

Vignettes of the Bhopal Disaster

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Abstract

Dr. Dhara is a former member of the International Medical Commission on Bhopal. This poem is about his experiences interacting with victims of the disaster.

KEY WORDS: Bhopal, gas cloud, toxicity, victims, disaster

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Tainted by the cloud
Bhopal awakens
The sound of bicycle bells
the early bus.
A roar of black fumes for breakfast.

Years ago the gas cloud,
(atom of the green revolution)
hugged the city.
Its poisonous affection
A night avatar of annihilation
Misery in the morning mist

Women sweep the atom
in the never-ending dust.
Their children cough
a cohort of cripples.

A street hawker
lungs scarred
A traveler for trade
His daily labor interrupted

by atomic bouts of breathlessness.

The college professor, perplexed

by his new handicap in teaching

an old molecular structure.

His class chuckles.

Aphasic! Atomized!!

Young woman in her prime

spinster-in-the-making

by the hand of the invisible atom.

Veil lifted, complaining,

'I was touched by the cloud'

'Yes, we are all tainted by the cloud'