

BHOPAL

(S.B.G.)

WE WILL NEVER



FORGET

On the SECOND ANNIVERSARY of
the world's worst industrial
disaster, let us pledge to
fight multinational interests
and governmental apathy to
ensure that there shall be
NO MORE BHOPALS





SAZDA BANU (26, Clerk, Widow of Ashraf Mian - UCIL worker killed by Phosgene in 1981; Umrao Dulha Bagh)

On December 3, '84 I arrived at Bhopal by the Lucknow-Bombay Express from Kanpur. The train stopped at the platform at 1.30 a.m. I started coughing, as soon as I got off the train. The platform was deserted. My two children were with me. One was 5 and the other 4. The elder was called Arshad Mohammed Khan and the younger one Shoeb Mohammed Khan. We were all coughing, after which I don't remember anything. Someone carried me to the hospital from

where I was later dropped at my brother's house. My children were abandoned at the platform. At 7 a.m. I asked for my children. Then my brother went to the station to look for them and brought them back. At 9 a.m. my elder son Arshad Mohammed Khan expired. After my husband died I got no compensation. My in-laws have filed a court case and they are asking for the money. I have got nothing. I still have not got the 1500 rupees. My in-laws sent me out of the house after my husband died. My husband died on December 25, '81. This also happened because of the manager's mistake. His duty time was over and he was asked to open a valve. The valve had not been opened or even touched for three years, and there was phosgene gas inside. My husband asked him three times if there was gas inside. Three times the manager said, No. After the valve leaked, my husband was kept in the factory dispensary, and later taken to the hospital. I have not got anything yet.

GAURI SHANKAR (23, Unemployed; Indira Nagar)



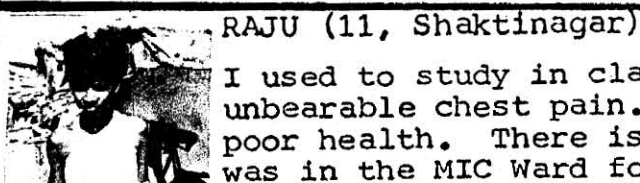
Ever since I was hit by the gas I have had breathing trouble all the time. I can't ride my cycle. I used to earn 50 rupees daily but now even a cup of tea is a problem. Before the gas I had some tools with me and I was thinking of opening a workshop. But after the gas I was forced to sell some and mortgage the rest to get medicines. I am not very old, I am a youth. I think that if I get a good doctor, I will get better. Carbide should be punished. Carbide is a mass-murderer, which has taken thousands of lives, thousands of women, thousands of cattle and birds. Birds no longer flew in the sky. In my heart I feel like setting Carbide on fire, blowing it up. When I was admitted in the Indore hospital, I used to read poems about Union Carbide and wrote some myself.

RADHA BAI (50, Beedi-making/housework; Jaiprakash Nagar)



My husband is dead. He died in the month of 'Chait' on poornima. He was then under treatment at the DIG Bungalow hospital, he got some medicines from there and took them and then he said, It is Chaiti Punno* so I will take a bath. He pulled up one bucket of water (from the well) and while pulling the second, he fell into the well, he had become giddy. Now I make bidis. The government people said, I could not get relief for his death was not due to the gas.

* Festival on the full moon night of the Chait month (March-April).



RAJU (11, Shaktinagar)

I used to study in class 2 before the gas leak. Now I have unbearable chest pain. I do not go to school because of my poor health. There is pain in my chest and I feel dizzy. I was in the MIC Ward for seven days.

GHANSHYAM (32, Unemployed; Indira Nagar)

I used to drive an autorickshaw, but after the gas leak this became difficult. I cannot look at bright light. I cannot face oncoming headlights. Nowadays I do nothing except go daily to get my eyes treated. I have eruptions in my eyes. There is no use in the treatment. Now I sit at home. I don't go anywhere.



GYANA BAI (40, Housework/Basket weaving; Indira Nagar)

I was pregnant with a son at the time of the gas, now he has trouble with his eyes and cannot see well at night. I can't make baskets properly now. Now I work on one bamboo for two days and make baskets on the third day. Before I would strip the bamboo in a day and make four baskets. When I sit in the sun to strip bamboo, my head reels and darkness comes before my eyes. I go in and lie down, and my eyes burn.

AHMAD ALI (45, Unemployed, Bapna Colony)

I was seriously ill and was in Hamidia Hospital for eight days. I had medical certificates with me. I went with my certificates to the Textile Mill and said, Saab, these are my certificates. I have come back to my job. Then the manager said, Your health is not good and the workload here has increased; give me your resignation. So I gave my resignation. I had worked in the Mill for fifteen years. I was a permanent worker. They said, We need your original certificates (for gratuity etc.). Then they accepted my resignation, but I have not got my certificates back. I have not filled the claim form, nor have I got 1500 rupees. If I had the certificates, I could have filled the claim form.



PREM BAI (40, widowed by gas, Shaktinagar)



I don't know ^{where} the lawyers came from. They said that they will get a response for me immediately. The loss of your loved one will be taken care of, they said. My husband died on December 3, '84. I don't know the lawyers' name, address or anything. They took my papers, photo and other things. Other lawyers came and they also took my signature. They said they will make a claim for me.

JAGADISH (35, Worker in Straw Products; Shaktinagar)

The government doctors, they just chased me out of there. When I was admitted to Hamidia hospital, I asked the doctor to keep me there. My condition was very bad. The doctor said, You get out right now. I thought I would wait and try again. In the afternoon the doctor said, Go now, you have been discharged. I don't want to talk to you.



ABID ALI RIZWI (32, Union Official; Chandbad)

I am the Vice-president of the Textile Mill Workers Union. The main problem of the workers after the gas incident is lack of stamina. They have to stand at the machines for eight hours non-stop. Now their capacity to do so is finished. In one or two hours, they are done for. They need rest. If they work for two to four days, they have to go on leave. Absenteeism has greatly increased now, and no division has all its workers present.

NARAINI BAI (35, Housework; Shaktinagar)

We have no money and no job to earn our livelihood. Before the leak, I used to work as a labourer. Now I can't do that. After the gas leak, I have worked only for eight or ten days. I get breathless. I feel dizzy, my head aches. When I rest, I feel slightly better. When I get back to work, I feel sick again.



MAHESH (10, class 3 student; JP Nagar)

I lost many of my friends during the gas leak. My friend Goonja died. Most of my playmates are no more. I get out of breath and cannot run when I play.



RAJESH TIWARI (28, Unemployed; Kainchi Chhola)

Instead of helping the people, the government is putting people on the dole. But people have their rights. After the gas I could see that no political party supports the people. I took part in processions and sit-ins, so that gas victims should get what they are entitled to. But they have not got anything. Carbide should definitely be punished because the dreadful incident that occurred here should not happen again elsewhere.

KANTH BAHADUR (35, Unemployed; Shaktinagar)

I came here from Nepal and immediately after that the gas leak occurred. The gas had a very adverse effect on me. I was in the Hamidia Hospital for eight days and in the TB Hospital for a full month. I lost my job after that,



so I went to the Satguru Complex to meet the Chief Medical Officer Dr. Dheer. I gave him my application and showed him my papers. He said, We will reply to you later. I said that I had heard this response in many places and that he should tell me something final. He asked me whether I was trying to become a 'leader'. He became very angry with me and asked me to get out. All my attempts at showing my medical card were ignored. I fainted under this stress. I was taken by the police to the police station. So much for the want of a job. Dr. Dheer had charged me with goondaism under Sec. 151, IPC. All sorts of lies were written about me in the police report. As they were preparing to hit me, I said, At one level you are keeping me alive and at another you are beating me with sticks. I threw my treatment card at the policemen. I was released several days later, on April 12, '86 and I found out that the police had extracted 250 rupees from my family, in addition to 150 rupees taken from me. After my release, I wrote to the Prime Minister, Health Minister, Collector, Dr. Dheer, and newspapers viz. Dainik Bhaskar, Nai Duniya and MP Chronicle. I sent letters to everyone. Now I am waiting to see who replies.



LAXMI BAI (28, Employed in Carbide Rehabilitation Centre; Shaktinagar)

I feel Carbide is responsible for what happened. Both Carbide and the Government must be punished. Carbide because the gas escaped from its factory and the Government because it gave Carbide permission to be sited where it is. The Government is colluding with Carbide. If it had to punish Carbide, it would have done so by now. I have not voted after the gas leak. Before, I used to vote for Congress. Each and every party must be beaten with shoes. Who bothered to come to us when we lay stricken after the gas leak?

MOHAMMED KHALID (30, Light decorator; Indira Nagar)

My wife, my brother, my sister, my father - my whole family was affected. My wife is in great difficulty. She had a live child in her womb, but the child died. After that she was treated for 8 or 9 months. It cost 90 rupees to pay for just three days medicine.



GOMTI BAI (30, Bidi making/house work; Indira Nagar)

I used to make a thousand bidis a day. Now I don't make even 500 and my head starts to reel. My legs ache when I sit for long. I feel giddy. The tobacco makes me cough a lot, I did not cough before. I feel breathless.

BAL MUKUND (40, Unemployed; JP Nagar)

My legs are useless. I cannot walk. I gave in an application to set up a small shop. But it wasn't granted. Before the gas leak, I used to work at a wood merchant's, but now I am unemployed.





GAFOORAN BEE (60, Housework; Indira Nagar)

I feel as if there is a fire in my head and it seems as though the same gas is leaking. When I cough it feels as though it is the gas again. What do I know about the case? I can neither read nor write. I have got my claim form filled. But I don't know how much it asks for. Who knows when we will get the compensation?

KAMLA BAI (35, Bidimaking/Housework; Indira Nagar)

I don't feel as hungry as I used to before the gas. I can't eat more than two rotis. Many things don't taste good now. My mouth tastes bad.



HARI SHANKAR (40, Street Magician; Vijay Nagar)

Before the gas leak I used to perform magic on the streets. Now I can't do it. I get breathless. I speak for some time and leaves me breathless and my chest pains. I went to find work at the Chandbad Rehabilitation Centre but they told me that I was 'overage'.



SHANKAR LAL (45, Ex-UCIL employee; Kainchi Chhola)



I used to work at the incinerator in Carbide. I used to get about 1200 rupees a month. After being laid off from Carbide, I got a job a year later (January '86) in the Irrigation Department. I now get 430 rupees a month. This does not meet my household expenses. Because of illness I often go late to my new job, and I get shouted at. I have to go to the hospital often. At the most I can work for 10 or 15 days a month. Then I fall sick and I go without pay.

TULSA BAI (55, Housework; Vijaynagar)

After the gas leak, when I went to the village, people said, How dark you have become, and how weak. Even now I remember the gas leak. Sometimes I completely forget about it. And sometimes, it comes back to my heart.

I had been on a procession. We went to break the gates of Carbide. To break the gates and voice our demands - to ask, Why have you caused the gas leak and brought us pain? But the police did not let us go. The police beat us up.



RAMESH (24, Cycle Mechanic; JP Nagar)



Five to six months after the leak, government officials came and collected applications for loans. In March '86 they told me that my loan had been sanctioned. Then they asked me to get a photograph of myself and a 'no dues' certificate. I got no dues certificates from 22 banks.

Day after day, hungry and thirsty, I went from bank to bank. For three months I did only this.



SANTO BAI (10, Student, Married; Shaktinagar)

I study in the 5th class. After the gas incident I failed. Or else I would have been in the 6th class. My health was poor, so I wrote my exams badly. I cannot concentrate on my studies. Reading makes me giddy, and makes my head spin. In my class 5 or 6 girls failed. This never happened before.

KOMAL BAI (30, Washes dishes; Indira Nagar)

My husband died in 1985. He was very sick after the leak, they said he was suffering from typhoid. We were unable to admit him in a hospital because we had no money. We knew nothing about Carbide. I had never seen it before. This factory should be shifted from here. Some people say Carbide will start functioning here again and sometimes people say it will remain closed. They sometimes say there is another gas leak. Only last month people in Kazi Camp ran away saying the same thing.



ACCHO KHAN (56, Porter; Indira Nagar)

Before the gas leak I used to carry loads. Now I do nothing. Because of the gas I cannot do anything. I don't even have the strength to talk or run, my lungs are ruined. I have small children. I survive on the 10 to 15 rupees that I earn.

VIJAY (29, Textile worker; Rajendra Nagar)

I work at the loom at the Textile Mill. After the gas leak my stomach aches. I cough a lot. I get tired when I move around. I go to work for just 10 days in a month. There is a difference of 800 rupees in my earnings. This should be compensated by Carbide because the gas leaked from their factory.



MANKUMARI (29, Housework; Vijay Nagar)

The government brought the factory from outside and killed thousands of people. When we fight and put pressure on the government, only then will we get money. Otherwise we will not get anything. They have been distributing 1500 rupees for two years and even that they have not done properly. Voraji says, We will give it to you tomorrow. Rajiv Gandhi says, We will give it to you one day before that. Now they are cleaning the mohallas because they want votes. This happens every year. After the votes they say, We do not know you.





SURESH (8, class 2 student; Shaktinagar)

There is very little to eat. Very little to wear. Papa just doesn't get a job - he has no permanent job. Before the leak, he used to work on a boring machine. Now he cannot work on that machine.

Carbide must be punished. Take them to the police station, then hit them, and then jail them - those Carbide fellows.

I can't play like I used to before the gas leak. Now I am weak. My hands and legs ache when I run. I get breathless soon. If I run I fall down immediately.

JAMEEL KHAN (35, Saw Mill Worker; Rajgarh Colony)

I work as a helper at the Saw Machine. I have been doing since childhood. After the leak I find it difficult to work. Previously I could stand the saw dust, but now it has become unbearable and it makes me cough. I get 400 rupees a month. Before the leak I earned 600 rupees including overtime.



SUMATI BAI (50, Assistant in Aanganwadi*; Shaktinagar)

I participated in a number of protest marches. We had gone on a procession to Kamala Park and there the police beat us all up badly. They hit me on my hand, and till today, a full year later, I feel the pain - I can't even lift my hand. I can't do any work with this hand. I

can't lift any loads. I can't fill vessels with water and carry them.

We felt we ought to punish Carbide by ourselves, that is why I participated in the procession - otherwise why should we go? We benefitted from the protest. We got grain.

* Child-care centre.

SAYEEDAN BEE (60, Housework; Indira Nagar)

After the gas everything has been razed to the ground. If we had stayed for two more minutes (during the gas) we would all have been wiped out. I escaped death, but what am I good for now? I have become half-dead. When will we get compensation from Carbide? I know nothing about it.



GOPI LAL (40, Cartpuller; Rajnagar Colony)

I push loaded carts. I am breathless most of the time. I go to far off places pushing my cart-loads. My earnings have been reduced by half. There are lots of carts these days. Everyone seems to own a cart bought through bank loan. There weren't so many carts in the days before the leak and business used to be good. Now I can't find any work.



KANTI BAI (30, Housework; Vijay Nagar)

I have five children. All of them suffer from ailments related to the gas leak. The youngest, Somnath, is suffering the most. He is two years old. He was born two days before the gas leak. He is always out of breath. The medicines just ease his pain for two days after which it comes back again. I admitted him in Hamidia Hospital. There the doctors said he had TB. He was given three injections a day for eight days and then he was discharged. After some time he became just as sick again. Before the gas no one in my family had suffered from TB.

BARJOR SINGH (45, Blacksmith; Kabad Khana)

At the time of the gas I was at home. All at once it hit us. We looked outside. Everything was dark. We stayed home out of fear. If we had stayed outside for two or three minutes, we would all have died. Now I have trouble working. My hands and legs have no life in them. My hands have become scaly. I experience numbness and tingling. My hands and legs have become black. I have no property. What I get is what I beat out of iron.



BHANWAR LAL (46, Worker at Straw Products; JP Nagar)

The amount of work I used to do before the leak I can never do again. Now I have reached such a state that I feel like giving it all up and sitting at home. But I am helpless. I have six children, and I am the only earner.



SHAMMU KHAN (50, Cycle shop owner; Indira Nagar)

People are still going around in circles for their 1500 rupees relief money. The assets of Carbide are still intact. Neither is the government taking it over, nor is it using Carbide's assets to help the poor victims. The people are not quiet, it's just that they are being lulled. Like when a child cries, one soothes it by diverting its attention saying a tiger is coming or a goat is coming. Neither does the tiger come nor does the goat. And the child eventually sleeps. The government is working in a similar fashion. We will have to cry out all over again.

RAEESA BEE (35, Housework/knitting machine work; Bapna Colony)

I used to go to the rehabilitation centre to do work. After three months of work in the centre, they said, You people will get loans for machines. You will have to repay in instalments. Because of the gas, my condition is bad, I cannot make 350 rupees a month to pay the instalments. They had taken the responsibility of sending somebody to teach me, but nobody came. In 3 months, I could not learn properly at the centre with 12 women working on one machine.





NARMADA PRASAD (38, Health worker in a voluntary health clinic; Shaktinagar)

When I go in search of labour, people just look at my face and dismiss me - they take only strong men. When I did find a job, for which others are paid 18 rupees, they told me, Dada, we will give you 12 rupees. So I said I will do it for 12 rupees itself, for with that I could buy 2 or 3 kilos of atta. I had only gone a small distance when someone said, Dada, you can't do this - this job is too strenuous for you.

RAM SINGH THAKUR (54, Unemployed; JP Nagar)

Before the leak I was a manager of a wineshop earning around 900 rupees a month. After the leak my eyes have become weak. When I reported for work 1½ months later they fired me, saying if I could not read or write I wasn't fit for them. They chased me away. If I can find work now, I will even work as a chowkidar*.



*watchman.



DEVI BAI (48, Housework; Vijaynagar)

I joined the gas victims' struggle thinking that I could get proper treatment. I would be cured, that, may be the poor would be helped. Most of the people joined the struggle in the hope of the same things. Union Carbide should be punished for injuring so many lakhs of people.

MUSHTAQ ALI (25, Railway porter; Model Ground)

At the time of the gas leak I was on duty at the station. I got back to work eight days after that. I feel breathless when I work. I cannot lift the amount I used to. Every month I am sick for fifteen days. Because of this my earnings have suffered badly. Before the gas leak I used to run from one carriage to another. Now if I run from here to the carriage, I am breathless.



SHANTI BAI (35, Housework; JP Nagar)

When I cook my eyes start burning. During the day it is not so bad. But in the evening the burning becomes unbearable. My hands and feet ache, and my chest pains. When I lift water, I can never lift the amount I used to.



SAGEERA BEE (30, Housework; Rajgarh Colony)

I have spent nearly 8000 rupees on private treatment. I had to borrow this money at 25% a month interest. I have sold my goats. Our son has become very weak. Day by day his condition becomes worse. He is 14 months old.

SHANTI BAI (26, employed in rehabilitation centre; Shaktinagar)

I work at a sewing centre. In a month, we get jobs for 20 days, sometimes for 15 days and at other times for 12; never do we get employed for a full month. My monthly wages are 250 rupees sometimes, 200 rupees at others and at times 275 rupees. Never do we get more than this. If I work for a full day, I experience pain in the hands and legs, and a burning sensation in the throat and chest pain.

MAMTA (6, Housework; Shaktinagar)

They distribute bread at the aanganwadi. Then they let us go. I like bread. We don't get any toys to play with at the aanganwadi. We are taught अ and आ .



RAMCHARAN (20, class 11 student; Indira Nagar)

My health was good before the leak. Ever since the leak, I feel giddy, my eyes have become weak and I can't read well. This year 50% of my class has failed. Before the gas leak we had an 80% pass percentage and our school had a good record. My condition worsens day by day. Previously we never realised that this factory would be so lethal and dangerous. After the leak everyone knows. We have seen this factory around for ages but we were never told what it manufactured.

PRADEEP (12, class 6 student; Kainchi Chhola)

It is Carbide's fault that the poison escaped. The big-big officers in Carbide should be punished. They should be hung.



SUNIL KUMAR (14, class 9 student; JP. Nagar)

Just as people were killed by the gas, something similar should be done to punish Carbide. This punishment cannot be given by the Bhopal Court. Two years have passed and Carbide and the Government are still arguing, but they are doing nothing. I think if the owner (of Carbide) were here, I would slay him - and it is not just me but the whole colony that thinks so. Carbide has destroyed my family - seven people, my mother, father, three sisters and two brothers died. Many of my friends also died.

TWO YEARS AFTER

Two years ago, the whole world held its breath at the horror that Union Carbide's satanic factory had caused, through UC's merciless and hell-bent quest for profits. For years, people had warned of the madness of pouring poisons into our environment in the name of prosperity. Carbide, through its relentless cost-cutting and its systematically hazardous management of ultra-hazardous materials, has taken a short-cut to the devastation that we dreaded. Two years have passed. Neither the death of thousands nor the misery and suffering of lakhs has made Carbide flinch from its attitude to 'business as usual'. On the contrary, it has done everything to impede justice to the people of Bhopal. But Carbide will not go unpunished.

The dimensions of the tragedy are heightened by the scandals that surround every aspect of it. The government's relief and rehabilitation plans still remain so many castles in the air. Fully two years after the event the government has become, if possible, even more fanatical about secrecy than it ever was. Compounded with Carbide's criminal refusal to divulge any information on the nature of the gases, the victims are again the same. With all the medical studies commissioned into effects of the gas (nearly 20 by the ICMR alone), the treatment remains practically the same as it was in the first week of the disaster. The ICMR studies including the epidemiological survey are still 'Confidential'.

We wanted to review all aspects of the disaster in this issue. The question was - how? With unmitigated hostility and suspicion from government officials towards BGIA, collecting information continues to be hazardous. We wrote letters to all the chief officials in charge of gas relief with a detailed list of questions on government action and planning. Not one responded. We decided therefore, to let the gas victims speak for themselves - this would be the best way of conveying the nature of their suffering, the most revealing and comprehensive means of understanding their condition.

Physical suffering is unabated - the medical treatment, such as it is, has had little effect. Perhaps most devastating is their anguish at their helplessness. Their chief source of pride - their work, their ability to provide for themselves, has been taken away from them. But their voices are as eloquent as ever.

Any hope for proper and long-term relief and compensation seems possible only as a result of such eloquent struggle. But how long can a deprived and debilitated community struggle? Gradually, hope is likely to give way to despair. When that happens, the industry, government and the general public shall write 'finis' to Bhopal and march on relentlessly till another one is let loose. We must not let that happen.

'BHOPAL' is brought out
by the Bhopal Group for
Information and Action.
D-42 FIRDOS NAGAR
BHOPAL 462 018

This issue was produced
by Goutam Banerjee, Vinod
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nath Sarangi, and MK
Srinivasan with assist-
ance from NR Mohandas.



BOOK-POST



Shri Vijayendra
CPDR (Bombay)
A-2/26, Seepz Staff Quarters
Andheri (East)
BOMBAY - 400 093.

For private circulation only