

By Dr. Vandana Shiva:

Zazu Dreams is a complex, intergenerational story of three generations in creative conversation: grandmother Micaela Amato Amateau illustrating the stories of her grandson Zazu, as told to his mother, Cara Judea Alhadeff. Zazu's dreams weave a more-than-human story across space and time, across cultures.

The interconnectedness between the past and the present, between ancestors and future generations, between humans and the earth family, weaves an imaginary beyond anthropocentrism and ecological apartheid.

Eco-Apartheid is the assumption that humans are separate from nature, are her conquerors, masters, owners, and the denial of the fact that we are part of nature, not separate from her. Apartheid is 'apartness' or 'separateness' in Afrikaans.

The anthropocentric assumption that humans are separate from nature and superior to other species, who have no rights, is not just a violation of the rights of our fellow beings but also a violation of our humanity and human rights. We are members of one Earth family, and our being human is predicated on our relations with Biodiversity and Living Seed, Land and Living Soil, Living Waters and Living Food. Human rights defined on the basis of separation and superiority make 'dominance' and 'exploitation' appear natural to being human, when they are in fact constructs based on the illusion of separation and superiority which have contributed to both non-sustainability and injustice.

Denial of nature's rights leads to destruction of nature and a threat to the very conditions of human survival. In an ecologically interconnected world, denial of the rights of nature translates into denial of human rights. The same constructs that lead to violence

against nature and her destruction become the basis of violence against fellow human beings. Non-sustainability and injustice are part of the same process.

This worldview of separation also engenders hierarchies and the illusion of superiority—of humans as superior to other species, men as superior to women, whites as superior to Blacks and all people of colour, one faith as superior to the diversity of belief systems which have nourished cultural diversity. Separation and Superiority create structures of violence—violence against nature, violence against women, violence against every ‘other’ defined as lesser beings with the objective of colonization.

Zazu Dreams take us beyond separation and apartheid. It allows us to see that everything is interconnected. “Only by understanding how all forms of oppression are interconnected can we understand that all forms of emancipation are equally interconnected.”

Through the tapestry of dreams, the perennial principles of life come alive:

1. Life is an entangled web of interbeing.
2. Everything is interconnected. Nothing is separate.
3. Life is a flow.
4. Life regenerates, renews, recycles.

In nature, there is no separation and no waste. We are made of the same five elements that the earth is made of. The same food and water, energy and breath flow across the web of life. We are part of the cycle of life in constant renewal. The waste of one species is food for another. Everything is food. Every being is something else’s food. Through the process of recycling, regeneration takes place, and life continues.

Soil is 'humus'. Human is derived from humus—soil. We come from the soil. To soil, we return. Taking care of the soil is the process of living. The dung beetle becomes a teacher of interconnectedness and recycling in the age of separation and extraction.

As Zazu reminds us, “dirt is a process that turns into life; the process that turns garbage into a bostán (garden) is central to our survival.”

The flows of life reveal how illusory the constructions of separation and superiority are. In life, we are an interconnected symbiotic web of diversity, cooperation, mutual giving. When we take care of the earth, the earth takes care of us. Zazu and the dung beetle show us the way to our future.