

26 YEARS LATER

'Black Comedy'

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The wise good men in the empowered group of min-isters (sorry, not one woman in this sanctum sanctorum) have suddenly discovered a politically correct shining conscience, that it almost seems impossible that they were sleepwalking for 26 long years. It's a long time, 20 plus 6 years, and several Congress, Left-backed and other Rightwing regimes after, there are babies who are still born deformed or blind or disabled in the dilapidated, dingy and sick interiors of old Bhopal. Their mothers and fathers often have devastated intestines and lungs, fingers forever trembling, throats choked, eyes blinded by Methyl Isocyanate, the killer gas which killed 15,000 plus and damaged approximately 400,000 people, for many generations to come.

There are infinite narratives of slow suffering, solidified, relentless and ruthless, inside poor homes of this old town, with toxins having polluted the air and drinking water, the skin and eyes, the hair and body. They carry on with the stoic tenacity of human beings who have been ravaged for no fault of theirs, left to their destiny to die everyday.

Surely, the sensitive, strategic minds of the good wise men of the current and past governments in the largest democracy, and the contemporary men of wisdom in the UPA GoM, can see this amazing black comedy in the mirror of their shining conscience. Surely, out here, it's not all that gas as it was during that fated neurosis of December 2-3, 1984, when the biggest industrial disaster in the history of the world, man-made and purely due to abject, criminal inefficiency, and indifference, spread the poison of death across the old town of Bhopal.

Since then much toxic waters have flowed inside the gutters and inside the intestines of the people of Bhopal. Indeed, for the establishment, between sewage gutters and human intestines, there seemed no tangible difference. If Indians have witnessed a truth, for 26 years, there has been nothing but this tangible, inhuman, nasty, protracted and brutish indifference.

So why is their conscience troubled suddenly after a lower court judgment? Have they fallen in unrequited love with the people of Bhopal? Will they now get a doddering old Anderson and put him in jail, even while the killers of the Gujarat carnage or Maliana massacre or Delhi killings roam about free, even holding powerful positions?

Did that mass suffering move their shining conscience of 9 percent growth rate? Did they become wiser and humane during this long process when citizens were treated worse than animals awaiting slaughter in a country which claims to be nuclear superpower?

And why this obsession with Anderson when the judiciary, the state and Centre, chose, consciously, to betray the constitutional rights of the citizens of India? Were they unaware? Did they not receive hundreds of petitions, did they not hear their desperate pleas in first person, even inside the current prime minister's office and the chief

minister's office, did they not see them protesting on the barricades, did they not see them walk 800 kms on foot, not once but twice, all the way from Bhopal in the heat, rotting on the streets of Delhi in the open, on the pavement near the toilet at Jantar Mantar - Indian democracy's magnificent showpiece of catharsis and anti-catharsis?

So how soft was the prime minister on Dow Chemicals? Do Bhopals happen and they will continue to happen, but sorry, India can't make big business, especially American multinationals, accountable? So who wrote those letters defending Dow? And how did the initial and later sellouts happen so brazenly without the establishment being totally unaware of this filthy, dirty, anti-people deal?

The truth is that they gave a clean chit to Anderson, to Union Carbide, to Dow, and all others in India who deserved to be punished. They were hand-in-gloves with the criminals responsible for the death of 15,000 people, and the daily slow death of tens of thousands of others. Indeed, what stopped them (or the filthy rich corporates) to create an alternative, creative, humane infrastructure of shelter, health, drinking water, life-sustainability, jobs, compensation, education or housing for the people of Bhopal? Why did they refuse to do that? And how will Anderson's return change this irrefutable and depressing fact?

If their politically correct conscience is shining, it does not show. If their minds are sensitive, it seems diabolical and hazy. This history from above is not gleaming. It's all gas out there. □□□

[source : Hard News]