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On the latest episode of Russell Brand's "Stay Free," scholar, environmental activist and food sovereignty advocate Vandana Shiva, Ph.D., discussed food fascism, the power of "philanthropy," digital enslavement and how people can free themselves from this system.

by [Brenda Baletti](#), Ph.D. , [The Defender](#)

August 2, 2023

"Human beings cannot have a relationship with nature, land and one another, it seems increasingly, without the intercedence of this corporate power," comedian and political commentator Russell Brand told scholar and environmental activist [Vandana Shiva, Ph.D.](#), on the latest episode of his "[Stay Free](#)" podcast.

Brand asked Shiva, a food sovereignty and environmental activist, to explain how this corporate takeover of nature happened.

Shiva said the privatization of land and resources under colonialism was the first step in transforming nature into "either a mine or a dump."

Today, she said, privatization has become so entrenched that mega-corporation [Cargill](#) can own every chicken, chicken production facility, and every input needed to raise chickens, and then dump all of its waste into public rivers.

The situation we face today could not have happened, she said, without the criminalization of farmers – for which she held media organizations like [The Guardian](#) responsible because they attack farmers instead of the corporations.

“If the drivers are the corporations,” she said, “you have to have the guts to bite the corporations. You don’t target the victims. The farmers are victims of this system.”

Who are the real ‘food fascists’?

Brand asked Shiva why the global uprising of farmers – from Sri Lanka and India to Germany, England and [the Netherlands](#) – against the globalization of agriculture had come to be cast as a right-wing idea by the press.

Shiva said Mussolini himself defined fascism as “the convergence of economic and political power.” “Food fascism,” she said, “is the recent control over our food systems by giant corporations and the billionaires.”

Under colonialism, the British controlled the land, she said, but they didn’t control the food. The advent of agricultural industrialization, the green revolution and globalization made it possible for corporations to take [control of food](#).

The call for “[food sovereignty](#),” she said, “came as the call as opposite to the food dictatorship and food fascism.”

Now, she said, those people want to complete the separation of people from the land that began with colonialism.

Today, they want “farming without farmers.”

Being able to plant a seed, input love, knowledge and sun and

produce food, “is the only truly independent production system and it’s that freedom they want to attack,” Shiva said, because they are threatened by it.

So they discredit farmers by calling them “fascists” and “right wing.”

“And anybody who facilitates that is essentially doing the work of these globalists,” she said, “they’re the fascists.”

How ‘philanthropy’ buys control

Today, people who talk about the disproportionate power and influence that billionaires like [Bill Gates](#) have over global agriculture and health are regarded as “conspiracy theorists,” Brand said.

He asked Shiva to explain Gates’ rise to power in plain language and with facts.

Shiva said people like Gates became wealthy through neoliberal trade liberalization, where trade in information, in the software and other forms of data Gates produced, went completely untaxed.

Then, she said, they used that money “philanthropically” to gain control of other sectors.

By donating massive sums of money to the [global seed bank](#), to the [World Health Organization](#) and to [media organizations](#) such as The Guardian and the BBC, Gates and other billionaires took control of those institutions.

It even gives them the power to control governments, she said, who have been made desperate for money through indebtedness.

Gates and Silicon Valley, she said, “are very big players in the [fake food future](#) of farming without farmers, food without farms.” And they get journalists such as The Guardian’s [George Monbiot](#) to promote it.

Chasing enslavement

Shiva said this vision is built on “an imagined promise of an imagined future that we are never gonna arrive at. Because when you get there, you’ll find it doesn’t belong to you. It belongs to them.”

The systems that support their vision of the future appear to offer us convenience, but in reality, she said, maintaining them takes all of our time.

Many indigenous people, she said, still have a lot of time to enjoy life “because they’re not chasing enslavement through consumption.”

Shiva wondered why people would want a “smart home,” where, for example, “the fridge will tell you your milk is getting old. How dumb are we getting that we can’t open the door of our fridge and know our milk is getting old?”

“All that is surveillance data,” she said.

And processing that data takes big servers. “The tiny bits of enslavement we are getting into is [producing] 4% of greenhouse gases, which is more than the aviation sector,” she said.

She added:

“So, not only is it a very foolish kind of slavery, it’s a huge ecological footprint on the planet. Yes. And we can’t afford it. So we have to learn to walk lightly.”

Data is the new oil

Brand said he was alarmed at the increasing pace of “desacralization” where people prioritize materialism over spirituality and lose control over their lives. He asked Shiva how she thought censorship, the [inhibition of free speech](#) and the ability of the media to shut down dialogue, fed into this process.

Shiva said it was part of “a system of total control,” that makes that control highly profitable.

What’s new in this system according to Shoshana Zuboff’s “[The Age of Surveillance Capitalism](#)” is that today, human beings themselves have been turned into raw material whose data can be extracted.

“That is the capital of today. Big data is the new oil, and then it’s used to manipulate us,” she said, adding “Any system that allows you the awareness of your real freedom must be censored.”

The strange thing, Brand said, is that this system of technological domination was sold to people as a way of empowering them and giving them their freedom.

[Technology](#) should be a tool, she said, but it “has been elevated to a god” and those opposed to that transformation are discounted, through Orwellian doublespeak, as “right wing.”

But, Shiva said, the last few years have shown there are three things people cannot give up:

“First, your ability to know and distinguish between truth and untruth. ... And not allow post-truth to be projected as truth and the truth speakers to be projected as conspirators.

“The second is our ability to relate to each other without the intervention of a surveillance state and surveillance corporation.

“And third, because food is what makes us, it becomes our blood, ourselves, our brain.”

In other words, Brand said:

“Speak freely. Tell the truth. Communicate freely. Grow your own food. Don’t eat things grown in labs. Don’t [eat bugs](#). And

don't listen to people who want to promote it."

Watch here:

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