

Obituary – Sunil

Kumar Verma, Bhopal

Sunil Kumar Verma's life was tragically affected by the 1984 Bhopal disaster when at the age of 13 he lost his parents, three sisters and two brothers. The family became separated when they ran in panic as the cloud of poisonous gas descended on their home near Union Carbide's pesticide plant. When Sunil recovered he found himself alone and responsible for his surviving ten year old sister and two year old brother. The siblings survived mostly on the generosity of neighbours, both Hindu and Muslim.

Sunil died in his apartment on 26 July 2006. He was 34 years old and had suffered from schizophrenia for many years; mental illness is common among those affected by the Bhopal gas disaster. His suicide reflects the shameful neglect of those affected.

On learning of the deaths of his family through photos stuck on a roadside wall, Sunil claimed not to have cried. 'There were so many corpses. Who will you cry over? After a while, the heart becomes quiet.'

In 1987 Sunil formed a group *Children Against Carbide*, which mobilized orphans and other young people affected by the disaster to fight for social justice. In 1989 he toured the world with a group of survivors to garner support against the settlement made in the Bhopal case between the Indian Government and Union Carbide, visiting the UK (centre in photo), Ireland, Netherlands and the US.

He was known for his generosity, loyalty and sense of humour. He retained a detailed knowledge of the disaster and the ensuing legal case, but did not live to see his dream of proper compensation for the survivors.

In June 1995, Sunil laid the foundation stone for the first People's Clinic in Bhopal for treatment of the gas victims. His health took a turn for the worse in 1997 after he took a stance for Hindu/Muslim community relations. He struggled and suffered terribly with his illness, but never lost his sense of humour. He was fully aware that the voices he heard were not real, but still could control them.

Sunil is survived by his brother and sister and her family. He leaves a large and loving community at Sambhavna clinic. At his funeral people of all religions and leaders of organizations across Bhopal came to pay tribute.

Tim Edwards



Wearing organic cotton has never been easier

PAN UK's new online directory of organic cotton retailers

retail stores your area

Shop by product category

There are now over 80 organic cotton fashion labels in the UK alone, sold in 250 retail outlets, and as many online shops. This is five times more than in 2003. While baby clothing has always been the most popular segment of the organic cotton market, a wide range of products are now available, with thousands of items of clothing for the whole family, from denim jeans to woven shirts. Fabric by the meter, toys, bed linen, and even feminine hygiene products are also available. All of these can be found on PAN UK's new directory to organic cotton retailers on www.WearOrganic.org. The directory can be used to find the locations of stores selling organic cotton products, or to shop online by product category.

Buying organic cotton greatly benefits the livelihood of many cotton farmers and their families throughout the world, saving them from pesticide poisonings, and protecting our environment. It has never been easier to buy organic cotton.

Guide to cotton textile standards

Are you confused by the proliferation of standards, labels, various 'eco' or 'ethical' claims about textiles; eco-friendly, green, sustainable, organic, 100% natural, azo-free, fairly traded, Fairtrade, ethically traded? What do they mean? Are they legitimate and reliable labels? What difference do they make? How can we be sure?

PAN UK is launching its new consumer guide *My Sustainable Tee Shirt: A consumer guide to organic, fair trade, and other eco standards and labels for cotton textiles*. This guide is a first attempt to provide concise and fair information about the major textile certification schemes. *My Sustainable Tee Shirt* is available to download from PAN UK's website at www.WearOrganic.org



A Consumer Guide to Organic, Fair Trade, and Other Eco Standards and Labels for Cotton Textile



Two poisoned by paraquat in UK

In separate incidents in the UK two men have died after mistakenly consuming paraquat. In the first, a gardener employed by Sheffield City Council decanted paraquat from council stores into an opaque drinks bottle for a friend wanting to kill patio weeds. The gardener passed the drinks bottle to his friend at a social club where it became mixed with shopping. After several drinks his friend had no recollection of receiving the paraquat and placed the bottle with other shopping in his fridge. His brother took a sip from this bottle and died three weeks later from respiratory failure. The gardener resigned and was fined a total of £500. This incident was reported on at the end of last year.

Information on a second incident, occurring around the same time period has more

recently surfaced. This second incident occurred in Coatbridge near Glasgow in Scotland when a local council groundsman decanted paraquat into a labelled plastic water bottle to treat weeds in his home garden. On his way home he stopped at a bowling club where shopping bags belonging to several people became mixed up. The bottle of water ended up in another man's fridge. During the night the second man drank from this bottle and immediately became ill dying a few days later. Both incidents occurred in 2004 with successful prosecutions culminating at the end of 2005.

During the recent EU review of paraquat amateur uses were discontinued but professional uses were approved despite the toxicity of this pesticide and the lack of antidote.