

# 777

THE BHOPAL MEDICAL APPEAL, 24TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE, DECEMBER 2008



As Bhopalis begin their 25th year of suffering without justice, of poisoned water, damaged children & the endless struggle for health and a life of dignity, with your help they have created their own healthcare system, and given free care to 30,000 people ↗ p3



## Saira's story



WHEN LOVE IS NOT ENOUGH







## Bhopal, a brief background

THIS FAMOUS, TERRIBLE & TENDER PICTURE was taken by MAGNUM photographer Raghu Rai on the morning of December 3, 1984, after the night of horror in Bhopal when a huge cloud of poison 500 times more toxic than cyanide spewed from a factory belonging to Union Carbide Corporation.

Thousands died in hideous ways. As the sun rose on streets full of corpses, Raghu found himself in a graveyard where a man was burying his young daughter. The father had covered the tiny body but then, unable to bear parting from her, brushed the earth away for one last look.

For the Bhopalis this picture has come to symbolise 25 years of unimaginable suffering, an injustice never righted, crimes unpunished, and a community that most of the world has forgotten.

Today in Bhopal, 100,000 people are still chronically sick from the effects of that night, while some 26,000 others are ill from contamination of their wells and stand-pipes by chemicals leaking from the abandoned plant, which remains derelict and full of poisons. Union Carbide and its owner Dow Chemical continue to deny responsibility for the poisoning and refuse to clean up the factory.

### WHY IS THE NEWSLETTER CALLED 777?

777 in Hindi and Urdu is *saat saat saat* which with a slight twist of the tongue can also mean *together, together, together*. The Bhopal Medical Appeal is a joint effort of ordinary people around the world to bring free medical relief to victims of the gas and water disasters. Who are we? We're survivors and Sambhavna Clinic staff in Bhopal, we're donors, volunteers, supporters and organisers in the UK and elsewhere. We're all equal, all together, and together we're the Bhopal Medical Appeal.

### GIVING SOMETHING BACK

We have learned a great deal about treating chemically- and industrially-induced illnesses with therapies that do not add to the body's toxic load. We are looking to share knowledge with people and organisations all over the world who may benefit from it. Ideas welcome.

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# As the 25th year of suffering dawns in Bhopal, we commemorate the dead & celebrate the spirit of the survivors

A GREAT CATASTROPHE, followed by years of sickness, poverty and injustice can overwhelm and crush the human spirit, or it can enable ordinary people to discover that they are extraordinary.

Such people find that they have the grit to survive, the defiance to face their persecutors and the courage to fight back. Out of shared struggle, even in the midst of terrible sickness, comes strength, the joy of friendship, and the realisation that they are not weak, powerless or contemptible. They are in fact possessed of great power, power to bring about political change, do real good in their community and in the world.

In Bhopal, some of the poorest, most helpless people on earth, sick, living on the edge of starvation, illiterate, without funds, powerful friends or political influence, have for the last quarter of a century struggled for their lives against the world's biggest chemical corporation, its allies in the US and Indian governments and tycoons

and an army of hired lawyers, lobbyists and PR agents.

It's a struggle of those who have nothing against those who have it all. Where many Bhopal survivors can barely afford one meal a day the company has limitless wealth. Since 2006 it has spent around \$200 million on ads portraying it as a caring benefactor of humanity.

The company has been fined for bribing officials, it is known to have lied, attempted to subvert democracy, bullied politicians and twisted the laws of two nations to avoid justice in either. The Bhopalis, seeking help from their own government, were instead abandoned to their fate, ignored by politicians, fleeced by corrupt officials, swindled by moneylenders and unscrupulous quacks, not infrequently arrested, kicked and beaten by the police for daring to protest.

Every authority that owed the Bhopal survivors a duty of care has failed them. Having no one else to turn to, they were forced to help themselves and discovered that the poorest slums were full of talent.

From this humblest of communities has come a remarkable flowering of political intelligence, social service, medicine, art, science and music.

As we celebrate their successes, we must remember that everything they have achieved has been won against brutal opposition, in a context of struggle and suffering of which there is still no end in sight.

## *The quarter century long struggle for health and a life of dignity*

In the immediate aftermath, Union Carbide offered no help or advice to the seriously-ill, terrified survivors of the gas. 'Medical experts' sent to Bhopal from the US turned out to be professional witnesses and chemical-weapons experts. The one treatment that gave any relief, injections of sodium thiosulphate, was stopped after an intervention by the company. The first survivors' organisation decided to give the injections itself, but their self-built clinic, a pole-and-thatch affair, was attacked by police, who beat the doctors and staff. Its equipment was looted and the frail building torn down.

In March 1985, a column of frightened mothers-to-







*The people who built the first clinic pose for a picture, 1985. Some are still involved in the survivors' struggle. Many others have died.*

be wound towards a government hospital with bottles containing urine samples. The women asked for the samples to be tested to check whether their babies could be born damaged, and to ask for sodium thiosulphate injections to rid their bodies of toxins inhaled on 'that night'. Instead of injections, tests, medical advice and kindness they were driven away by police with sticks.

Ironically, even as these scared women were being chased away, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) was carrying out a double-blind clinical trial to test the efficacy of sodium thiosulphate injections as a detoxificant for the gas-exposed. And while the fears of mothers-to-be were all too soon realised in what one medical expert described as 'a spate of horrific births', the ICMR results took 22 years to be published, when



they revealed – a whole generation too late – that the injections could indeed have saved tens of thousands of lives.

This story summarises in bleak miniature the fate of a quarter-century of attempts by the poisoned people to obtain effective medical care. Such efforts, whether relating to illness caused by the gas leak or to the more recently discovered water-poisoning, have consistently been stonewalled and obstructed by Union Carbide, its owner Dow Chemical, Indian health authorities and politicians. Arrests of protesters and brutal beatings are still used to deny the survivors their right not just to proper health care, medical research and compensation, but even the

right to ask for these things. For Bhopalis, medical care cannot be other than a political issue. There is no separation in the struggle for health and justice. They are inextricably entangled aspects of the same fight.

THANKS TO YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT, there is much the survivors can do – and are doing – for themselves, but there is much more they cannot realistically achieve without victory in the courts. Cleaning up the contaminated soil and water in and around the factory is of critical importance for health, as tens of thousands continue to be poisoned, with consequent epidemics of cancers and damaged births, but only political and legal action can get the site cleaned. It is beyond the survivors to raise the sums needed to do it. Under the laws both of

India and the US, Union Carbide should pay, but Carbide has spent the last 16 years ignoring an Indian court summons. Dow Chemical claims it cannot make its wholly-owned subsidiary obey the law. At the same time it seeks to portray Bhopal survivors as terrorists. The *New Jersey Star Ledger* in December 2003 ran a Dow press release:

*Three 'Justice for Bhopal' terrorists were shot dead at a Dow Chemical facility in Piscataway, New Jersey, on December 14th. Bhopal activists stormed the Dow facility, took eight Dow workers hostage killing one. Later a SWAT team took out the three terrorists...*

Having quoted this slur the paper then belatedly revealed that 'Piscataway police had dressed as the Bhopal terrorists in a mock drill'.

Safe drinking water, high quality medical research, adequate compensation, all crucial to health, cannot be obtained without action in court – and on the streets – when court decisions are simply ignored by politicians.

In May 2004, the Indian Supreme Court ordered the government of Madhya Pradesh, the state of which Bhopal is the capital, to provide clean drinking water for communities whose wells and stand pipes had been poisoned by Union Carbide's chemicals. A year later, with no sign of any action, desperate women took their sick children to ask officials why they had failed to obey the Supreme Court's order. The women were kicked and severely beaten. Even the children were not spared.

A year later, nothing had been done, but the Chief Minister announced a plan to spend £108 million on public gymnasias and ornamental fountains to beautify the city. The minister in charge of 'gas-relief' celebrated his birthday with elephants, camels, dancing horses, a

53-kilogram cake and a firework display. Newspapers reported that the flower garland his supporters wound around his neck was 21 feet long.

Earlier this year the Supreme Court's order had still not been carried out. Bhopalis, including many old and sick people who receive care at our clinic, walked 500 miles to Delhi to ask the Prime Minister's help.

For two months he refused to see them, keeping them waiting in a makeshift tent on a public pavement.

In desperation, a group of mothers carrying their damaged children chained themselves to the railings of the PM's house. They were arrested. The policewomen who led them away to jail were weeping.

A week later male police brutally beat women and children as young as six who had dared to stage a 'die-in' outside the Prime Minister's office.

The Bhopali survivors have now made three long marches to Delhi, in 1989, 2006 and 2008. They've

endured extremes of heat and cold, slept in deserts and snake-infested jungles and walked through badlands ruled by bandits. Some women have been on all three walks. Most can look back on a lifetime of struggle: street demos, sit-ins, roadblocks, boycotts, graffiti-actions, fly-poster campaigns, hunger-strikes with and without water. They've staged exhibitions, satirical awards, music concerts, street theatre and created some of the most extraordinary protest art ever seen. All these things, plus the torches and banners, the songs and slogans like *Women Of Bhopal: Flames Not Flowers*, and the famous *Beat Dow With a Broom* are part of the Bhopal survivors' efforts to win proper health care for themselves and their families, and to bring to justice those responsible for the tens of thousands of damaged, sick and dead.

In 2002, *Outlook India* magazine wrote:

*'Bhopal isn't only about charred lungs, poisoned kidneys and deformed fetuses. It's also about corporate crime, multinational skullduggery, injustice, dirty deals, medical malpractice, corruption, callousness and contempt for the poor. Nothing else explains why the victims' average compensation was just \$500 – for a lifetime of misery. Yet the victims haven't given up. Their struggle for justice and dignity is one of the most valiant anywhere. They have unbelievable energy and hope. The fight has not ended. It won't, so long as our collective conscience stirs.'*

As their fight enters its 25th year, how can we not support them?



1989 Leaving Bhopal



2006 Gwalior at dawn



2008 In the jungle



# 'Mama, please don't lose the fight for life.'

*In her own words, the story of SAIRA BI, as told to BIJU KUMAR*

MY NAME IS SAIRA BI. My father Mohamed Khan *Gudna Godnewalé* (the tattoo artist) has lived all his sixty years in one mud hut in Chhola Naka, Bhopal. All of us children from his two marriages were born there. We were ten brothers and sisters. Four of us are dead. One sister died before the gas disaster, another died on 'that night'. My twin brothers died two years later. Four brothers and two sisters survive.

Our family has always been horribly poor. Besides tattooing, father massaged people with pulled muscles. The pittance he earned was gambled away. Sometimes we'd have meals, but mostly we went hungry. Our neighbours, pitying us, would sometimes send their leftovers.

Father disliked us going out. When neighbours asked, 'Hey, *Gudnaywalō*, coming to town?' he would curtly reply that girls of our family weren't dancing girls, but he himself never took us anywhere. Yes, I felt insulted when people called us *Gudnaywalé*, poking fun at us because my father was a tattooist. To them we were low caste scum.

## MY MEMORIES OF 'THAT NIGHT'

The night the gas leaked I was five and my brother was three. Our younger sister who died that night was a year old. Memories of that terror will remain with me forever. My father went outside to answer a call of nature and saw people running like mad past our hut. He shouts to mother, 'Hey, look at this! Why's everyone running? Why are my eyes burning. What's this smoke?' Mother starts coughing and he says, 'God knows what's going on, maybe it's *qayamat* (the day of reckoning).'

He picked me up, put my brother on his shoulder, took my mother, who had our baby sister, by the hand and led us running away. It hurt to breathe, the smoke in our faces was like fire, our eyes were burning agony, like someone had thrown chili dust in them. I was choking and retching. The night was full of screams.

After stumbling some distance through lanes by the railway, our family came onto the track. There were bodies everywhere. Some people were alive but unable

to move. They were coughing and vomiting, crying for help and dying. My father was gasping for breath. He couldn't carry us any further and told my mother to take us on without him. So we became separated.

Somehow we found our way to the railway station. Thousands had gathered there. People were pouring water from pots and buckets on their relatives who had passed out to try to wake them up again, but many were already dead. My eyes swelled up so much they closed completely and I passed out. When I came to, I couldn't see a thing but I was calling out for mother and father.

Father later found us. He said he had recognised my brother by the *tarveez* talisman we had got when we went on pilgrimage to Ajmer.

We were all taken to a hospital in Sehore town. My sister was on oxygen. Her picture appeared in a newspaper. We were given some curry sauce and bread and we children got a *rasgulla*

each. When we got home, our berry tree had withered. Its fruits had turned black, but we ate them anyway as we were very hungry. My sister died a few months later. My twin brothers, born two years after the gas leak, died within ten minutes of coming into this world.

## I GET A NEW STEPMOTHER

Then my poor mother also died and there was no one left to look after us kids. Her parents worried about us. They were kind, I'd often been to their house. Mother's brothers have a bit of farm land and they asked my father to let them take me home with them but he said he wasn't about to start 'distributing' his children. Once my uncles took me off for the day. Father brought me back and gave me a hiding. Then he announced that he was remarrying and that I would never again be allowed to visit my grandparents.

Father was very happy with his new wife. When she arrived he stopped working and never gave a thought to us children. He cared only about her. We were destitute. Food was cooked once a day, and often not even once. After my stepmother had her own children they always



*Saira at Sambhavana,  
February 2008*



got best of the meals. She'd give us a bit of *roti* and tell us to go to sleep, but would feed her own children well. If we, the first wife's children, asked for more food, we were beaten.

My stepmother beat us a lot. I often felt like killing her! I did nothing because of father. Such a bad woman, from some place near the Chambal. Dangerous, she was, did mumbo-jumbo and black magic – she struck her enemies dumb! Father was totally under her spell.

So much we children suffered. I wasn't well. Ever since the gas, I was breathless, coughing. I went from doctor to doctor, hospital to hospital, and got no relief.

My stepmother hated me more for being ill. 'We'll never get rid of you. Who'll ever want to marry a sickly creature like you? You'll be a millstone round our necks forever.'

It's true that girls affected by Union Carbide's gas find it harder to find husbands. So many gas-affected women miscarried and gave birth to 'monsters'. I was badly affected by the gas and so I truly thought I would never marry.

I studied up to standard II in the government girls' school in J.P. Nagar, where they distributed free books and cotton uniforms. My brothers got no education and father couldn't have cared less. Poor little boys, they were so hungry they searched for food in waste bins, committed thefts and petty crimes to fill their bellies. They grew up to become anti-social types, *mawalis*. Had my father fed them when they were little, they would not have gone astray. They were all younger than me and they were very young at the time of my marriage.

### I'M MARRIED OFF & SENT AWAY

My father married me off to a man from Sitapur, far away near Lucknow. I was thirteen. My husband was a petty thug, a goon who beat up people, including me. He and my in-laws thrashed me so badly that I was passing blood in my stool. The torture was endless. I didn't bring enough dowry, plus I was damaged goods from Bhopal.

'You knew this,' I said. 'Why did you choose me?' Then my husband brought home another woman. I sent word to my father and stepmother asking them to take me back to Bhopal. They wrote direct to my in-laws saying that if they didn't want me they should kill me.

The in-laws never stopped beating and tormenting me. I could not take any more. I fled in a truck driven by my aunt's son-in-law. When I got home, my father gave me a hammering and angrily took me to the station to send me back to the in-laws. On the train I was crying. A kind woman took pity on me. She brought me to an

orphanage in Kallan Naar ki Gali, Ameenabad.

Three years I spent in the orphanage and learned embroidery and sewing, and even got a bit of education. Then one day the superintendent told us girls to contact our homes to be taken away. Father and his wife arrived, wept a lot, and brought me to Bhopal.

### I'M NEARLY SOLD TO A BROTHEL

My stepmother soon reverted to her cruel ways. She'd hit me violently. I had gashes on my head and deep cuts in my hands. One day she was beating my one-year old step-sister. I yanked her off by her hair and fought her.

*I watched her die. She was so beautiful, but by now her eye was bulging right out. She cried, and writhed in pain. I had no money to buy painkillers for my child.*

She was furious and got me tied up with rope. When father came home, I got a severe thrashing. I fled their home. A policewoman took me to Delhi and tried to sell me to a brothel. Luckily for me, someone intervened and brought me back to my father, but he forcibly returned me to my in-laws.

### MY DAUGHTER GETS CANCER

In all I spent nine years with my husband and his family and and bore him three children. One daughter died, two other girls are alive.

Like so many of our Bhopali children, the child who died developed cancer in her eye. Doctors said the eye needed to be removed or the cancer would spread to her brain. They told me to take her to Bangalore, or Kathmandu. But I had no money. I said I'd try to get help in Bhopal. We came here but it was no use. When we got back again my husband had run off and no one would tell me where he was. Some neighbours took pity on us and raised 10,000 rupees. A man called Furqan was trusted with taking us to a hospital in Lucknow but when we got there he vanished with the cash. The doctors asked for the money but I had none. They said that in any case it was too late. The cancer had spread to other parts.

I managed to get my girl back to the in-laws. For two months I watched her die. She was so beautiful, but by now her eye was bulging right out. She cried, writhed in terrible pain. I had no money to buy painkillers for my child. Her throat swelled, choking her. She couldn't eat and became like a skeleton. Her teeth fell out. Her other eye failed. She suffered so much. One day she said to me, 'Mama!' and died. She was four years old.

### I RETURN TO BHOPAL & FALL SICK

After this, I brought my two surviving girls to Bhopal. The hut we live in is owned by my father. He lets us stay there. I found work as a cleaner so I could feed my daughters, but my health had worsened. I had swellings

all over the body plus violent pains in my chest and spine. They never seemed to ease. My body ached. I'd have long bouts of coughing and found it harder and harder to breathe. From one cheap doctor to another I went, even to quacks. None could say what was wrong.

When I became too ill to work there was no more money. My daughters suffered a lot of hunger with me. Jeenat, she's so young, only six, did so much for me. The water tap near our hut had run dry. She used to bring water from far away to wash my face and limbs. She'd clean the floor and wash utensils, then go out begging for food. She only went out after dark because during the day people would taunt her. One night in J.P. Nagar some dogs chased her and bit her leg. A rickshaw driver brought her home. She was crying and bleeding. The driver was angry with me for letting her go out alone at night. He said the dogs would have mauled and eaten her alive had he not got there in time.

At last Hamidia hospital told me I had a bad heart. What could I do? I had no money for an operation.

### I'M KICKED OUT OF HOSPITAL

My father and brother took me to the BMHRC [*Note: the Bhopal Memorial Hospital & Research Centre, built from the sale of Union Carbide's impounded shares supposedly for*

*the benefit of the gas victims*]. The staff refused to see me without a 'smart card' proving I was a gas victim. I said I had papers to show I was gas-exposed, plus a bank book which showed I used to get £3 a month interim relief. They were at my in-laws. I said I'd send for them.

The hospital people told me to go away. My father fell at the doctor's feet but the doctor told the guard to throw us out. A doctor in the emergency unit even began abusing us. We returned home. I wrote to the in-laws but they did not send the papers. I asked again when the government distributed £300 as the first half of 'final compensation'. They refused, saying my father would keep all the money, so I got nothing. Now a second round of £300 has been paid. Again I got nothing.

### GOD HEARS MY PRAYERS

My luck changed when someone told me about the Sambhavna Clinic. My health was by then so bad that I could hardly breathe. I was in a wheelchair, but somehow got myself there. The security guard asked if I was gas-exposed. I told my story and he took me to register. Sambhavna accepted me and treated me with kindness.

Their doctor confirmed that I had a damaged heart valve. It would have to be operated upon, or I would die. The doctor said that Sambhavna did not have facilities





for heart surgery but he took me to see Sathyu brother, who runs the clinic. He said he'd do his best for me so I went home and prayed god to show me some kindness.

One day, I learned that god had heard my prayers. A member of Sambhavna staff collected me and took me to see a heart specialist at the BMHRC, which has facilities for heart surgery. Without the gas victims' smart card I had to pay, but Sambhavna bore all my costs.

BMHRC doctors agreed to admit me on condition that cash to pay for the operation and my stay was deposited in advance. These expenses were also met by Sambhavna. I was operated upon and remained in BMHRC for a month and a half. Sambhavna staff used to visit me daily.

### I COME TO LIVE AT SAMBHAVNA

Each day after my operation Diwakar used to come from Sambhavna bringing my medicines. The first time I was in bed but couldn't speak. Soon I was feeling a bit better and was able to talk. After I was discharged, Diwakar brought me to Sambhavna. He said the staff meeting had decided that until I was recovered I should stay at the clinic, because of the unhygienic conditions in our neighbourhood where sewage flows openly.

I remained at Sambhavna for a month. The staff were so friendly. They made sure I ate properly and took my medicines which I often forget to do. As my breath came back I enjoyed walking in the clinic garden. My sweet daughter, solicitous as ever, came every evening to massage my legs. I was so looking forward to being home again with my two girls.

The day I went home every one in the clinic came to

wish me well. They had collected a sum of about 2,000 rupees [£26] for me. Diwakar used it to buy grain and other necessities for us and I also had some cash.

There are not enough words to praise Sambhavna and the treatment it provides to the poor people. It helps everybody. It saved my life. The staff of Sambhavna helped me and my children get food and shelter. Nobody does so much for others. It was my children's good luck that you people saved me. Sambhavna should be supported by all. May it earn great fame! Sambhavna is rolled-gold!

### MY MESSAGE OF HOPE

Nowadays I'm feeling much better. My breathing is much improved. It no longer hurts to talk. My children live in hope that one day things will take a turn for the better. Mama, don't lose the fight for life, they say. And I'm determined not to be defeated.

I want to fight my own battle. Women can do a lot. I pray to god to give me life and strength so that I can stand on my feet and not depend on others. I've never burdened others with my miseries, nor have I ever begged. When I was working as a domestic help, people asked me why I carried on when I was so obviously ill. It was simple. If I did not, my children would die of hunger.

Yes, I've often felt that I suffered so much because I am a woman, but to whom could I have complained? No one comes to share your sorrows. Every woman has to face hard times. Some face troubles better, some worse. But there is no point in crying in front of others. People should fight their own battles. I would like to tell every woman not to accept defeat.



*Jeenat (left) & Muskan*

### EPILOGUE: LOVE IS NOT ENOUGH

SAIRA BI, AGED ABOUT 29, could not survive and died on 18th April, 2008. Her daughters Jeenat and Muskan are now in the care of the Darul-Shafquat Shahjahani orphanage in Bhopal.

We publish Saira's story in sorrow and with deep regret that despite her trust in us, we could not save her.

Everyone here at Sambhavna came to love Saira, her courage, the dignity with which she bore her terrible suffering, her humility and decency. If love alone could have saved her, she would be alive now and the writer of these words would not be in tears.

Saira's story epitomises a lot of what's wrong with the health care of survivors in Bhopal. Since the night of the gas leak, treatment protocols have hardly evolved. As in Saira's case survivors are routinely prescribed drugs that do no good, and often actually harm. The gas survivors, mainly from the poorest sections of society, are often treated rudely at government hospitals. Medical records are a shambles, with little or no account taken of patient history. Some doctors won't touch 'lower caste' people, so examinations are careless and perfunctory.

### SAIRA'S FINAL WEEKS

When Saira left us she was stronger and eager to be back with her children. Sambhavna staff gave money to send grain, vegetables and lentils for her family. Diwakar used go round to see Saira, bring her her medicines and make sure she was taking them. At first she seemed to be doing well but slowly her condition began deteriorating. Towards the end of March she reported bad pain, cold and numbness in her legs. We took her to the BMHRC to consult the surgeon who had operated on her.

The hospital said she was imagining the pain and that what she needed was a psychiatrist. At our insistence they admitted her for observation, and week later sent her home with a report saying that doppler investigation had located a block in the distal portion of the descending aorta. 'This was found to be of chronic nature,' claimed the document, 'and might have been present even before she was taken up (*sic*) for her valve surgery.'

We were unhappy with this assessment. If the aorta was blocked before surgery, how did it escape detection? Had the blockage been there before surgery Saira would have had severe pain in her legs with no femoral pulses, but she had no such symptoms. The pain and coldness came afterwards. It is in fact likely that the blockage was a consequence of the surgery.

On 17th April we received word that Saira had felt very ill and had gone to the Bhopal Charitable Hospital. Biju from Sambhavna went there immediately. Saira was

in intensive care. She was in a bad way, crying, groaning, screaming in pain and refusing to take any medicines.

She told Biju she was sure she was dying and was worried that her children would not be looked after well after her death. Despite everything, Saira wanted to go home to her daughters. Biju called Sambhavna's Doctor Quaiser who in turn spoke to the duty doctors at the Bhopal Charitable Hospital but Saira was too ill to go home and Biju eventually left the hospital at around half-past ten. A little after midnight we got a telephone call informing us that Saira had died.

### THE MIRACLE OF SAIRA

Next day we heard from the Shahjahani orphanage that a woman answering Saira's description had arrived there a few days earlier, in great pain, to ask them to care for her children. We are in constant touch, and can report that the girls are being lovingly looked after. At the recent Id festival, they had lots of presents. We will watch over them and make sure they get a first-class education.

Saira's story seems unique in the depth and savagery of its misfortune. But in another way it is a miracle. How did an unwanted, unloved child, brought up in hunger, neglect and fear of beating, married off to a brute who abused her, learn to love so deeply?

How did a child whose life was unfairly blighted at the age of five acquire the magnanimity to say, 'If Dow company knew how much illness the factory is causing, it would surely help us.' Sadly, this is not true (*see pages 14-17*), but how does someone who has experienced the worst of human nature still believe in its goodness?

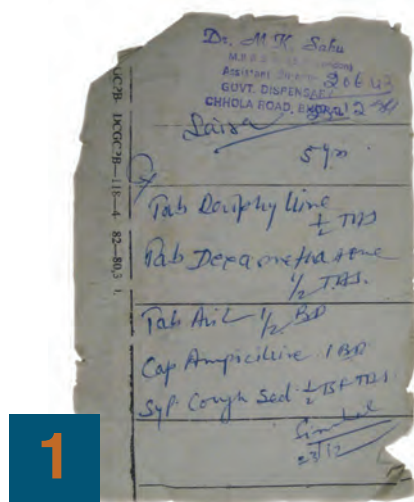
We did our utmost for Saira and it wasn't enough. What more could we have done? What could we have done better? Dozens of women like Saira are seriously ill right now in Bhopal. To help them, we need to reach them in time, and make sure they have the best available treatment. Please continue to support our work.



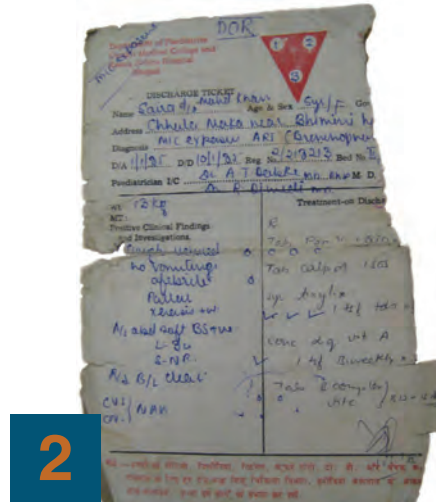
*Saira's bank book. When she died the balance was 818 rupees, roughly £12.*



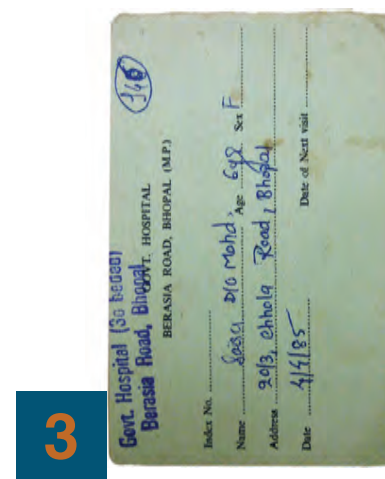
# Saira's life depended on these fragile scraps of quackery



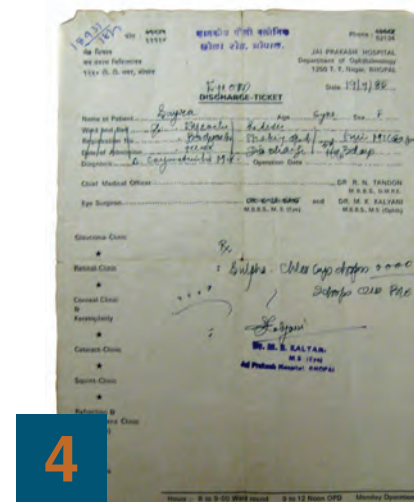
1 GOVERNMENT DISPENSARY, CHHOLA ROAD, BHOPAL. 23 DEC 1984



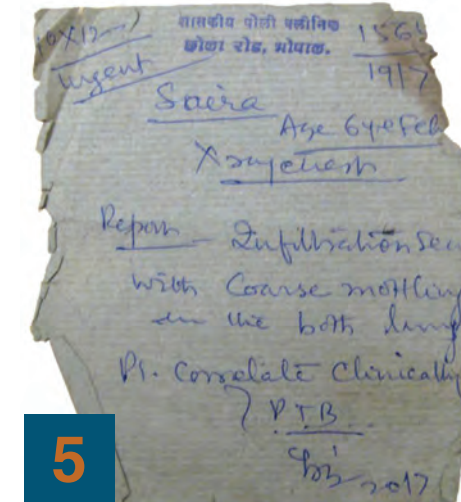
2 DEPT OF PAEDIATRICS, KAMALA NEHRU HOSPITAL, BHOPAL. 1 JAN 1985



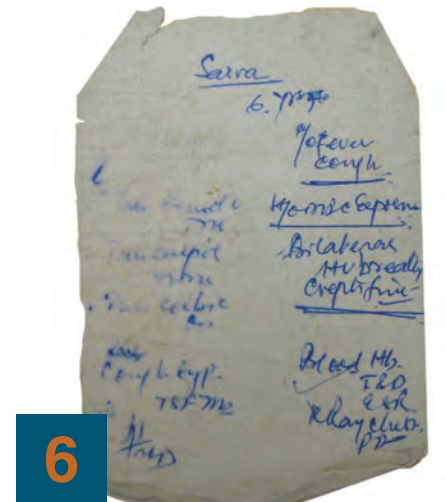
3 PATIENT CARD, GOVT HOSPITAL, BHERASIA ROAD. 4 APRIL 1985



4 JAIPRAKASH HOSPITAL, DEPT OF OPHTHALMOLOGY. 19 JULY 1985



5 X-RAY REPORT SHASKIYA POLI CLINIC. 19 JULY 1985



6 UNKNOWN DOCTOR circa 1986

1. Here, nineteen days after *that* night, little five-year-old Saira was clearly coughing and breathless. She is prescribed a bronchodilator (*deriphyline*), antibiotic (*ampicillin*), anti-allergic (*pheniramine maleate*), cough syrup and a steroid (*dexamethasone*). The scattergun approach shows the doctor does not know how to treat

the effects of methyl-isocyanate, the poison gas. The doctor is treating her for upper respiratory infection (the antibiotic). The steroid was a particularly bad choice as steroids stop white blood cells reaching sites of infection, thus allowing existing infections may worsen or new ones to occur. Patients taking steroids are at

increased risk of all types of infections (bacterial, viral, fungal).

2. Here Saira has been treated for acute respiratory infection (ARI). She was given an antibiotic (*penicillin*), an antipyretic to bring down fever and relieve pain, a cough syrup (*tixylix*), plus vitamin A and B complexes. Why did the doctor use

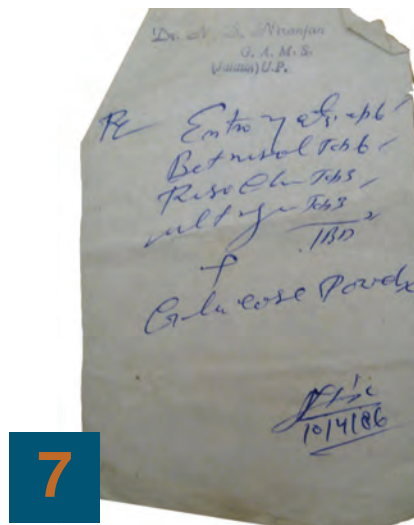
a different antibiotic when only a week earlier Saira had been given *ampicillin*? The Vitamin A is probably for her painful eye condition but the problem was caused by gas exposure not vitamin A deficiency.

3. Saira has been issued a card which shows that she has been formally registered for care at the

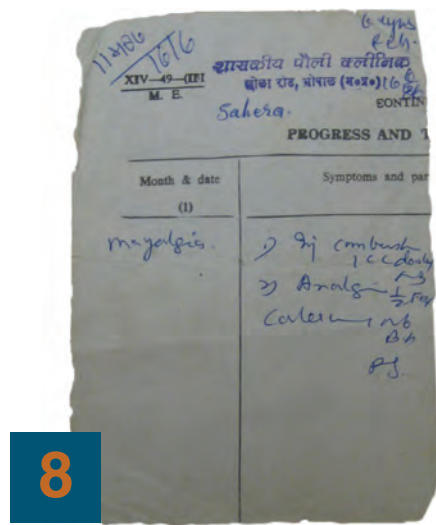
newly opened thirty-bed hospital (which later became the 125 bed Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital).

4. Saira has been given antibiotic eye drops (*sulphachlor*) to treat her still inflamed and painful eyes. However her eye condition is almost certainly caused by exposure to Union Carbide's gases, not infection.

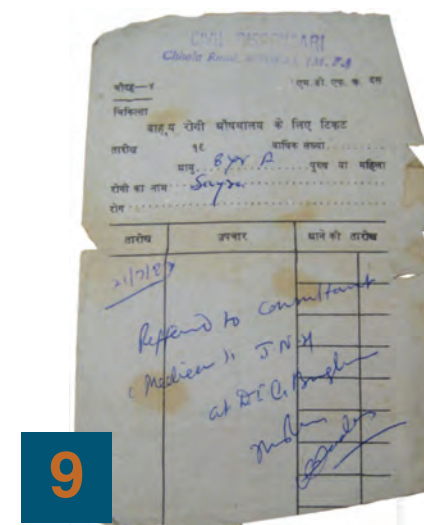
5. On the basis of 'infiltration' seen in her lungs by an x-ray Saira is given a provisional diagnosis of pulmonary tuberculosis – one of the most common misdiagnoses among Bhopal's gas-injured – lung damage caused by inhaling toxic, corrosive and irritant gases were wrongly attributed to tuberculosis.



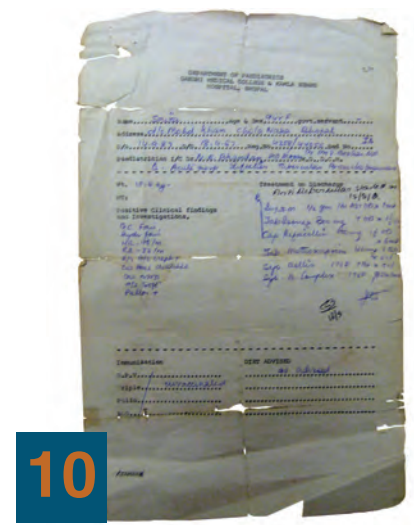
7 DR N. S. NIRANJAN JALAUN, UTTAR PRADESH. 10 APRIL 1986



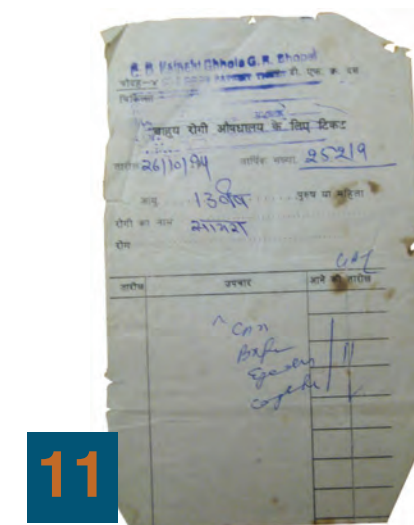
8 CHHOLA DISPENSARY, BHOPAL 16 JUNE 1986



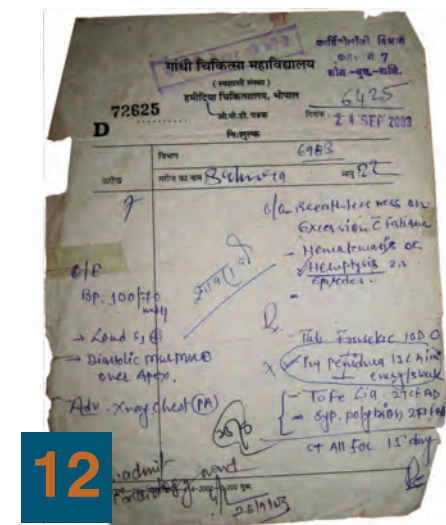
9 CIVIL DISPENSARY, REFERRAL TO CONSULTANT. 21 JULY 1987



10 HOSPITALISATION, GANDHI MEDICAL COLLEGE. 18 SEPTEMBER 1987



11 CHHOLA DISPENSARY 26 OCTOBER 1994



12 HAMIDIA HOSPITAL, BHOPAL 24 SEPTEMBER 2003

6. Saira is treated for fever and cough. Once again a chest x-ray is ordered with no reference to the previous one (repeated exposure can be harmful).

7. Neither complaint nor diagnosis are recorded. Saira is to be treated with a steroid, *betamethasone*,

and an anti-malarial drug.

8. Saira is treated for myalgia (muscular pain/body ache). It is not clear what injection she is being prescribed but she is being asked to take a tablet, *analgin*, banned in many countries including India because it can cause bone marrow depression.

9. Saira was *already* registered for care at the hospital to which she is now apparently being referred for the first time. Evidently her records have not been consulted.

10. Saira is suffering from acute respiratory infection. The doctor treats her for pulmonary TB

but fails to explain why. It's probably misdiagnosed but Saira is now shot full of anti-tubercular medicines, including intra-muscular injections of the antibiotic *streptomycin*, every day for a month.

11. No complaint or diagnosis is recorded. Saira is given an

anti-allergic (*CPM chlorpheniramine maleate*), painkiller (*ibuprofen*), eye drops and cough syrup in accordance with the failed policy, prevalent in Bhopal, of just treating symptoms.

12. Saira is breathless, chronically tired with haematemesis and haemoptysis (vomiting & coughing

blood). She's found to have a diastolic heart murmur and is (rightly) admitted to a cardiology ward. Tests reveal a faulty mitral valve, a problem that usually shows up early in life. With proper medical care, Saira's condition could and probably should have been diagnosed at least ten years earlier.



# Corporate, municipal & medical neglect condemn many to death

INCREDIBLY, UNION CARBIDE abandoned its Bhopal factory without bothering to clean it. Lethal chemicals lie in rotting drums and sacks in warehouses open to wind and rain. Twenty-four monsoons have washed them deep into the groundwater, which flows northeastward, causing severe damage to people living in that direction.

A recent Sambhavna study used satellite maps to identify hundreds of water sources like hand pumps, bore- and tube-wells. We collected samples of water used for drinking and washing along with data like the depth of source, reliability of supply and uses (drinking, washing, crops). The results, summarised 'colony by colony', are disastrous.

The Municipal Corporation's tankers and pipes do not bring in enough water for people's needs. The pipe network is badly maintained. Leaks and breaks in the pipes allow water to become contaminated by sewage.

Most people use private hand pumps or bore-wells and drink ground-water which is often filthy and smells like solvent. Many suffer skin rashes after drinking or bathing in the water.

Most of the chemicals (*see following pages 14-17*) that

are leaking from the factory and poisoning the drinking water are toxic to the kidneys, so it is not surprising to find an epidemic of renal problems emerging alongside those of cancers and damaged births.

A lot of people drinking the poisons were already gas-affected. A large proportion have diabetes, which if left undetected can lead to renal failure.

Careless prescribing has led to many people taking medicines, including painkillers like paracetamol, that have a potentially toxic impact on the kidneys, which may have been directly damaged by Carbide's toxic gases – as noted on *page 4*, there is a signal lack of research into effects of exposure on the population.

BMHRC, which is meant to prioritise gas victims, has a fully fledged nephrology department, but the gas-affected are routinely denied dialysis, crucial in saving lives and halting further damage, to give the priority to paying patients. Gas victims – contemptuously referred to as *gaisees* at BMHRC – are told to come back 3-6 months later. While waiting, many die.

Meanwhile Union Carbide and its parent Dow Chemical continue to refuse to clean the factory.



*The nearest many people will come to clean running water*



*People have no choice but to drink contaminated water*



*Laced with toxins and sewage: the stinking water of Bhopal*



## The promise

ON JULY 6TH, 2006, Dow Chemical Chairman Andrew Liveris, speaking at the United Nations, said:

*'Water is the most important compound for the preservation and flourishing of human life. 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 biggest cause of disease in the world. More than 4,500 children die every 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.'*

Asked if he would then honour the 'polluter pays' principle and clean the drinking water of 30,000 people in Bhopal poisoned by chemicals leaking from the derelict factory of Dow's wholly-owned subsidiary Union Carbide Mr Liveris replied, *'We don't feel this is our responsibility.'*



## The reality

### TETRACHLOROETHENE

(9 times EPA safety limit)

Shown to increase risk of leukemia, bladder cancer, oesophagal cancer, cervical cancer, skin cancer and liver and kidney tumours.

### TRICHLOROETHENE

(50 times EPA safety limit)

Drinking small amounts may cause liver and kidney damage, nervous system effects, impaired immune function and impaired foetal development in pregnant women.

### CHLOROFORM

(260 times EPA safety limit)

Can have a carcinogenic effect on the liver, kidneys and intestine. Causes miscarriages and lowers sperm counts.

### 1, 2-DICHLOROBENZENE

(5 times EPA safety limit)

Reported to induce anaemia, leukemia, skin lesions, vomiting, headaches, weight loss, yellow atrophy of the liver, kidney damage and chromosomal aberrations, immune damage.

### 1, 4-DICHLOROBENZENE

(11 times EPA safety limit)

Carcinogen, liver and kidney tumours.

### CARBON TETRACHLORIDE

(682 times EPA safety limit)

According to the EPA (1997) can cause cancers. High exposure can cause liver, kidney and central nervous system damage, including the brain. Causes headaches, dizziness, nausea and vomiting. In severe cases coma and even death can occur.





## *Ill and alone no more: Kusum Bai*

WHEN KUSUM BAI was in her early forties, her life did not seem too bad. Her husband had a steady job as a clerk in the Zila Panchayat office. They had two sons and two daughters and although not well-off, they managed two square meals a day and other necessities of life. The family lived in JP Nagar, right across from where Union Carbide had built its shiny new factory. Gradually the once gleaming pipework grew tarnished. Although the people living nearby did not know it, the factory was in such a dangerous condition that workers tried to alert newspapers and posted warnings on lamp-posts all around.

On the night of 2nd-3rd December 1984, the toxic gases escaped from the plant and created the catastrophe still known in Bhopal simply as 'that night'.



Kusum Bai's husband Kashi Prasad and her two teenage sons, Dinesh Kumar and Mithilesh Kumar, both studying at the Model School, Shahjahanbad, died in streets packed with panicked choking victims.

Kusum Bai herself collapsed and was unconscious for several days. When she woke up, her world had been destroyed. Her husband and two sons were dead. Of her daughters there was no word. Kusum went searching the city for news of them and last discovered that after also having collapsed in the stampede through narrow alleys, both girls had been admitted to Hamidia Hospital.

Despite desperate pleas from Bhopali doctors, struggling to cope with symptoms of a poisoning whose cause was unknown, Union Carbide refused to reveal the composition of the gas cloud, saying the information was a trade secret. When the main toxin was identified as methyl-isocyanate (MIC) the company refused to share the results of at least 14 animal studies. Doctors in Bhopal did not know what they were treating or how to treat it. Those who survived were given treatment only for their symptoms, and thus it has mostly continued.

Kusum Bai escaped but her lungs were forever damaged. Her daughters were also injured. All suffer to this day from breathing problems. Now a frail 65 year old with damaged vision and constant need of medical care, Kusum Bai (who registered at Sambhavna more than a decade ago) speaks in a barely audible voice. Her daughters were married and the elder daughter's son, who studies in Bhopal, lives with her and helps her.

Ever since inhaling MIC, Kusum Bai has suffered bouts of breathlessness, constant cough and elevated blood pressure. She had no money to consult specialist doctors, and could not collect her husband's family pension as for a long time after the tragedy she was too ill to make the rounds of government offices.

Kusum started visiting Sambhavna in 1997, a few months after the clinic opened. She is being treated with a mix of allopathic (modern) medicine and yoga.

### **Kusum Bai says:**

'I'm much better now. The cough has gone, blood pressure's under control although I still feel breathless while walking. But I'm still improving. First I had medicines once a week, then once a fortnight, now it's on a monthly basis. One thing I'm sure of, I would have continued to suffer badly had it not been for the Sambhavna Clinic.'



## Portrait of a do-gooder: Abdul Waheed Khan

Abdul Waheed Khan is seventy-two years old. He was thirty-four when, in 1984, poison gases poured from Union Carbide's factory in Bhopal.

Khan lived in the city's Budhwara area, which was severely affected by the poison cloud. Like so many others he ran for his life on 'that night.' He survived, but his health never recovered, although, as he himself says, he is in better condition than many of those similarly exposed. It's five years since he first came to Sambhavna where we've been treating him for high blood pressure. He says his health has improved ever since he started visiting Sambhavna.

A quintessential Bhopali, the convivial Khan, who for the past 50 years has worked as the manager of a city-centre petrol pump, was in the clinic one day when he read a notice asking people to bring in their unused medicines, as it would help the clinic save money.

Khan immediately went to his doctor friends, to

relatives and acquaintances, and asked them to give him medicines they were no longer using and didn't need. Many people, after recovering from an ailment, throw away any left-over medicines. The same thing happens when a doctor changes a patient's drugs, making older medicines redundant.

Abdul Waheed decided to make regular visits to his friends and family and personally collect their unused medicines. Having first made sure that the medicines are not past their use-by date, Abdul Waheed sorts them carefully and each week brings to Sambhavna the fruits of his labour to hand over to our doctors.

Each week his haul seems larger because, being the amiable, friendly soul he is, the city is full of his friends, acquaintances and well-wishers, who are now all asking their friends.

Mr Khan is modest about his contribution, but apart from his generosity of spirit, many of the drugs he rescues are extremely costly and not having to replace them saves the clinic a not-insignificant sum of money.

He hopes that readers in the UK and elsewhere will be able to start similar schemes.





# ‘My life was not worth living before I came to Sambhavna’

RASHIDA KHATOON is a gas victim who lives in the old part of Bhopal city. She is a teacher in a small government aided school. For the last 15 years she has suffered from lumbar spondylosis and nausea.

Rashida's medical history follows the trend all too common in Bhopal. When her back became painful she went to see a general physician, Dr P. P., who charged her a steep fee, but merely prescribed painkillers which at best brought temporary relief.

Over the next two years, unsurprisingly, Rashida's back grew worse. The doctor next sent her for an ultra-sonography (USG) test, in case she had kidney trouble. The expensive test revealed that her kidneys were fine.

Rashida's backache grew steadily worse and the nausea was causing constant vomiting. Plucking up the courage to quit her incompetent doctor, she went to the Bhopal Charitable Hospital where a spinal x-ray revealed that a disc had prolapsed and was compressing her spinal chord, causing her pain and other symptoms.

She was advised to have an MRI scan to gain a clear picture of her vertebral column. The MRI scan was done a fortnight later and confirmed the exact site and

severity of the problem, but the doctors prescribed more painkillers and suggested physiotherapy. She was given some exercises to do at home.

According to Rashida the painkillers no longer worked, but physiotherapy helped reduce the pain.

In despair, she visited two government hospitals where she was neglected and had to wait between two and three months diagnostic reports.

Finally, and now in permanent pain, she went to the Bhopal Memorial Hospital Trust and Research Centre (BMHRC). She was told that there was an operation she could have but that the chance of success was very low. This hospital too put her on painkillers but as months passed, the pain kept growing worse and there was no help anywhere.

At last the pain became unbearable. Rashida was unable to go to school to do her job. She was spending every day crying in crippling, fiery agony and became deeply depressed. Whenever the pain soared above the limit of what she could endure, she would scream. After one particularly savage bout, Rashida went back to the BMHRC and begged for the operation. Upon hearing

again that it would probably not work, and might be dangerous, she replied that she was unable to bear the pain a day longer. She wanted the operation, even at the risk of her life – a life no longer worth living.

Luckily for Rashida, before the operation could take place, a fellow teacher at her school visited her and told her about the free Sambhavna Trust Clinic.

Her colleague said that a couple of years earlier he had had an accident and had visited BMHRC where doctors advised that he'd need an operation. But before submitting to surgery he had visited Sambhavna and after three-four months of yogic exercises, ayurvedic medicine and massage, was fully recovered.

Rashida was excited by her colleague's story and asked him to take her to Sambhavna. Her welcome, as with so many other people who had arrived there in pain and fear, was warm, positive and unlike anything she had experienced before.

Sambhavna's ayurvedic doctor prescribed certain herbal medicines, plus back massage, steam bath and a procedure called *kati basti*. *Kati Basti* is a *panchakarma* procedure where warm medicated oil is pooled above the affected area of the lower back in a cup formed from *urad daal* dough. This immediately reduces pain and eases pressure from the prolapsed disc. Rashida was also advised to learn some yoga asanas and breathing techniques.

## Rashida describes what happened next:

‘I practiced Yoga and took my ayurvedic medicines but for the first eight days the pain did not abate. On the ninth day, I began massage and *kati basti* and the pain started to decrease. Gradually it has ebbed away and now, after three months of treatment, I'd say 75 percent of it has gone. I used to have continuous tinglings in my legs but these have become rare. I've had no vomiting for the last six or seven months and the exercise has reduced the pain in my knees. I also used to have panic attacks, but these have completely disappeared and these days I feel relaxed and happy. My husband is 94 years old and bed-ridden. When I was in pain, I used to feel guilty that I couldn't look after him properly, but now I am better, I can take proper care of him and as a result his health is better too. I have now re-joined my school. I only visit Sambhavna occasionally nowadays but whenever I come, I love meeting the staff members and practicing yoga in our yoga salon. I like spending



*Kati basti is an ayurvedic procedure that uses a bath of medicated oil to reduce pain and inflammation*

time here. Thanks to Sambhavna, yoga and my great ayurvedic doctors, my life is back on track.’

## Jyoti, Rashida's yoga instructor, comments:

‘When Rashida Khatoon was referred to the yoga department, she was in such pain that she could not sit on the floor. I started giving her yoga lessons on an air mattress, and sometimes on a bed.

Gradually, her pain decreased and she was able to do more and more asanas and exercises. As her blood pressure was very high, I insisted she learn *pranayamas*, which are simple breathing exercises.

With a combination of yoga and *panchakarma*, her condition improved rapidly and she's almost back to normal. Her faith in Sambhavna is touching. Although Rashida isn't well-off, she insists on making donations to help the work and whenever she comes here, she brings biscuits, chocolates and fruit for the staff.’





NASIR  
KAMAL

## How doth our garden grow?

SAMBHAVNA'S GARDEN is the main source of herbs for the clinic's medicine production unit. Growing our own plants and making our own ayurvedic medicines means we can guarantee they are of the highest quality.

Our gardeners, Ratnaprabha, Mukesh and Mohan bhai, helped by a wonderful squad of volunteers from around the world, are always busy. The land must be carefully managed, the soil kept fertile and the garden kept beautiful as a quiet retreat for visitors.



Demand for herbs has increased as more and more people come to us for care, so we have added a number of new herbs to our collection and increased crop-yields of certain plants. Since we refuse, on principle, to use agricultural chemicals, our gardeners have stepped up production of vermicompost, or to give it another name, worm manure. This bio-fertiliser, sprinkled on the soil just like a urea fertiliser helps produce bumper crops.

This year we grew a lot more *baldi* (turmeric), used in at least 30 medicines including *baridrakband churna*, *nirgundi* oil, *mahanarayan* oil, *jatyad* oil, *dbanwantri* oil and *neem* oil. Turmeric is very beneficial in treating coughs, injuries and lowering blood pressure.

The new plants and herbs added to Sambhavna garden this year included *shataври*, *safed kanthkari*, *kbuss* (fragrant roots), *chirayta* and *paan* (betel leaves).

*Shataври* is good for pains of various kinds, for weakness, and boils. *Safed kanthkari* is used to cure coughs, pulmonary diseases, toothache, sore throat and in treating kidney stones. *Chirayta* is immensely beneficial in curing malaria and other kinds of fever. *Paan*

leaves aid digestion and freshen the mouth, but are currently not used in medicines in Sambhavna.

Other plants growing in greater abundance are *giloy* and *dbatki*. *Giloy* is used to treat malaria and other fevers, and is even beneficial in treating certain cancers.

*Tulsi*, a species of basil, is nature's gift to humanity. It will grow almost anywhere. Its flowers, stems and roots are all valuable medicines, useful in treating colds, persistent coughs, malaria, all kinds of fever and to detoxify the body. There is hardly a part of the garden where one cannot see a *tulsi* plant.

One of this year's important additions was the rooftop 'green room' where *nishodh* creeper now casts a deep shadow. This not only looks pleasant, it helps cool our *panchakarma* treatment rooms, the recreation room and doctors' offices. More rooms will be cooler as the creeper grows.

Near the canteen, we have planted lemongrass to prevent soil erosion. The gardeners have opened up new paths into the garden and have been ruthlessly weeding.

Another major new project was the demonstration garden. Here visitors can admire an array of herbs used to cure various ailments. At least 30 plants are on show.

Joining *giloy*, *dbatki* and *tulsi* are *gujja* (used to counter hair-loss, skin diseases and paralysis), *chhoti peepli*, (for cough, pulmonary diseases, stomach ailments and piles), *karkara* (for weakness, headache, toothache, epilepsy, and mental weakness), *amla* (heart ailments, eye problems and purifying the blood), *nirgundi* (for joint-pain, swelling, menstrual problems and earache), and even roses and medicinal grasses. Beside each plant the garden team has placed a sign with its name, uses and care instructions. We hope the garden will interest people in growing herbs and learning to use them safely

Above left: A mass of 'red wrigglers' create nutrient rich soil as powerful as any fertilizer but doing zero damage

Opposite top left: The *nishodh* creeper cools the clinic naturally, and provides a valuable herbal resource

Opposite top right: *Atibala-kandbi* in the demonstration plot. The sign says it is useful in treating TB, menstrual problems and dry cough in children.

Opposite, below: Mohanbhai and Mukesh in the turmeric patch





MILES  
BERKLEY

# Namaste! Our cycle

'NAMASTE! I RESPECT THE DIVINITY in you that is also in me': the phrase is derived from Sanskrit *namas*, to bow, and *te*, to you. This graceful greeting summed up our journey perfectly, though happy hearts and sore bottoms might have run it a close second.

Cycling from the Kolvi caves 460 kilometers to the Sambhavna Clinic in Bhopal, the 17 of us spoke and heard *namaste* thousands of times from smiling faces. One accompanies the greeting by folding one's hands as in prayer – try that whilst cycling around a cow lying in the road. We soon developed a one handed version, or for the more safety conscious a 'no hands' option.

Our journey began with a great flight to Delhi and an afternoon's sightseeing. We caught a night train to Bhawani Mundi, sharing delightfully intimate sleeping quarters – think of eight people on shelves hanging off the wall of your garden shed and you get the picture. Now add in folks wandering to and from the loo, eating, chatting on mobiles, meditating, snoring and giggling – it's not long before the ambient noise level exceeds the recommended 40db for a bedroom – an Indian train is an event to be experienced rather than slept through.

Arriving at Bhawani Mandi, we proceeded to Kolvi caves, a 5th century Buddhist cave complex overlooking our campsite. It was 35 °C as we wandered the caves with scores of local children before getting our bikes ready. The mechanic was a whizz at fixing on the handlebars, pedals and saddle I'd bought from the UK. I had thought about bringing my bike, but felt it was more a challenge for them to fix my parts onto their bikes.

Dinner, in an airy tent, was a spicy but not over-hot buffet of delicious local foods. In the morning add cornflakes and warm milk and it's breakfast.

The tents were magical, with European-style loos anchored by ingenious plumbing to the groundsheet (a real surprise), camp beds (lilac sheets – just kidding) and electricity, occasionally.

The pattern for the three days of toughest biking was 06.00 hrs wake up, dash to the loo, 'shower' under a cold tap, realise you're cleaning your teeth in tap water, trip over the ground sheet to get to your bottled water while hoping your tent mate has slept through the more interesting bathroom noises. Departure of the assembled 'peloton' was at 07.00 prompt. Every 25 kilometers we'd stop for a rest break, water, snacks and to exchange *namastes* with curious bystanders. Swapnil, our resident psychiatrist was, of course, chatting in his native tongue.



# ride from Bundi to Bhopal

It was clear that people had heard of the cycle ride both via word of mouth and through local papers. Some had walked miles to stand by the roadside and watch our strange group of rather pale, lycra-clad cyclists speed by.

There was one challenging 12 kilometer section, real 'off road' stuff. I learned that I couldn't get my feet out of cleats on the pedals quite fast enough sometimes – with resulting tumbles. Our travelling mechanic soon sorted me out. At a little village we met a family of monkeys. One of our group, Jack (at 16 a mere 35 years younger than I) was 'showered' from above by monkeys who objected to him parking his bike under their tree.

In Jhalawar we stayed in cabins overlooking the lake before cycling 93 kilometers to Manohar Thana where a huge crowd, some 1,000 villagers, surrounded our campsite. After dinner I wandered into the village with Swapnil, visited a Hindu temple and had my first paan – a concoction of rose syrup, areca nut and spices wrapped in a betel leaf, which when chewed serves both to refresh you and turn your mouth red. 'Are these addictive?', I asked Swapnil. I could have got hooked.

After two more days riding we headed into Bhopal to the Clinic and a riotous reception with drums, lots of red powder (complete with sparkly silver bits). Sathyu and his team give us the warmest welcome, a great lunch and tour of the facilities. It's amazing to see the care, love and compassion provided by the clinic, and moving and inspiring to see the dedication of all those involved in the continuing struggle for justice.

The environmentally-friendly building is an ocean of tranquillity built around a central pond and fountain, with airy balconies and spaces, access ramps to all levels and spacious treatment rooms. It has a revolutionary solar-powered system for processing clinical waste.

Essentially a day clinic, Sambhavna sees about 150 patients every day, with over 30,000 people having been treated to date, an incredible feat, given that all care is free and costs are met by charitable donations, primarily from the UK. The clinical approach is holistic with both allopathic and ayurvedic medical care provided by six qualified doctors. Yoga instructors offer individual and group tuition. The impressive administration system, with computerised patient records, must be the envy of other hospitals in Bhopal. The herb garden is fantastic. More than 150 medicinal plants are grown and processed on site into tablets, tinctures and oils.

We had great fun in a great cause.



Left top: *Relaxing after a hot day in the saddle*

Left centre: *The challenging off-road desert leg*

Left below: *Miles, Steve and Swapnil relaxing*

Above: *Meg with Doctor Mali*

Centre: *Sathyu, Ros and Rachna*

Below: *Namastes from the fantastic cycle riders*



# 25 years of struggle for life



*'Beat Dow With A Broom'  
at Sambhavna birthday party*



*Jeff Stride painting in the clinic's  
medicinal herb garden*



*Burning an effigy of the detested 'kampani'*



*Celebrating hard won victories  
helps create a deep sense of community*

DURING THE COURSE of their quarter-of-a-century struggle for health care and a life of dignity, the Bhopal survivors have created and staged hundreds of imaginative and memorable events. Lacking money or friends in high places, they've used wit, humour and satire to defy their oppressors and make their voices heard. The *Beat Dow With A Broom* campaign was dreamed up by Bhopali women and proved wildly successful. They've created amazing street art, poetry, theatre and songs. In seeking to join them in their quest for justice and health, we can be inspired by a spirit that conjures joy from despair and power out of nothing at all. [www.bhopal.org](http://www.bhopal.org) has many examples of Bhopali events, and dozens of ideas we can all use to raise funds and awareness in the forthcoming 25th anniversary year.



*Chemical fashion show  
at Sambhavna birthday party*



*Sadhus making bread and tea for  
walkers on the 2006 march*



*The satirical Mir Zafar Awards were given to politicians who had sold out the survivors*



*A Sambhavna exhibition on the medical  
situation in Bhopal drew crowds*



*Shanti Bai dances in the street after  
a victorious hunger strike in 2007*

# 25 ways to help raise funds

## College action group

We can provide speakers, posters, leaflets, photos & a DVD about the Appeal

## Cycle:Bhopal

Cycle through the wild landscapes of Rajasthan & central India and finish with a visit to our clinic in Bhopal

## Drive our Bhopal Bus

Experienced drivers wanted to cover sections of our 2009 grand tour of UK & Europe

## Create a web game

The new Bhopal-Web offers lots of opportunities for creative designers and programmers

## 500 mile UK padyatra

Thrice the Bhopalis have walked 500 miles from Bhopal to Delhi. In 2009 let's walk for them.

## Street collecting

Collecting tins for shops, pubs, sports clubs, theatres etc, and a tin to rattle on special 'bucket days'

## Tell a friend

If each of us tells just 1 person per week during 2009 we could reach 500,000 new people

## Hold an Ebay auction

Anything you don't want, stick it on Ebay. Or buy from the Bhopal Medical Appeal Ebay shop

## Write for Bhopal

Publish small local editions of stories, and poetry, and get your work read as you raise money

## Bhopali curry evening

A grand way to have a party with friends. We have lots of delicious authentic recipes

## Sponsorship page

Go: <http://www.just-giving.com/process/raisemoney/> and "Create Your Page" then tell everyone!

## Set up a local group

A good way to get involved with our campaigning, medical work and health outreach

## Fancy dress contest & ball

See opposite for some ideas from the Bhopalis who manage to make campaigning fun

## Throw a party

Celebrate the indomitable spirit of the Bhopalis and their long struggle for health and a life of dignity

## Auction of promises

If you can offer an item or service please let us know and we will let the world know

## Glastonbury litter-picking

Earn £130 for the Medical Appeal and see the festival free [www.bhopal.org](http://www.bhopal.org) for more details

## Volunteer

In London, Brighton or Bhopal, for a day or longer, bring your skills and talents and acquire new ones

## Paint for Bhopal

Artists amateur and professional, please donate a painting or have an exhibition

## Stage a street play

Write and produce your own script, or one of the many scripts that people have written for us

## Hold a dog or horse show

A fun idea, collect entry fees and have a grand day at the show-ring, dressage or show-jumping

## Do the 10K London run

Join 26,000 runners on Sunday 10th July. We have some places available, please contact us

## Make a film, record a song

We're running Bhopal film and music festivals throughout 2009 on YouTube

## Walk for Bhopal

Sponsored walks are a good way to raise money and awareness - and keep healthy

## Chai and daal bhaati stall

Bhopali chai has a pinch of salt. We provide the recipes, you enjoy them with your friends

## Organise a raffle

Always a winner: the faithful old standby for clubs, schools, offices and community groups

More details and many more fun ideas  
on [www.bhopal.org](http://www.bhopal.org)



# Thank you and big Bhopali hugs to our precious friends

A SPECIAL MENTION THIS YEAR to the following groups who have donated to the Appeal.



Leeds University  
curry evening

The Oxford Indian Society who hosted an evening with musician Vishwa Mohan Bhatt; Jen Rose and everyone at Leeds University Bhopal Action Group – if you would like more details of what they're up to please email [bbopalaction@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:bbopalaction@hotmail.co.uk); the boys and staff of Reeds School who continue to sponsor Dr Mali's salary through non-uniform days and their school secretary Meg Fitzgerald who valiantly cycled 260 miles across India to raise further donations and visit the Clinic (see page 24); anyone who joined us at the Indian embassy in March to support the Bhopal protestors in Delhi; Fran Crowe who ran another Fresh Air sale at Felixstowe Art on the Prom – <http://www.flyintbeface.com>; Sue Jones-Davies & carol-singers; Heather Williams & women's group; Barlow Moor Lodge who held a Ladies Evening raffle; Marshfield Spinners; all those at FC United of Manchester; the Transport and General

Workers Union 7/148 Branch:Edinburgh & District.

Those who manned Bhopal stalls in rain and sun: Jane Olorenshaw at Wivenhoe May Fair; Fiona and Mike Case at The Pilton Show.



Yew Tree Gallery: An Irish Connection

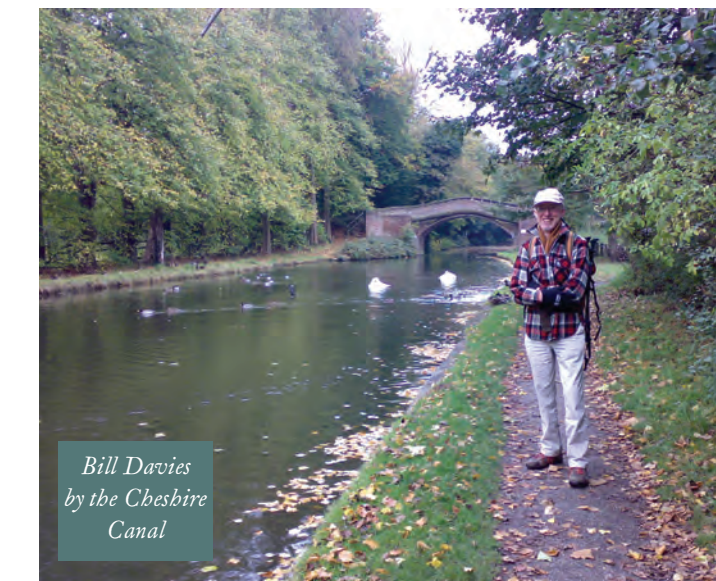
Gilly Wyatt-Smith and the wonderful Yew Tree Gallery who raised another £1,000 at their exhibition *An Irish Connection*; Will Chester-Master for all his support, and our stalwart volunteer Judy Daniel.

Everyone who asked for donations to the Appeal instead of birthday gifts including Marion Hunt, Bob Bage, Mr Phillip Bode on his 85th birthday; Diana Fairfax who held a fantastic luxury-cruise-ship-circa-1927 themed 80th birthday party complete with paper roses on walls, a golden gangway and guests dressed inventively as ship's doctors, film stage and dance stars of the 1920s, poets and fire-eaters.

Thank you to staff at Oxfordshire County Council who gave donations instead of Christmas cards. Lastly a huge and heartfelt thank you to Rob and Kam Abbott who very generously asked for donations instead of wedding presents.

Everyone who ran, walked or rode in an unusual manner! Congratulations and thanks to Bill Davies who raised over £1,000 for the Appeal walking the 100 mile Cheshire canal ring; Mike Geoghegan who dedicated a fortnight cycling from Lands End to John O'Groats; Alan Hiron who completed the Three Peaks Race and Helen Baker who ran the Flora Light Women's Challenge; and to Anne Gregory who completed the Great Manchester Run.

Our thanks to the following Trusts : The



Bill Davies  
by the Cheshire  
Canal



Our heroic  
Glastonbury  
litterpickers

Tolkien Trust, The Innominate Trust, The Ericson Trust, The Paget Trust, Spear Charitable Trust, Balsams Charities, Kenneth John Lee Trust, The Conrad Phoenix Charitable Trust, John & Susan Bowers Fund, The Young Holiday Charitable Trust, Jane Durell Charitable Trust, the Bleakley Trust, the Camden Trust.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) for their valued support as ever including Bath Friends Meeting House, Carlton Hill Quakers, Swindon; Bury St Edmunds, Welwyn Garden City, Selly Oak and Wokingham.

All the church groups and religious orders who have been so generous: the Social Justice Group at St Clement's Church, Chorlton who held a lively evening with a jazz-funk band and raised £1,000; Brockweir Moravian Church for their fundraising soup lunch,

Society of the Sacred Heart, St Mary's Rome Catholic Church, Penistone; The Methodist Church, Loughton; Caldley Valley Neighbourhood Church; St Dominic's Convent, St Boniface Church London, Banner Cross Methodist Church's coffee mornings, Justice and Peace Group, St John The Baptist Parish Church, Brighton; St Andrew's North Weald; Witham United Reformed Church, Lilian Hulme and all at Cheadle Hulme Methodist Church.

Thanks also to Jee Saheb Restaurant in Oxford; Robert Leacroft Systems for continued support; Oxford Hotel Projects, Ecogadgets Limited and Construction Benchmarks; and to Deborah Miarkowska at Eco Chic who commissioned a bag from craftsmen in Bhopal and put us on their website [www.ecochicfairtrade.co.uk](http://www.ecochicfairtrade.co.uk).

In memoriam. We remember the following people and family members who have contributed to the work of the Appeal: Patience O'Leary 1924-2006, Mr Bernard Rogers, Ernest John Parker, Clare Brennan; Mrs Eileen Umpleby; Helen and Stuart Seaborn (thank you to daughter Debbie).

The wonderful Fiona Case at Glastonbury Festival and the tireless litterpicking volunteers who descended on the Festival with blue shirts and plastic gloves to raise almost £4,000 for the Appeal, enough to provide medicines at the Clinic for over four months. A massive thank you to: Leanna Beacon, John Caines, Gill Calow, Liz Cooper, Joe Dove, Laura Ellis, James Fairburn, Gillian Goodchild, Lee Jones, Joe Kelly, Tim Melling, Nicky Melling, Leah Mitchell, Demetrios Monoyios, Katy Noble, Colin Pearce, Maddy Pritchard, Esther Redhouse White, Jen Rose, Daniel Smith, Nigel Smith, Donald Spargo, Sarah Speakman, Camilla West, Max White, Amanda Wrigley, Emily Bell and Laura Clarke.



Oxford Indian Society proudly presents  
**Pt. Vishwa Mohan Bhatt**  
7 pm, Friday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2008

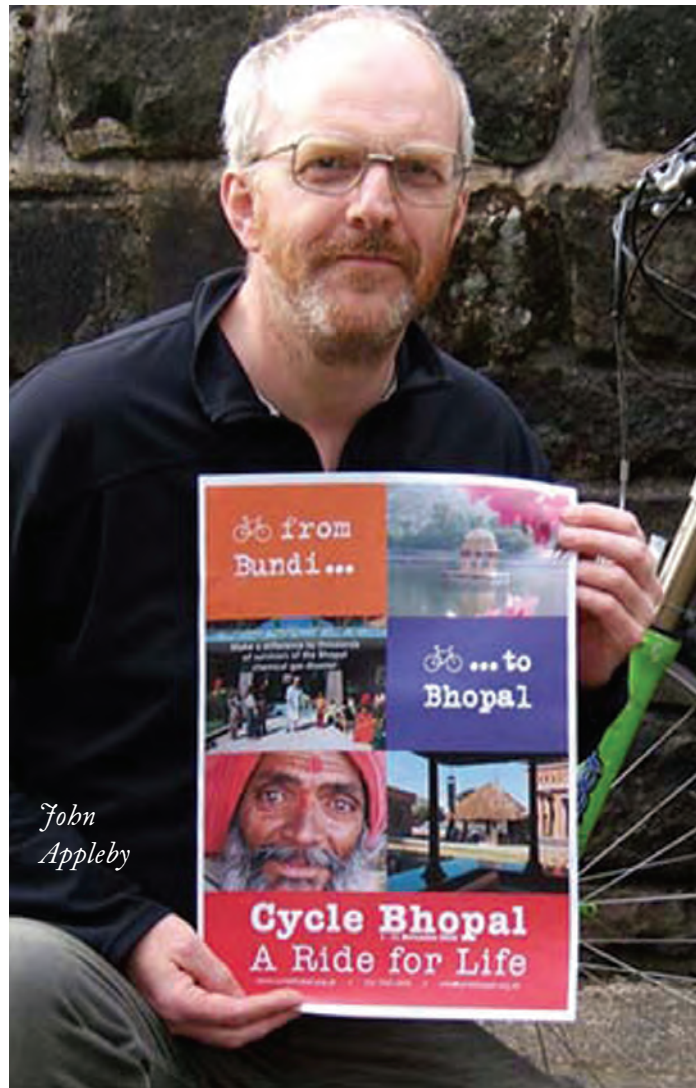
Grammy award winner Pt. Vishwa Mohan Bhatt is the world's greatest exponent of the Mohan Veena, a highly modified concord archtop guitar with 19 strings.

Groomed under the tutelage of Pt. Ravi Shankar, his sublime and unique style has mesmerized audiences around the globe. He is without question amongst the finest and most anticipated maestros of Hindustani classical music alive today.

Jacqueline du Pré Building  
St. Hilda's College, Oxford, OX4 1DY  
£3 students / £10 non-students  
All proceeds to the Bhopal Medical Appeal

Enquiries/tickets  
onevents@gmail.com  
amoshkha.das@st-hilda.ox.ac.uk





A special thanks to all the riders taking part in this year's inaugural *Cycle Bhopal: A Ride for Life*. For many a huge personal challenge, cycling long dusty roads across India to raise money for the Clinic and to see the work their ride is supporting. (See pages 24-25)

Thank you for your energy and inventiveness; Geoff Shearn, Meg Fitzgerald, Diego and Jack Robirosa, Lois Kleffman, Patti Finley, Jane Wightman, Miles Berkley, Swapnil Palod, Barbara Cohen, Janet Weitz, Ros McKendry, Sally Cardew, Margaret Pedler and Andy Higman, Simon Waddington, Steve Curtis and John Appleby.

Thank you to Anna Hughes who gave yoga classes to raise funds for the Bhopalis and Jan Hartell who, inspired by the story of Sandeep & Rajesh, raised over £500.

A massive thank you to the primary children in Class 5 at Scoil an Chroi Naofa, Foxford, who gave up their precious pocket money when they learned what had happened to the children in Bhopal.

Apologies to anyone we have inadvertently missed (let us know so we can make amends in the next issue), and big Bhopali hugs to one and all.

### You wrote:

*My heart breaks for your suffering, but my spirit is uplifted by your determination to recover. I am physically crippled myself, so I know how hard it is to carry on. Your indomitable spirit gives me hope to carry on my own, much less desperate struggle – A DONOR, CAMBRIDGE*

*Thank you so much for what you are doing. You are turning a shameful set of misdeeds of unimaginable proportions into a beautiful example of caring, loving response. I salute you. You touch my heart – HUGH W10*

*It makes me SO angry that people have to use such extreme measures and put their lives at risk so that fat-cat politicians do the job they were elected to do – USHA WRITING ABOUT THE 2008 PADYATRA AND HUNGER STRIKE*

*To be honest, and I'm ashamed to say it, I had forgotten about the Bhopal disaster until recently so I really did feel very proud to have contributed a tiny bit to such a worthy cause – MARIE*

*Very moved by the tragedy that affected the people of Bhopal who, in the simple act of breathing, lost or blighted their lives due to the toxic gases released by the Union Carbide disaster – FIRST NATURE VOICEWORK*

*I live way off on the coast of Halifax, Nova Scotia. I may be far away but this has really struck home to me – ELIZABETH*

*I have been using the ad 'Union Carbide may God forgive you' for years. As a geography teacher I used the Bhopal disaster as an example of corporate irresponsibility. Now I teach English. It never fails to enrage my classes and many of them go away and look it up on the internet – JANE*

*The garden was very beautiful when I was there – things grow so fast in India – the banana trees were sky high with massive roses, hibiscus etc everywhere. The floods last summer sounded awful and did quite a bit of damage which has spurred me on to fundraise specifically for the garden. The gardeners were lovely and I was just gutted I couldn't speak Hindi – they were great to work with, very welcoming and hospitable, and we had loads of fun, they were – spent quite a bit of time visiting them and their families. Sambhavn is such an inspiring place. Bhopal city is a pretty hard place to be but I sat and cried as I was leaving! – ANNA KINROSS (VOLUNTEER IN 2007)*

*I was very moved by your leaflet and appalled that so much suffering can be inflicted on so many, apparently with impunity, by one company. How can Union Carbide walk away from what they have done?*

*I enjoyed the trip immensely. I was rather anxious as to my ability to cope with the cycling – being somewhat of a novice – but everyone was very supportive and the whole trip was extremely well organised. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to take part – CYCLE BHOPAL RIDER*

## The art of the big Bhopali hug

ILLUSTRATION: DAN SINHA

### Step one

Extend arms and embrace.



### Step two

Withdraw from embrace, seesaw over like a tightrope walker and repeat step one.



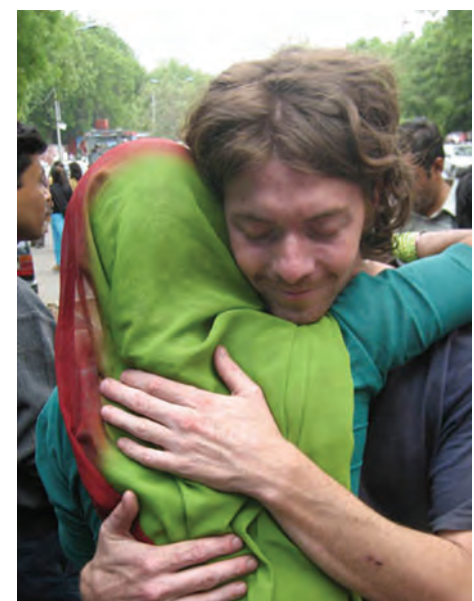
### What does it mean?

When you have nothing, no money, no powerful friends, no one to speak for you, when those whose duty it is to protect you twist the law against you, what can you do?

The answer is that we fight, for our right to health, clean water, for children to be born whole, for those who have ruined lives and flouted laws to be held accountable.

If there is no one to help, then we fight alone. If hope is gone we fight without hope. As long as we have life, we have the world – and we have the most precious thing in the world – each other.

Together we will fight injustice and cruel people, out of our shared suffering we'll make joy, laughter, and the strength and will to fight on, never to give up. We may never win, but we can never be defeated. This is the meaning of the big Bhopali hug.





# *Animal's People* to be filmed

DIRECTOR MICHAEL ANDERSON is to make the film of Indra Sinha's Booker shortlisted novel *Animal's People* which is set in a Indian city devastated by a poison gas leak. The novel, which also won the 2008 Commonwealth Prize for 'the best novel from Europe and South Asia', is based on Bhopal and draws on the author's experience of working with the Bhopal survivors and with the Bhopal Medical Appeal which he helped to found.

According to Anderson principal photography will start in November 2009, but the project is already deeply into pre-production with recces and location finding.

The Quadrupedal Films production is one of twelve feature film projects showcased in the influential Indian Film Bazaar, which offers co-production opportunities to some of the best filmmaking talent from the country, both established and newly discovered, whose films aim to tell hidden and unseen stories of contemporary India.

'The twelve stories we have chosen feature brave and memorable characters, epic and emotional journeys, and stories from communities on the fringes.'

The novel has been widely praised. 'Playful, pitiless and moving,' said the *Times Literary Supplement*, '*Animal's People* stands as a testament to the courage and resilience of India's poor.' *The Guardian* called it 'a work of profound humanity,' while *Time* magazine said the novel had given 'recent fiction one of its most gripping voices, and one of its most exceptional opening salvos: "I used to be human once."'

Writing in the *Independent*, Boyd Tonkin said that '*Animal's People* bypasses the often-told story of "that night" to focus on the aftermath of suffering, despair and recrimination in a thinly disguised city named Khaufpur (Dreadville). Scampering through its slums on all fours after his six-year-old bones "twisted like a hairpin", the orphaned Animal is now a street-smart, foul-mouthed, angry-souled young man who tells the sufferers' story into the tape-recorder of a 'jarnalis'. Animal, and his city, spurn the pity of outsiders.'

Sinha fends off all condescension with the salty and scabrous urchin's voice – a virtuoso compound of Irvine Welsh and Salman Rushdie – that he crafts for the bitter hero as he moves among "the people of the Apokalis" ... his barnstorming monologue ranks among the strongest of the many bids to bend English into an Indian shape since GV Desani's lost 1948 classic *All About H. Hatterr*.'

Anderson says he commissioned Sinha to write the screenplay for the film to guarantee that the voice of Animal makes the transition from page to screen.

PENELOPE GORDON-LENNOX

