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Vandana Shiva, Organicology & the Seed Wars

By Rady Ananda

[Vandana Shiva: The Future of Food and Seed](#)

pdxjustice Media Productions, *in cooperation with Organicology Conference hosted by Oregon Tilth, Organically Grown Co., Food Trade Sustainability Leadership Assn., Organic Seed Alliance, and Navdanya.*
60 mins.

Physicist, ecologist and world-renowned author Vandana Shiva closed the inaugural Organicology Conference in Portland, Oregon on February 28th with her speech: *The Future of Food and Seed: Justice, Sustainability and Peace in the 21st Century.*

This [hour-long video](#) gives a brief history of the seed wars that have been ongoing since the late 1980s and argues for seed freedom and protection from unregulated biotechnology. Instead of regulating natural seeds and organic farming, states should regulate the monopolists.

Acronyms:

IT PGRFA – International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

GATT – General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs

TRIPS – Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (WTO)

WTO – World Trade Organization

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

IFPRI – International Food Policy Research Institute



The Study of a Sustainable Food Future

Many Americans familiar with Dr. Vandana Shiva first met her in the film, [The Corporation](#). Others have read one or more of her twenty books. Still others have heard her in person. In February, she capped the three-day Organicology Conference held in Portland, Oregon, giving a brief history of the seed wars – the battle to hijack seed ownership via laws, agreements and regulations. GATT, TRIPS, the WTO and Monsanto figure prominently in her speech.

"State regulation extinguishes biodiversity," Dr. Shiva explains in [a 2008 paper](#), "and pushes all farmers into dependency on patented, corporate seed. Such compulsory licensing has been the main vehicle of destruction of biodiversity and farmers rights in U.S. and Europe."

Shiva regards seeds as the embodiment of democracy, in their natural abundance and diversity. TRIPS legitimizes monopoly, forbidding farmers to save seeds. Cargill (now owned by Monsanto, she asserted) hailed its GM seeds because they prevented bees from "usurping the pollen." And we wonder where the bees have gone.

"The aim of the seed industry is a trillion dollars of profits from royalties every year. The aim is no farmer should have access to their own seed. The aim is every farmer should be forced into the market every year.

"You can only do that by using multiple instruments of control over the seed. The first instrument ... is the intellectual property laws covering both patents as well as breeder's rights..."

She scoffs at the absurdity of patent laws that recognize manipulation as akin to invention. A seed is not an invention. The seed was here before humans. "All you can do with a seed is manipulate it. Manipulation has never

been treated as creation. It's often treated as cruelty. I would call GM cruelty to seed."



She spends a few moments discussing the Orwellian term "substantial equivalence." Mega-corporations assert intellectual property rights for manipulating nature into creating something "new" or "novel." But, don't worry, they tell us, it's not THAT new; it's 'substantially equivalent' to what nature created. Well, either it's a brand new invention (and thus patentable) or it's not. We are not swayed by the double speak of psychopathy.

Informed farmers in the US [reject the slew of new bills](#) requiring registration and disclosure of seeds and [animals](#).

Wisconsin farmer, Paul Griepentrog, has been involved in raising produce, livestock and direct marketing the past 30 years. He now collaborates with several groups and individuals to halt the sudden onslaught of "food safety" bills that seek to hyper-regulate the small and medium farms.

"Insane laws were passed [in Wisconsin] ... in which even a pile of hay or manure would be a punishable offense as they may harbor rodents. That sounds good, but how am I to store hay in round bales for livestock?"

Dr. Shiva explains the nefarious intent behind hyper-regulation of small and medium sized farms:

"You can only have a monopoly on seed thru patent if you have had a closure on the alternative supply. Because why on earth would farmers pay royalties every year if they could have free seed they could save year in and year out? To create that closure, the industry has evolved compulsory licensing and registration laws....

"This basically means farmers can't have their own seeds. They must only grow seeds that are licensed. They must have approval from the State."

"The creation of seed monopolies is based on the

simultaneous deregulation of seed corporations, including biosafety and seed deregulation, and super-regulation of farmers seeds and varieties." [Nov. 15, 2008](#)

Dr. Shiva asks why regulate natural seeds that have evolved for thousands of years and which cause no harm. "Since it has no harm, it has no need for state regulation." What should be regulated are the genetically modified seeds which do cause harm, including genetic contamination.

She likens the seed wars to India's salt wars when the British empire tried to regulate salt. "Seed doesn't belong to the humans; it belongs to all the species that are nourished by it." And she asserts on behalf of all farmers:

"We will not obey a law that makes it illegal for us to perform our highest ecological duty on earth, which is to save seeds for the future."

Vandana Shiva has a plan to save seeds and defeat GMOs, and at least 400,000 Indian farmers have signed on with her.

The film ends with a 15-minute Q&A session focusing on diversity, and local production. The smaller and more diverse the farm, the higher the nutritional output. She reminds us, Bt cotton destroys soil and GM foods are less nutritional. "We need to return to organics."

This hour long video gives a brief history of the seed wars that have been ongoing since the 1980s. It refocuses the debate from profits to sustainable life systems, including human societies. Finally, it persuasively argues for organic biodiversity as more than a right, but a human duty to life itself.

Also see [Navdanya website](#).

Author's Bio: OpEdNews Senior Editor. In 2004, Rady Ananda joined the growing community of citizen journalists.



Initially focused on elections, she investigated the 2004 Ohio election, organizing, training and leading several forays into counties to photograph the 2004 ballots. She officially served at three recounts, including the 2004 recount. She also organized and led the team that audited Franklin County Ohio's 2006 election, proving the number of voter signatures did not match official results. Her work appears in three books.

Her blogs also address religious, gender, sexual and racial equality, as well as environmental issues; and are sprinkled with book and film reviews on various topics. She spent most of her working life as a researcher or investigator for private lawyers, and five years as an editor.

She graduated from The Ohio State University's School of Agriculture in December 2003 with a B.S. in Natural Resources.

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"In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act." Tell the truth anyway.

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