# Listen, I will tell you what terror is

REPORT BY **INDRA SINHA** *www.indrasinha.com*

TO ME TERROR IS WAKING in darkness to the sound of screams. My eyes and mouth are on fire. There's a white cloud in the room. The children are coughing. Voices are yelling 'Run! Run!' Not knowing what's happened, I yell to my wife to grab the kids and get out. Someone shouts, 'The Union Carbide factory has exploded!' In the alley outside, the street lamp is burning brown, so thick are the clouds of gas. People are rushing past. They jostle and clash like water rushing in a river. Some are in underclothes, others are naked. Those who fall don't get up. The gas is blinding. It's agony. In the crush our children's hands are torn from ours. They are gone. We scream their names.

All around us people are dying. Some have piss and shit running down their legs. Some are choking. People are washing their eyes in filthy drains to ease the pain. This woman lost her unborn baby. As she ran her womb opened and the foetus fell out, right there in the street. What name should I give to the things I have seen?

Next morning I'm searching the heaps of dead for my family. Black, withered leaves are falling from the trees. I meet a man burying his baby. He looks at me and says 'Good morning.' We both start crying.

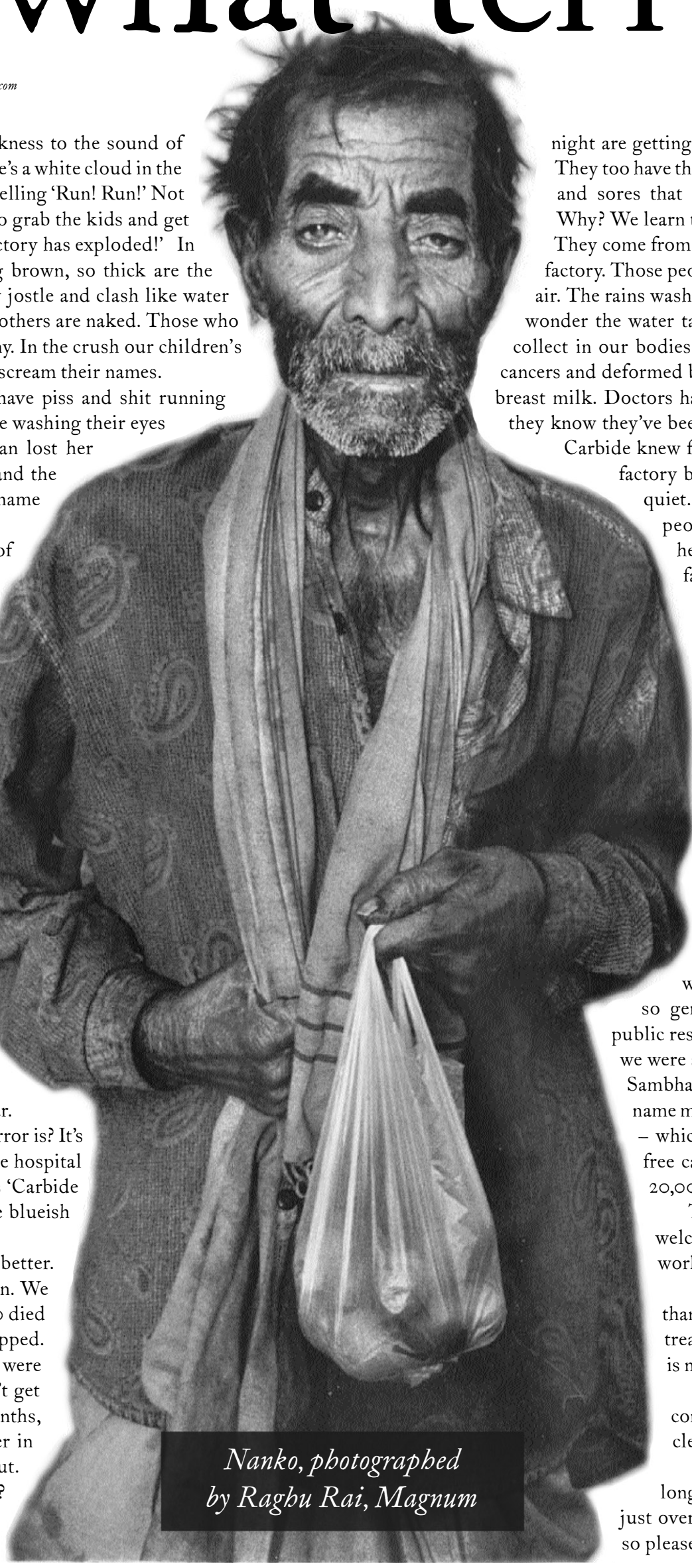
As days pass, we who survived are hit by pain, fever, giddy fits, nausea, breathlessness, damaged eyes, aching limbs. We don't know if we'll live or die and the hospital doctors don't know because the company which killed our children won't give information about the gas. They say it's a 'trade secret'.

People are full of fear. We're breathless, sick, not able to work. Everyone asks, how will we survive? I used to carry sacks on my back, now I can barely carry myself. Then I think, so what if I starve? I have no family to feed. When the gas came everything fell, and everything fell through our fingers. Before the gas, I was poor. Afterwards, I was a beggar.

Months go by. You want to know what terror is? It's women too scared to give birth, coming to the hospital with urine samples, begging to be tested. It's 'Carbide babies', born dead with tiny heads, flesh like blueish jelly, eyes that stare like boiled eggs.

A dozen years pass. People don't get better. Union Carbide still won't give the information. We are sick, we don't know what's in store. 8,000 died in the first days, but the dying has never stopped. Some wish they were dead. Many girls who were babies, or born around the night of gas, don't get their menses. Others bleed once in three months, or three times a month. The poor kids suffer in silence because such things aren't talked about. If they can't have children, who'll marry them?

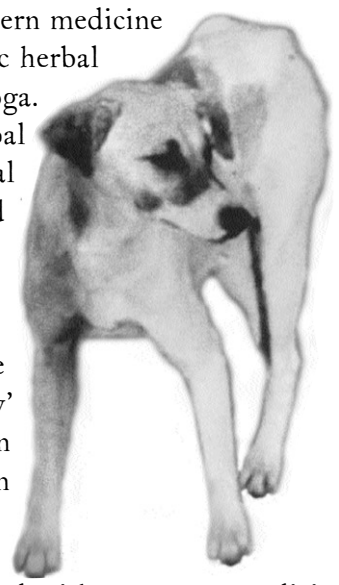
More time passes and now there's a new terror. People who weren't in Bhopal on that night are getting ill with the same symptoms as gas victims. They too have the cough and chest pains, skin rashes, blisters and sores that won't heal. They're dizzy and breathless. Why? We learn that there are poisons in our drinking wells. They come from the same place the gas did: Union Carbide's factory. Those people left chemicals lying in heaps in the open air. The rains washed them into the soil and into our wells. No wonder the water tastes bad. It burns. The water-poisons will collect in our bodies like the gas-poisons have. They can cause cancers and deformed babies. They're in our blood. They're in our breast milk. Doctors have found them. The women weep because they know they've been suckling their babies with poison. Union Carbide knew for ten years about the soil and water in the factory being poisoned. Knowing the danger it kept quiet. It kept quiet even though we were the same people whose families it had killed, whose health it had ruined. It still refuses to clean its factory. I have told you what terror is. Now you tell me who are the terrorists.



*Nanko, photographed by Raghu Rai, Magnum*

IN 1994 A MAN FROM BHOPAL came to Britain to tell whoever would listen about the plight of the gas survivors.

They had realised that they must help themselves, because nobody else was going to. The survivors wanted to open their own clinic to give free treatment to gas victims. They wanted the clinic to combine modern medicine with ayurvedic herbal therapy and yoga.



The Bhopal Medical Appeal was launched and so generous was the public response was that we were able to open the Sambhavna Clinic – the name means 'possibility' – which has now given free care to more than 20,000 people.

The poorest are welcomed and treated with respect – medicine works better when given with love.

In our work we prefer to use fewer rather than more drugs. Our pioneering use of yoga in treating diabetes has proved so effective that it is now being taken up in government hospitals.

We educate people about the dangers of contaminated water and help them to fight for clean supplies.

Please support our work. A little goes a long way in Bhopal, where a doctor's salary is just over £1,000. The smallest sums are a godsend, so please be as generous as you can.

FREEFONE 0800 316 5577 TO DONATE NOW WITH A CARD or visit *www.bhopal.org/donations*

*Medicine works best when given with love. On that basis, here is my gift to help those still suffering in Bhopal*

1. I want to give £5☐ £10☐ £20☐ £50☐ £100☐ £250☐ £500☐ £1,000☐ £3,000☐ £5,000☐ Other.....
By cheque payable to PAN-UK(Bhopal Medical Appeal) / Charge my credit/debit card. Valid from ☐☐ / ☐☐
Card no ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Expiry date ☐☐ / ☐☐ Issue no. *(Switch/Solo)* ☐☐ / ☐☐

2. ☐ Please Gift Aid your donation. This increases the value of your gift at no cost to yourself as we can claim the tax you've already paid on it. Please tick box if you can confirm you've paid UK Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax.

3. ☐ Please contact me about making a standing order.
☐ I would like to receive email updates about Bhopal - (no more than one email every three or four months).

4. *Please fill in your details and sign where indicated*
Name.....
Address.....
.....
.....Postcode.....
Signature.....Date.....
Email.....

4. Please post the completed form to:
Pesticide Action Network/Bhopal Account
FREEPOST LON100406, London EC2B 2BR

No stamp needed but if you use one it saves us the cost. You can also donate direct to:

PAN-UK/Bhopal Account No 61752312, NatWest Bank, Sort Code (60-03-36), 504 Brixton Rd, London SW2 8EB

**Bhopal Medical Appeal**
INDEPENDENT CHARITY IN ENGLAND & WALES NUMBER 1117526
KINDLY ADMINISTERED BY THE PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK UK