

# Navdanya

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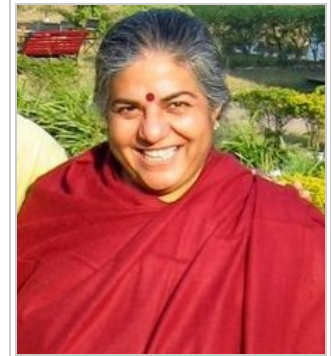
**Navdanya** is an Indian-based non-governmental organization which promotes biodiversity conservation, biodiversity, organic farming, the rights of farmers, and the process of seed saving. One of Navdanya's founders, and outspoken members, is Vandana Shiva, an environmental activist, physicist, and author. Navdanya began in 1984 as a program of the Research Foundation for science, Technology and Ecology (RFSTE), a participatory research initiative founded by the scientist and environmentalist Dr. Vandana Shiva, to provide direction and support to environmental activism.<sup>[1]</sup> "Navdanya" means "nine crops" that represent India's collective source of food security.<sup>[1]</sup>

Navdanya is a member of the Terra Madre slow food movement. Navdanya is a network of seed keepers and organic producers spread across 16 states in India.

Navdanya has helped set up 54 community seed banks across the country, trained over 500,000 farmers in seed sovereignty, food sovereignty and sustainable agriculture over the past two decades, and helped set up the largest direct marketing, fair trade organic network in the country.

Navdanya has also set up a learning center, Bija Vidyapeeth (School of the Seed) on its biodiversity conservation and organic farm in Doon Valley, Utranchal, north India.

Navdanya is actively involved in the rejuvenation of indigenous knowledge and culture. It has criticised genetic engineering. Navdanya claims to be a women centred movement for the protection of biological and cultural diversity.



Vandana Shiva one of the founder of Navdanya

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## Save a Seed

20th Century farming revolutionized traditional food production methods by using cheap (but non renewable) hydrocarbon fuels and agricultural chemical products which make a major contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, blamed for causing climate change. These new methods together with cheap transport and fuel led to the optimization and industrialization of food production using scientifically crafted but mass-produced feedstock for monoculture and international food trading monopolized by a few technically advanced nations.

### Seeds for Freedom

Indigenous subsistence and traditional crop-rotation which formerly implied a wide variety of plants across the world -some of which are may be danger of becoming abandoned (unrecognised as food crops). The fear is that resilient crops, which provided a safeguard in times of climate change, may not be husbanded against a cash-crop disaster. For example, Millets use only 200 to 300 millilitres (c. 1/2 pint) of water but give 40 times more nutrition than industrially and chemically farmed rice which required 2.5 l (1/2 gallon) of water and tends to lose nutrients during industrially processing as well as consume packaging which would otherwise not be required.

Navdanya's Seeds of Freedom campaign is intended to provide a source or exchange of diverse naturally occurring crop-seed.

## GMO Free Campaign

Navdanya has led the national and international movement against Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in agriculture. Working with citizens' movements, grassroot organizations, NGOs and governments, they have made significant contributions to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Biosafety Protocol.

Since 1991 they have been campaigning against GM crops and food in India

Navdanya has also been involved in and leading campaigns against GMOs on an international level. During the WTO Hong Kong Ministerial, Navdanya joined 740 other organizations in presenting their opposition to the WTO's stance on GMOs.

## Biopiracy

RFSTE/ Navdanya started the campaign against biopiracy with the Neem Campaign in 1994 and mobilized 1,00,000 signatures against neem patents and filed a legal opposition against the USDA and WR Grace patent on the fungicidal properties of neem (no. 436257 B1) in the European Patent Office (EPO) at Munich, Germany.

Along with RFSTE, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) of Germany and Ms. Magda Alvoet, former Green Member of the European Parliament were party to the challenge. The patent on Neem was revoked in May 2000 and it was reconfirmed on 8 March 2005 when the EPO revoked in entirety the controversial patent, and adjudged that there was "no inventive step" involved in the fungicide patent, thus confirming the 'prior art' of the use of Neem.

In 1998, Navdanya started a campaign against Basmati biopiracy (Patent No. 5663484) of a US company RiceTec. On Aug 14th 2001 Navdanya achieved another victory against biopiracy and patent on life when the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) revoked a large section of the patent on Indian Basmati rice by the US corporations RiceTec Inc. These included:

- The generic title of the RiceTec patent No. 5663484, which earlier referred to Basmati rice lines;
- The sweeping and false claims of RiceTec having 'invented', traits of rice seeds and plants including plant height, grain length, aroma which are characteristics found in our traditional Basmati varieties
- Claims to general methods of breeding which was also piracy of traditional breeding done by farmers and our scientists (of the 20 original claims only three narrow ones survived).<sup>[2]</sup>

## Navdanya v. Monsanto

The next major victory against biopiracy for Navdanya came in October 2004 when the European Patent Office in Munich revoked Monsanto's patent on the Indian variety of wheat "Nap Hal". This was the third consecutive victory on the IPR front after Neem and Basmati, making it the third consecutive victory. This was made possible under the Campaign against Patent on Life as well as against Biopiracy respectively. MONSANTO, the biggest seed corporation, was assigned a patent (EP 0445929 B1) on wheat on 21 May 2003 by the European Patent Office in Munich under the simple title "plants". On January 27, 2004 Research Foundation for Science Technology and Ecology (RFSTE) along with Greenpeace and Bharat Krishak Samaj BKS) filed a petition at the European Patent Office (EPO), Munich, challenging the patent rights given to Monsanto on Indian Landrace of wheat, Nap Hal. The patent was revoked in October 2004.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Citations

1. <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> "Introduction to Navdanya" (<http://www.navdanya.org/about-us>). Retrieved 19 April 2011.
2. <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> "Biopiracy Campaign" (<http://navdanya.org/campaigns/biopiracy>). Retrieved 20 April 2011.

## External links

- Navdanya Website (<http://www.navdanya.org>)
- Watch the film (<http://www.seedsoffreedom.info/watch-the-film/watch-the-film-english/>)

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Categories: Non-governmental organisations based in India

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