

The Bhopal Gas tragedy

In the late 1960s, Union Carbide Corporation built a small factory at the edge of the city of Bhopal, India. It formulated the carbamate pesticide, Sevin, for sale on the Indian market, and imported its most hazardous components, phosgene and methyl isocyanate, in small batches. In 1972, company engineers proposed upgrading the facility so that they could also produce these hazardous ingredients on site, and thus increase the output of Sevin. The plans for the upgrade were drafted by Union Carbide and vetted by, among others, the company's future CEO, Warren Anderson. highly unstable MIC was to be stored in an unnecessarily large tank constructed despite internal objections in part because UCC policy provided pay incentives to the board for producing larger infrastructure.

The economic rationale for the construction of the Bhopal factory was the demand for pesticides engineered by the "green revolution," a massive, internationally sponsored shift in agricultural practices. The "green revolution" was set in motion in India (and other developing nations) during the 1960s and 1970s by an alliance of governments, multinational corporations, and world development and trade agencies. Under the banner of the eradication of food shortages, the "green revolution" purposefully disrupted the small-scale, manual, multi-crop, organic agriculture that had developed in India over thousands of years, in favor of large-scale, mono-crop, chemically and mechanically maintained agriculture. Unfortunately, the "green revolution" did not succeed in eliminating hunger, and by the late 1970s, many had already become disillusioned with its promises.

Sevin failed to perform as well on the Indian market as hoped, but by May 1982 the factory had received a damning report from the safety audit team sent from the U.S. In fact, the huge new factory had ceased production by the middle of 1984 when UCC was reportedly shopping it around for sale. None of the plant's six safety systems, including the refrigeration for the MIC, which must be kept at 0 degrees Celsius, were functioning. Some had been turned off to save money, \$30 per day in the case of the refrigeration system. At midnight on December 3, 1984, while most of the city was sleeping, a ruptured disc failed on a 40-ton tank of MIC, which escaped the tank as a low, poisonous cloud that drifted south. Over 500,000 people lay in the path of the gas, which traveled most thickly over the slums closest to the factory, thinned out slowly over Old Bhopal, and finally began to disperse above the lake toward New Bhopal.

Even years after the tragedy, it is difficult to measure the human cost of the disaster. Persistent myths conflict with reality. Political purpose and dramatic license have continually motivated some politicians and writers to inflate the fatality number.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Bhopal spurred new cycles of process monitoring and a fresh look at risk management. In the months and years after Bhopal, Union Carbide focused a microscope on every operation. There was an unprecedented search for every risk, any risk. We discovered that there was still more that we could accomplish in maintaining safer operations.

Safety concerns about building an industry far from human lives with minimal flora and fauna damage if not none should be adhered to, replacement of flora cover lost should be put into consideration on taking on such projects. The government needs to limit the chances of such disasters by putting forth appropriate laws to minimize such chances, yet in 2020 we now have the EIA act.

The EIA act of 2020 doesn't account for such disasters, by reducing the time span that locals talking in another dialect can refute the want of an industry to make a plant that will allow such tragedies to continue.

in the name of development, such acts are downright atrocious and go to show how capitalism has no law. Sustainable development is important in such scenarios where lives, growth, capital, and safety are kept in check without the need for such a tragedy to occur again. It is my hope that the EIA Act 2020 gets retracted so that the nation can move more towards and green sustainable country rather than a capitalist fuelled mayhem.