

# **The Global Justice Movement - providing human security to the least secure?**

## **Networked activism and the opposition to genetically modified crops in Karnataka, India<sup>1</sup>**

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This paper argues for a new approach to work in the field of human security. Frequently, debate has centred on attempts to narrow the breadth of the concept or provide a clear hierarchy ranking different aspects of human security. However, there are several reasons why it may prove fruitful to focus attention, rather, on the range of actors considered to be useful within the field. While there are limits to the willingness and ability of states and international agencies to fully embrace the human security concept (particularly given that its definition, arguably, must of necessity remain vague) the global justice movement (GJM) does not face the same limitations. This is in part because the GJM does not rely on centralised policymaking, but instead works through a form of 'networked activism' in which the processes of the movement are an attempt to build a more just and democratic world. As networked activism substitutes for overarching and centralised policy within the GJM, more attention must be paid to whether it adequately supports the GJM's work in the field of human security.

This discussion of the GJM's contribution to the work of human security is undertaken with specific reference to the movement opposing genetically modified (GM) crops in Karnataka, India. The fieldwork for this project was carried out in 2006 and involved over twenty semi-structured interviews as well as observations of meetings, protests and workshops, and analysis of both academic and activist literature. Initially academics and key figures within the movement were contacted, and following interviewees were contacted through a process of snowball sampling. There are various limitations to this research, and the use of multiple information sources is intended to give a breadth of perspectives that would not be available by, for example, basing research solely on interviews.

The movement opposing GM crops was chosen both because it is representative of and tied to the movements that make up the broader GJM, and because the issue itself is a paradigmatic case of the

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debates circulating around globalisation. Questions of access to information, the power of multinational corporations and cultural imperialism – among others – are all central to the debate over GM crops. Examining this movement therefore allows an opportunity to examine the analysis and solutions proposed by the GJM in a particular context, and to assess whether it provides material advances to the human security of those affected by a particular issue. While the activism adopted by the Indian movement has not proved to be entirely unproblematic, the solutions being proposed and implemented in response to perceived threats to human security are quite different from those put in place by conventional actors. These solutions, and those being put in place by the GJM as a whole, should not go unexamined by those working within the human security paradigm, as they may provide alternatives that more institutionalised actors are incapable of implementing – or even envisaging.

### **Rethinking the human security concept**

The human security concept has emerged in response to the perceived failures of the traditional security paradigm. There have long been critiques of the assumption that a secure nation-state necessarily leads to security for those living within its borders, and recent events have provided numerous examples of the classical paradigm of security being used to justify repression of certain groups in both developed and developing nations. This is leading to a growing dissatisfaction with the idea of security based on the state (Gasper 2005, 373). Australia's treatment of asylum seekers who supposedly threaten border security, the curtailment of civil freedoms brought in by the United States' *Patriot Act*, and the violence committed against separatist and indigenous groups in many states all belie the simple equation of state security with individual and community security. This is particularly the case in an era in which civil war and terrorism – state sponsored or otherwise – are increasingly a greater source of violence and insecurity than interstate warfare. Leeson (2006) argues that in some cases, such as that of Somalia, people are actually better off in many respects living in a failed state than they were under the previously existing state. Additionally, newly developing or growing problems such as disease (for example AIDS, drug-resistant tuberculosis, and new forms of malaria) and environmental issues require non-military, cross-border solutions (Sen 2000, 2). Calls have therefore been made for a concept of security that moves beyond the military- and state-focused assumptions of the classical paradigm.

While the human security concept provides an alternative vision of security that may avoid many of the problems of the classical security paradigm, it has been criticised for being too broad to provide a truly useful blueprint for action. Both of the main approaches to human security, that of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and that of the Canadian government, share a similar basic notion of what the human security concept should encompass, yet neither provides a detailed and rigorous definition. Both approaches base their concept around “the protection and welfare of the individual citizen or human being” (Bajpai 2000, 3), although they have slightly different emphases. The UNDP approach focuses on development issues, and lists seven aspects of human security – economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security (UNDP 2004). Given the breadth of this list, the argument that the UNDP definition of human security is broad enough to encompass just about anything (c.f. Paris 2001, 90) seems to be quite justified. The Canadian conception is similarly broad, although its focus is more on political underdevelopment than that of the UNDP – issues relating to breakdown of states, societies, and governance are given prominence (Bajpai 2000, 33). The two approaches are not incompatible but rather highlight different parts of the same picture. It has therefore been argued that the human security concept needs to be narrowed if it is to become a useful tool for policymaking and analysis.

Although it would be convenient for policymakers and scholars to work with a more rigid definition of human security, there are important theoretical and pragmatic reasons why a more narrowly defined

concept is unlikely to gain wide acceptance. On a theoretical level, the concern with not only securing individuals from threats to their physical well-being but also with “the stability and security of...the real opportunities of achievement which are open to them and which they have good reason to value” (Gasper 2005, 377) necessitates a broad approach with vastly different emphases in different contexts. To rigidly define the concept of human security would significantly diminish one of its implicit, but vital, claims – that the differences between individuals are as valuable as the similarities, and should be taken into account in any meaningful vision of security. Deciding what constitutes “well-being” and “meaningful opportunities” without reference to local needs and desires would mean abandoning the commitment to diversity. Additionally, and on a more pragmatic level, the Canadian government’s use of the human security concept as a lynchpin for a loose coalition of middle states, developmental agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) requires a certain flexibility in the concept’s definition, and it is improbable that calls for a narrower definition will meet with positive responses from those who use it as a political rallying-point (Paris 2001, 96). It is therefore unlikely that attempts to create a stricter notion of human security will either manage to preserve key aspects of the concept or meet with general acceptance from those who put the concept into practice.

Rather than attempting to narrow the definition, there are two compelling reasons for those promoting the human security concept to consider a reexamination of actors working in the field. Although there has already been a limited revision of the viewpoint that the state is the main actor guaranteeing security, with those working within the human security paradigm seeing “citizens, media, NGOs, and transnational organizations” as playing a valuable role (Burke 2001, 230), further work in the area may be productive. This is, firstly, because the continuing construction of the provision of security as a predominantly top-down process is one of the major reasons behind the calls for a more rigorous definition of human security. States and international agencies need clear templates for action in order to create consistent policy that will be applicable in a broad range of contexts. They need to be able to produce policy documents that are relatively static and clearly prioritise different elements within an overarching policy. However, if one looks towards alternative actors for the provision of human security, particularly those who do not work in a centralised and top-down manner, the requirement for a strictly-defined template for human security is relaxed. Given the reasons mentioned above for retaining the current wide vision of human security, it seems fruitful to look for actors whose nature is more hospitable to the existing nature of the concept.

A second reason to look beyond the state and bodies such as the UN when promoting the concept of human security is that these institutions are embedded within a system that to a significant extent relies on many of the assumptions of the classical security paradigm for legitimisation. As Burke points out, the entire concept of human security involves “a profound ontological shift that challenges, at many different levels, the entire philosophical structure of national security” (2001, 229), and indeed the very legitimising foundation of the nation-state itself – the idea that the military protection of the state is a necessary precondition for the safety and well-being of those living within its borders. While the UN and other international institutions are not reliant on these assumptions for legitimisation in the same way that states are, they are still firmly integrated into the current international system and are largely structured by neo-realist thinking. To expect a full embrace of the human security concept from well-established actors in the international system is therefore unrealistic. This does not mean, of course, that these actors cannot make progress towards human security goals or that the attempt to work towards incorporating human security concepts into the policy of governments and international institutions is without merit – it merely means that there are compelling reasons for extending the field of actors under consideration.

### **The global justice movement as an actor in the field of human security**

The GJM is arguably one of the most important actors working towards the goals of human security today, a fact that is often overlooked - mainly because the GJM is most often perceived as an 'anti-globalisation' movement, oppositional rather than constructive. For example, Amartya Sen, one of the key figures in the development of the human security paradigm, sees the events at Washington D.C. and Seattle against international financial institutions as simply "protests against globalization" (Sen 2000, 7), which fails to take into account the many different faces of globalisation, and the many different viewpoints within the movement. Friedman's view that the movement is currently "burning down McDonald's and shutting down the IMF" instead of looking at "how to improve local government, infrastructure, and education in places like rural India and China" (2005, 384) seems to be indicative of a widely held position. Even those who see the global justice movement as playing a role in the field of human security generally see its role as being to bring attention to problems, rather than to provide solutions to them. However, while the movement certainly does play a role in protesting against aspects of globalisation - although it is "anti-neo-liberal-globalisation" rather than "anti-globalisation" *per se* (Jordan & Taylor 2004, 43) - a significant part of its work consists not of protest but of attempts to build alternatives, to provide viable solutions to the perceived problems of economic globalisation. In reality, the productive part of the movement forms the vast, submerged mass of its activity, while the "anti-globalisation" protests are only the visible tip of the movement.

In fact, the work of the GJM can be understood as directly serving the goals of the human security paradigm. Social movements, after all, do not just challenge the existing system, but are also "potentially and actually, significant sources of alternative economic and technological models and practices in the first place" (Venter & Swart 2002, 195). This movement is trying to show that "another world is possible" (the catch cry of many sections of the GJM, and of the World Social Fora (WSF)) by setting up viable and effective alternatives to neoliberal globalisation. Vitaly, the movement does not have a clearly-defined end goal, except, perhaps, for that encapsulated by the slogan "one world with room for many worlds", or by the Zapatistas' insistence on the emergence of new *stories* rather than a single dominating ideology (Notes from Nowhere 2003, 23). It certainly has no central policymaking hub. Instead it is made up of a variety of actors who drift in and out of involvement, including individuals, smaller movements, NGOs and social movement organisations (SMOs). Few of these actors will be pursuing the simple goal of 'global justice' or even focus on providing opposition to neoliberal globalisation, but will rather be involved in struggles over issues which feed into the end goal of a more just world (although of course there are different visions of justice), such as those relating to the environment, debt relief, or human rights. This fluid and amorphous 'movement of movements' seems designed to fit the need for a bottom-up, non-military, diverse approach to human security that contains elements of universalism while still being strongly rooted in the local and contextual.

The GJM's approach to human security is not undirected, despite the lack of a finely-tuned overarching vision. Its 'policy', in as far as it has policy, is written in the everyday processes of the movement and is continually debated and refined over mailing lists, during WSF discussions, at meetings, and through debates about internal structure and processes. The movement draws on various traditions, including anarchism, feminism, *satyagraha*, and the new social movements (NSMs) of the 1960s and 1970s in attempting to 'be the change it wants to see in the world', to paraphrase Gandhi. The focus on ideology is thus replaced, at a movement-wide level, with a focus on how inclusive, just, democratic, creative, and sustainable (to name a few key values) different practices are. These practices range from how meetings are run to what forms of demonstration are used to who makes the coffee and does the dishes - all levels of action are perceived as meaningful, and as open to debate. The importance placed on "the medium, not just the message" is demonstrated by the existence of groups within the movement who specifically work to facilitate and heighten commitments to "networked and coordinated pluralism"

(Keane 2003, 61). The attention paid to “the *how* of resistance” (Kiely 2002, 99), in combination with the use of particular techniques and technologies, results in a mode of activism that can be described as ‘networked activism’. This form of activism is key to the movement’s ability to work effectively towards human security.

Networked activism is characterised by several interrelated traits which tend to stem from similar causes and are generally mutually reinforcing. These traits include the use of horizontal structures made up of connected nodes, a locally-based activism with strong links to levels ranging from the local to the global, a reliance on information and communication technologies (ICTs), an avoidance of centralised power structures, the incorporation of diversity, tactics that rely heavily on the use and dissemination of information, and the use of play and creativity. These traits are not, of course, given equal prominence in the work of all parts of the movement at all times. They are, however, both a feature of the overall structure and activity of the GJM, as well as being demonstrated in archetypal manifestations of the movement. For example, the anti-WTO protests held in Seattle in 1999, which are seen as “both a culmination and departure point” (Jordan & Taylor 2004, 74) for the GJM, were reliant on the internet to mobilise participants, involved a diverse range of groups and individuals from both the US and other nations, were not centrally planned, frequently used humour and play to send their messages, and were covered in independent, open media set up by the movement itself. The work of the Zapatistas, another paradigmatic case within the movement, also provides an excellent example of this. It is vital to note that networked activism is not merely a series of strategies for achieving a far-off utopia – as argued above, it is meant to be building workable alternatives in the here and now.

However, it is important to note that there are several critiques of networked activism and of the GJM that claim that it is not living up to its own professed values. The first is the commonly voiced opinion that the GJM is not in fact a “global” movement, but rather one that is dominated by the North and developed world concerns. There are claims that the movement has “lost touch with the true aspirations of the world’s poor”, and is driven by a combination of “pampered American college kids” trying to expiate their middle-class guilt and the Old Left making a “rearguard push” for relevance (Friedman 2005, 385). As well as outside critics, some within the movement have also brought attention to the minimal presence of people of colour and other marginalised and oppressed groups at events such as Seattle (Nagra 2003, 27). However, although the GJM cannot be seen as completely inclusive, it is far from being a solely Northern movement. To begin with, it is open to and willing to change in the face of internal criticism (Nagra 2003, 27). Secondly, while events such as those at Seattle are important they are not the only expression of the movement, and in many cases those who are unwilling to take part in large, confrontative demonstrations are active in other parts of the movement. Finally, groups from the developing world may be less visible – at least to those in the developed world – but they play a vital role within the movement. Events such as the 2006 polycentric WSF, and the strength of predominantly developing world networks such as Peoples' Global Action (PGA) support Keane’s claim that activists from the South are in ascendancy within the movement (Keane 2003, 59-60). The GJM then, must be recognised as addressing the concerns of both the developed and the developing world.

A more subtle and as yet not fully addressed concern with the movement is that certain aspects of networked activism itself may be creating obstacles to the work of the GJM. Questions might be asked, for example, about how those who are participating in struggles to access resources vital to everyday life feel about the playfulness expressed at events such as the various ‘carnivals of the oppressed’ held at different movement events, and whether they feel these expressions of light-heartedness are relevant to their struggles. More fundamentally, it needs to be asked how the heavy reliance on the internet affects the movement, given its potential to exclude some groups from involvement and to cause

problematic divisions and hierarchies within smaller movements. A further concern with the use of the internet is the reproduction of existing inequalities online, as those without access to computers and the ability to express themselves adequately online (and particularly in English) are at a significant disadvantage. Further, while in the material world the most disadvantaged members of a particular society may not have much of a say, they are at least present. Online, it is easy to get carried away talking about democracy and inclusivity because there are no homeless people, no beggars, no fringe-dwellers – the disenfranchised are, on the whole, simply not visible. It is inevitable that many of the inequalities and problems that sections of the GJM are critiquing will be reproduced within the movement, given that those within it are also embedded within the systems of patriarchy, capitalism, heterosexism, and so on. It is possible, also, that new inequalities and problems will be created within the movement. While it may prove fruitful to look to the GJM for possible solutions to threats to human security (or in other areas), it is also important that critiques of the movement be addressed.

A deep reading of the human security concept means that issues of equality, inclusivity, and especially access to information and debate are vital. If the central question of human security is truly “How safe and free are we as individuals?” (Bajpai 2000, 2), then the work of human security must allow individuals (and communities) to participate in debate and decision-making that relates to their basic needs and desires, and must allow them to take part in activity that secures “the stability and security of people’s capabilities” (Gasper 2005, 377). The ability to access and shape debates related to human security issues is particularly important in light of arguments that we are now living in an ‘information society’ – an era in which “[i]nformation is the crucial resource exploited by the world system, and it, literally, informs (‘gives form to’) all other kinds of resource, including those of an economic nature”. As the GJM’s work in aid of human security cannot be truly effective if it is not relevant to and inclusive of those whose lives and well-being are most at threat today, it is necessary to examine the effects of the processes of networked activism.

### **The global justice movement in action: human security and the opposition to genetically modified crops in Karnataka, India**

While it is possible to address the question of how this form of activism works for or against the goals of the GJM and of human security from the perspective of the entire GJM, it may be more useful to examine the question as it relates to a particular context. After all, essential to the movement’s transformative possibilities “is an understanding of what is at stake in the politics of networking for concrete places and environments” (Escobar 1999, 40) – all of the purported strengths of the movement melt away if they do not, at some stage, produce material results. Studying a particular movement allows us to see its real effects at a grassroots level, and to examine the relationship of particular movements to the broader GJM. While in many senses there is no movement entirely ‘typical’ of the GJM, the Indian movement opposing genetically modified (GM) crops is characteristic in that the issues taken are inextricably linked to the modern processes of economic globalisation and the alternatives proposed centre on the importance of sustainability, democracy, diversity, and justice at all levels ranging from the local to the global. The movement is not concerned with abstract ideological arguments (although these are certainly deployed) but with basic issues of economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security, and affects those who are amongst the most disadvantaged by the processes of economic globalisation. Although in a sense the goal is clear - to prevent the use of GM crops, or at least those being sold by large multinational corporations (MNCs) – there are both a range of proposed alternatives and a range of opinions on this basic goal. Some within the movement, for example, are only opposed to foreign-produced GM crops (Bhat 2006), while others are opposed to all commercialisation of seed and agriculture. In this ambiguity of goals, as well as in other respects, the Indian movement is a microcosm of the larger GJM as well as being firmly embedded within it, and as such it is a good test case for the movement’s approach to human security.

This examination of the Indian movement looks not just at what the movement is doing, but at the more fundamental question of *how* it is doing it – how its use of networked activism is building (or failing to build) structures and capacities that will lead to more secure lives for those the movement is working with.

Given the debate over GM crops, it is worth showing why this issue can be considered to fall under the purview of the human security concept. One indicator of the importance of the GM issue is the strength of the debate surrounding it. In a range of arenas, including the political and scientific, opinion is still split between seeing GM crops as a threat to human security and seeing them as the new solution to world hunger, with numerous other positions along the way also held. Those who see GM technology as a threat to human security base their viewpoint on a number of arguments. The most obvious concern with GM crops is their potential effect on human and environmental health. Various studies have indicated that GM crops may potentially lead to devastating effects on the ecosystem or cause allergies (or more serious health problems), although the full extent and implications of these issues has not been fully and rigorously evaluated (Stewart, Richards & Halfhill 2000). The possible impacts of GM crops are made all the more serious by the inability to contain or reverse them, as various studies (Belcher, Nolan & Phillips 2005; Van de Wiel, Groot & den Nijs 2005; Pearce 2004) have shown that there are no proven and effective ways to completely isolate crops grown in field conditions from wild species. In addition to the direct problems potentially caused by GM crops are the problems caused by the manner in which they are grown. It has been argued that the ‘Green Revolution’ form of farming, and in particular monocropping, is detrimental to both biodiversity and nutrition (Ramprasad, 70). Although all of these claims remain contested, not only within the scientific establishment but also in activist circles (Omvedt 1998), there is a strong argument for understanding the issue of GM crops as being one that relates to health, food and environmental security.

A more immediate problem for many developing world farmers is the high cost of GM seeds and other inputs, and the frequently disappointing yields. Given that around 63% of India’s population still rely primarily on agriculture for their livelihood (Shah 2004, 35) these problems contribute significantly to the overall security of individuals and communities. Whereas traditionally farmers have been able to save or swap seeds, or pay minimal amounts for seeds bred by state universities, the cost of hybrid and GM seeds (over two thirds of which goes merely into the patent charge) is high (Bhat 2006). Greenpeace India argues that farmers frequently buy the seeds based on advertising citing unscientific field trials, celebrity endorsement, or even enticements such as trips and feasts (Raghunandan 2006). Crops frequently underperform due to unsuitability to Indian conditions or farmers’ lack of ability to supply the properly spaced program of water, pesticides, fertiliser and other inputs – in the Indian case, some argue that Bt cotton\* is actually less productive than many local varieties (Nair 2005). Even where crops produce higher yields than local varieties one season they may fail or underperform in subsequent years, creating uncertainty in the lives of farmers (Sanghita 2006). The threat posed to farmers’ economic security has been dramatically demonstrated by the wave of farmer suicides that the anti-GM movement claims are caused at least in part by the problems associated with GM crops.

There are also aspects of cultural and community insecurity related to these issues, mainly based around the disappearance of traditional systems of cultivation and the increasing control and commercialisation of knowledge by MNCs. Previously seeds were part of a complex system and were

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\* “Bt cotton” refers to Bollgard cotton, a trademark of Monsanto. This cotton contains a gene from *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), which acts as a protection against bollworms, a common pest. It was field trials of Bt cotton that were the focus of the first major protests against GMOs in India, and the debate over Bt cotton has remained central in the GM controversy.

assigned certain cultural meanings and values. Women played an important role in choosing and conserving seeds, a role that is disappearing with the increasing commercialisation of seeds, and agriculture more generally (Jayaram 2006). Vandana Shiva, based in the North of India and a key figure within the anti-GM movement, sees control over seeds as vital, and argues that “If we lose control over our seed, we lose our freedom”. The idea that a company can own the rights to a particular gene or plant – be it Bt or otherwise – is extremely problematic, as has been shown by the attempts to patent plants like neem and basmati rice. Control of information is increasingly important in a world where the poor’s material impoverishment is now compounded by “their exclusion from access to information and participation in defining the relations of definition” (Havemann 2000, 27). The disappearance or appropriation of traditional systems of knowledge may pose a more long-term and fundamental threat to human security than more immediate and obvious threats. The issue of who controls and has access to information is a key part of the debate over GM crops, and highlights the need for solutions that address not just the particular threats to human security that may be posed by GM crops, but also the broader systemic causes for these claimed threats.

Despite the public outcry over the recent spate of farmer suicides, government action on these and related issues has been limited. Legislation is frequently guided by attempts to comply with trade agreements and entice investors rather than by a concern with farmers' welfare. In a key decision, the Plant Varieties Protection and Farmers' Rights Act (2001), which gave farmers the right to sell and exchange seeds, will be replaced by the Seed Bill (GM Watch 2005). This Bill will not only allow further expansion of GM crops in India, but will also improve market conditions for private seed companies (GRAIN & Sharma 2005). Even where legislation exists to control or evaluate GM technology the government is frequently either unable or unwilling to enforce it, and there is a belief among many working in the area that politicians “are hand-in-glove with companies” (Jayaram 2006). Additionally, Greenpeace’s work has shown that Bt cotton has entered the food chain during supposedly contained field trials and that illegal and unapproved varieties are coming onto the market – “basically the approval process is a complete sham, because we are not able to actually manage or regulate, or even monitor it” (Raghunandan 2006). Further, attempts to research the effects of GM crops are hampered by the large amount of money coming into Indian state research universities and developing public-private partnerships in the research sector. In some cases, academics opposing GM crops feel that they are hobbled by the need to fit the agendas of the companies providing funding to their institutions (Babu 2006). Given the financial constraints, international context and structural problems that the Indian government is currently facing, they are not able to fully address the various threats to human security that GM crops may pose.

Opposition to GM crops in Karnataka has mostly emerged within civil society, and has been growing in fits and starts since the early 1990s. The *Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha* (KRRS), the Karnataka State Farmers’ Federation, has played a key role within the movement, being involved in the launching of the *Beeja* (Seed) *Satyagraha* in 1992, a national campaign taken up by a number of farmers’ movements across India (Assadi 2004, 208). In 1994 the KRRS began its own campaign, taking direct action by burning GM crops grown in Monsanto’s field trials and raising awareness about GM issues in Karnataka (Somalingiah 2006). There was a period of hibernation for the KRRS in recent years due to the death of Professor Nanjundaswamy, who provided much of the movement’s impetus, but their involvement appears to be picking up again (Raghunandan 2006). As well as the KRRS, a number of other organisations directly involved in work on environmental or agricultural issues have taken up the issue, including the Green Foundation, the Centre for Cultural Research and Action (ICRA), the Environment Support Group (ESG) and Greenpeace. There are also groups working specifically on issues of access to information, such as Servelots and the Centre for Alternative Media (CAAM), as well as development NGOs and consumers’ associations. Journalists, academics and other individuals

also actively work within the movement in various professional or personal capacities. These actors are linked into a wider network by a range of formal and informal interactions and communications, and there is no central body either guiding the movement or speaking on its behalf. This network has utility not merely for its work on the GM issue, but also for its ability to share information on and address related issues.

The Indian movement also shows a productive relationship between the local and the global level that avoids the problems associated with the state-based approach. The movement tackles issues very much at a local level, while simultaneously feeding into and drawing from the broader GJM. This leads to a strong sense of solidarity with farmers and other oppressed groups around the globe<sup>\*</sup> while maintaining a recognition of the value of what is specifically Indian. The KRRS advocates *swadeshi*, a return to self-sufficient, village-based life, but at the same time it sees the village as “a global micro social unit” based on the same fundamental needs and resources (Somalingiah 2006). The KRRS was also instrumental in setting up various international groups and events, including People’s Global Action (PGA), Via Campesina (an international farmers’ and peasants’ network), and the Intercontinental Caravan, an action involving several busloads of Indian and other farmers and activists travelling across Europe to raise awareness about the effects of neoliberal globalisation (Nanjundaswamy 2003, 158). Other groups and individuals receive funding, information, and other support from international groups, and vice versa. The movement is also involved in networking at a local, state, and national level through events such as the South Against Genetic Engineering (SAGE) conference. At the same time there is an emphasis on providing solutions at a local level, on remembering where local capabilities and needs lie. When Shiva distinguishes between diversity (uneven endowments) and scarcity (“having a mismatch between a culture and nature’s giving”) she argues for an approach that is firmly rooted in local conditions and environments (Van Gelder 2003). The entire form of activism used by the movement can be seen within this context, being a blend of analyses and processes developed through contact with the broader GJM and more Indian influences, such as the ideas of Gandhi and Lohia, which in turn have influenced the GJM. This is not to say that there are no problems with the movement’s approach – the “questionable commitment” to allowing activists from Nepal, “non-Indians”, to speak during Intercontinental Caravan actions being a case in point (Featherstone 2003, 414). A recognition that problems exist can, however, coexist with a recognition of the many ways in which the approach of the Indian movement melds together a sense of global solidarity with a strong recognition of contextual differences, and provides a blueprint for how to effectively work towards human security without having to cripple the concept with a homogenising and acontextual template.

While there are a variety of different means by which parts of the movement communicate with one another, it cannot be said that the movement’s methods of communication are fully open and inclusive. In some parts of the movement, particularly within NGOs, the internet plays a large role in maintaining connections and there are several email groups for discussion of GM and related issues. In other sections, such as the KRRS, very few people have access to computers or the internet, although other technologies do play an important role. In the KRRS the postal system is used for routine communication while mobiles, landlines and faxes are used for more urgent matters (Nanjundaswamy 2006). Although access to technology, and particularly to the internet, does tend to reinforce an element of stratification within the movement, this is partly balanced by the amount of face-to-face contact that supplements electronic communication. Individuals frequently travel significant distances to attend workshops, conferences or meetings, both within and outside of Karnataka. Of course, these are not

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\* During my time in India one of the most frequent questions put to me was, “Are Australian farmers facing these problems too?”

without their problems – large meetings with a predominantly male audience can discourage women's participation, even within organisations with an explicit commitment to gender equality (Nanjundaswamy 2006), and travel costs money and demands significant sacrifices of time. To some extent problems with the movement's methods of communication are inevitable and unavoidable, but they are also exacerbated by a general lack of attention to communication strategies, and in particular to their implications for who is and is not included in the debate and discussion within the movement. One of the most obvious results of this is the perception that movement leaders, particularly Professor Nanjundaswamy and Vandana Shiva, use their ability to navigate communication channels to dominate decision-making and the presentation of the movement to the outside world. This is perhaps one of the most problematic aspects of networked activism, as lines of communication are essential to creating a 'network' rather than a mere collection of isolated nodes and can erode the whole functioning of a movement if weak.

Related to the communication question is the question of the movement's ability to gather, disseminate and process information on GM technology, and build others' ability to do so. Given the effects that GM crops potentially have on the lives of farmers, consumers and the environment, providing relevant and accessible information on the issue is vital if people are to be able to make meaningful choices about the most basic aspects of their lives. To date, full access to information about what genetic modification involves and what its implications might be has not been available to many Indians, for a number of reasons. One of these is a lack of openness on the part of companies. For example, seed companies did not promote Bt cotton as “Bt”, they used different brands so that farmers believed it was just another type of hybrid seed (Pailoor & Pailoor 2006). In discussions with several farmers it became clear that many had heard of Bt cotton, but had no idea that it was a GM crop, and indeed had not even heard of the concept of genetic modification (Tippanna 2006). Another reason for the lack of information and debate on GM crops is that it is often constructed as a technical issue, too complex for common people to understand (Raghunandan 2006). Decisions are thus left in the hands of government or academic bodies, few of which are working in a neutral and disinterested context. For those within the Indian movement to make a significant difference to the long-term prospects for human security, it is necessary to build the capacity to make informed decisions on these issues.

This capacity-building is happening, although there are currently limits and gaps in the movement's work in the area. The movement has a good base, as those involved in the opposition to GM crops recognise the value of information – the KRRS has described the right to information as “an integral part of the right to freedom of thought and expression” (Assadi 2004, 207), and Greenpeace has gone to significant effort to put out maps showing the location of all GM field trials currently underway (Raghunandan 2006). There are several journalists and organisations bringing out information and debating the issue in agricultural magazines and newsletters that are affordable and written in the local language, Kannada, as well as speaking about GM and related issues on television and radio programs. The Centre for Alternative Media also runs a notable, if under-resourced, program that trains farmers in how to research and report on agricultural issues (Pailoor & Pailoor 2006). Although the movement has not yet begun to effectively reach middle-class and urban consumers (Raghunandan 2006), there are currently moves underway by groups including Greenpeace India, CREAT and Servalots to spark debate on GM issues among consumers. There is thus reason to believe that the movement will be able to make significant headway in terms of providing the information and capacities necessary for people to make informed choices on GM issues.

While it is important that awareness is raised on this issue, particularly given the recent approval of several new GM crops by the Indian government, most critical analyses of GM crops see the issue as part of a broader system that must be addressed at a structural level, rather than as an isolated problem.

While the opposition to GM crops is the lynchpin of the movement, few of those involved are working solely on GM issues. Most important is the link between opposition to GM and the promotion of organic, low-budget farming. For the KRRS, as well as for other groups, “there is no sense in dividing resistance and alternatives, since none of them can take place without the other” (Nanjundaswamy 2003, 157). Additionally, the KRRS’s efforts are part of “a very long process of construction of a new society”, which aims at “social change on all levels” (Nanjundaswamy 2003: 154-155). Similarly, groups such as ICRA and the Green Foundation are directed at improving the living conditions of small or marginal farmers, generally those living on less than one hectare of land, and the opposition to GM crops is closely tied to attempts to support forms of farming that have low input costs and support biodiversity (Babu 2006; Ramprasad, 70). The perception of the issue as being related to a larger system of privatisation of the commons, neoliberal extension of colonial power and unsustainable development is common throughout the movement, although of course the exact interpretation of problems and solutions varies. This holistic approach is a result of the ability of the networked form of activism to incorporate diverse perspectives, and is very much in line with the human security approach, tackling the problem at a variety of levels and as part of a broader system. Notably, it is not a result of some pre-planned template or policy but is a natural outcome of the different resources and perspectives that actors within the movement have access to.

The sort of activism undertaken by different actors within the movement is varied, although there is an overarching commitment to non-violence and information-based strategy that relies more on presenting positive alternatives to GM crops than on protests against them. As mentioned above, the presentation of alternatives is a key aspect of the movement's strategy. Many within the movement feel that the best way to oppose GM seeds is simply to swap local seeds and avoid buying products from agricultural companies (Nanjundaswamy 2006; Bhat 2006). Where sections of the movement do take action directly against GM crops it is predominantly non-violent, although non-violence is defined differently by different groups. The KRRS's direct actions, which have included burning GM crops and damaging property at the offices of MNCs, have made some “hard-core Gandhians” uncomfortable, although most in the movement believe that the destruction of property can fall within the Gandhian concept of non-violence (D'Monte 2000). Other groups, such as Greenpeace, believe that destruction of property does not fall within their definition of non-violent struggle (Raghunandan 2006). Even allowing for occasional 'violent' destruction of property, the opposition to GM crops is predominantly based on the power of persuasion – signature campaigns and scientific reports aimed at the government, newsletters, workshops, articles, discussions and 'citizen's juries', to convince consumers and farmers. This means that even for those who are uncomfortable with destruction of property there are many spaces for involvement within the movement. In this case networked activism's reliance on information-based rather than force-based tactics shows a progressive alternative to the use of military force to provide security, clearly in keeping with the human security paradigm and able to be utilised by other movements or for other issues.

The final aspect of the movement's work to be discussed is the humour, artistry, and creativity that it demonstrates. This does not necessarily take the same forms as in other contexts. Those involved in the movement “don’t know what carnival, for example dancing salsa, what kind of a message it has. And for us it is clear that whatever we are doing it should carry a message to society, to the people” (Nanjundaswamy 2006). Similarly, Indian farmers involved in the Intercontinental Caravan were quite horrified when they were joined at a protest by "naked hippies" (Nanjundaswamy 2003). Actions in the Indian context, however, do draw on cultural and artistic expressions, as well as frequently demonstrating a sense of humour or pathos. This pathos is demonstrated in actions such as those of farmers in Maharashtra who are putting their whole village up for sale (Jathat 2006, 16), or those in Nagpur who are selling their kidneys to raise money (Vijay Times 2006). In a more optimistic

demonstration of this creativity, groups like the Green Foundation and the KRRS hold *Seed Melas* (festivals) in which indigenous seeds are swapped, stories are told, and folk dances and dramas are played out. Although this aspect of the movement's activism may seem trivial compared to work on food or economic security, they are arguably just as important in securing the well-being of individuals. Both the Indian movement and the broader GJM are not just working to oppose neoliberal globalisation, they are also making an argument about aesthetics, attempting to show that their “other world” is one in which the basics of everyday life (including the search for a livelihood and the provision of food, in this case) are imbued with cultural meaning and worth.

## **Conclusion**

The movement opposing GM crops in Karnataka has had several notable successes and failures when it comes to improving the human security of those affected by the GM issue. Work at the grassroots level has often led to real changes, although much remains to be done in this area and the resources that the movement has available for grassroots work are currently limited. In terms of reaching the urban population and the middle class, the movement has had limited success. There are signs that this work will be taken up more seriously in the future, which may also lead to an increased ability to bring pressure to bear on both the government and companies that sell seed and produce. The most important aspect of the movement's work has probably been its contribution to the creation of a network that can address a variety of related issues. The movement's use of networked activism has also allowed it to build progressive, non-violent, diverse, creative, information-based, holistic processes that effectively combine work at the global and local levels. It has also produced problems, most notably the lack of attention paid to how the movement communicates internally. If the movement is able to adequately navigate the problems that it faces, it has the potential to make lasting and significant contributions to the long-term human security of those it is working with, and to produce real change not just on the issue of GM crops but on a whole raft of related issues.

The Indian movement has demonstrated the possibility for movements within the GJM to provide solutions to threats to human security, particularly on issues that are unlikely to be successfully tackled by governments working within the classical security paradigm. This is particularly urgent work when it comes to issues such as GM crops, given the irreversibility of any adoption of GM technology and its ability to affect some of the most basic aspects of people's lives. It is clear that the GJM will not become the main actor in the field of human security in the near future, and that the movement will not have the power to redefine how the international system sees and acts on security issues - attention and pressure still needs to be brought to bear on the provision of security by the state and by international agencies. However, it is important to also look beyond these bodies, to the GJM and to other actors, if we are to examine the full range of possibilities for the pursuit of human security. It is also important that critical studies are made of how the GJM and other actors go about their work in the field of human security, in order to prevent their contributions becoming as hidebound and limited as those of more traditional actors in the field.

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