



Our fight for clean water and life

In May 2004 the Supreme Court of India orders the state government to provide clean water to contamination-affected communities.¹ The order is ignored. When women and children go to the government offices to ask why nothing has been done they are beaten up by police. The politicians announce grand plans to spend hundreds of millions on ornamental fountains.

The red paint on the pump says the water is unfit to drink, but the child cannot read. In long ago 1969, before even her mum was born, Carbide was already dumping its waste in Bhopal.

On the ground, in pits, into huge 'solar evaporation' ponds. Wherever.

By 1982, the ponds were leaking. The lawyer Babulal Gaur brokered a settlement between Union Carbide and farmers whose cattle had died while grazing near these ponds.²

Years later the same Babulal Gaur became the State Minister in charge of Gas-Relief, then Chief Minister. By now

2005 many people living

near the plant are sick. *(Page 90 has an A-Z of the many and severe health problems linked to contaminated water.)*

Neither the State nor the Central government showed much interest.

In May 2004 we petition the Supreme Court which then ordered the State government to supply clean water to the contaminated areas.

In August 2004 Bhopal's Gas Relief Minister Umashankar Gupta grandly announces that all affected by the leaking toxic wastes will get clean drinking water within three months. Each day we watch but never is there any sign of any work beginning.

January 21, 2005

Rioting with deadly weapon

We women decide to remind Gupta of his promise. We sit outside his gate singing songs. Gupta's PA calls us in and receives our petition. All is peaceful, but nine people, including Champadevi Shukla, 51 (winner of the Goldman Prize) are arrested and police charge them with rioting with a deadly weapon, a crime carrying a two year prison sentence.

May 18, 2005

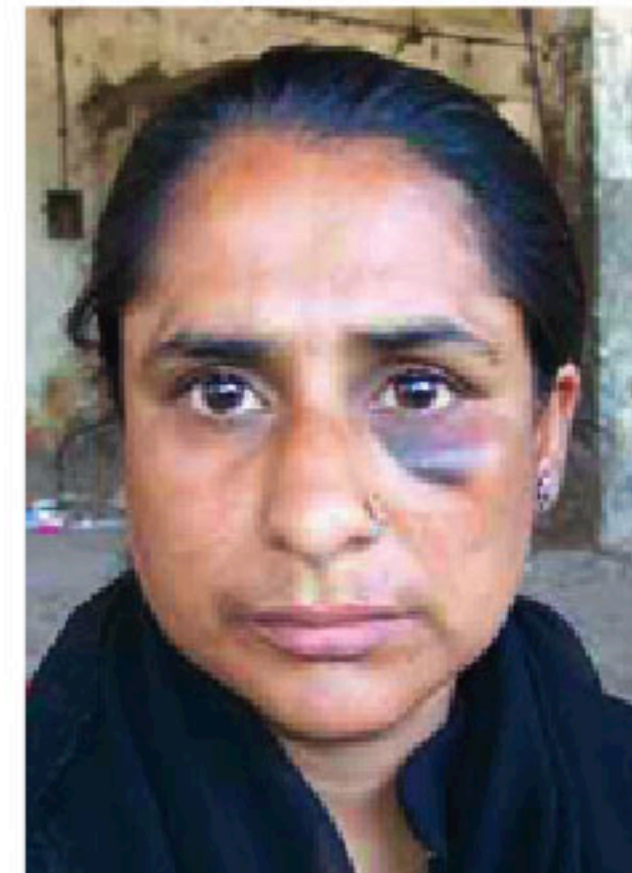
'Are we less than human?'

We enter the office of the Director of

Gas Relief and ask to meet him. We wait singing songs. Three truckloads of armed riot police turn up.



The cops are kicking out, hitting really hard with thick sticks. I am trying to get my children out of that place and see Sathyu dragged by his hair all the way down stairs then beaten with sticks.



I don't see the man who hits me. The fist comes flying from nowhere into my eye. Such pain, I've gone blind I thought. I'm so scared for my kids. When we're outside I sit down and I'm shaking. That they treat us this way, are we less than human?

June 16, 2005

£180 million for fountains

No money is available for piping safe water to the contaminated slums, but Chief Minister Gaur unveils plans to spend £180 million beautifying the city with ornamental fountains and opening gymnasia and badminton courts to promote public health.³

February 12, 2006
Umashankar's birthday

On his 53rd birthday supporters of Gas Relief Minister Gupta give him a two mile procession with elephants, camels and dancing horses followed by fireworks and a cake weighing 53 kilos – one for each year of his life. One of his garlands is 21 feet long.



Dow promises clean water for every person on earth. (Except Bhopalis.)

2006 Fireboats hired by Dow's PR agency jet aloft tall sprays over the Hudson River as the world's diplomats gather for a speech by Dow CEO Liveris.

'More than a billion people are in peril every day because they do not have enough water or the water they have is unhealthy. Lack of clean water is the single largest cause of disease... more than 4,500 children die each day because of it. *We are determined to win a victory over the problem of access to clean water for every person on Earth – we need to bring to the fight the kind of things companies like Dow do best.*'⁴

Stirring stuff. But when Liveris was asked if Dow would clean up Bhopal, where the drinking water of tens of thousands is poisoned by toxic wastes dumped by Union Carbide, and birth defects are many times commoner than in the rest of India, Dow's CEO says *'We don't feel this is our responsibility.'*⁵

July 26, 2006
Sunil takes his own life

Next day, Sunil Verma, 34, who lost five family members in the 1984 gas disaster, despairing of ever gaining justice, puts on a tee-shirt that says NO MORE BHOPALS and hangs himself.