviors (heroes/protagonists). While Monsanto assigns the
role of villain to hunger caused by rise in food production and inadequate in food production, Shiva squarely points at Monsanto for being the villain by manipulating the situation. In both cases, the worldwide farming community provides the backdrop and stage props. I map the rhetorical situations in both websites over Burke’s concept of the stage/theater and try to understand the roles played by various elements on the virtual pages as they correspond with individual characters and props on the real stage. By mapping the web pages of both Monsanto and Shiva against the same theatrical backdrop, following Burke, I am able to compare and contrast their content, tone and style. This strategy also helps to locate and understand the power dynamics at work among the characters/elements in the two websites, which is yet another important goal of CDA. While determining the power relations at play within the contexts of the two websites, I am able to examine the ideologies that inform the players and shape the messages they convey. Whether it is Monsanto’s neoliberal capitalist ideology using the principle of global development to enter new markets, or Shiva’s ecofeminist stand against a multinational corporation, the dramatistic pentad helps throw light on locations of sociopolitical and socioeconomic inequality, use or abuse of power, and scope for agency to resist domination.

It is at this point that de Certeau’s concept of “myth” provides additional theoretical insight to unpack the messages conveyed by the players in virtual theater. In other words, while Burke helps understand the rhetorical scenario, de Certeau makes it possible to grasp the messages emerging from that scenario. These messages are conveyed through myths, as de Certeau would explain. How are myths constructed? According to de Certeau, repeated iteration of certain notions and simultaneous strategic silences about some facts/information
help build myths over a period of time. In the context of neoliberal capitalism’s supposed aim of global development, how does Monsanto depict its role of developer-savior and how does it serve as a persuasive rationale for nations to allow the corporation into their economies? Furthermore, how does the corporation convince prospective markets and consumers that its presence as a food provider is necessary for survival? These are the questions that de Certeau helps answer with his theory of myth-construction. It is through the creation of a narrative of need – with facts, figures, and/or silences – that a large corporation such as Monsanto gains control over socioeconomic systems, and ultimately the lives of people. Again, insight into the process of mythmaking makes it possible to see how Monsanto-critic Shiva counters Monsanto’s myth of need. Not only does she challenge the claims made by Monsanto in the course of its myth, but also offers different and contrary views and thereby, a contrasting narrative. Thus, comparing and contrasting the two narratives remains the underlying strategy throughout my analysis of the two websites, and I perform this probe with the tools devised by Burke and de Certeau.

The premise of such a study is the eco-critical concern that a new form of colonization has emerged in our postcolonial world that works by acquiring control of global food production and supply. A whole body of discursive resistance has germinated in response to Monsanto’s neoliberal rhetoric, crossing continental boundaries and gathering momentum in developed and developing countries alike. Jennifer Wingard looks at the effects of neoliberalism in the U.S. and points out how current “state policies are defined by neoliberal governmentality that privileges privatization of government industry and individual personal responsibility” (Preface). In such a scenario, Harvey’s theory about “state-financial nexus” (171)
comes into play to show how even a democratic government can serve as an accessory/enabler to promote the colonizing agenda of corporate predators. This is a key aspect of neocolonization in neoliberal times.

In addition to having state policies delineated by “neoliberal govermentality” to facilitate their objectives, corporations also craft the rhetorics of need, development and service to justify their operations and foster goodwill among the public. While scholars such as Dingo and Scott have examined how such megarhetorics of capitalism transcended localized settings to become “transglocal” discourses (7), others such as Monica Waugh-Benton have taken a critical look at the process of “strategically including and excluding particular audiences” (2) of corporatespeak that pledge corporate social responsibility around the world. According to Waugh-Benton, the purpose of such inclusion and exclusion by corporations is to “simultaneously evade its critics, enhance its image, and increase the legitimacy of its participation in ever-widening areas of public concern” (2). In the same vein, in my research Monsanto serves as a case study of how corporate megarhetorics function. The study of such a corpus helps scholars of rhetoric trace new notions of colonization in a neoliberal global world through the analysis of corporatespeak and the resistance generated in its wake. In addition, it sheds light on a) the socio-political situation in a former colony that makes it convenient for a multinational corporation to step in, b) the digital media’s role in promoting as well as building resistance to the corporation's neoliberal agenda; and c) new and emerging notions of discourse in multinational rhetoric and resistance in a digitized world.

Although a staggering amount of scholarship exists on neoliberal capitalism and the societal power structures and power struggles within the framework of any ideology (such as
the work of Foucault, Hall, and Harvey), not much scholarship exists that uses CDA in the light of ecofeminist ideology to see how discourse itself is evolving in a digitally connected world and helping propagate new forms of colonialism. In my study, an analysis of online texts is performed through the eco-critical lens to note the similarities and differences between commonly occurring words, expressions, and concepts in the two websites. I have read the texts in the two websites closely to pick and codify recurring elements – noting the number of times they appear in the web pages – and used them as heuristic devices to understand their messages, whether in the neoliberal capitalist context or as part of the resistance movement. In other words, as chapter 5 (entitled “Key Common and Contrasting Concepts in the Websites of Monsanto and Shiva”) will reflect, I hinge my analysis on the comparison and contrasts of common, emphasized elements that I find in the two websites, selecting them on the basis of repetition or recurrence.

3.1 Using critical discourse analysis (CDA)

CDA, as Norman Fairclough demonstrates, is most suitable for an examination of texts produced by Monsanto and its opponents since it is rooted in the concept of critical language awareness (CLA), which is “based on the conviction that because of contemporary changes affecting the role of language in social life, a critical awareness of language is ‘a prerequisite for effective democratic citizenship’...” (71). Fairclough and Ruth Wodak succinctly list the principles on which CDA is based, and these principles make CDA most suitable for my study:

- CDA addresses social problems.
- Power relations are discursive.
Discourse constitutes society and culture.

Discourse does ideological work.

Discourse is historical.

The link between text and society is mediated.

Discourse analysis is interpretive and explanatory.

Discourse is a form of social action. (271-280)

As Fairclough adds, there is a “need for critical awareness of language as part of people’s resources for living in new ways in new circumstances” and that “what is at issue is a critical awareness of discourse which includes other forms of semiosis as well as language: visual images in particular are an increasingly important feature of contemporary discourse” (71). This notion is drawn from Gunter Kress and Theo van Leeuwen’s foundational theory in visual rhetoric that says images can function as a semiotic mode alternative to language. Based on this theory, my study looks at the visual rhetoric of images posted by Monsanto on its official website, an example of which is provided above.

Fairclough shows how a critical look at the use of individual elements in a text and the relationships of sentences to the complete text reflect the workings of power in social relations (“Critical Discourse and Marketization” 136). While examining Monsanto’s online texts to see how the company crafted the narrative of need for food to suit its own purpose of controlling the global food supply in our neoliberal times, I noted how certain rhetorical strategies were used in subtle ways that provided glimpses of where and how power operated in the socio-political and economic contexts of our neoliberal times. My linguistic and semiotic analysis took into account the use of images alongside the written text to enhance the rhetorical effect,
directed mainly at farming families around the world.

As Huckin et al. say CDA is “an interdisciplinary approach to textual study that aims to explicate abuses of power promoted by those texts” (107). This is achieved by “analyzing linguistic/semiotic details in light of the larger social and political contexts in which those texts circulate” (107). Thus context – in this case formed by neoliberal capitalism in a postcolonial world – is a major factor taken into account when understanding the texts produced by Monsanto as well as those who resist it. Given the interpretive nature of such a research, the case study of Monsanto was conducted using a contextualist research paradigm following Cindy Johanek’s approach, which considers the physical, material, socio-cultural and ideological factors informing the parameters of text production. However, since “context” does not exist in isolation but includes the factors of rhetor and audience also, this paradigm was expected to lead to research findings that addressed all the aspects/variables of a situation, which in this case was located in a postcolonial, neoliberal world. The aim was to be as comprehensive as possible in the analysis, and hold “exciting possibilities for the future” (5) in theorizing on how the phenomenon of neo-colonization takes place in the postcolonial world.

I took the ecofeminist stance to form a comprehensive inquiry into how context, rhetor and audience played out in the Monsanto website. My aim was to see how power relations impacted discourse. I looked for power structures to determine how they informed people's minds during the process of meaning/knowledge-making. This was where CDA proved most fruitful as an analytical method. Wodak’s observation on the objectives of CDA was significant at this juncture as she ties the method of textual analysis with structural relationships and the resultant structures of meaning in society. She says, CDA is “fundamentally interested in
analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control when these are manifested in language” (“Critical Linguistics” 53). Furthermore, it is particularly important to incorporate the postmodern approach in the CDA method in this research since the virtual stage of Monsanto and its opponents’ text production is a space for shared, distributed and collective knowledge which calls upon individual performers/actors (recalling Burke’s stage metaphor) to make knowledge through text production rather than being dictated by any single authority.

However, that does not mean there are no constraints or limitations on such text production. Contemporary socio-political ideologies combined with the affordances of digital technology (or the dictates of the features and functionalities of websites) shape text and inform what is included in it and what is excluded. This is when it becomes necessary to take the feminist stand to see how both ideology and technology cause what Michelle Simmons and Jeffrey Grabill call “indirect exclusion” (420) of information or promotion of particular concepts or agendas on the virtual stage of the interface. Furthermore, this is where I note the contextual use of technology as the rhetorical situation steers production. Since rhetoric is both situational and sophistic as an art, Monsanto’s website is best understood as situated in a network of relations, power hierarchies involving the system of labor and production, and historical factors depending on the target market. This Marxist insight based on the premise of domination of one group of people by another (and the need to be liberated from domination). However, as the research progresses, my objective is to let the conclusion evolve out of a dialogic process between my subjects and myself (the researcher). This dialogic process is facilitated by ecofeminism, which allows me to be self-reflexive (as recommended by
What makes the ecofeminist ideology most relevant to my study is that it connects feminist philosophy with the ecology and the environmental discourse by generating awareness about the challenges the earth’s eco systems face in practically every continent. Ecofeminism analyzes how the domination of women is connected with exploitation of the environment by modern science in a patriarchal capitalist society, thus arguing that the mistreatment of women and nature are connected. In the context of this study, the ecofeminist lens questions the assumption that civic and global governing bodies need to be ethical stakeholders in matters related to agriculture and those whose livelihoods are dependent on it, including women in the farming community, when in reality the governing bodies often act in collusion with corporate forces against the interests of the farmers. The ecofeminist lens is particularly helpful when explaining Navdanya’s form of resistance rhetoric that implements the Gandhian rhetorical strategy of “satyagraha” or non-cooperation in a non-violent way.

However, it needs to be reiterated here that the ecofeminist standpoint necessarily makes this research a situated practice, and the challenge for the researcher is to still remain self-reflexive, constantly evaluating and acknowledging her own position/ideologies and biases. As Marianne Jorgensen says, “The debate on reflexivity has revolved around the core question of how to understand and evaluate our own knowledge,” but then ultimately, “…knowledge is understood as a socially situated discursive practice with its own regulative mechanisms and with social consequences” (63). While being mindful of the regulative mechanisms in knowledge- and meaning-making, I have tried to be careful not to privilege materialist or economic assumptions when understanding how the web texts impact the audience.
Furthermore, I problematized the agency of the audience of the texts since I neither see them as passive followers of rules nor free agents, but as performing “multiple and shifting subjectivities that enable opportunities for change” (42). In short, this study has strived to understand the rhetoric in a specific situation along with its objective of generating action to precipitate change, whether in the interests of a corporation or of the farming community.

The theoretical perspective of social constructionism helped clarify how people and organizations construct social realities through their actions, which in this case is by composing web text that harps on certain words or expressions for mass consumption. In such a scenario, I saw how the realities are accomplished through repetition (of key words, expressions, and concepts, as mentioned above), while making us critical of the scenario or situation as it is depicted by the rhetor. Moreover, my constant engagement with the compare-and-contrast technique was key to understanding how discourse was built through constant back and forth between concerned parties (Monsanto and Shiva).

3.2 Selecting the texts

I consider the online texts created by Monsanto and its critics as primary artifacts demonstrating how rhetoric is used to promote a corporation’s neoliberal capitalist agenda on the one hand, and build a global resistance movement against this agenda on the other. Monsanto’s official website monsanto.com and the blog, Navdanya, which was created by one of Monsanto’s most well-known critics, Vandana Shiva, thus serve as digital texts representing the two sides of the worldwide discourse. The reasons why I selected Shiva’s blog as representative of the texts of resistance are: a) Shiva is perhaps the most widely known name
connected with the movement in both the eastern and western hemispheres, b) *Navdanya* is most similar to the corporation’s official website in terms of genre since both sites contain written and visual matter including videos that make it possible to conduct a comparative analysis on a uniform plane, and c) limiting the scope and extent of the analysis to the two websites helps scaffold this study and makes it manageable.

In addition to examining information present in the text, I also look for missing data or silences and avoidances that, according to de Certeau, contribute toward understanding the purpose of a narrative just as much as what is overtly stated by the narrator. The intention of such an analysis is to bring to light how the classical strategies of rhetoric are still being used in the 21st century digital age to persuade people one way or the other. The interpretations of the repetitive words and images are geared toward understanding how they are being used to lodge ideas in the audience’ minds by driving their focus in certain directions.

### 3.3 Site maps

I examined the official websites of Monsanto (monsanto.com) and Vandana Shiva (navdanya.org) in their entirety for this study. While the Monsanto website looks more polished and professionally crafted, *Navdanya* has a touch of aesthetics and design sensibilities with a floral motif at the top. There is also an organic feel – in keeping with its theme of organic life – precisely due to the lack of polish when compared with monsanto.com. The organization in both site maps is geared toward easy navigability, although a few of the links in *Navdanya* are no longer active (for example, Twitter). In terms of content, both Monsanto and Shiva are current, updating their sites with the latest news, views, and announcements. Even though the
individuals who run the websites are not named, it is obvious that Monsanto has professionals/experts maintaining and updating its pages while Shiva does not. The difference shows mainly in the design and stylistic aspects of the websites, Monsanto’s site having a highly polished, professional look.

However, as expected, Monsanto focuses more on its products and biotech research along with supporting testimonials from farmers and others in the agricultural business while *Navdanya* highlights demonstrations and events against Monsanto, Shiva’s speeches in and outside India, the Indian government’s policies related to Monsanto and GM technology, and scientific articles countering the apparent benefits of biotechnology (specifically, in genetic modification of food). Also, while Monsanto mentions charitable deeds with its funds, *Navdanya* seeks donations for its activities. Both websites, however, speak about their achievements and awards, with Monsanto providing a link (entitled Recognition) devoted to this.

Here is an overview of the home pages, followed by secondary and tertiary pages (when applicable).
Search Jobs

Why Does Agriculture Need to be Improved?

What is Monsanto Doing to Help?

How Are We Doing It?

Visit Our Other Sites

Monsanto Gift Store

America's Farmers

Asgrow & DEKALB

Channel

Deltapine

Discover Monsanto

Genuity

Monsanto Fund

Monsanto Vegetable Seeds

Roundup Ready PLUS

Navdanya

Home

From Dr. Vandana Shiva

Brochure

Contact Us

About Us

Donate

Earth Democracy

Climate Change

Women for Diversity

“No More Bhopal” Call for Organic India

Organic Movement

People’s Assembly

The Earth University – Bija Vidyapeeth

Bija Swaraj is Our Birthright

Campaigns

Jaivik Kranti for Anna Swaraj 2020

Publications

Letter to Prime Minister: Violation of India’s IPR

News

The Mango Festival ‘Amrapali’

Events

Monsanto Vs Indian Farmer

Archives

Earth Journeys

The Navdanya Diary

Dal Yatra

Internships/Volunteer

Sarson Satyagraha

FAQs

Seed Satyagraha

Fair Trade

Round Up RoundUp

Navdanya’s Biodiversity Conservation Farm

Food Smart Citizens for Food Smart Cities
Dr. Vandana Shiva Calls on You to Respond to the Seed Emergency. Join Us for the Movement for Seed Freedom. Write to info@seedfreedom.in

No GMO Banana Campaign

Sign the Petition for the Rights of Mother Earth

Search

Mailing List

Find Us on Facebook

Latest News

Latest Events

Dr. Vandana Shiva’s Twitter
3.4 Description of corpus

The following is a screenshot of the Monsanto homepage (www.monsanto.com):

Figure 2. The picture at the top of Monsanto’s home page changes every few seconds, starting with the above shot of children from Africa. The page also features links to news reports and promotional information on the company’s activities and products. Accessed 9 June 2016.
The Monsanto website has four main pages – Monsanto Homepage, Products, Newsroom, and Improving Agriculture – with each leading into several other pages including Careers (with Monsanto) and Investors that features the company’s corporate profile, presentations and reports by its employees, and SEC filings. These secondary pages have links to several tertiary pages as well that contain third part reviews and studies. There is a total of around 250 pages (including links to related resources) and the website is updated often.

Highlights of the content are multimedia items (infographics and videos), PDFs with data on agriculture-related topics, farmer testimonials as recorded by Monsanto, staff profiles, job
application forms, information for students regarding internships, trainee roles, and scholarships, student profiles, sign-up forms for company events, and links to Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn pages. In addition, there is a section called Visit Our Other Sites that contains 10 sub-sections such as the Monsanto Gift Store, Monsanto Fund, and Roundup Ready Plus (Roundup is a controversial Monsanto product). On the whole, this is an extensive site with plenty of visuals, written text, and some interactive sections. Vandana Shiva’s website (below), entitled Navdanya (www.navdanya.org), is actually a blog that is similarly replete with visuals, written text, and multimedia items such as videos and infographics. As such, the two websites make for an equitable comparative study. The top picture on the Navdanya home page changes too, like that on www.monsanto.com, featuring the topics of organic farming, climate change, the earth, and a global women’s movement for biodiversity and food security.

The home page has links to 17 more pages (column on the left side), and these links include one to Shiva’s online journal, The Navdanya Diary. The oldest journal entry is dated November 17, 2009, while the Archive section features an undated article that refers to an event being planned for May 1998. It is not clear from the blog when exactly it was started. In addition to latest press releases and news reports on the movement against GMO (including a few in Hindi), Monsanto’s activities in particular, and organic farming in general, other items found in the blog comprise posters, videos of Shiva’s speeches and interviews, and the promotion of books authored by Shiva and others.

Figure 5. Navdanya features books on GMO, seed freedom, and biodiversity

Other highlights of the *Navdanya* blog are a series of articles from Shiva’s journal, *The Navdanya*, links to her organization’s events, programs, and the activities of her seed farm in northern India, an archive of *Navdanya* publications, FAQs, and news of internship and volunteering opportunities. The interactive items include signing a “Petition for the Rights of Mother Earth,” signing up for earth conservation courses offered by Navdanya, liking the organization on Facebook, and reading and responding to Shiva’s tweets.

### 3.5 Data analysis

First, I analyzed the website monsanto.com, which led the way to a comparative study with *Navdanya*. I perused the online texts of both the websites in their entirety; that is, I looked at every page of the two websites closely to identify recurring words, expressions and images with two questions in mind:

- How do these words contribute toward constructing an argument to support certain business practices?
- How does the opposition try to deconstruct and invalidate this argument?

Next, I coded the early data collected from the websites by attaching labels to words and phrases or expressions that depict what they are about. This provided the opportunity to compare entries under each label as used by Monsanto with the way it is featured in *Navdanya*. I codified the comparison. These codes and prevailing ideas about them around the globe indicated areas to examine and analyze during the course of this study. Thus, the analysis compared the global conditions or situations that Monsanto highlights with the same situation as described by Shiva in *Navdanya*. By coding the comparisons in the form of notes, the analysis
made sense of the data collected. Specifically, the analytic notes taken during the examination of the text followed Gery Ryan and Russel Bernard’s strategy of 1) identifying themes and subthemes, 2) filtering out themes that are not important to the project and keeping only those that are relevant, 3) setting up a hierarchy of themes to encode, and 4) connecting themes with theory, or coming up with grounded theory founded in the themes. As Ryan and Bernard point out, themes emerge from data (the inductive approach) as well as from the investigator’s existing understanding of the topic (the a priori approach). However, in most studies “themes are induced from empirical data—from texts, images, and sounds” (88). The technique I use to discover themes was a labor-intensive, line-by-line examination of the web text, with the objective of finding themes that helped build a specific narrative. I codified the themes in memos that I inspected to see if certain narratives were emerging. The memos, which were based on the analytic notes, recorded the frequency of the use of words or expressions in the websites (whether Monsanto’s official site or Navdanya) in specific contexts, with the objective of discerning patterns of repetition in references to certain ideas, events, or numbers extracted from research. Ryan and Bernard comment that repetition is “one of the easiest way to identify themes” (89). The idea was to see how repetitions helped build a narrative, with or without a genuine foundation in facts and figures, to eventually serve the purpose of the rhetor.

I noted the numbers to see Monsanto’s possible attempt at using repetition to project a specific image of itself: that is, construct the savior image through reiteration of selective facts, figures and numbers that supported the myth of hunger and need. I also looked at the pictures, testimonials, and references to academics and researchers to see how the stage was created to present the drama (as theorized by Burke).
3.6 Visual analysis

According to Gillian Rose, there are three basic criteria for visual critical methodology:

• Taking images “seriously” and looking at them “very carefully” because it is not entirely reducible to their context.” In fact, “Visual representations have their own effects.”

• Thinking about the “social conditions and effects of visual objects” because “Cultural practices like visual representations both depend on and produce social inclusions and exclusions, and a critical account needs to address both…”

• Considering “your own way of looking at images” because “ways of seeing are historically, geographically, culturally and socially specific…” (16-17).

As Ryan and Bernard say, what is important here is to examine “the setting and context, the perspectives of the informants, and informants’ ways of thinking about people, objects, processes, activities, events, and relationships” (93). The critical lens used to look at the digital texts is grounded in W.J.T. Mitchell’s theory of visual and media culture and van Leeuwen and Carey Jewitt’s mode of visual analysis. The written and pictorial elements of Monsanto’s website, http://www.monsanto.com, and Shiva’s official website, www.vandanashiva.org, and blog diary, www.navdanya.org, constitute a typical form of visual language in this age of digital communication. Mitchell’s understanding of contemporary media culture and the way it depends on digital technology to disseminate news and views across the globe, shows how and why both Monsanto and its critics use digital tools of communication to reach worldwide audiences. This instance of comparison of the use of digital tools by Monsanto and its opponents undercuts the concern of some scholars that interpretive study lacks objectivity, and
instead emphasizes the inherent strength of the reflexive mode whereby the researcher keeps interacting with her “data and emerging ideas” (179). Such an approach is chosen for its potential to promote abstract interpretations.

To return to Mitchell’s interpretation of text, his interest lies in “language and imagery” and “the interlocking system of meaning and communication” (quoted from the podcast interview, *WJT Mitchell: Iconology Today*, with media theorist Bernard D. Geoghegan) that has led him to developing a science of images. Moreover, as he mentions in the introduction to the edited collection, *The Language of Images*, he considers pictures to be living things and marvels at today’s world that is “so inundated with composite pictorial verbal forms… with the technology for the rapid, cheap production of words and images” (1), which explains the power and scope of online visual rhetoric as practiced by Monsanto and its critics. Mitchell’s approach here is that of social practice as it explains how the repetitive production of words and images with the help of digital tools has the power to create social realities. The objective of my analysis based on this social constructionist approach is to locate themes in the words and texts since, as Ryan and Bernard state, “themes are only visible (and thus discoverable) through the manifestation of expression in data” (86). Furthermore, it is important to note the repetition of themes as they indicate how influential they are across cultures and belief systems, how they can be used to impress on people’s minds, and how they are modified, altered or manipulated to fabricate social realities or narratives.

While Mitchell helps with this form of interpretation by providing the overarching framework for looking at visual texts, van Leeuwen and Jewitt contribute at a more fundamental level by “assessing useful information about visual analysis” and then investigating
“the way social issues are represented in the mass media” (1). They provide step-by-step specifics for several possible approaches to reading them. Among the various approaches, the visual semiotics approach based on Roland Barthes’ concepts and the iconographical method of visual analysis that was developed by art historians are most relevant to this study since both approaches “are premised on the idea of layered meaning, of images consisting first of all of a layer of representational or denotative meaning...on which is then superimposed a layer of connotative or symbolic meaning” (2). These two approaches, therefore, consist of three basic steps: a) identifying who and what are seen in the visual, b) understanding what the visual means at the surface or literal level, and c) exploring hidden, beyond-the-surface, or symbolic meanings. As van Leeuwen adds, both the semiotics and iconography approaches “provide specific pointers for distinguishing and analyzing” the representational and connotative layers while providing “specific criteria or arguing whether or not a layer of symbolic or second-order meaning is present” (3). It needs to be mentioned here that while iconography looks at both textual and contextual factors when determining the presence or absence of symbolic meaning, the Paris school of semiotics mostly considers textual criteria, or indicators residing in the image. Even though iconography used to be applied to art works from the past, van Leeuwen’s contribution to the field lies in demonstrating how it can help interpret all kinds of contemporary images such as European and North American depiction of Africans and Afro-Americans. This is particularly relevant to the study of Monsanto’s “Who We Are” page that contains the image of an African child who is learning math in a village school.

Carey Jewitt and Rumiko Oyama add further depth to the semiotic approach by means of their method of social semiotic visual analysis, showing how to analyze “the meanings
established by the syntactic relations between the people, places and things depicted in the images,” the meanings being “not only representational, but also interactional” (3). That is, the images are said to “do things to or for the viewer” (3). Interpretations emerging from this approach are concerned with the “truth value of images” and also the composition or design/layout, strategically determining the position of images and written text. Such a reading sees social semiotics as a method of interpreting images in their social context, not only as a “critical form of visual discourse analysis” but also leading the way to influencing “the semiotic practices it describes” (3). One of the research projects discussed by Jewitt and Oyama is an ethnographic/semiotic study of a primary school science classroom, which is in sharp contrast yet parallel to the bamboo-walled math classroom featured on the Monsanto website.

In this context, Martin Lister and Liz Wells’ use of the visual cultural studies method is appropriate to interpret the “Eurocentric view of Africa” (3) and the depiction of those inhabiting the continent as “economically and technologically weak, dependent victims of natural disaster” (78). A sub-field of cultural studies, the visual cultural studies method originates from “the unprecedented importance of imaging and visual technologies in contemporary society” (2). Based on the premise that cultural studies is essentially an interdisciplinary field, it looks at “all kinds of visual information” for the inherent “meanings, pleasures and consumption,” with “an agenda of questions and issues” (2) designed to address specific images.

This is where we finally see Fairclough’s concept of CDA working together with other theorists to make sense of written and visual texts. Fairclough’s analytical strategy as applied to sociolinguistics is used here in conjunction with Foucault’s concept of locating power in social
interactions and associations, specifically in the interplay of the self-promotional rhetoric crafted by Monsanto and the public response to it. Used together, Fairclough’s critical analysis of spoken and written words and Foucault’s exploration of power sites in discourse show how power can be exercised through language. Fairclough himself was influenced by Foucault’s ideology in examining how discourse works in society, and looked at “the shape of the new global social order” (“Global Capitalism” 71) in capitalist times through the lens of linguistics. His focus, therefore, was on “critical awareness of discourse: the relationship between discourse, knowledge and social change in our ‘information’ or ‘knowledge-based society’ where life itself is “textually-mediated” (71). Thus, Fairclough’s method of critically analyzing language/text use is helpful in understanding the relationship between discourse and knowledge-making and how it can lead to resistance and, ultimately, social change.
Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for my analysis of [http://www.monsanto.com](http://www.monsanto.com) and *Navdanya* is meant to address the primary research question: How can scholars of rhetoric trace new notions of colonization in a postcolonial world through the study of neoliberal development discourse and resistance to it? I study the corporate rhetoric of biotech giant Monsanto in its official website and the ecofeminist resistance rhetoric of Vandana Shiva in her weblog, *Navdanya*. My rhetorical inquiry concerns the future of the global farming sector and allows for an interdisciplinary exploration of transnational development discourse through the overlapping but complementary lenses of ecofeminism and CDA. The purpose of my study – that spans rhetoric, composition, critical theory, cultural theory, communication studies, business ethics, and postcolonial studies – is to trace new notions of discourse creation in the 21st century using a combination of textual, visual, and critical analyses of digital text. Since ecofeminism aims to resist and contradict the rhetorics of neoliberal capitalism, it serves as a suitable lens for scholars of rhetoric to trace new notions of colonization in corporatespeak in a postcolonial, neoliberal global world. The idea is to understand how, thanks to the “megarhetorics of development” (Dingo and Scott 4), global trade agreements, and the way governments position themselves, doors are opened to predatory foreign companies.

Given the fact that a major part of the resistance rhetoric in my study was generated in the context of India, I look at the socio-political situation in the former British colony where Monsanto found it convenient to enter the agricultural sector. In today’s postcolonial context, colonization is economic in nature rather than territorial which, ironically, is akin to approach of
the British East India Company when they first landed on Indian shores (from England) more than four centuries ago. I will discuss the entry of the British company in India in further detail in chapter 6. To return to the socio-economic scenario of today’s neoliberal capitalist world, ecofeminists are those eco-conscious citizens who can critically review the development rhetoric of corporations and resist the forces of economic colonization. Through my study, I show how some corporations (like Monsanto) claim to help undeveloped or developing regions in the name of corporate social responsibility, which is actually a neoliberal rhetorical strategy to gain access to national economies around the world. As Matt Newcomb observes, “Development also frequently refers to perceived levels of a free market economy...” (114). The author points out that neoliberal rhetoric refers to “development” as “an escape from being undeveloped” (115) that may be achieved with the help of multinational corporations by allowing them free access to an undeveloped country’s market and economy. To understand how corporations use development rhetoric to further their business goals, DeChaine examines corporate social responsibility in the light of human doxa, that is, how the public perceives certain notions as imbibed from their habitus (referring to Bourdieu) or social situatedness. In addition to looking at public responses to corporate activities in different countries, I also look at CSR as a matter of praxis, or action/practice based on ideology and values, which have raised questions related to business ethics in the case of some corporations.

After examining the rhetorical implications of the word “development” in a former colony, I focus on the role of the digital media in helping promote and build resistance to a multinational's neoliberal agenda. When resistance plays such a significant role in discourse involving neoliberal corporate practice, the business ethics (or lack of it) of corporations is
particularly under the scrutiny of the resistance camp. David Harvey theorizes that “neoliberalism values market exchange as ‘an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide to all human actions...’” (A Brief History of Neoliberalism 3). As Harvey further contends, neoliberalism “holds that the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions... This requires technologies of information creation and capacities to accumulate, store, transfer, analyze, and use massive databases to guide decisions in the global marketplace” (3). This explains the extensive use of digital and information technologies by corporations that function globally, whether for conducting business or for advertisement and public relations. Following this inference, the significant areas covered by this study are neoliberal colonizing rhetoric as demonstrated through public image management, advertisements, and media campaigns of corporations; the eco-feminist resistance movement; and the transglocal nature of discourse in the digital age.

4.1 Neoliberal colonization

According to Harvey, neoliberalism is “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets, and free trade” (A Brief History of Neoliberalism 2). In such a socio-political setup, the role of the state is “to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices... and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets.” While many countries have adopted neoliberalism in their political and economic practices since the 1970s, as Harvey points out, “Deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from
many areas of social provision have been all too common” (3). In some instances, as in India, deregulation and “withdrawal of the state” from “areas of social provision” was part of a plan to allow foreign companies to enter the local market in various sectors, including agriculture and farming. However, as Harvey laments, the “process of neoliberalization has... entailed much ‘creative destruction’, not only of prior institutional frameworks and powers... but also of divisions of labor, social relations, welfare provisions, technological mixes, ways of life and thought, reproductive activities, attachments to the land and habits of the heart” (3). This “creative destruction” has been a worldwide phenomenon, particularly in developing countries in Asia and South America. Felipe Filomena, who researched the effects of Monsanto’s policies in Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Mexico and the Amazon region, notes how at first, after the neoliberal reforms in the 1990s and a boom in commodity prices in the 2000s, “export-oriented agriculture proved to be a key industry for Latin American development” (4). However, this proved to be a mixed boon. Filomena writes about how IP regimes encouraged private and foreign investment in the R&D of new plant varieties, but they also made this technology expensive and hard to develop locally as a result of which export revenues were “syphoned out from the region through royalty payments” (4). This syphoning out of revenues is how neoliberal colonization works in postcolonial times.

Thus, in the context of this study, the term “neoliberal colonization” refers to certain globalized capitalist practices, specifically by the multinational corporation, Monsanto, which implements its neoliberal agenda through the food and agriculture sector, with the objective of gaining control of the world’s food supply. Monsanto’s multinational business plans embody a capitalist philosophy promoting an unregulated market (except when it is self-regulating to
serve its own business interests), urging governments and policy makers “to promote free market capitalism and strategies such as global trade and the development of global markets” (Dingo 9). Such a capitalist agenda, which looks at the entire world as its prospective consumer base, aims at seizing control of national economies and ultimately, the global economy. This is what Nkrumah identified as neocolonization of nations in a postcolonial world, phenomenon that works not through military means but by holding the purse strings of nations. However, what is specific about the way Monsanto perpetrates its neoliberal version of colonization is by tying its business plans with CSR rhetoric, or doing business in the name of community service and global development.

Eileen Schell’s incisive article, “Framing the Megarhetorics of Agricultural Development,” mentions how neoliberal corporate philosophy is couched in the rhetoric of benevolence, garbed in “feed the world” ethos, and claiming to “save developing countries from starvation and hunger” (155). Scott and Dingo comment in the introduction to their edited volume that such rhetorics of care and concern “shore up the ethos of megacorporations by showing their concern for ‘vulnerable’ members of global society” (5). As such, the rhetoric of benevolence smacks of the justifications offered by western colonizers of yore when they annexed territories in the name of education and development in apparently uncivilized parts of the world. The parallel between the past and present situations is well articulated in Schell’s statement that “Such rhetoric of development participate in the neoliberal idea that more productive and innovative farmers, with ties to industrialized agriculture and agribusiness corporation, must ‘save’ the less productive farmers who cannot feed their own people” (155-156). Schell concludes that the “rhetoric of partnerships, charitable benevolence, and epideictic
rhetoric of praise for American farmers...stands in direct contrast to the free-market oriented principles of competition and the concept of “free trade”” (157). In response to such criticism, companies such as Monsanto have launched highly sophisticated campaigns of “defensive corporate ethics efforts” (157) that are often strategically tied to CSR, as evident in certain portions of the text posted on its official website.

However, as Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony would suggest, the strategies of neoliberal colonization seen in Monsanto’s rhetoric provides only half the picture. In other words, it is not enough to examine just the rhetoric of the exploiter, as Marx would call agents of capitalism such as Monsanto, but to also consider what the exploited is saying. Therefore, this study will focus on the resistance rhetoric of the exploited farming community in India, as articulated on their behalf by ecofeminist activists such as Shiva. Shiva’s “utterances”, as Gayatri C. Spivak would probably say, show her in the light of a spokesperson for the mute subaltern marginalized by hegemonic corporate forces. One reason I chose to focus on Shiva is that she is attempting to create conditions that would eventually enable the subaltern to speak. Spivak calls it “inserting into the long road to hegemony” (310). The other reason I chose to study Shiva’s text is that she is the most prominent face of the resistance movement against Monsanto in India, with an impressive international presence as well. She has a large volume of online text that is comparable in content with Monsanto’s website, and has been both praised and critiqued for her activism. As such, she represents the voice of the exploited, albeit remediated by access to digital technology and thereby a worldwide audience. Her weblog, Navdanya, when read alongside Monsanto’s website, provides a comprehensive view of the way neoliberalism operates through constant negotiations and give-and-take of
power between the exploiter who wants to establish hegemony, or colonize, and the exploited (those who also resist such efforts).

According to Gramsci – and this is where he deviated from Marx – hegemony is a condition best understood by examining both the structure of bourgeois power and the consciousness and perceptions of the proletariat including the peasantry, or the farming community. Furthermore, as Schell points out, we need to consider the fact that while there is a tendency among critics to see corporations as the bourgeois power/exploiter victimizing people, the corporations are in fact allowed to operate unchecked in particular ways by national governments and supranational bodies like the IMF and the World Bank. In his *Prison Notebooks* (written in Italian during the late 1920s and early 1930s and first translated into English in 1971), Gramsci describes a process of moral and intellectual leadership that helps gain the consent of the proletariat to their own domination/colonization, which is akin to the state/political apparatus that, in the name of liberalization of the country’s economy in the neoliberal age, persuaded the first set of farmers to open the door to Monsanto, thereby enabling the corporation to gain control of what Marx refers to as the “means of production.”

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx defines the bourgeoisie as “the class of modern Capitalists, owners of the means of social production...” while the proletariat (or the dominated) was the class that had “no means of production of their own” and are therefore “reduced to selling their labor-power in order to live.”

Gramsci takes Marx’s theory a step further by bringing to light the consenting role of the state as well as members of the civil society, at least initially, in capitalist attempts at hegemony, which explains how the complex nature of neoliberal colonization works. As Arjun
Appadurai observes, “the disposition of global capital is now a more mysterious, rapid, and difficult landscape to follow than ever before” (34). Harvey explains in an interview to David Primrose on November 15, 2012, the state is in cahoots with multinational corporations to enable such economic colonization, and privatization of public services is one of the strategies used to achieve it. Harvey says that “part of the neoliberal project has been to subsume greater chunks of the state so that public services (including those in the agricultural sector, such as seed banks in India) . . . have become privatized” (24). Such privatization allows corporate players to have a free hand in a market that had traditionally been monitored by state laws and the interests of the people/consumers. Harvey laments it is impossible to avoid an institution of this kind and that “there exists a certain core of the state that is totally embedded in the process of capital accumulation – the state ‘state-financial nexus’ . . . that should be challenged” (24). Analyzing this “state-financial nexus” further, Cotoi takes the Foucauldian perspective on “power, politics, government and knowledge” and shows how, since the 1980s, “The political power was not seen any more as hegemonic, thoroughly structurant, state dwelling power” (110). The rise of corporations and the capitalist mechanism in the last quarter of the 20th century opened new ways of power sharing between the state and commercial institutions.

However, Stuart Hall invokes Gramsci in his essay, “The neoliberal revolution,” to conclude that even though “in ambition, depth, degree of break with the past, variety of sites being colonized, impact on common sense and shift in the social architecture, neoliberalism does constitute a hegemonic project,” (27) this is not a “completed project.” In other words, hegemony needs to be constantly “worked on, maintained, renewed, revised.” Thus, Hall adds,
social forces that have been excluded or whose consent has not been won or whose interests have not been considered “form the basis of counter-movements, resistance, alternative strategies and visions . . . and the struggle over a hegemonic system starts anew” (26). Monsanto’s market rhetoric and the counter rhetoric of those who resist it exemplify this unceasing Gramscian struggle in a hegemonic system.

Last but perhaps extremely significant, this struggle also features what Gramsci called the organic intellectual who rises from the masses but thinks differently and resistively, leading the movement against neoliberal colonization. The eco-feminist activists in this study are examples of such organic intellectuals (in addition to Shiva, I mention journalist-filmmakers P. Sainath and Marie-Monique Robin because of their films on Monsanto’s impact on farmers). Recalling British cultural theorist Paul Willis’ belief that capitalism both constrains and enables agency, the rise of ecofeminism as part resistance discourse is as an example of such agency. The role of ecofeminists in the struggle against neoliberal capitalism’s efforts at hegemony will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

4.2 Ecofeminism as an ideology of resistance

A key term in this study is “resistance.” What is resistance? In the context of this paper, which examines voices of protest against the neoliberal capitalist rhetoric of Monsanto, resistance is a matter of praxis, or a stance/action charged with ideological stimulus that manifests Gramsci’s notion of an oppressed people’s organic movement against the oppressor. In other words, this is the position of a section of people – including eco-conscious activists such as Shiva, farmers on the ground, and women in the farming community who have been holding demonstrations against Monsanto’s practices and the government policies that aid and
abet them – who refuse to accept the hegemonic agenda of a corporation that is not in their interests. Foucault, who differed from many Marxist theorists in shifting the focus from oppression per se to resistance to power, would locate power in resistance itself. Such power, germinating in the ideological stance of the apparently less powerful, defines resistance as a performance of power and not a matter of possession, while defying Marxist theorizations such as that of Althusser that look at power as a mono-directional thing flowing from the top downwards, or from the oppressor to the oppressed.

To Foucault, individuals are not dupes of large ideological forces such as capitalism or the socio-political hegemony of the state but sources or springheads of bottom-up power that has the potential to permeate society and bring about shifts in power relations. As such, ordinary individuals from the agrarian community who protest and even contest the practices of Monsanto, sometimes in the courts of law, have the power to change the order of things; they are active agents of change rather than passive Marxian dupes. This theory extends Antonio Gramsci’s belief that power can never exist as an uncontested, monolithic entity, but can only survive as a constantly contested force that derives its sustenance from a continual give-and-take with those whom it is trying to dominate.

I try to locate agency, and thereby power, in the small Chilean farmer’s act of revolt against a large corporation and see how, as Foucault said, it “circulates” (98) as it is performed strategically by individuals who are “the vehicles of power, not its points of application” (98). Power is therefore, shared, although unevenly and also changeably, by the different stakeholders in a given network or system of relations, rather than being possessed in a permanent or static way. Explained through Bourdieu’s lens, such praxis of resistance is born of
capital (that is, values based on subjective knowledge derived from social institutions) that
derives its power from the doxa as well as habitus of a traditional farmer who suffered symbolic
violence in the hands of relatively new capitalist forces. Resistance here marks an hour of crisis
in neoliberal capitalism and a moral decay that is both the cause and effect. This crisis
embodies the clash between so-called development policies of capitalist forces in low-income
countries and the interests of ordinary citizens, resulting in complex power negotiations as
explained by Gramsci.

Such negotiations, which are basically possible due to the spirit of resistance among
citizens, also brings into play what DeChaine calls “humanitarian doxa,” which is a “powerful
form of political, economic, and social-cultural meaning-making” (93) that makes discursive
resistance possible, ultimately helping us see how in a globalized world, “the lines between
humanitarian conscience and corporate power are becoming ever more blurred and
interimplicated” (93). This humanitarian doxa informs and shapes resistance discourse by
providing the ideological underpinning, and looking at corporate power vis-à-vis humanitarian
interests through the lens of resistance in fact becomes an inventive way of understanding
resistance (in the context of Monsanto) while simultaneously participating in it and furthering
its cause.

“Ecofeminism” is a term used by the French feminist, Francoise d’Eubonne, in her 1974
book, Le Feminisme ou la Mort. Ecofeminism is based on the premise that the scientific
revolution of the 16th-18th centuries caused the separation of humans from the natural world,
and problems have emerged from mutually impacting oppression of people and nature.
However, her book was not published in English until 1981 and several other feminist thinkers
wrote about ecofeminism in the meanwhile independent of d’Eubonne’s work. So it is not really possible to determine any one person who should receive credit for coining the word. It was perhaps the product of a wave of collective thinking about environmental health in the feminist light. As Greta Gaard and Lori Gruen say, “Standing at the crossroads of environmentalism and feminism, ecofeminist theory is uniquely positioned to undertake a holistic analysis of these problems in both their human and natural contexts” (236). Furthermore, ecofeminists believe that discussing environmental change is futile if social change is not addressed simultaneously, and by the same logic, it is “not possible to address women’s oppression without addressing environmental degradation” (236). Today, it is the neoliberal rhetoric of global development that the ecofeminist movement aims to resist and contradict, making the eco-critical feminist lens appropriate for this study. Here is a concept where the basic ideology of resistance connects the feminist stance with the eco-critical concern for the planet’s ecology, making it suitable for an examination of the development rhetoric as well. Thus, it helps us understand how local cultural norms in conjunction with national and global economic and political forces enable corporations such as Monsanto to succeed with their capitalist agendas.

Ecofeminism compares, connects and equates the exploitation of women by patriarchal societies with the abuse of nature by capitalist corporations. For instance, in the case of India it helps explain how the contribution of women to farming and agriculture has traditionally been overlooked and how much larger forces, such as global trade agreements and in particular the Indian government’s collusion with Western political and corporate networks, opened the doors to biopiracy by a foreign company. As Gaard and Gruen put it, “Much like the US socialist feminists who, in the 1970s, began analyzing the oppression of women in terms not just of
patriarchy or capitalism, but both, ecofeminists are developing a ‘multi-systems’ approach to understanding the interconnected forces that operate to oppress women and the natural world” (248). While on the one hand addressing the “oppressions of women and the earth... in isolation” was seen as ineffective and incapable of producing change, this “multi-systems” approach to determining “interconnected forces” (248) resonates with Foucault’s idea of locating sites of power in a problem/struggle. However, while Foucault refused to prescribe solutions to the problem or dictating what needs to be done with the knowledge, the ecofeminists have taken the matter further by making change their ultimate objective.

Based on the principle of resistance rhetoric, the application of ecofeminism encompasses the analysis of texts about the environment and environmentalism, with the purpose of revealing concealed agendas, assumptions and meanings. Ecofeminism examines any discourse that may impact the future of ecosystems, such as neoliberal economic discourse on the one hand and discursive constructions of gender, politics, agriculture and nature on the other. This double-pronged approach of ecofeminism makes it particularly suitable for my study since it brings to light the real objectives of potentially damaging capitalist ideologies and also looks at resistance discourses that can help check damages done by such profit-driven corporate ideologies to nature and society. The purpose is to return to practices that build an ecologically sustainable environment.

The “ecofeminist framework” proposed by Gaard and Gruen traces how social change was at the heart of a movement that started in the 1960s to “achieve global justice and planetary health” (252). The idea was that environmental theories by themselves were not enough to accommodate the “insights of feminism” (234), which were deemed necessary to
address environmental issues. Therefore, developing a theory of ecofeminism that drew “heavily on the initial insights of social feminist theories as well as the experiences of activists in the peace, anti-nuclear, anti-racist, anti-colonialist, environmental, and animal liberation movements” was believed necessary to provide a “historical, contextualized, inclusive approach for solving the problems” (248), including those related to ecological matters.

The eco-critical aspect of this study can thus help draw new “eco-frontiers” that, as Sylvan Guyot says, “represent a new field of research linking environmental matters to specific political spaces” (676) that are defined by their historical and socio-cultural contexts. In this study, the focus is on the fallout of so-called economic liberalization in India against a postcolonial backdrop. As Ha notes, “Consumers in (political and economic spaces) of emerging countries, in particular, are more invested in eco-products due to environmental degradation and high consumer distrust of existing hazardous products” (94). Monsanto’s hazardous genetically modified products are at the center of such eco-critical discourse at this precarious juncture in the history of a nation that has been struggling to feed a burgeoning population. Given this exigency, Monsanto situates itself as a provider of magical solutions using 20th-21st century technologies as well as neoliberal business and advertising/publicity strategies, which include development rhetoric. It is imperative then for eco-critical and eco-feminist discourses to try and deconstruct and disprove Monsanto’s market-centric rhetoric and lay bare its agenda of economic colonization.

It is thus clear how the eco-feminist lens is useful for this study when questioning the assumption that civic and global governing bodies need to be ethical stakeholders in matters related to agriculture and those whose livelihoods are dependent on it. In reality, as eco-activist
Shiva points out in *Navdanya*, the governing bodies often act in collusion with corporate forces against the interests of the farmers. This is where NGOs have stepped in to fill the breach, like Shiva’s work with her organization, Navdanya, which is a network of seed keepers and organic producers in India countering the industrialization of plant reproduction. To keep the study on equal ground, the ecofeminist lens is used to examine and critique Shiva’s resistance rhetoric as well as she reacts to Monsanto’s self-promotion. Despite critiques about her apparent publicity-mongering and questions regarding her credentials and qualifications to speak about the science behind genetic engineering, fact remains that her periodic demonstrations in India, her blog (*The Navdanya Diary*), and her books – such as *The Violence of the Green Revolution* (1992), *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge* (1997), and *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply* (2000) – have served to draw attention toward the cause of the environment. The Navdanya organization’s work is a form of resistance rhetoric, critiquing modern science and neoliberal capitalism’s value-free practices while implementing the Gandhian rhetorical strategy of “satyagraha” or non-cooperation in a non-violent way.

While using the lens of ecofeminism, however, this study does not overlook the critiques of “strategic essentialism” (Spivak 259) and “marginalization of women” (MacSwain 23) against ecofeminists such as Shiva and Mies who see ecofeminism as a source of empowerment for women in the face of hegemonic forces such as Monsanto. As MacSwain points out, critics of the ecofeminist movement argue against a “static and irreducible” female “essence” that apparently marginalizes women by depicting them as the “other” with “closer ties to the natural environment than men” (23). However, this study considers the complexities of ecofeminism beyond such simplification in the context of ancient civilizations such as India,
where women have often contributed as much as men to agriculture food production but without recognition. Here, Spivak’s aforementioned idea of strategic essentialism does help explain how women in the East, despite their contributions to agricultural activities alongside men, are seen as a stereotype of powerless and hapless victims of the socio-cultural setup, but then goes on to see how they assert their agency by resisting forces such as Monsanto.

Spivak believes that “...today’s increasing interest in multiculturalist or postcolonial mariginality... is a straw in the globalizing wind within feminism in the academy” (176). To Spivak, it is like a fetish and a strategically derived essentialism representing women, whom she describes as the “much-invoked oppressed subject” (259) regardless of location and situation. Marx, says Spivak, would have called this essentialized woman “a social ‘subject’ whose consciousness is dislocated and incoherent with its Vertretung (as much a substitution as a representation)” (259). However, she adds, “The exuberance of this interest sometimes overlooks a problem: that a concern with women, and men, who have not been written in the same inscription (a working hypothesis that works well in colonial situations), cannot be mobilized in the same way as the investigation of gendering in one’s own... new ways have to be learned and taught, and attention to the margin in general must be persistently renewed” (176). In fact, Spivak provides definitions of sort for the concepts of neocolonialism and postcoloniality – “dominant economic, political, and culturalist maneuvers emerging in our century after the uneven dissolution of the territorial empires” and “the contemporary global condition, since the first term is supposed to have passed or be passing into the second” (172), respectively – and we must consider the “multiplicity of agencies” (183) of the so-called marginalized women in the various localized neocolonial situations in our postcolonial world.
To return to the application of ecofeminism to this research and summarize this discussion, using the eco-critical feminist lens to analyze the global/public rhetoric of Monsanto and the resistance discourse generated by it leads the way to new areas of inquiry on how Monsanto’s promotion of a capitalist agenda in developing as well as developed countries can be resisted through the counter-promotion of sustainable agriculture. Then, to reiterate Willis’ theory, capitalism both restricts and facilitates agency and the emergence of ecofeminism as a resistive ideology shows the growth and development of such agency.

4.3 Discourse as a transglocal phenomenon

This discursive resistance to Monsanto’s rhetoric on global food production has crossed continental boundaries and gathered momentum from the Americas to Asia and Australia. It is important to keep in mind here that the transglocal cross-fertilization of voices of opposition across transnational movements is possible due to digital technology. Scholars such as Dingo and Scott have examined how the megarhetorics of capitalism transcended localized settings to become transglocal discourses. The conflict between development rhetoric and the interests of a given land and its people takes place in the backdrop of what Appadurai describes as “mегареторика of developmental modernization” (10) involving arguments presenting global development as a drive toward progress and modernization. According to Scott, such arguments include in their purview “development’s risks and opportunities for targeted areas and their people” (33). The transglocal scope of development is a recurring key factor underlying this discussion on developmental modernization.

It is seen as a transglocal phenomenon generating eco-critical discourses that create what Harvey calls a common “space” connecting geographically disjointed areas of “ecological
interaction” (Spaces of Global Capitalism 119). As Scott says, both “Globalizing and localizing forces direct the transglocal rhetorics” and we must be mindful about “locating rhetoric’s power in transglocal connectivity and movement” (49). Moreover, as Jason Edwards and Jaime Write point out, this study considers the need to examine “not just the results of globalization [and so called global development] but also the rhetorical process before, behind, and around those results” (69). While Harvey draws on Marx’s theory of “capital accumulation” to explain “uneven geographical development” (Spaces of Global Capitalism 116), this study seeks to explore how the rhetorical strategies of neoliberal capitalism are geared toward capital accumulation in the name of development around the globe. Such development is achieved through the commodification of indigenous resources of a land, such as seeds and the process of farming itself as Monsanto has shown. Harvey notes that resistance movements against “the destructive consequences of commodification – such as environmentalism – are...firmly pitted against the dynamics of free-market capital accumulation” (Spaces of Global Capitalism 114). He goes on to surmise: “If capitalism survives through uneven geographical development, if capitalism is uneven geographical development, then surely, we need to search out an adequate theoretical framework to encompass this fact” (Spaces of Global Capitalism 115). In the context of this study, eco-critical feminism transcends the local to propose precisely that kind of theoretical framework that would help understand the global workings of neoliberal capitalism for so-called development.

Specifically, “transglocal” in this study refers to the global business of a multinational company involving local/national agricultural interests, the discourse crafted by the company to encourage (and sometimes coerce) the participation of local farmers around the globe, and
counter-discourses of resistance among stakeholders who are concerned about the threat to the planet’s biodiversity. It is important to note Harvey’s commentary here as he refers to Marx’s basic idea that “an unregulated free market capitalism could only survive by destroying the two main sources of its own wealth: the land and the laborer” (114). In this study, this concern for the land and the laborer serves the dual purpose of propelling my own eco-critical ideology and understanding how such a common concern can unite voices of resistance transglocally.

Scott says in the context of yet another multinational company, Novartis: “The public formed in protest of the Novartis lawsuit [against the Indian government for denial of a patent for the anti-cancer drug, Glivec] is difficult to track due to its rapid formation and extension across various contexts” (36). The “various contexts” included fields having business relations with the drugs and pharmaceuticals and also the national and international media, activists, non-government organizations, political parties, governments and the public in general that formed the consumer base for medicinal drugs. Scott defines public as “a network of actors but also as a social space organized by and recognizable through interlinked, visible, and ongoing discursive action” and also as “networks to which various actors are technologically linked and rhetorically enrolled” (36). Here, not only does Scott underline the role of technology in linking actors/members of the resistance discourse, he also points out how this “transglocal public” (37) – spread out from India to Switzerland and the U.S. – was “rhetorically enrolled” to play their parts effectively in a given network or rhetorical situation.

The metaphor of the actor harkens back to Burke’s notion of the dramatistic pentad that explains how any rhetorical situation can be understood as a stage or theater, complete with
props, wherein people enact roles in a rhetorically appropriate way. The “pentad” comprises the five important stage entities: main actors, secondary actors (and sometimes tertiary actors and the chorus), the script, background/backdrop, and stage props (which can include music).

In the online or virtual context of http://www.monsanto.com and Navdanya, the company and Shiva play the main role of protagonist, the farmers are the secondary characters, and the farming community or agricultural sector provides the backdrop. In Monsanto’s script, which is a myth about global food shortage, hunger is the villain, while in Shiva’s script Monsanto is the villain as the orchestrator of hunger. Michel de Certeau’s concept of the myth comes in handy when following the narrative/tale of hunger, shortage in global food supply, and need for biotechnology in Monsanto’s script. The script in Shiva’s website is primarily about debunking this myth with the help of news reports, testimonials of people related to the farming community, and her own speeches in India and abroad. The videos (including interviews/speeches), and infographics posted in both websites can be compared with music and other aural elements that aid visual elements on a traditional stage. Design elements such as motifs, colors and images serve as stage props. In Chapter 7, I will use this scheme of the damatistic pentad in my detailed analysis of Monsanto and Shiva’s online rhetorical performances.

To summarize the purpose of this theoretical framework, then, the use of complementary CDA and ecofeminist lenses, theories from post-Marxist scholars, Burke’s dramatistic pentad, and de Certeau’s concept of myth help this study unpack the colonizing potential underlying Monsanto’s corporatespeak. A case study of Monsanto brings to light how the megarhetorics of development, in the garb of corporate social responsibility, function
across the length and breadth of the globe to access agrarian economies. As Gerard Hauser said, this is “rhetoric’s public work” (ix) manifesting itself in a democracy. The purpose of my study is not to flay one side or the other but to understand how rhetoric works in discourse in times when there is economic confusion and social injustice, political tension and uprisings, and threats to the planet’s environment. Coogan and Ackerman put it succinctly: “Globalization and new distribution of wealth and human communities provide us with rhetorical scenes as civic engagement with the imperative to learn how to comprehend them” (11). The theoretical framework of my study on corporate rhetoric and resistance has been conceived with this purpose of comprehension.
Chapter 5: Common and Contrasting Key Concepts in the Websites of Monsanto and Shiva

In this chapter, I will analyze the language used in http://www.monsanto.com and Navdanya using CDA through the ecofeminist lens, both at the word and phrase/sentence levels (as recommended by Huckin et al.), to identify some common and contrasting concepts at the heart of the discourse on neoliberal development rhetoric and resistance to it. These words/concepts are identified on the basis of repetition, or the noteworthy number of times they are used in the text, or their conspicuous absence. The outcome of this analysis helps set the stage – to use the metaphor of theater in Burke’s notion of the dramatistic pentad – for further explanation of the way these concepts serve as the theme of the dramas presented by Monsanto and Shiva in their websites as they argue and counter-argue about the need for GMO and its impact on the environment. The use of the ecofeminist lens in this context also helps take resistance in this study to a level beyond “strategic essentialism” (or reduction of the scope of eco-feminist activism to the empowerment of apparently powerless, stereotyped Oriental women), which was Spivak’s complaint against Shiva and other ecofeminists during the closing years of the last century.

The following sections of my analysis use ecofeminism in the context of transglocal resistance where it attains a whole new dimension of activism concerned with the empowerment of all members of the global farming community whose livelihoods are threatened by corporations such as Monsanto. In this global rhetorical situation, the key concepts that stand out in the websites of Monsanto and Shiva (which I will analyze) are “hunger,” “growing populations,” food insecurity,” “sustainable agriculture,” and “seeds.”
5.1 Hunger

This is a word that Monsanto uses as a key reason for its presence in the world’s agricultural sector. Given its appeal to emotions, particularly in the developing world where it seems to make sense to use Monsanto’s apparently high-yielding GMO products to feed starving people, hunger serves as a reason for legitimization of the corporation’s research and business activities as it ties biotechnology with corporate social responsibility. It is essentially the villain in Monsanto’s drama set against the backdrop of the world’s farming community. In this scenario, Monsanto tries to justify its research and gain legitimacy by depicting itself as the hero in the garb of a benevolent organization engaged in CSR.

As seen in figure 2, Monsanto claims it has been meeting the challenge of “food insecurity” among “resource-poor farmers” in Africa by supplying them with high-yielding maize and other seeds, thus using CSR to justify its activities. The company’s website features an entire “Hunger Series” with no less than five pages devoted to the topic of hunger, and in these five pages the word “hunger” comes up 20 times and “hungry,” once. Particularly, in the page titled “Food for All: Grants that Feed Those in Need,” the word “hunger” has been used nine times. This is in relation to the company’s official mission statement of eliminating the evil from the face of the earth. Such repetitions help build a narrative, with or without a genuine foundation in facts and figures, to eventually serve the purpose of the subject. While the numbers show Monsanto’s attempt at self-justification by projecting a reasonable as well as credible self-image (that is, build ethos with the help of the apparent truth of the situation as evinced by facts, figures and numbers), the pictures, testimonials, and references to academics and researchers are carefully selected to support the cause of CSR.
My purpose behind noting these textual elements is not Monsanto-bashing or advocacy for the opposition movement; instead, it is my aim to observe how data and images have been projected through the digital/virtual medium to persuade people one way or the other. My eco-feminist interpretation of the repetitive word “hunger” in conjunction with related images is geared toward understanding how they are being used by a biotech company to lodge ideas in the audience’ minds by driving their focus in certain directions. This is indeed the first step toward colonizing the minds of the target audience, before convincing them to open the gates to their farmlands.

In sharp contrast to Monsanto, Shiva’s blog, Navdanya, does not even mention the word “hunger” on the home page. Instead, it focuses on the need for organic farming, biodiversity, and sovereignty of seed, food and land to meet the needs of people in a safe and sustainable
way. It seems that the absence of the word “hunger” speaks volumes about the diametrically different approaches of the corporation and its critic. The former uses the pathos-laden word to justify its research and business agenda while the latter avoids images of “resource-poor farmers” and instead, directs the reader’s attention toward the need to shun GMO seeds and prevent “domination and control” by multinational corporations. In the page titled “Earth Democracy,” Shiva urges farmers to “protect our rich biological heritage” and uphold the “fundamental freedom to save and exchange seeds,” steps that would enable them to live their lives independently of corporations, with dignity. Eventually, in the page entitled “Organic Movement,” she comments on how “Chemical agriculture and genetic engineering are threatening public health,” pushing farmers into debt traps and even suicides. While this is one of the rare instances when she uses the word “hunger,” the focus on GMO makes it clear that the villain of her piece is Monsanto. Even though she does not point at a clear-cut hero/savior in this particular situation, she goes on to suggest “the only lasting solution to hunger and poverty” is ecological agriculture. Shiva uses the word “hunger” three times and “starvation” only once on the “Food Sovereignty” page. In a further effort to gain credibility (and thereby legitimacy), Monsanto devotes a page to describing how its funds helped “...Fight Hunger Through the Hands of Farmers.” On this page the company claims to have donated $635,000 to hunger-related organizations, $100,000 overall to America’s Farmers Food Drive since the program began in 2009, and $3,000,000 by matching farmers’ donations. “We are proud to work with the winning farmers and organizations to combat rural hunger,” says Deborah Patterson, the Monsanto Fund president.

Monsanto depicts an equally forceful image on the “Hunger Series III” page by using the testimonials of several farmers who describe how the company’s Invest an Acre program helped “improve lives in their community.” Iowa farmer Jon Studt comments, “With this program, we like that we know where our donation is going and that Monsanto matches the funding for double the impact.” To top this testimonial, local Monsanto representative Matt Roach adds that he is “humbled with Jon and Judy Studt’s generosity of their time and donation.” The company completes the depiction of its benevolent image by committing “to support the Invest an Acre program through a cumulative $3 million contribution over four crop years.” It also makes it a point to mention that U.S farmers “are not required to purchase Monsanto products” to participate in these programs. This seems to be a rhetorical strategy to
create a distance between the company’s business activities and its commitment to CSR, with the purpose of augmenting its image as an institution that genuinely cares for farmers.

5.2 Growing populations

So why is there so much hunger? Leading from one compelling idea to the next, the script in Monsanto’s drama continues to unfold step by step. The company indicates how it plans to deal with the cause of hunger (the villain) by posing the following question (as part of the heading) on the page on growing world population: “Why does agriculture need to be improved?” The rest of the heading (see image below) actually answers the question. It is because of “Growing Populations, Growing Challenges.” What is Monsanto’s role in this situation? With so many people to feed, food production needs to increase, and its biotech research can help do that. The stage is thus set for justification and legitimization of the company’s operations.

Since the current food production is not sufficient and there is an apparent crisis ahead, according to Monsanto, there is the imminent need to promote research that will find means and methods to provide global food sufficiency. Such neoliberal corporate megarhetorics of self-justification supports the premise of this study that this is a new, financial form of colonization in our postcolonial world that works by acquiring control of global food production and supply. The strategic use of such terms in conjunction with persuasive images from developing parts of the world also show how new notions of business ethics have emerged in the neoliberal capitalist era, manifested through aggressive modes of advertising and public relations (PR). For instance, the image of the African child in a village school (see figure 1) is
associated with words and expressions such as “heart,” “commitment,” “sustainable agriculture,” “value system,” “family,” and “principled code of conduct” that show how the company implicitly uses narratives of food shortage, hunger, and the sufferings of families in the agriculture sector to package its agenda. The objective is to cater to the sensibilities of prospective clients in an increasingly environment-conscious world. However, appearing on the page titled “Who We Are,” this image smacks of the old concept of Orientalism whereby societies located east of Europe were seen in a certain stereotypical light of the underprivileged facing a catastrophe and therefore needing a savior.

Figure 8. A page on Monsanto’s official website (http://www.monsanto.com) making an argument for the need of what it is doing in the agriculture sector. The argument hinges on meeting the challenge of feeding a growing world population. Accessed 10 Dec. 2016.
The above screen shot also demonstrates Monsanto’s deliberate choice of words and visual imagery to convey a myth of impending catastrophe in the world’s food supply. As the hero in this myth, the company’s role is to avert the catastrophe. The words placed prominently near this visual – “commitment,” “pledge,” “Sustainable Agriculture,” “Fighting Rural Hunger,” “Human Rights,” “Corporate Giving,” “improving agriculture,” and “improving lives” – clearly try to etch the trajectory of a narrative of ethically saving the world’s hungry population. To reinforce the myth of “fulfilling the promise” of Monsanto’s “genuine value system” by “engaging our communities in a significant and positive manner” (quoted from the screenshot above), Monsanto uses the photograph of an African boy who is learning math in a village school. The idea is to show Monsanto’s contribution toward educating the youth in underprivileged parts of the world, thus helping the community. The use of the color black and the view of bamboo/thatch in the background are significant rhetorical tools, speaking directly to the hearts of an audience who are concerned about the socio-economic problems in this developing – or perhaps under-developed – part of the world. Obviously, this image is meant to re-establish credibility for the multinational corporation that has had a beleaguered reputation since the controversies over GMO and unethical business practices around the world.

5.3 Food insecurity

Here is a classic case of what Michel de Certeau called construction of the myth, whether or not it is founded in reality. In fact, Monsanto makes a very compelling case of the need for its agriculture-related research and other activities, and rationalizing its presence in the global farming scenario. The effort to build ethos is clear on the page titled “Food for All:
Grants that Feed Those in Need,” as Monsanto claims how in 2015, it “sponsored ten $2,500 grants through the FFA: Food For All Grant Program—a program of Feeding Our World Initiative.” The company emphasizes that it is important to help “agriculture students understand the issues and effects of hunger and take action to support the human right to safe, affordable, and nutritious food in their own communities.” Monsanto’s use of the notion of “hunger” here is highly topical since the entire discourse on food production hinges on the prospect of starvation in a world of around 7 billion people. However, the question whether a crisis has been engineered by none other than the company itself for profits from selling genetically engineered products lies at the root of this discourse, opening up new “eco-frontiers” of research that, as Guyot says, links “environmental matters to specific political spaces” (676). This is also where ecofeminist criticism rises above concerns about just women and probes the politics behind corporations and their engagement with the environment.

Shiva’s discussion on food insecurity is proof of this broadening of eco-feminist concerns. In contrast to Monsanto, she discusses the need for food and nutrition security instead of “food insecurity” (page entitled “Food Sovereignty”), emphasizing the need for farmers’ freedom by increasing their incomes. She also debunks Monsanto’s narrative on hunger, saying the company has been perpetuating “the three myths... of feeding the hunger (sic), protecting the planet and food safety...” The web page below argues that the phenomenon of “food insecurity” was created by Monsanto to open up markets for its products. Furthermore, it counter-argues that not only does “food insecurity” means insufficient supply of food, but also food that is expensive and lacks nutritional value. Shiva thus challenges Monsanto’s claim to legitimacy.
Figure 9. On this page from www.navdanya.org, Shiva makes the case that in times of globalization food and agriculture have become instruments of trade. Accessed 10 Dec. 2016.

5.4 Sustainable agriculture

Building on the concept of “food insecurity,” the next logical turn in the discussion or script in both websites is to find a solution to the problem. This solution, as both sides indicate, is farming practices that are sustainable in the long run. Sustainability then becomes a key word in the realms of both CSR and eco-feminist resistance. However, it is interesting how differently the two sides project the same basic idea. While Monsanto calls it “sustainable agriculture” in a pragmatic and businesslike tone, Shiva uses creative language such as “seed freedom,” “a soil pilgrimage,” and “organic farming” (see figure 10) that appeal to the sensibilities of traditional farmers. Monsanto’s tone shows the connection between sustainability and business, while Shiva’s choice of words connects the future with a certain way of life.

The corporation’s efforts at self-legitimization, particularly in the face of adverse criticism, are obvious as it hinges its argument on the notion that sufficient food production can be maintained in the long run only with the help of hybrid or genetically modified seeds produced by researchers in the laboratory. In her counter-argument, Shiva debunks Monsanto’s claim and urges a return to traditional methods of farming with seeds saved from the past (the notion of retaining “seed sovereignty”). As the screenshots from the two websites show (see figure 10 and figure 11), both sides focus on farmers and consumers but in contrasting ways. Shiva urges people to become “Food Smart” and mindful about what they eat. She promotes farming methods that involve saving indigenous seeds and building seed banks for the future. The corporation, on the other hand, touts its apparent efforts to assuage hunger by producing
genetically modified high-yielding seeds. This is evident in a “White Paper” titled “Our Commitment to Sustainable Agriculture” and two videos titled “We Must Work Together [with farmers]” and “Committed to Sustainable Agriculture, Committed to Farmers.” What stands out in the paper and the videos is the focus on farmers as the supporting actors in a play where Monsanto is the benevolent hero. The message conveyed is that the corporation is not working alone in laboratories or making self-serving decisions in offices but walking hand-in-hand, albeit patronizingly, with those toiling in the fields.

This is the second step toward colonization of the agrarian community, using the neoliberal rhetoric of development couched in CSR that works through gaining the trust of people instead of using military or other forceful means. The next step in this process of colonization would be to foster complete dependence on the corporation for seeds and other supplies needed for farming, which would of course be projected in the light of measures for “sustainable” food production. The final step of colonization, as will be seen below, would be to eradicate indigenous seeds altogether and so that genetically modified seeds produced exclusively (and thereby patented) by Monsanto become the sole means of food production for farmers. The refrain of “sustainability” serves the company very well toward this end when used through the screen of CSR that is built into its PR rhetoric. The effort seen above to inject credibility into the message of “sustainable agriculture” through the implementation of (controversial) biotechnology is also in response to criticism that the corporation’s sole goal is self-promotion without any regard for the farmers’ opinions or interests. This is an example of what Domenec called a “technology risk” (51) company using persuasive rhetoric to counter allegations of ethical malpractices. Shiva’s criticism, of course, is constructed on the premise
that farmers are the worst sufferers (victims) of a villainous corporation’s activities. As seen below in the screenshot of a section of her blog, she condemns Monsanto’s promotion of products such as the herbicide, Roundup, which is one of its highest revenue earners.

Monsanto, on the other hand, makes a case of its “commitment” to farmers by placing them at the center of its argument, albeit as secondary actors, as seen in pages below. What is remarkable in these pages is the repeated use of the words “committed” and “commitment” (seven times), emphasizing the corporation’s apparent seriousness in the matter of “improving” people’s lives. For that matter, the words “improved” and “improvement” are seen six times in the page titled “Improving Agriculture” (see figure 14). To gain justification for its activities, Monsanto provides a graph (see figure 11) showing how the advent of agricultural programs – namely, Breeding (1866), the Green Revolution (1940-1970), and Bioechnology (1981) – have proved to be milestones in global history by enabling increased production of food to feed a burgeoning population. The graph also contains a quote by an agricultural scientist, a Dr. Norman Borlaug, to provide credibility to the corporation’s claims. This is in addition to links to widely accepted sources of data such as USDA and The Danforth Center. Finally, to cap this compelling narrative of need and supply that is already brimming with CSR rhetoric and ethos, Monsanto tugs at heartstrings with the statement that “If there were one word to explain what Monsanto is all about, it would have to be farmers.” Shiva discredits such use of CSR with words crafted in a similar vein but with the addition of information gleaned from the political and economic history of the subcontinent. She points out (see figure 12): “India has emerged as the capital of hunger and diabetes...India has become food insecure since the 1990s, time of liberalization of agriculture under WTO diktats.”
Figure 11. On the page titled “Why Does Agriculture Need to be Improved,” Monsanto uses a graph from a scientist to argue that biotechnology is needed in a world of rising population. (http://www.monsanto.com). Accessed 10 Dec. 2016.

Figure 12. Shiva denounces the “corporatization” of food and “worsening food insecurity” rebutting Monsanto’s claims of feeding millions (www.navdanya.org). Accessed 10 Dec. 2016.

What is seen above is an attempt by a corporation to build a myth based on need that would eventually help colonize the needy though its business strategies disguised as CSR, and counter-attempts by an eco-conscious resistive force to bust that myth and de-colonize minds that may have been influenced already.
Figure 14. Page titled “Improving Agriculture” from http://www.monsanto.com. The column on the right features a “White Paper” detailing how the corporation has been committed to making agriculture sustainable. Below this is an infographic claiming improvement in the situation of farmers and agricultural consumers since 1983, ostensibly due to the efforts of Monsanto. Accessed 10 Dec. 2016.

5.5 Seeds

Last but not least, “seeds” serves as a seminal word for the websites in this study as well as my research. I have used it in the title of my paper: “Seeds of Neocolonialism...” The notion of “seeds” is fundamental, literally as well as metaphorically, in “development” discourse in the context of agriculture as I will now explain. In the literal sense, seeds are the source of the world’s food and a farmer’s primary resource of livelihood and her/his most valuable assets, making them the primary object of control for those who intend to colonize the agricultural
sector. Metaphorically, seeds can symbolize the beginning of an idea, such as the origin/germ of a movement as exemplified by the title of Shiva’s website (Navdanya, meaning “nine grains”). What this title suggests is that the potency of seeds, when harnessed by a native, can thwart any colonial aggression. No wonder, then, that agri-business giant Monsanto focuses on grabbing this primary resource of farmers as it attempts to industrialize farming. While Monsanto tries to justify creating genetically modified seeds, patenting them and selling them to farmers around the world to apparently prevent an impending food shortage crisis, eco-feminists (as those who are concerned about the environmental impact of global agribusiness and not merely the empowerment of women in farming) say the company is actually orchestrating the crisis by wresting control of seeds and monopolizing their distribution.

Interestingly, while Shiva as a representative of the resistance camp denounces hybrid seeds and advocates food sovereignty through a return to traditional farming by saving organic seeds, there is yet another angle to the notion of seeds in this discourse. Shiva critics such as Keith Kloor say her statements have sown the seeds of doubt; that is, her credibility is questionable. Therefore, seeds have become a basic and pivotal source of power play among the various stakeholders in the neoliberal development discourse, showing on the one hand how a corporation is trying to annex the global farming sector and on the other, how eco-conscious people are resisting. Peter Pringle, a scholar of the GMO debate, says that while one aim of the advanced industrial nations in funding agricultural research was indeed agricultural, “the other [aim was] geopolitical” (50). As Monsanto’s critics point out, the company’s modus operandi is to first obtain indigenous seeds, then modify their genetic makeup, and finally patent the modified seeds so that farmers lose all claim to a resource/property that used to be
their own for generations. While this is an example of the praxis of business globalization using the means of biopiracy, eventually this leads to a new form of colonization of the world’s agricultural economy.

The eco-critical stance against such a geopolitical practice of neoliberalism is encapsulated in activist Felipe Amin Filomena’s comment that “In times of global food crisis, it is vital that we understand how genes and seeds are enclosed from the commons, excluded from the public domain and constructed as private property” (4). What is also important here is that “the formulation and enforcement of intellectual property (IP) rights by the state has not been the simple materialization of a national interest in IP but a result of pressures from different actors within and outside the state” (5). In other words, the state walks in tandem with multinational corporations and other foreign powers on this new path to colonialism, which is neocolonialism in neoliberal times. Working in cahoots with corporations, the state actually helps them remove the most vital property from the hands of farmers and render them powerless. In the context of India in the 1970s, it was the unstable socio-political situation of a former colony still trying to build its infrastructure (while facing a burgeoning population) that made it convenient for Monsanto to enter the agricultural sector and play the role of savior. Monsanto claimed to usher in the so-called Green Revolution with its high-yielding hybrid seeds that promised to eliminate hunger. However, before long environmentalists started questioning the long-term merit of using sterile, hybrid seeds doused in pesticides, fungicides and herbicides to produce bumper crops, and the farming community stood witness to the often-tragic socio-economic results of seed industrialization.
This was how neoliberal capitalism worked to colonize the agricultural economy in postcolonial India. My analysis of the common but contrasting key concepts in the websites of Monsanto and Shiva show how the power play has been unfolding between a global corporate force that uses development/CSR rhetoric and an individual (and founder of a non-governmental group) who is counter-arguing with the help of ecofeminist anti-colonization and anti-hegemony rhetoric. The highlight of the findings of this analysis is the fact that neocolonialism in today’s postcolonial world wields CSR-related rhetoric as one of its strongest weapons, annexing agricultural economies through coups that are not altogether bloodless if the suicides of farmers are to be considered. At the same time, those who oppose such colonization on the basis of ecofeminist ideology have taken their movement to a new domain that encompasses the cause of all who are disempowered, disenfranchised, or displaced in the name of development.
Chapter 6: Monsanto Crafts a Myth with Facts, Figures, and Silences

Keeping in mind the primary research question inquiring how scholars of rhetoric can trace new notions of colonization in neoliberal development discourse, this chapter examines the myth of need that Monsanto tries to perpetuate through its website. After an overview of what the company explicitly says and what it deliberately omits about its operations, the focus is turned on the specific contexts of India, Africa, and Chile. This examination is based on the premise that the first step in Monsanto’s repertoire of strategies is to colonize the minds of its audience by convincing them about the need, justification, and legitimacy of the company’s activities. The company achieves this by crafting a myth of need with facts, figures, and some strategic silences related to global agriculture and food supply, and then repeatedly recounting that myth so that over time it is accepted as the truth. This chapter looks at how the myth is invented and the linguistic tools used to make it effective.

6.1 Crafting the myth of hunger and the need for a savior

Colonizers of the past as well as present times have employed the tools of rhetoric to present a rationale for their actions. This rationale has been conveyed through a narrative – or a “myth” as Michel de Certeau would call it – that attempts to justify colonization, whether territorial/political or economic. In the previous chapter, a CDA of the key words and concepts in Monsanto’s website (“hunger,” “growing [world] populations,” “challenge of feeding,” “food insecurity,” and “sustainable agriculture”) in addition to images that feature apparently needy people, particularly children, from certain parts of the world, showed how Monsanto has been reinforcing the narrative of a catastrophic worldwide hunger wherein it is playing the role of the
“savior.” In this chapter, I argue (following Huckin, Powell, and Fairclough) that repetition of the above words and the underlying theme of need throughout the website is part of a rhetorical strategy to perpetuate the “myth” that Monsanto is essentially a benevolent, socially responsible corporation trying to save the planet. Thus, using the leitmotif of need is a linguistic tool in http://www.monsanto.com that anchors the reader’s mind to a CSR-based raison d’être for the company. Later in this discussion, I will examine how Monsanto uses silence on certain matters related to its products, performance, and track record to bolster the myth of service.

Critical discourse analysis of the word “hunger” helped us understand the involvement of language in the way contemporary capitalist societies work and the “politicization” (Powell 440) of language. At the same time, Huckin’s method of bringing out the fine-grained details in text led this analysis to gain insight into what he called the “political aspects of discursive manipulation” (4). Here is an excerpt from “The Hunger Series,” a five-part section under “Improving Agriculture” in http://www.monsanto.com. Entitled “Monsanto Company and the Monsanto Fund Help Fight Hunger through the Hand of Farmers,” this article exemplifies how the company projects its activities before the world:

It might be hard to believe that one of your neighbors may be going to bed hungry. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), over 50 million Americans live with food insecurity, because these people do not have adequate resources to purchase food...Monsanto’s commitment to sustainable agriculture and improving lives has helped farmers by providing the necessary technology to assist with food production. However, Monsanto Company and the Monsanto Fund also help farmers fight hunger through many
programs by investing in the communities where those very farmers live and work. ([http://www.monsanto.com](http://www.monsanto.com))

Even before starting a fine-grained analysis of the excerpt on the word level, what strikes the reader is the title of the article: “Monsanto Company and Monsanto Fund Help Fight Hunger through the Hand of Farmers.” The headline clearly expresses the stance of the company that it is serving the people by assisting farmers. That prepares the backdrop for the message in the body of the article, which is about how Monsanto is apparently pursuing the noble cause of eradicating hunger from the face of the earth. Expressions such as “Fighting Rural Hunger,” “human rights,” “Corporate Giving,” “improving agriculture,” and “improving lives,” provide the trajectory of care and compassion to Monsanto’s narrative of service. As Huckin had recommended, it is important to take note of words that are in close proximity to the dominant word (which is “hunger” in this case) to enable a “broader contextual analysis” (4) and understand its expected impact on the reader. The CSR-driven tone of the opening sentences in the above excerpt, followed by statistical data quoted from USDA reports, shows an effort at persuasion through purposeful use of the rhetorical appeals. Such persuasion can work universally, not just in developing countries but in the US as well since “hunger” is a very powerful, albeit common word. Used in the context of an apparently impending catastrophe, it can easily manipulate the minds of people and convince them about the company’s proclaimed commitment to CSR.

However, Huckin’s statement that there are political aspects to “discursive manipulation” (4) is seen to be true in Monsanto’s history of selling high yielding but terminator seeds (crops from such seeds will not produce offspring seeds) to hungry farmers in countries
around the world through collusion with governments, financial institutions, and a section of the scientific/research community that spoke in its favor. This suggests that regardless of continent or context, while the hungry are vulnerable to consuming a big corporation’s palatable promises, those who have business and political clout can see it as a chance to forge profitable business deals. Harvey describes such opportunism as the neoliberal praxis of “capital accumulation” (“Contesting Capitalism” 5) and raises questions about the real motives of corporations behind their practices. Following Harvey, a critical look at the word “hunger” with reference to other rhetorically significant words located close to it unveils its relational, dialectical, and interdisciplinary aspects. It is clear how “hunger” helps relate communities as diverse as corporate, political/bureaucratic, scientific, and activist with farming. At the same time, “hunger” opens a discourse involving all of these communities and enables interaction among the different disciplines they represent. Furthermore, a post-Marxist approach to discourse analysis helps this study unpack the cause-and-effect phenomenon in society: it can be seen that the cause of hunger in some parts of the world has the effect of an apparent power-void due to the absence of means to produce/provide locally, enabling Monsanto to step in as a provider or savior as it calls itself in the myth. Under these circumstances, Monsanto fills the power void to gain control over the lives of those whom it claims to save. Such transition to power is benign on the surface and easily couched under a display of service, especially when a word as powerful as “hunger” is involved. Therefore, it is not merely incidental that Monsanto’s website features an entire “Hunger Series” with five pages devoted to a discussion on hunger. In the page titled “Food for All: Grants that Feed Those in Need,” the word “hunger” is used nine times in the context of countries around the world, including the
U.S. Clearly, Monsanto is presenting a CSR-based rationale behind its GMO research and business plan that encompasses the entire globe.

It appears from the discussion above that power is not necessarily obtained by using brute force but could also be drawn through the perpetuation of a heart-rending myth. This partly explains how neoliberal colonization/hegemony takes place in a postcolonial world without the use of armed forces. It is very helpful here to map the content of Monsanto’s website and its myth over Burke’s dramatistic pentad, which provides a perspective of the company’s effort at presenting an emotionally affective show for public consumption. If the web pages were to be compared with the stage at a theater, the people and concepts featured on the pages could be seen as playing the five basic theatrical elements of protagonist/villain (main characters), secondary characters and/or chorus, script/plot, backdrop, and stage props. While “hunger” is the super-villain in Monsanto’s website, the company itself is the omnipresent protagonist who heroically saves “hungry” millions, and farmers and farming communities are the chorus chanting praises of Monsanto through testimonials and interviews. A handful of scientists/researchers and people related to agriculture appear intermittently as tertiary characters to add voice to the praises sung by the chorus. Obviously, their purpose is to support the claims of success made by Monsanto. Farmlands across the globe provide the backdrop for this drama, while the audios, videos, infographics, images and other graphics/visuals constitute the props and sound and visual effects as in a theatrical show. The topic of need in Monsanto’s myth serves as the theme for the script. Notably, the farmers who should be the primary subjects of this plot are relegated to the position of objects receiving beneficence from the hero, namely Monsanto.
Furthermore, there are no testimonials from the families of less fortunate farmers in India and elsewhere who were reported to have died/committed suicide since their association with Monsanto. The farmers featured on the company’s website seem to be cherry-picked to support its stories of success. Another notable absentee is the company’s fierce critic, Shiva, who obviously does not serve the purpose of its myth. A comparison of the dramatic scenario in http://www.monsanto.com with that in Navdanya, Shiva’s website of resistance, will be provided in the following chapter. For now I will only emphasize that in accordance with Monsanto’s myth, “hunger” (as a form of need) serves as the leitmotif of the plot on its virtual stage – that is, its website – with a script geared toward projecting the company as the hero-savior of “hungry” farmers around the world.

A critical look at the theme of “hunger” in the context of the company’s history and business moves outside the US leads us to the secondary research question in this study: What is the socio-political situation in a former colony that makes it convenient for a multinational corporation to set foot in it? The answer to this question must necessarily take into consideration Harvey’s notions about how “...part of the neoliberal project has been to subsume greater chunks of the state so that public services (including those in the agricultural sector, such as seed banks in India)... have become privatized” (“Contesting Capitalism” 24). Public services constitute an area where CSR could play a vital role in corporate policy-making in times of privatization, and as Bendell had envisioned, companies could take steps to eradicate hunger with a genuine spirit of benevolence as proclaimed in Monsanto’s myth. However, in a scenario where privatization allows corporate players to have a free hand in a market (that had once been monitored by state laws and the interests of the
people/consumers), and in countries where corporate accountability is only nominal or figurative, is CSR in the reckoning as a priority?

Here is an overview of the situation in India, followed by continental Africa and Chile that, while showing a scenario quite contrary to spirit of CSR seen in Monsanto’s myth, explains what Harvey called the “state-financial nexus” (“Contesting Capitalism” 24) and takes the analysis a step in the direction of Cotoi’s interpretation of the Foucauldian perspective on “power, politics, government and knowledge” (110). Cotoi explains how, since the 1980s, “political power was not seen any more as hegemonic, thoroughly structurant, state dwelling power” (110). As the examples of India, Africa, and Chile will show below, the rise of corporations and the capitalist mechanism in the last quarter of the 20th century opened new ways of power sharing between the state and commercial institutions that created the path to an unprecedented system of colonization.

6.2 Monsanto’s business in India

Monsanto’s entry into the agricultural economy of India in the last quarter of the 20th century is eerily similar to the arrival of the British East India Company in 1612 and eventual political takeover in 1757. When the British company docked near Calcutta on the shores of the Bay of Bengal 400-odd years ago, it was ostensibly for the purpose of trading in cotton, silk, tea, indigo, salt and other such commodities. Over the next century, however, the traders turned into rulers while using the rhetoric of development and service for the apparently charitable purpose of uplifting needy natives. The British colonizers’ rhetoric of development is strikingly similar to Monsanto’s current proclamations of corporate social responsibility. In addition, the (now defunct) foreign company’s takeover of political power in the subcontinent was facilitated
by the actions of, and agreements with, some self-serving local kings, which echoes today’s trade deals, liberalization policies, and what Harvey calls the state-financial nexus.

Monsanto entered the Indian agricultural sector after a 1988 Seed Policy formulated by the World Bank that required the country’s government to deregulate the seed sector. On the face of it, this step would allow external help with strengthening an indigenous farming system that was not producing enough to feed a burgeoning population. Monsanto promised a Green Revolution with its hybrid seeds, which sounded like a blessing for the hungry. As a result of the deregulation, major Indian companies were tied up in joint ventures and licensing agreements with Monsanto, and seeds that were part of the Indian farmers’ personal resources were to be destroyed. Only those seeds that were sold by Monsanto, which were the “intellectual property” of the company, were to be sown. Thus, power over the lives of a state’s subjects is not primarily in the hands of the government any more but is being shared with commercial institutions, national and international, that entered into joint ventures. The approach to locating power in social associations explains, in light of Appadurai’s theory, how globalization is a highly complex phenomenon involving the convergence of people, processes, and perceptions; and in the context of neo-colonization in postcolonial times, points to a world with unprecedented practices of work alliances, ideologies, and ethics. This results in a whole new system of colonization.

To return to Monsanto’s pathway into India’s agricultural economy and how it started to wield power over the farmers, Shiva provides a counter-narrative in Navdanya about how the company began to collect royalty for the non-renewable hybrid seeds it sold (farmers were not allowed to use open-pollinated seeds for free from their own resources any more). Shiva also
accuses Monsanto of bypassing the limited existing governmental regulatory process by using public-private partnerships (PPP) to promote its genetically modified seeds. By way of example, she mentions how in 1995 the company introduced Bt technology in the country through a joint venture with the Indian company Mahyco, and started field trials of Bt cotton in 1997 without approval from the environment ministry’s Genetic Engineering Approval Committee. While Monsanto does not contest any of these above accusations in its website, what is important in the context of my study is that the company’s growing activities and presence in India shows how political power is not hegemonic, or totally structurant, or state-dwelling any more.

Despite being sued by the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology at the Supreme Court for conducting open GMO trials without the approval of Genetic Engineering Approval Committee, Monsanto managed to start selling Bt cottonseeds in 2002. The destruction of alternative seeds and the ill effects of monoculture, among other reasons, led to mass suicides by farmers that finally led to an incriminatory parliamentary committee report in August 2012, which in turn led the Supreme Court to recommend a 10-year moratorium on field trials of all genetically modified food including halting ongoing trials (reported by Zee News on July 22, 2013). Monsanto’s seeds were described as seeds of suicide. This uncomplimentary description is obviously omitted in its savior myth.

Again as an instance of what Harvey called state-financial nexus, in the last week of February 2014, the Oil and Environment minister in India, Veerappa Moily, re-approved GMO field trial in the country. This is reminiscent of the American Congress passing a bill in April 2013 restricting investigations against GMO research by Monsanto, thanks to aggressive lobbying by the company. The “nexus” between state and corporate systems in the two countries answers
the research question on how a corporation can find its way into a country’s economy.

Monsanto of course vehemently denied the existence of any such “nexus” on the “Just Plain False page” on its website. Calling it yet another “myth” spread by detractors, Monsanto says: “Opponents level this accusation to discredit the broad, scientific and global support for GM crops... Governments have also occasionally hired a person who previously worked at Monsanto; however, instead of the obvious conclusion that these are experienced and highly skilled individuals, critics will suggest a quite complicated, global governmental conspiracy.” Although Monsanto does not refer to any specific cases when building this defense, it takes advantage of the fact that it is very difficult to prove allegations of direct connection between a corporation and the government.

On the positive side, the GMO controversy helped start dialectic among various sections of society in India, making it an interdisciplinary discourse. In the context of CDA in this study, the significance of this dialectic draws from Pennycook’s theory that we need to pay attention to the “talk” around a text since the “meaning of a text cannot be reduced to the readings of the text analysis outside of the social take up” (84). Activists and media persons who resist Monsanto’s “development” myth are at the heart of the “talk” mentioned by Pennycook, exemplifying the “social take up” of Monsanto’s messages. Indian journalist and eco-feminist activist P. Sainath conducted the research for a film, *Nero’s Guests* (2009), exploring why 200,000 farmers committed suicide in India between 1999 and 2009. Sainath’s journalistic work supports Pennycook’s notion that the impact of a text may be less due to a reading or interpretation of that text than as a result of “talk” (84) around that text. The “talk” regarding Monsanto’s genetically modified seeds and suicides among farmers first involved the farming
community where Sainath’s investigative film (a cinematic text) originated and, eventually, all other forms of media including social media, the government and the masses enabling the spread of discursive power among people who had heretofore been silent. Sainath’s cinematic response to Monsanto’s rhetorical practices demonstrates 21st century instances of different kinds of discursive practices through different forms of text. Here, we also see the expanding power and scope of eco-feminist resistance: while trying to de-colonize minds that had so far been influenced by Monsanto’s claims of success, Sainath’s film aims to prevent future colonization by presenting a counter-myth with journalistic candidness.

Figure 15. In this redesigned section (containing text from the former “Shared Interests in Agriculture” section), Monsanto asserts there is no connection between Bt cotton and suicides by farmers in India (http://www.monsanto.com/company/commitments/human-rights/statements/indian-suicides-bt-gmo-not-responsible/). This is in response to allegations such as those made in the film, Nero’s Guests. Accessed 15 July 2017.
As a continuation of the “relational” and “dialectical” process, Monsanto vigorously responds to criticism leveled against it by the likes of Sainath. Even though many of the farmers who committed suicide were Bt cotton growers, Monsanto flatly denies on its website that its business practices caused the tragedy. In fact, this is one topic to which it devotes an entire section, Shared Interests in Agriculture (recently redesigned). On a highly defensive note, Monsanto provides links to several articles on the apparent absence of any link between Indian farmer suicides and GM cotton, and even speaks of the “success” of Biotech (Bt) cotton in India (see figure 15 and figure 16).

Figure 16. Monsanto cites external research indicating “multiple societal issues” (and not GM cotton) are behind farmer suicides in India (https://monsanto.com/company/commitments/human-rights/statements/indian-suicides-bt-gmo-not-responsible/). Accessed 15 July 2017.
The company cites studies by International Food Policy Research Institute, the Council for Social Development, and the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research Study to claim that the reason behind the suicides is “multiple societal issues” such as lack of reliable credit, plant and insect resistance to pesticides, and lack of irrigation facilities. In short, Monsanto’s sophisticated skills have turned the story of mass farmer suicides on its head into a story of hope in the face of adversity. Critics such as Shiva question the credibility of the institutes and studies mentioned by the company, not to mention that the rise of suicides has been observed only in the past three decades that coincides with Monsanto’s presence in the country. Monsanto has been silent on this coincidental timeline, silence being a convenient rhetorical tool for the company in this uncomfortable rhetorical situation.

In India, the cause of farmers takes on an added flavor for the scholar of power dynamics due to the concept of non-cooperation at the heart of a grassroots movement. In the post-Independence era, the non-cooperation stance has manifested itself through the ecofeminist, anti-Monsanto demonstrations of farming women. Such an ideological stand has a dynamic of its own, deriving its strength from the fact that when people suddenly withdraw consent and cooperation, the establishment finds itself in the doldrums. The effectiveness of this strategy in a specific rhetorical situation (India) shows how eco-feminism needs to consider the ethos of a land, as it were, the way it is defined by its history, culture, local perceptions, knowledges and wisdom, and how such locally-focused strategizing can help dismantle structures of oppression around the world. As Shiva points out in The Navdanya Diary, her blog-journal, rhetorical tools of resistance should be devised according to local ethos and wisdom instead of the mindless imposition of western discourses of resistance. In other words, local
sciences need to be utilized to add momentum to discursive voices that counter hegemonic multinational corporate food politics, not just in India but around the world.

6.3 Monsanto’s depiction of Africa

After looking at postcolonial India, my discussion will now focus on continental Africa to see how “talk” around the circumstances at a given place feeds discourse and has, more specifically, contributed to the myth of need that Monsanto created to enter the local agricultural system. While addressing the research question about the role of the socio-political situation in a country in enabling the entry of a foreign company, Africa also serves as a case in point that proves Pennycook’s notion that “…the meaning of a text cannot be reduced to the readings of the text analysis outside of the social take up” (84). Several parts of the continent have been in the grip of famine for decades and the socio-economic situation was highly conducive for Monsanto’s “service” in the 1970s. Once again with reference to the rhetorically significant image of the African child in a village school (see figure 1), I argue by using CDA that Monsanto’s use of the headline “Our Commitment” in the section “Who We Are”, followed by words and expressions such as “heart,” “commitment,” “sustainable agriculture,” “value system,” “family,” and “principled code of conduct” shows us how the company implicitly uses narratives of food shortage, starvation, and the sufferings of families in the agriculture sector to package its business agenda in a politically correct way, catering to the sensibilities of prospective clients in an increasingly environment-conscious world.

Here is what the incredibly powerful image of the African village student seems to say: in the face of impending catastrophe due to shortage in food supply, Monsanto is committed to (with reference to the headline “Our Commitment”) providing sustenance as well as enabling
long-term supportive aids such as education. This is a prime example of CSR-based rhetoric powering the company’s myth of serving the needy. In addition, on the homepage of its site monsantoafrica.com, focusing exclusively on Africa, the company reiterates its claim that its aim is “Bridging the gap between people’s needs and their available resources.” In fact, a Monsanto executive won the 2013 World Food Prize (based in Des Moines, IA; founded by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Norman Borlaug and awarded since 1987) for her work in the seed biotech industry. Interestingly, Borlaugh, founder of the World Food Prize, is the same agricultural scientist whose graph on rising world population is featured on Monsanto’s website (see figure 11). However, referring back to the secondary research question regarding the tactics and mechanisms used by a corporation to achieve economic colonization in a postcolonial world, here is how Monsanto uses non-military means to gain control over people’s lives: it is through their hearts, or as Gramsci would say, through their consent.

Monsanto reinforces the myth of “fulfilling the promise” of “genuine value system” by “engaging our communities in a significant and positive manner” (quoted from the screenshot). The image of the African boy learning mathematics in a village school with thatched walls is an instance of optimal use of visual rhetoric to impress upon readers that the company genuinely cares; it speaks directly to hearts of an audience who are concerned about the socio-economic problems in this developing/under-developed part of the world. As Said would point out here, there a measure of Orientalism behind the assumption that it is but natural that an African boy would need to be educated by a Western-oriented company. The rest of the page repeats key words from other pages – “commitment,” “pledge,” “Sustainable Agriculture,” “Fighting Rural Hunger,” “Human Rights,” “Corporate Giving,” “improving agriculture,” and “improving lives” –
which underscore Monsanto’s claim that it is ethically saving the world’s hungry population. The idea is to show, again and again, Monsanto’s contribution toward the community by helping educate the youth in underprivileged parts of the world. This image is therefore meant to re-establish credibility for the multinational corporation with a beleaguered reputation since the controversies over GMO and unethical business practices. Now, here is one of the stories behind the story that the image of the African boy does not say. It is important to bring this story to the fore using an ecofeminist lens so that this analysis can include, with the purpose of revealing concealed agendas, assumptions and meanings, how corporate colonizers operate.

There was a huge crop failure in South Africa in 2008/9 due to a breeding error in Monsanto’s genetically engineered seeds. According to an online petition started by the African Center for Biosafety, Monsanto did compensate farmers who suffered losses but “banned them from speaking to the media, and made no mention of whether they compensated resource poor farmers who were given the seed and lost their yield as well” (as posted by Juhie Bhatia for the “Pulitzer Center/Global Voices Online” series on Food Insecurity on 21 July 2010).

The website, Food Sovereignty Ghana, reported on 15 October 2013 that seven African nations marched against Monsanto in Accra. According to the website, the march “seeks to halt the government from signing up to UPOV, an irreversible legal action which will have grave consequences for our sovereignty as a nation, for economic justice, and the safely and diversity of the food we eat in Ghana.” In the face of such opposition from several countries, Monsanto counters on its website (“Newsviews” section) that opposing GMOs is a luxury of Western privilege that denies developing countries vital resources to feed impoverished communities and, in the context of selling genetically modified seeds, it is a “myth” spread by detractors that
“Monsanto has undue influence on governments through lobbying and the hiring practices of governments.” This gives a whole different spin to the argument – making the worse case seem better as Plato would say – by suggesting the opponents’ position is unfounded, uninformed, and unjustified.

The current agricultural system in India, including its trade agreements, patent agreements, and policies further aid and abet this myth of catastrophe. As Storey says, for de Certeau the socio-cultural field is “a site of continual conflict (silent and almost invisibly) between the ‘strategy’ of cultural imposition (production) and the ‘tactics’ of cultural use (consumption or ‘secondary production’)” (222). What de Certeau calls secondary use is in fact the act of consumption, which triggers or hinders production by generating or not generating demand. The way this maps over the production-consumption scenario in today’s neoliberal capitalist marketplace is through the “continual conflict” between the agenda of production and the imposition of products by multinational corporations and decisions regarding the use of such products by consumers (in this case, by farmers and those connected with agriculture).

Ironically, as Rueschemeyer et al. point out, “the unrestrained operation” of the market for “capital and labor” (243) is what forms the material base of democracy. This is an instance where democracy manifests as the characteristic political form of capitalism, even if does not quite serve the interests of the people, and in a way enables neocolonialism by providing corporations with “unrestrained” access to markets and individual consumers.

6.4 Monsanto and Chile

The dialectic involving Monsanto in Chile is the third instance of “talk” underscoring Fairclough’s notion that relations between discourse and people, power relations and
institutions are “interconnected elements in social activity or praxis” (3), which also impact the way myths are created. Moreover, as the case described below shows, hegemony/power is not something constant but needs to be worked on continuously (a theory proposed by Gramsci) and Monsanto’s attempts at responding to some of the allegations against it prove this theory. The following case demonstrates how rhetorical praxis, in this case ecofeminist, is influenced by the way things are (and vice versa), leading to shifting of power toward the oppressed, which in turn an result in transformative action. This case also shows how the neo colonizer (Monsanto) has learned to make small concessions and changes to retain power in a modified fashion, just like the Western colonizer of yore facing rebellious natives.

The subject in this January 2014 story of shifting locus of power is the (then) 38-year-old Chilean farmer named Jose Pizarro Montoya. The farmer exposed agricultural-giant Monsanto’s “unethical patenting” agenda at a GMO-seminar hosted by the Chilean government and went on to win a lawsuit against Monsanto despite breaking the rules in his contract. According to a news report by Lucia Sepulveda Ruiz, dated 23 January 2014, published on the blog, Sustainable Pulse (sustainablepulse.com), Montoya is the first Latin American to win a lawsuit against Monsanto/ANASAC for breach of contract (ANASAC, or Agricola Nacional S.A.C. is a Chilean company in the agricultural and forestry market that serves as the distributor of Monsanto products in Chile and Peru). Since the contract Montoya signed with ANASAC did not let him sue the company through regular courts, he had to follow the expensive procedure of filing with the Chilean Chamber of Commerce. This incident shows how, as Fairclough said, the increased negotiation required by contemporary global discourse “demands highly developed dialogical capacities” (140). In other words, modern discourse demands an ability to interact
creatively within nuanced situations, while justifying one’s position among a wider set of possibilities. It was a huge victory for Montoya and the resistance movement at the individual level, even though in terms of the money that Monsanto or its Chilean subsidiary paid to Pizarro, it was a small concession. This small concession, however, is of immense significance to an eco-feminist scholar of rhetoric focused on how the discourse in response to Monsanto’s neoliberal practices helped transcend local exigencies to become a “transglocal” cause.

In response to criticism related to aggressive and unethical patenting of products in Chile (just as in other places), Monsanto addresses the matter directly saying it is simply not true. In the Company section, it lists several “myths” about the company, including the following: “Monsanto has never sued a farmer when trace amounts of our patented seeds or traits were present in the farmer’s fields as an accident or as a result of inadvertent means.” The company notably avoids mentioning second-generation seed users, and goes on to defend itself against yet another charge that it sells “terminator” (or sterile) seeds. Listing this as yet another myth (see figure 17), the company says it has “never commercialized a biotech trait that resulted in sterile – or “Terminator” – seeds... We made a commitment in 1999 not to commercialize technologies that result in sterile seeds...” A close reading of the language in this statement will, however, reveal that the company does not deny having technologies that produce sterile seeds. The question, then, is: Why does it produce such seeds? Here is yet another instance of using evasive language and also remaining silent about a major aspect of its research and business practices. Under the circumstances, as mentioned before, it is a matter of compromises, small adjustments, and concessions to the resistive farmer, Montoya.
The predicament of farmers who fell for the neoliberal capitalist “humanitarian” rhetoric of Monsanto has been the same across the world from Africa to the Indian subcontinent and Latin America. In Chile, bankrupt farmers had to sell their land and other assets to be able to honor their contracts with Monsanto and go from being landowners to becoming workers, thus becoming financially colonized. Furthermore, as reported in the website entitled ThinkProgress (thinkprogress.org), Monsanto repeated its practice of aggressively enforcing patents against farmers “who use second-generation seeds produced by the prior harvest rather than buy new seeds, often bankrupting these farmers through legal fees” (report by Aviva Shen on 17 October 2013).

I have thus highlighted three instances – in India, Africa, and Chile – that exemplify Monsanto’s actions to promote business around the world and eventually control and colonize
the market economy. My purpose here is to show that when Monsanto crafts the “myth” of
catastrophe related to global food production, they project their own contribution to it in a
positive light while omitting news and scientific reports that are contrary. It needs to be
mentioned here that sometimes the company simply downplays or strongly contradicts
opposing reports and opinions. In such situations, as in the case of sterile second generation
genetically modified seeds, I see how the art of sophists has been (mis)used, validating Plato
and Aristotle’s comment that rhetoric can be (ab)used to make “the worse case seem the
better.” I have also looked at the multinational’s narrative in light of de Certeau’s concept of
“myth,” which is in the context of the cultural field, to see how it can fabricate catastrophe
through rhetoric.

Finally, I have noted how state-run agricultural systems with their trade agreements,
patent agreements, and policies are aiding and abetting the creation of this myth of food
catastrophe and need. After analyzing the “state-financial nexus” in three continents and
instances of individual rebellion against the mighty Monsanto, I concur with Hall who says that
even though “in ambition, depth, degree of break with the past, variety of sites being colonized,
impact on common sense and shift in the social architecture, neoliberalism does constitute a
hegemonic project,” (27) this is not a “completed project.” In other words, “Hegemony [and
counter-hegemony as well] has constantly to be ‘worked on’, maintained, renewed, revised.”

Thus, “Excluded social forces, whose consent has not been won, whose interests have not been
taken in to account, form the basis of counter-movements, resistance, alternative strategies
and visions... and the struggle over a hegemonic system starts anew” (26). Monsanto’s market
rhetoric and the counter rhetoric of those who resist exemplify this Gramscian struggle over
hegemony. Referring to the language used by colonizing Orientalists, who ostensibly wanted to “civilize” natives through colonization in the past, Said had said: “…rarely were Orientalists interested in anything except proving the validity of these musty ‘truths’ by applying them…” (18). Today, Monsanto tries to do the same by repeatedly applying the “truths” in its myths to consumers around the world.
Chapter 7: Shiva and Resistance by Ecofeminists

Today’s resistive ecofeminists are farming people as well as activists targeted by a corporation. Specifically, with reference to the primary research question in this study, I ask: What can scholars of rhetoric learn about neocolonialism from the resistance put up by ecofeminists? Following the premise of chapter 6 that Monsanto fits the neoliberal capitalist version of Western colonial forces, this chapter examines how the ecofeminist voices of opposition, as exemplified by Navdanya (www.navdanya.org), can be seen as digital age resistance against corporate attempts to “develop” their apparently under-developed world. This provides a new direction to Said’s notion that the Orientalists or colonizers of the past tried to apply “musty ‘truths’ [of need]” to “uncomprehending, yet degenerate, natives” (18). In the neoliberal capitalist times, people targeted by Monsanto may have been “uncomprehending” initially, but after a few decades of catastrophic experience with the company’s products they now seem to have become aware and informed about the proliferation of GMO and the industrialization of agriculture. Rather than being agency-less victims, they have learned to articulate to a global audience that the real “degenerate” aspect of this neoliberal capitalist scenario is the profiteering ways of corporations. Today’s resistive individuals/groups are environment-conscious advocates of an organic lifestyle, or ecofeminist activists speaking for the cause of the earth.

This chapter looks at the power negotiations between ecofeminists and a corporation during its attempt at economic colonization. With reference to the second research question regarding the socio-political situation in a former colony that makes corporate colonization
possible, I use the ecofeminist lens to examine how Monsanto manipulated Indian farmers into buying its promise of food security. Huckin et al. would describe such corporate business practices discursive manipulation of consumers. A study of the ecofeminist’s counter-argument to what Appadurai called the “megarhetorics” (10) of development helps explain in greater depth the ramifications of global trade agreements and state-corporation collusions; or more specifically, how international and national financial and political bodies collude to enforce globalization of agriculture through less than ethical means. For example, in Navdanya, Shiva calls out the Indian government for allowing Monsanto to patent indigenous food grains such as basmati rice, which was the legacy of Indian farmers for centuries. This patenting exposes how the state was instrumental in opening the nation’s doors to biopiracy by a foreign company. However, on the positive side, the subsequent nationwide rage has kept Monsanto’s attempt at patenting the medicinal neem plant on hold. This reflects the ongoing power play between today’s natives and the corporate colonizer.

Thus, I trace how today’s ecofeminists are trying to shift the balance of socio-economic power away from a domineering corporation back into the hands of individual farmers. The idea is to see how, by bringing together small but vital voices of resistance on a transglocal, digital platform, these eco-conscious people have taken the next step to gaining agency. Owing to ecofeminist ideology, “agency” emerges as a key concept for scholars of rhetoric to take away from this study, showing the direction that future scholarship can take when examining neo-colonization by corporations through development discourse. Furthermore, while locating the ecofeminist’s agency, this discussion also offers insight into how, as the third research
question asks, digital media can help build resistance to a multinational corporation's neoliberal agenda by enabling cross-pollination of transnational/transglocal voices.

7.1 The ecofeminist finds agency on transglocal digital platform

Vandana Shiva’s website, Navdanya, is essentially a blog promoting an organization that is “a network of seed keepers and organic seed producers across 18 states in India” (quoted from Navdanya’s homepage). The word “Navdanya” (“nav” meaning “nine” and “danya” meaning “seeds”) is symbolic of the source from which life sprouts on our green planet. A word-level analysis of the title of the blog shows how Shiva has chosen a single but potent word to a) let the reader know at the outset they should expect an earth-friendly leitmotif, b) have a positive approach (drawn from the life-giving connotation of seeds) to counter Monsanto’s negative undertones of hunger and death, and c) turn the focus on those who have traditionally been the keepers of seeds and can, therefore, be instrumental in retrieving what is lost (organic mode of farming). Since the purpose of this organization is to spearhead a grassroots movement in the farming community against the proliferation of genetically modified seeds sold by Monsanto, www.navdanya.org has the look and feel of an advocacy website with links to the following: Shiva’s online journal, The Navdanya Diary; her personal website, vandanashiva.com, which leads to seedfreedom.info; latest news reports on the anti-GMO movement in India and other parts of the world; new publications by Navdanya as an organization and by Shiva individually; references to her earlier books; videos of her speeches delivered in India and abroad; information on upcoming events connected with the seed
independence and organic farming movement; and finally, *Navdanya* and Shiva’s Facebook and Twitter pages. Shiva also invites readers to subscribe to a mailing list.

The interactive social media links and Shiva’s invitation to join her mailing list are instances of how online technology can be used as tools to achieve the political aspects of discursive manipulation, although not necessarily in a malevolent way. The transglocal reach of the digital medium shows how, in today’s virtual spaces of resistance rhetoric, rhetors from different parts of the world can come together and network in response to a common cause transcending their local exigencies. The assumption here is that Monsanto is a common enemy for all eco-conscious citizens. Thus, Monsanto becomes a common transglocal cause through *Navdanya*’s discursive platform.

The emergence of such a worldwide discursive platform speaks to the third research question about how digital technology facilitates the building of resistance against a multinational corporation’s globalization agenda. Appadurai was impressed by “…the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information” (34-35), which is demonstrated by the extensive use of digital media by both Shiva and Monsanto and their critics. This capability to “produce and disseminate” words further complicates the way in which negotiations take place between the two sides at the global level, with other stakeholders such as national governments, trade bodies and their political networks contributing to the transaction of ideas, formulation of policies, and implementation of agendas. Such contributions from various stakeholders add to, as well as enrich, the talk around both Shiva and Monsanto’s texts. One of the outcomes of such inclusion of various parties in
the “talk” is that it complicates the process of colonization, ensuring that power is in a state of constant flux and hegemony is not an absolute or static thing.

Shiva’s text in Navdanya is replete with photographs, videos, and news feed of activism against Monsanto, and it is updated constantly with new information relating to the impact of genetically modified crops on the agricultural community. It is obvious from the news and research-based reports, use of scientific terms (such as those connected with BT cotton), and references to people connected with the global agricultural-business (from the corporate, political, and academic areas) that Shiva’s target audience is interdisciplinary, but primarily those who are already cued into the discourse of resistance against GMO. This is also corroborated by the comments posted on the site. She seems to be making the assumption that her readers are aware of the clash of interests between big corporations and farmers, and that the material she provides on her blog, which is both current news and her reaction to it, has the potential to influence their opinions regardless of the side they are on. However, this also happens to be an open blog accessible to anyone who might happen to stumble upon it, and the language, tone, and style of presentation of the matter are simple enough for the layperson with knowledge of the English language.

Given the integrated and comprehensive nature of www.navdanya.org along with the sites linked with it, and the fact that the links often lead to talk associated with Shiva’s stance on Monsanto, I find it necessary to study all the sites as a whole. Especially in the context of key concepts such as “seed freedom,” “organic farming,” and “food sovereignty,” it is important to see how they are presented repeatedly across sites to reinforce a common narrative of corporate greed and neoliberal capitalist malpractices, making readers aware of, as Fairclough
would say, the involvement of language in “the workings of contemporary capitalist societies” (1). In doing so, however, Shiva herself politicizes language as well.

A quick observation at this point is that although it does not quite have the sophistication and polish of monsanto.com on the design front, Navdanya is full of information, which contributes to its ethos as a serious platform for discursive resistance against the corporatization of farming: that is, speaking for agriculture in general and against Monsanto in particular. The credibility of the creator of the blog is a critical matter here as she tries to garner support for her cause. The image Shiva presents to the world has drawn support and negative critique in equal measure, building more talk around her text, and I will discuss this topic in detail later in this chapter. As the creator of a blog that lists the activities of The Diverse Women for Diversity (DWD, an international, eco-conscious women’s organization) as far back as May 1998, Shiva is a veteran in the online arena of discourse. She clearly knows, as Phillips would put it, that audience perceptions "are governed by underlying rules of discourse formations... and authorized by relations of power" (328). So, while casting herself in the authoritative role of the creator of Navdanya, she is knowingly setting an example in feminist rhetorical praxis that aims at guiding her audience – concerned citizens, members of the farming community, and colleagues or other activists in her network – to respond in a certain way; perhaps support her by engaging in the discourse, or “Like” her via Facebook, or even donate to her cause.

A discussion of the role that Shiva plays on her website necessitates a comparison with Monsanto’s role on its website as seen in the previous chapter through the lens of Burke’s dramatisic pentad. While Monsanto was the protagonist-hero-savior and omniscient voice-over
in monsanto.com, Shiva is the protagonist-activist in www.navdanya.org, often also doubling up as the farmers’ spokesperson. The notable point of similarity between the two websites/stages is that farmers are the objects – and not protagonists – in both. However, while the objects in monsanto.com seem to be grateful recipients of the corporation’s apparent goodness and charity, www.navdanya.org’s objects denounce corporate intrusion in their lives. I will now map Burke’s dramatistic pentad over the rhetorical situation in www.navdanya.org at the script/casting level as well as at the higher concept level for a comparative study with monsanto.com to bring out the similar and contrasting elements in the two websites, which will help explain how each makes its case before a global audience.

Shiva’s performance, as it were, pertains to a crucial moment in the lives of farmers when something needs to be done to reverse the GMO-related problems. However, the farmers, as the objects of her narrative, play the role of a supporting cast. While Monsanto is the primary villain, there are also secondary villains or accomplices in the form of government departments or officials and other stakeholders in the neoliberal capitalist set up who facilitate the global corporation’s entry into a country’s agricultural economy and help it realize its business agenda. It begs reiterating here that despite’s Shiva’s resistive stand against Monsanto, it is ironic how the farmers whose lives are in question in this narrative are relegated to the role of supporting cast (with less agency than the protagonist) while the character with the power to narrate their story (Shiva herself, the protagonist as well as digital rhetorician who creates the website) steals the show with her spectacular omnipresence. While her agency and her “utterances” depict her as a voice for mute and marginalized farmers, or the subaltern, it also brings the spotlight back on Spivak’s salient question: “Can the Subaltern
Speak?” However, this also problematizes the purpose of ecofeminist activism on behalf of subalterns by essentializing them – albeit strategically – which has been one of Spivak’s main critiques against ecofeminism. Spivak considers speaking for subalterns problematic; what she values is enabling subalterns to gain agency. Indeed that seems to be Shiva’s aim in her writings: she is attempting to create conditions that would enable subalterns to move toward hegemony. This leads the debate on “essentialism” to questions on how useful it is to essentialize in a strategic manner: that is, to take a temporary stand for social change. While the discussion on “strategic essentialism” continues, Spivak herself has withdrawn her own landmark expression.

Added to the above problem of “essentialism” is the fact Shiva, and not the farmers, take center stage in the virtual drama played out on her website. The main criticism of Shiva related to her activist persona as seen on her website as well as public appearances in India and abroad is that self-promotion (and not the cause of the farmer) is her priority. However, as Kapoor points out, this is actually helpful for the farmer’s cause since she can use her celebrity status to promote the issue at the international level. As a person from India who studied in the West, she is able to set an example in linking a local grassroots movement with transnational ecofeminist discourses and help address larger issues such as economic disparity and deprivation in a postcolonial world. Furthermore, in doing so Shiva also addresses Spivak’s critique that she is only concerned about the empowerment of disenfranchised women and, therefore, limits the scope of ecofeminist activism. As obvious from her website, Shiva speaks for the entire farming community and an organic future, rather than just for women.
Returning to Shiva’s website or virtual stage, the site design and navigational tools serve as the stage and its props, complete with light and sound in the form of visuals and embedded audio/video. To extend Burke’s notions of the dramatistic pentad from the real world to the virtual world, it is useful to consider Tronstad’s observation that theater/drama is a characteristic feature of some performances in cyberspace. Referring to Russian dramatist-theorist Nicolas Evreinoff’s invention of a genre named “monodrama,” Tronstad says that in the virtual world, the central character of a MUD (multi-user dungeon) environment stages a “monodrama,” or a situation “when everything on stage is seen from the viewpoint of one main character only” (220). Shiva, the protagonist of Navdanya, stages a monodrama too, presenting a narrative of her anti-Monsanto eco-critical cause to a worldwide audience online. Playing this persona effectively requires mastery of what Simmons and Grabill describe as “an art that is powerfully inventive and performative” (422) and the critical use of technology.

The concept of “monodrama” in conjunction with the dramatistic pentad shows how navdanya.com has been crafted to challenge monsanto.com, with its script, characters, and stage props conceptualized for the purpose of deflating Monsanto’s narrative/myth of the need for a savior in the face of impending food catastrophe. Shiva presents the key concepts of food security (as opposed to insecurity), sustainable production (as opposed to food shortage leading to famine), and preservation of organically produced seeds (as opposed to buying genetically modified seeds) as counterarguments to Monsanto’s claims. In short, while the backdrop and stage props are the same, the hero/protagonist and the villain reverse roles, and the secondary characters serve different purposes.

It is interesting how the act of crafting a website is akin to enacting theater on a virtual
stage, while it is also noteworthy how such mapping over helps this study understand the contrasting power scenarios in the two websites. At the heart of this analysis lies Fairclough’s analytical strategy in conjunction with Foucault’s concept of locating power in social interactions and associations. If Monsanto draws power from its claim that it can alleviate hunger, then Shiva proposes that farmers reclaim that power by gaining control over seeds. Shiva’s proposal for farmers in India is an example of feminist rhetorical praxis and the goal of such praxis is to lead to transformative action, which is how the postcolonial native strives to overthrow the new capitalist colonizer.

The power to overthrow a colonizer can come from self-sufficiency and in order to assert that the Indian farmer is capable of being independent, Shiva shows pictures of Indian women dressed in saris – whether working on farms or participating in demonstrations – which is again contrary to Monsanto’s images of partially clothed people underlining the tale of poverty. For Monsanto, power lies in perpetuating its image of the “savior” in a world full of needy people. As such, any suggestion of self-sufficiency among those apparently resource-poor people poses a danger to the corporation’s power. In contrast, Shiva’s version of the discourse highlights the power of the people and resists the danger that the corporation poses to that power.

Silences and omissions, as seen earlier in monsanto.com, are two such procedures that Shiva uses as well. She excludes all such notions from her blog that feed into Monsanto’s narrative of need. The recurring motif that is conspicuous through absence is that she does not show the Indian farming community in a “resource poor” light. Even when Shiva writes about indigenous or tribal people who still practice traditional methods of farming, she calls them
“independent people.” Obviously, among the “procedures of exclusion” employed by both Monsanto and Shiva is avoidance of words that contradict the narrative each tries to establish.

Figure 18. *Navdanya* features Indian farmers at a rally on the occasion of the 2016 International Year of Pulses. While there is no show of opulence, the farmers are all adequately dressed (www.navdanya.com). Accessed 15 June 2016.

Furthermore, as seen in the images below, Shiva imparts a tone of respectability to the subjects in the discourse, which is very different from the way Monsanto depicts members of the African farming community. The women in the image certainly don’t look helpless; on the contrary, they seem to be aware of the importance of sustainable farming practices and are, therefore, motivated to find out more about better practices related to growing lentils.
Figure 19. Screenshot from www.navdanya.org showing children from the farming community in India attending an event related to the 2016 International Year of Pulses. None of the children seems inadequately clad, unlike the African children shown on Monsanto’s official website. Accessed 15 June 2016.

It can be inferred then, the study of silences and omissions can reveal as much as the spoken word about a rhetorical situation and the rhetoric used. This post-Marxist approach of investigating silences and omissions in a given text is what Althusser described as a way of analyzing the symptomatic to unearth the problematic. The key to understanding the problematic – or what’s going on behind the scenes – is to decipher the power relations in the situation. When the rhetor deliberately withholds key information from the audience, it is with the intention of persuading in a certain direction through avoidance (Shiva’s effort to avoid showing Indian farmers as resource poor) or through ignorance (Monsanto suppression of the effect of sterile seeds in Chile).

Now, having discussed the “procedures of exclusion,” it is important to mention what is included. Perhaps most significant among the included elements is the word “seed.” While focusing on “seed,” Shiva carefully selects data that provides logical support to her claim that Monsanto is responsible for replacing local varieties of cotton with genetically modified cotton and “coerceing extravagant royalties from farmers” for the harvest gathered from these hybrid Bt cottonseeds. In the article titled “Monsanto vs Indian farmers” posted on March 28, 2016 (embedded in her journal The Navdanya Diary, which is accessible from the main website, navdanya.org), reason/logos is entwined with pathos as Shiva makes the case that since Monsanto’s entry into India in 1998, the price of cotton seeds has increased astronomically, as a result of which, “300,000 Indian farmers have committed suicide, trapped in various cycles of
debt and crop failures.” According to Shiva, “84% of these suicides are attributed directly to Monsanto’s Bt cotton.” Furthermore, Monsanto has patented Bt cotton, which helped them gain monopoly on the seed. Shiva provides the link to an article (see figure 21) in the “BusinessLine” section of one of India’s most respected newspapers, The Hindu, on a show cause notice served to Monsanto by the Indian Government urging revocation of the patent.

Figure 22: Screenshot of part of a seed price control order issued by the Government of India against Monsanto posted on Navdanya. Shiva says Monsanto is challenging the order as a “desperate act” ([www.navdanya.org](http://www.navdanya.org)). Accessed 15 June 2016.

By way of further evidence of Monsanto’s business practices that violated farmers’ rights, Shiva provides an image (see figure 22) of a price control order issued by the Indian government “slashing Monsanto’s royalty on Bt cottonseeds by 74% since the technology has lost its efficacy in resisting certain pest attacks...” Clearly, while the leitmotif in the Monsanto drama was “hunger,” the watchword in Shiva’s script is “seed.” Shiva makes the argument that Monsanto has been misrepresenting the concept of “hunger” for commercial purposes. If Monsanto says that GMO is the need of the hour to feed a burgeoning population, then Shiva advocates that organically produced seeds are the answer to long-term, sustainable food production. The above observations regarding Shiva vis-à-vis Monsanto are based on Fairclough’s theory that “discourse" can only be understood in the light of its internal and external relations with "objects" ([Critical Discourse Analysis](http://www.criticaldiscourseanalysis.org)) 3, the “objects” in this case being
farmers, seeds, and the prospect of hunger. Fairclough adds that it is a “complex” and “layered” (3) set of social relations that includes relations of communication between people and also relations between “concrete communicative events” (3), which in this study consist of the arguments and counter-arguments on GMO, sustainable agriculture, and healthy living posted by Shiva and Monsanto on their respective websites.

The above analysis also brings to light the other kind of relations that Fairclough says exists between discourse and complex “objects” in the physical world, people, power relations and institutions “which are interconnected elements in social activity or praxis” (3): Shiva’s activist praxis and Monsanto’s neoliberal capitalist praxis are related to one another in a way that is co-dependent; that is, one would have no meaning or reason to exist without the other. In that sense, the two types of praxes draw power from their mutual dynamic of opposition and this power is in a state of constant tug-of-war as it were, rather than being static or hegemonic at any one end or the other. This is what the scholar of rhetoric may glean from a study of corporate discourse on development and the resistance to it in today’s neoliberal capitalist times.

7.2 Shiva’s strategy of countering the myth of “hunger” with the potential of “seed”

If Monsanto based its raison d’être on “hunger,” then Shiva’s way to food sovereignty is “seeds” obtained locally through an organic movement. In this proposed scenario of homegrown food, farmers play the role of objects empowered with agency that can change their lives for the better. Here is another version of Shiva’s drama based on the same context as in http://www.monsanto.com, yet with a very different script that puts the local first rather
than the global, proposing how power can be moved from the hands of the dominator to the hands of the dominated. Demonstrating what Fairclough would describe as “highly developed dialogical capacities” (*Critical Discourse Analysis* 140), Shiva presents her argument against Monsanto in a very methodical way that can be mapped over the four basic questions in Stasis Theory, which I will show below. Furthermore, her use of the canons of invention, arrangement, and delivery make her argument well organized while also packing her message with the force of reason (drawn from facts/conjecture) and concern (alarm at the consequences of using Monsanto’s products). At the end, she also provides suggestions for a solution to the problem.

The following points are summarized from a Facebook post by Shiva that is linked to her blog (www.facebook.com/hashtag/vandanashiva):

- **The facts:** GMOs are a recipe for global famine. Since patented seeds are illegal to save for replanting, farmers are denied their traditional right to save seeds for replanting.
- **The meaning or nature of the issue:** GMO agriculture is a chemically intensive system that causes soil infertility. Industrial agriculture has already caused the loss of 75 percent of the seed diversity of our ancestors’ times. Biodiversity equals food security, but today’s practice of monocropping (due to infertile second-generation GMO seeds) is destroying the planet.
- **The seriousness of the issue:** Agrochemicals are building up in the soil, the water bodies, and in consumers’ bodies. The accumulation of Glyphosate (Roundup weedkiller) is especially alarming. In addition, there is the problem of Terminator Seed Technology, which produces plants genetically modified to kill their own seeds (meaning, bear
infertile seeds). Furthermore, when pollen from terminator plants cross-pollinate with other natural varieties, they make otherwise viable seeds infertile. The goal of such technology is maximize seed industry profits by preventing farmers from reusing harvested seeds and forcing them to buy from the seed market every year.

• The plan of action to repair the issue: Setting up a centralized food system. A network of home gardens and small to midsized farms can offer greater food security than a globalized system. Diversity of plant varieties as well as farms creates a more stable food supply.

The information provided above is in the context of the destruction of traditional Indian cotton and soybean in particular, which, as an example of the “highly developed dialogical capacities” mentioned above, speaks directly to the experiences of the Indian farming community. The effectiveness of this strategy in a specific rhetorical situation (India) shows how eco-feminism needs to consider the ethos of a land, the way it is defined by its history, culture, people, perceptions, knowledges and wisdom, and how such locally-focused strategizing can help dismantle structures of oppression around the world. In this context, Shiva’s use of local actors (farmers featured on the web pages and herself as well) helps pervade her narrative with the flavors of the local soil. In stark contrast to the keywords on Monsanto’s website that build a narrative of “hunger” and the need of a savior, Shiva’s website features words and expressions that promote change through self-sufficiency.

If the dramatistic pentad explained how the digital rhetorician enacts her play, complete with actors, a script, and stage props, Burke’s scientistic approach to presenting an argument shows how the rhetor can handle the language of the script, beginning with questions of
naming or defining. The scientistic approach builds a case using language, or a “terministic screen,” with primary stress upon a proposition such as “it is,” or “it is not.” This is seen in Shiva’s presentation of the issue related to Monsanto’s narrative of hunger and need. In Shiva’s counter-narrative, “it is” a fact that corporate greed and GMO technology have caused a serious problem for the farming community, not just in India but all over the world. Conversely, some of Shiva’s critics and Monsanto representatives can say “it is not” true that industrial agriculture is a problem; “it is” in fact a solution to the rising “hunger’ problem. However, the scientistic approach culminates in the kinds of speculation we associate with symbolic logic, so Shiva provides logos in the form of cause (GMO) and effect (infertility of seeds leading to loss of livelihood among farmers leading to suicides) and goes on to project (speculate) further deepening of the crisis if the problem is not addressed immediately. Addressing the problem requires action, and in such action Shiva can meet the goal of Burke’s scientistic approach.

As I had mentioned before, the most prominent expressions used by Shiva are: “seed sovereignty,” “organic movement,” and “food security.” “Seed,” in particular, appears on every page, featured article, and news report or video, both in the literal sense of what farmers grow and should rightfully claim as their own, and in the metaphoric sense of being the germ of agricultural independence. Other frequently used words are “sovereignty” (swaraj in Hindi) and “security,” as opposed to “insecurity” in monsanto.com. The contrast with Monsanto’s use of “hunger,” “challenge of feeding,” and “food insecurity” is obvious, the purpose being to show how corporate “megarhetorics of development have … [misleading] implications about the material conditions of citizens, their health and well-being, and [alarming] implications about sovereignty” (Scott and Dingo 4) that people need to be aware of. Shiva’s use of language also
demonstrates her ability to meet the demands of modern discourse to interact creatively within nuanced situations – such as discussions about “implications” of development on people’s lives – that could be given both positive and negative spins.

In her book *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply* Shiva (1997), Shiva describes Monsanto’s policies as “biopiracy” and “seed slavery,” expressions that have obvious negative connotations, implying that the company’s unethical praxes of business globalization serve as neocolonization strategies in a postcolonial world. She adds in this this book (featured on her website): “Monsanto has bought up the seed business of corporations such as Cargill, Agracetus, Calgene... It owns the broad species patents on soybean... Monsanto also owns a patent on herbicide-resistant plants... It also covers methods for weed control, planting of seeds, and application of glyphosate (a herbicide)” (29). In other words, the company controls every single step in the production of certain plants, “from breeding to cultivation to sale” (29). Explaining further in layman’s terms how Monsanto goes about its business, Shiva writes: “Normally soybeans are too delicate to spray once they start sprouting... But now, since two of its products – the bean and the weed-killer – are so closely linked, Monsanto gets to sell more of both” (30). Again, this statement is crafted for audiences who may not be scientists but can understand commonsense cause-and-effect reasoning about things. Words and expressions such “monopoly” and “cotton seed has been snatched from the hands of Indian farmers” help build Shiva’s case against Monsanto’s narrative of service or CSR and thus, challenge the company’s self-justification and claim to legitimacy. She describes Monsanto’s policies as “biopiracy” and “seed slavery,” both being practices of business globalization that aid neocolonization in a postcolonial world.
Figure 23. Shiva’s Facebook page features a post encapsulating her take on GMO’s effects and what needs to be done to change it (www.facebook.com/hashtag/vandanashiva). Post dated 27 June 2013. Accessed 15 June 2016.

The word “suicide” does come up in the context of cotton farmers, but the emphasis here is on the ill effects of Monsanto’s genetically modified seeds that failed to deliver rather than on the farmers and their societal conditions as seen on the Monsanto website. The idea is
to contradict Monsanto’s claim that “poor” farmers in India have historically committed suicide when they were unable repay farming loans. In the article titled “Seed Monopolies, GMOs and Farmer Suicides in India” (posted on 12 November 2013, in The Navdanya Diary), Shiva uses pathos effectively as she says: “As a human being, it concerns me deeply that 284,694 small farmers of India... have in recent times been driven to the desperation of taking their lives because of a debt trap created by a corporate driven economy...” She adds later: “It is, indeed, a genocide.” The choice of the word “genocide” is notable due the powerful connotation it brings to the Monsanto vis-à-vis Indian farmer context. Interestingly, while Shiva rallies against the seeds of apparent misconception planted by Monsanto regarding the efficacy of GMOs, her critics (such as journalist Michael Specter) expand on the same “seed” metaphor to cast “seeds of doubt” about her motivations and character. A detailed discussion of Shiva’s ethos vis-à-vis Monsanto’s efforts at shoring up credibility is presented below.

7.3 The importance of seeming earnest: Public image management in a global market

Shiva always dresses traditionally in saris made of natural materials (silk and cotton produced and woven in India) as she takes centerstage on Navdanya to provide us with a narrative of the plight of Indian farmers. She also wears a large bindi on the forehead – symbolic of Indian women – when giving interviews or interacting with people in India and abroad (see figure 24). To complement the vibrant colors of her saris, there is an artistic, green floral motif against a burgundy background at the beginning of the blog, setting the stage rhetorically for the cause of an organic, grassroots movement.
The Navdanya Diary features numerous videos of Shiva’s interviews to the media, speeches at universities and various conventions, news about forthcoming demonstrations and other events, cover shots of her books, and links to articles by herself as well as others. Her self-projection on the virtual stage is that an audience-savvy woman who travels between India and
Canada/U.S. frequently to speak about her cause. While her web images do carry the organic flavor of the uprising against GMO and Monsanto (in particular) in the subcontinent, critics draw attention to Shiva’s conspicuous presence throughout the blog and say it is mainly self-serving. This criticism does cast a shadow over Shiva’s ethos, but it is also true that unlike in the Monsanto website, her choice of photographs of the Indian farming community does not play up the notion of poverty for pathos. Instead, the images in her blog are positive, speaking about seed conservation events or the revival of traditional farming methods or upcoming awareness programs, basically highlighting the promise of success in the grassroots battle against a giant corporation. This is important in terms of achieving the ecofeminist purposes of (a) preventing colonization of minds with notions of need and helplessness and (b) de-colonizing minds that have already internalized these self-defeating notions. Instead, Shiva’s website talks about self-help and self-sufficiency.

While a section of her audience hails her as a champion of the resistance movement against Monsanto, some of her critics question her academic and professional qualifications, and thereby her credibility, to speak on the science-related subject of GMO. They also make insinuations about her personal motivations or objectives behind running the organization that she declares is non-profit. Shiva’s article titled “Seed Monopolies, GMOs and Farmer Suicides in India” (posted 12 November 2013, in The Navdanya Diary), is in fact in response to Natasha Gilbert’s piece in the online science journal, Nature (www.nature.com), entitled “Case Studies: A hard look at GM crops,” published 1 May 2013 (http://www.nature.com/news/case-studies-a-hard-look-at-gm-crops-1.12907). Gilbert seems to doubt Shiva’s eligibility to speak on the subject of GMO when she describes Shiva as “an environmental and feminist activist from
India” but makes no mention of her educational background in science.

While it is not the purpose of this study to investigate Shiva’s academic credentials, it suffices to note that according to Wikipedia, she has a doctoral degree from the University of Western Ontario on “Hidden variables and locality in quantum theory,” which pertains to the realm of “philosophy of physics.” Investigative journalist Michael Specter also questions Shiva’s claim that she is a physicist and comments in an article in The New Yorker, titled “Seeds of Doubt” (dated 25 August 2014): “Shiva refers to her scientific credentials in almost every appearance, yet she often dispenses with the conventions of scientific inquiry.” In addition, journalist Keith Kloor alleges in a Discover article titled “The Rich Allure of a Peasant Champion” (published 23 October 2014) that Shiva charges a speaking fee of $40,000 for each of her lectures and a business class air ticket from New Delhi. Such information may seem innocuous by itself, but in the context of Shiva’s criticism of Monsanto’s apparent profiteering ways it may provide fodder to critics about her own professional practices. While it is irrelevant for this research to probe the authenticity of Shiva’s claims as a physicist or GMO expert, what is indeed relevant to the lens of CDA is the ecofeminist stance in her messages and her ethos that impels a large number of people to believe her.

Throughout the website, Shiva uses typographic and iconographic/visual elements to muster credibility for her claim that seed and food sovereignty of farmers in India (and other countries) is being held hostage by big corporations such as Monsanto. Shiva also refers to scientific studies and statements by researchers that align with her statements (Monsanto does that too), and this opens the space for adding perspectives from the rhetoric of science to my discussion of the two websites. However, I will leave that for a future study.
Figure 26. Screenshot of Shiva’s Twitter page featuring her in a wheat field wearing a silk sari (@drvandanashiva). The top panel also showcases her books. Critics have accused Shiva of using the anti-GMO cause for self-promotion. Accessed 15 June 2016.

Figure 27. Actor Pierce Brosnan shared a post on Shiva’s Facebook page on 30 April 2016. Science journalist Ronald Bailey called Shiva a “proud self-declared luddite” (http://reason.com/archives/2001/02/28/rebels-against-the-future).
Images of freshly sprouting seeds and green farmlands, sometimes showing the farmers as well, are germane to Shiva’s rhetorical style. The following quote from an interview she gave to NPR (reproduced in a Facebook post that combines typography with iconography) captures her message in a nutshell:

"If they control seed, they control food; they know it, it’s strategic. It’s more powerful than bombs; it’s more powerful than guns. This is the best way to control the populations of the world."

- Vandana Shiva


Whether or not Shiva is a “Quantum Physicist... trained to look at the interconnectedness and non-separability of processes,” it is pertinent to mention here that the
website is not her only venue of publication against Monsanto. She has written several books also where she cites government and academic sources, and mentions fellow activists such as filmmaker P. Sainath who made *Nero’s Guests* (2009) on farmers’ suicides in India. Shiva’s concerns are shared by several other eco-activists, including Canadian journalist and documentary filmmaker Marie-Monique Robin. In the context of the importance of looking earnest while taking on an adversary as powerful as Monsanto, it is helpful to have such talk that comprises the support of other prominent activists. Robin’s words, therefore, are helpful to Shiva as they corroborate her statement that Monsanto is a predator and not savior of farming communities. While Robin’s research takes a slightly different path from Shiva’s in its inquiry into Monsanto’s business practices, her shared concern and interests lend credence to the core purpose of Shiva’s writings/activism. Therefore, even while some critics call Shiva a dramatic attention-seeker, her resistance rhetoric is worth examining in the light of critical rhetorical theory. To summarize then, Shiva, just like Monsanto, has included photographs liberally in her website to support the written text with visual credentials, and what is noteworthy about this strategy is how it is used by both camps to convey the classical appeals to global audiences in the context of 21st century neoliberal capitalism.
Chapter 8: Notions for Future Scholarship in Rhetoric and Writing Studies

As per the primary research question, the purpose of this project was to find out how scholars of rhetoric can locate emerging notions of colonization in a postcolonial world through the study of discourse on neoliberal “development” and the ongoing ecofeminist resistance to it. Since the ideology of ecofeminism aims to resist and contradict the rhetorics of neoliberal capitalism, the objective of this paper was to use ecofeminism in conjunction with CDA as complementary lenses to examine the self-promotional rhetoric in corporatespeak through a case study of Monsanto. Here is an overview of how the research questions were addressed.

Question 1: How can scholars of rhetoric trace new notions of colonization through the study of neoliberal development discourse and resistance to it? The areas to examine for an understanding of neoliberal means of colonization are corporate rhetoric on global development and corporate social responsibility. When corporations such as Monsanto craft a myth of need with the company playing the role of savior, not only do they seek justification and legitimization for their activities but also try to colonize the minds of the people supposedly in need. This is the first step in the process of neoliberal colonization. Eco-critical people who understand this corporate colonizing strategy gain the agency to resist through their knowledge. They are today’s empowered ecofeminists.

Question 2: What role does the socio-political situation in a former colony play in enabling foreign corporations to set foot in it? It is through what Harvey calls the state-financial nexus. As seen in India under WTO’s diktat since the 1990s that enforced liberalization of agriculture, collusion between national governments and corporations (with some help from
the policies of the World Bank and IMF) has made it possible for foreign companies to enter a country’s domestic economy. Therefore, today’s global trade agreements and World Bank/IMF policies are a rich area of inquiry for scholars of RWS who aim to see how “neocolonization” works in the 21st century.

Question 3. What are the “transglocal” implications of rhetoric created digitally by corporations and resistive ecofeminists? To an ecofeminist scholar of rhetoric focused on examining how the voices of resistance from different continents connected in response to Monsanto’s neoliberal practices, the affordances of digital technology is the new area of inquiry. The Internet has worked as a double-edged sword since it helped corporations spread their megarhetoric of development on the one hand and helped resistive forces transcend local exigencies to become a transglocal movement on the other.

Given the direction provided by the above observations, the outcome of this study can be encapsulated in the following points:

- A new area of research has opened up in rhetoric and writing studies due to the corporate “megarhetorics of development” (Dingo and Scott 7), global trade agreements, and the way some states have positioned themselves to facilitate the entry of global corporations into their economies.
- The rhetoric of development uses the concept of corporate social responsibility, CSR, to find justification and legitimacy for corporate activities.
- While CSR is a benevolent concept in and of itself, CSR-related rhetoric as crafted by some corporations has the power to colonize the minds of people through promises of beneficence. Colonizing minds is the first step toward corporate infiltration of
different aspects of people’s lives such as their livelihoods. An example of this is Monsanto’s infiltration of the farming and food production sector and, thereby, the agricultural economy of countries around the world.

- Such colonization is a neoliberal capitalist phenomenon functioning through economic control over the lives of people rather than using military force. Also known as “neocolonization” in postcolonial times, this phenomenon manifests as wresting control of the world’s food supply in this case study of Monsanto.

- Eco-conscious citizens have critically reviewed the corporate rhetoric of development/CSR and detected the underlying colonizing potential. These ecofeminists are now leading a worldwide counter-hegemonic movement against corporations.

- Ecofeminist activism has reached a new eco-frontier, as it were, as ecofeminists have taken the scope of the movement beyond concerns about disenfranchised women to socio-political action for the environment and the planet as a whole. They have provided agency – and thus, the power to resist – to all citizens who exist under the threat of corporations. This is part of the new area of research for scholars of RWS.

I describe below the currently emerging areas of scholarship in Rhetoric and Writing Studies.

8.1 Neocolonial rhetoric in a postcolonial world

As in the case of territorial colonizers of the past who promoted the rationale of civilizing natives in need, today’s corporate colonizers, too, use the neoliberal rationale of
saving people in regions that need development. For future scholars of RWS, this could be a fascinating area of exploration. In addition, building on Fairclough’s post-Marxist approach, scholars can trace how the cause-and-effect phenomenon plays out in society in the context of corporate colonization: that is, understand how the cause of hunger in some parts of the world has the effect of a power-void. The absence of means to produce locally allows a biotech company such as Monsanto to step in as a self-proclaimed savior. The public image of savior is of great rhetorical significance since it aids and augments the company’s message of corporate social responsibility. Imprinting this benefic image in the minds of clients and stakeholders is of paramount importance as a corporation begins the process of colonization.

What is significant to RWS is the modus operandi of neoliberal colonization, or the path it takes to complete the process after making the first impression in the minds of people. For instance, scholars can focus on visuals and related texts in a corporate document designed for public consumption. In http://www.monsanto.com, as evident from figure 1 that depicts an African child in a village school, new market-centric corporate strategies employing a combination of pathos and ethos have addressed the need for what Monsanto historian Dan J. Forrestal calls the evidence of commitment to “growth, adaptive change, service, quality... customers and shareholders, maximizing earnings... effective competition in an era of global interdependence, and social responsibility.” Even negative information, such as criticism by the media and NGOs, was addressed most effectively through open, honest, and optimistic discussion, which has been mentioned in separate pages on the company’s website.

The rhetoric crafted by the company for the purpose of reputation management in the face of what Campbell and Beck say are “public allegations of specific ethical malpractice or
faux pas” (100) depends on the values, trends, and practices of a given locale and indeed, as Smith and Adams note, Monsanto found out that analysts and investors – people who matter to their business – were “unexpectedly forgiving” when it came to past mistakes since their priority was the company’s path ahead and its value as an “investment” (91). Under the circumstances, the company’s purpose was to “effectively communicate with investors [and all other stakeholders]” and demonstrate its ability to “take advantage of market contingencies and neutralize competitor capabilities” to generate “stockholder confidence in management and greater market capitalization” (151). These observations underline the rationale behind the way Monsanto crafts its ethos or public image today, for investors and customers alike.

It would be of interest to RWS scholars to see how tactical bombardment with powerful images from certain parts of the world (that are believed to be in need of the corporation’s support and service) ultimately helps perpetuate the myth of need as reality. Such repetition of images and their omnipresence in the media serve to embed them in the minds of viewers as the truth and, thereby, validate the corporation’s claims after a point in time. Thus, it is worth noting how Monsanto projects itself as the savior of starving millions around the world on its website, even as it faces massive negative criticism. As Campbell and Beck comment, corporate websites have an “increasingly ambitious and elaborate...functionality,” providing information to an unprecedentedly broad “range of stakeholders” (100) for purposes including marketing, selling, reporting, and reputation management.

DeChaine believes it is the “ubiquity” of what DeLuca and Peeples describe as “the public screen” that induces as well as enables corporations to transform their public image. According to DeChaine, the most “visible transformations in the character and power of the
modern corporation” are the result of its “transnationalization” (81), an inherent aspect of globalization in the digital age.

Not only is Monsanto’s official website a prime example of using web 2.0 affordances for public image management through “globalized rhetoric of social responsibility” (DeChaine 81) in the face of an apparent food catastrophe, it is also an instance of using the Internet to defend itself by projecting the role of a savior in response to the worldwide opposition. In this context, the notions of “poverty,” “hunger,” and “food insecurity” deserve special attention for the ways it is used by Monsanto to project “efforts” at genetic engineering favorably. Figure 29 shows how Monsanto uses pictures of academics and verdant farmlands to claim credibility as well as success for their projects.

![Figure 29. On this web page entitled “Improving Agriculture,” Monsanto explains how its activities involve members of the academy and has the support and contribution of scientists and researchers](http://www.monsanto.com)

Speaking of criticism and opposition, Monsanto critics (including Shiva) have also posted their own versions of the “hunger” story, replete with data and images, to counter Monsanto’s claims (see figure 9). According to Shiva in *Navdanya*, “The entire agri-food chain...has been hijacked by corporate superpowers like Monsanto...” “Hijacked” is a strong word to use against Monsanto with the obvious purpose of damaging its reputation. Thus, in figure 29 we see strategic use of words to create ethos for a corporation on the one hand and debunk it on the other. Both Shiva and Monsanto seem to be well aware that self-publicity, advertising, and public relations determine, to a large extent, the success or otherwise of organizations and movements. The importance of being earnest, or seeming to be so, is obvious in the crafting of their websites for a globalized market where news and information travel instantaneously from one continent to another and bad rep could spread just as quickly to ruin a business or a movement against it.

Future scholarship in RWS, however, could provide a positive direction to this war of words by following up on Bendell’s idea that companies should “engage the dialogue and reflect on their practice” (1). Bendell’s hope is that companies will heed to valid criticism for constructive outcomes, generating some genuine benefits for society. Toward this end, rhetoric and writing scholars could draw from the fields of business ethics and communication studies to come up with trans-disciplinary insights on reestablishing CSR as a beneficial practice for society. Scholars may also theorize on how companies could incorporate CSR into their core processes to enhance their market value, thus making it a win-win situation for corporations as well as society.
8.2 Counter-hegemonic rhetoric of ecofeminists

The purpose of ecofeminist resistance is two-fold: to decolonize minds that have been impacted by neoliberal corporate rhetoric and to prevent further colonization. Both of these purposes are worth exploration for new and upcoming scholarship in rhetoric and writing. They offer future scholars a fertile ground for research to determine the efficacy of ecofeminism as a resistive ideology as its scope expands from women’s issues to the environment, the future of the planet’s ecosystem, and to all those who are under the threat of corporate colonization. My study thus notes a new eco-frontier that the ecofeminist movement has arrived at. At this juncture, the important research questions for forthcoming scholarship could be:

(a) How effective has ecofeminism proved to be when resisting hegemonic corporate forces?

(b) How has ecofeminism empowered resistive individuals/groups and how does it serve to provide agency?

(c) Finally, how did digital technology factor into the way ecofeminists in the different continents established transglocal links, broke new frontiers in their scope for activism, and were empowered to battle global corporate forces?

The last question is important because worldwide dissemination of these eco-critical messages from the resistant camp would not have been possible without digital technology. While providing global reach to voices such as Shiva’s, the Internet also connected them as a counter-hegemonic discursive force that corporations have been forced to address (as seen in the disaster management and damage control steps taken by Enron, Chevron, and Monsanto). Thanks to the global outrage facilitated by the Internet, the mighty corporation Monsanto was
forced to pay compensation to a small, landless Chilean farmer, Jose Pizarro Montoya, in 2014. Thus, the Internet has shown that, just as in times before virtual connectivity, hegemony is not absolute but a constant negotiation between forces. Furthermore, these various forces existing in socio-political and socio-economic systems serve as checks and balances for one another, making hegemony a very complicated thing. To end then, the Internet has provided ordinary people with an extraordinary amount of agency that makes it possible for them to resist globally influential forces such as Monsanto. This new phenomenon of transglocal discursive resistance is what future scholars of rhetoric and writing can build their theories upon.
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Curriculum Vita

Moushumi Biswas is a journalist-turned-academic from India who has worked with The Hindustan Times and The India Today Group. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of Calcutta and Master of Arts degree in English Language and Literature from Jadavpur University before moving to the U.S. in 2006. She returned to the academy to earn her second Master of Arts degree – in Rhetoric and Professional Communication – from New Mexico State University (NMSU) in 2011. She joined the doctoral program in Rhetoric and Composition at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) in 2011. Her research interests include neoliberal corporate rhetoric, ecofeminist rhetoric, and transglobal/transcultural rhetoric. She has presented on topics related to her research at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Computers and Writing, Feminisms and Rhetorics, and The Rhetorical Society of America. Biswas won the Chuck and Pam Sphar Endowed Scholarship from NMSU in 2010, the NMSU Dean’s Recognition for Outstanding Performance in Graduate School in 2011, the Outstanding Research Award from the UTEP Department of English in 2015, the UTEP Library Information Literacy Course Enhancement Grant in 2016, and the Juergen and Phyllis Hunter Strauss Fellowship in Summer 2017. She has written a book chapter entitled “Cultural Rhetoric of the Sari” for an edited collection, Feminist Challenges, Feminist Rhetorics: Locations, Scholarship, and Discourse, published by Cambridge Scholars Press, UK, in 2014. Currently, she is under contract to review the book, Globalized Fruit, Local Entrepreneurs (Douglas Southgate and Lois Roberts, 2016), for Food and Foodways, an interdisciplinary journal published by Taylor & Francis.
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