COMFORTING, TREATING, HEALING
In the search for an effective treatment protocol, Sambhavna has developed a unique combination of yoga, Ayurveda, Panchakarma, and modern Allopathic medicine. Participants in yoga therapy are instructed in different postures, breathing exercises and cleansing actions based on their symptoms. Ayurveda is an indigenous system of medicine using herbal remedies to help the body heal itself. Many Bhopal hospitals are prescribing irrational and ineffective drugs as treatment. Both yoga and Ayurveda reduce intake of these synthetic drugs, which are often found to be doing more harm than good. Our Ayurvedic team includes two Ayurveda physicians and two therapists specializing in Panchakarma, a detoxification procedure. Therapeutic care is provided using herbal medicines, medical oil massage, steam bath, medicinal oil stream and medicinal enema. Two general physicians, a gynecologist, and consultants in psychiatry, ophthalmology and pathology comprise our Allopathic unit. Their work is supported by our in-house pathology laboratory. Great care is taken by Sambhavna’s entire medical team to ensure that our patients suffer no additional harm from our treatments. We are also working with other organizations to develop an appropriate health care system for gas and water-affected people, and we collaborate with doctors and researchers around the world to keep up with new treatment and education programs.

REGISTRATION AND MONITORING
Victims receiving care at Sambhavna must certify their residence in a neighborhood affected by the gas leak or water contamination. The process of validating many claims is painstaking, but also essential to guarantee the focus of our mission. Every person accepted at Sambhavna receives a booklet that will contain their medical history (see right). These records are kept on file at the clinic and maintained in the clinic’s computer database. Each entry is monitored to track the effectiveness of treatment and the frequency of complaints.

RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION
Our research team has tackled this task of documenting the full range of survivors’ health problems, from increasing incidents of cancer and TB, to second-generation genetic abnormalities. This data is vital, as all official research on the medical ramifications of exposure to Union Carbide’s poisons was terminated in 1994. Most of those studies, conducted by the Indian Council of Medical Research, have never been published. We also analyze the overall effectiveness of current therapies and innovate new treatment methods. Several of our studies have been published nationally and internationally: Methyl Isocyanate Exposure and Growth Patterns of Adolescents in Bhopal appeared in The Journal of the American Medical Association (October, 2003), and our report detailing the positive impact of yoga exercise on lung capacity was presented at the XVI World Congress of Asthma in Argentina. Our medical and scientific research is available in the Sambhavna library, along with other studies, legal transcripts, government publications, and corporate documents. Books on a variety of health subjects, campaign posters and pamphlets, and newspaper clippings from 1984 to the present day can also be found in our archives. Used frequently by researchers, journalists, activists, survivors and staff, it is the most comprehensive collection of original source material about the Bhopal disaster.

EMPOWERING THE COMMUNITY
Sambhavna’s involvement with the community extends well beyond our clinic. Our five community health workers go into the gas and water-affected areas every day to identify people in need of treatment, follow up on those who receive care at the clinic and collect information on local health issues. This work is complemented by programs to educate people about common health concerns, and train selected individuals to become community health leaders. These leaders have helped the community health staff meet two of our biggest challenges: successfully controlling TB and providing community-based screening for cervical cancer.

GROWING AND MAKING MEDICINES
Sambhavna puts significant emphasis on the quality of medicines prescribed. Sambhavna’s one-acre garden, adjacent to the clinic, harvests more than one hundred species of medicinal plants. Our medicine makers blend these plants with locally purchased herbs to produce almost fifty different kinds of Ayurvedic powders, oils, decoctions and pills in our making unit. Not only is the garden our primary source for medicines, it also serves as the model for smaller herb gardens cultivated by survivors in surrounding neighborhoods. These survivors are trained by our garden staff, with help from the community health workers. Most of our other modern medications come from LOCOST, a non-profit trust dedicated to producing high-quality medicine at low cost for charitable clinics.

NO MORE BHOPALS
Our global outreach mission is twofold: first, stop the continuing medical disaster in Bhopal, and second, ensure that such preventable tragedies never happen again anywhere in the world. To do this, Sambhavna organizes and participates in local, national and international conferences on medical and environmental health issues relevant to the Bhopal disaster. Sambhavna has joined with a host of other survivor campaigns to set up exhibitions, vigils, film screenings and other programs that raise awareness about industrial disasters and corporate negligence.

ESCAPING THE CIRCLE OF POISON
We believe that slow and silent Bhopals are happening all over the world. In 2003, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released its biannual report on the testing of 9,282 American citizens for pesticides and chemical residues. Blood and urine samples revealed 13 pesticides in the average American body. In many cases, people who are sick because of industrial poisons are forced to take medicines manufactured by chemical corporations that also pollute the environment. In providing herbal and drug-free therapies to people in Bhopal, Sambhavna is committed to finding a way for people across the world to escape this circle of poison.
NEW FACILITIES, MORE CAPABILITIES

Completed in April, 2005, our new clinic facility (see below) is located near the communities most severely affected by the gas disaster and the contaminated groundwater. Built primarily with non-toxic construction materials, the clinic includes rainwater harvesting, solar energy production, wastewater recycling, and solar medical waste disposal among its many eco-sensitive features. In addition to the extensive medical facilities, Sambhavna provides ample work space for community health staff, researchers and volunteers, and generous accommodations for as many as 16 volunteers and guests.

With new facilities, expanding services and more community outreach, our workforce has grown steadily over the last decade to 42 full-time employees today, three times its size when the clinic first opened. Over half of our staff members are survivors of the gas disaster; several live in the water-affected communities. Most clinic decisions are made collectively by the entire staff at weekly meetings. Our operations are overseen by seven trustees—scientists, doctors, social workers and activists who have been involved with the aftermath of the disaster for more than twenty years.

IN TEN YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE

Sambhavna has demonstrated that it is possible to develop safe, simple, effective and inexpensive ways to treat the people exposed to Union Carbide’s poison. We have also shown that it is possible to inspire a community to take control of their situation, possible to improve their health through their own initiatives, possible to conduct meaningful research with seemingly insufficient financial and human resources, possible to supplant the government’s neglectful attitude toward the victims. In other words, it is possible to bring about meaningful change. Sambhavna, a Hindi word, means ‘possibility’.

In recognition of our service, the clinic has received several prestigious awards. In 1999, Sambhavna was awarded the Japanese Tajiri Muneaki Prize for its exceptional achievements in the campaign against industrial pollution and occupational hazards. In 2001, Sambhavna’s accomplishments were recognized with two major distinctions: The Governor of Madhya Pradesh honored the clinic with the annual “Inner Flame Award” for outstanding humanitarian service, and the international MEAD 2001 award distinguished Sambhavna Trust for exemplifying anthropologist Margaret Mead’s famous words, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.”

VOLUNTEERS AND DONORS

The clinic proudly operates without corporate money or government assistance. We rely primarily on individual donations to sustain our mission. Over 10,000 compassionate individuals have made contributions since our first fundraising efforts in 1994. We received critical support for our new building from Greenpeace Nederland, Switzerland’s Foundation Pro Victimis and French author Dominique Lapierre, who also makes regular donations from the proceeds of his internationally best-selling book on the disaster, It Was Five Past Midnight in Bhopal (Full Circle, 2001).

The gifts of time and talent given by an array of volunteers from across the world, including many from the affected areas in Bhopal, are also a central part of what allows Sambhavna to thrive. Volunteers can apply their skills in many areas: medical work, social work, writing, research, gardening, photography, information systems, and more.

Join us in our efforts by contributing money, donating equipment or volunteering your time in Bhopal. You can be a part of Sambhavna’s commitment to improve the health and health care situation of the people poisoned by Union Carbide. Please contact us at:

Sambhavna Trust Clinic  
Bafna Colony, Berasia Road  
Bhopal, INDIA 462 001
Call Us: +91 755 2730914/2743157  
Write Us: sambhava@sancharnet.in  
WWW.BHOPAL.ORG

THE SAMBHAVNA TRUST CLINIC
BHOPAL, INDIA

THE BHOPAL DISASTER: CARING FOR SURVIVORS

In the midnight hour of December 3rd, 1984, an immense cloud of poisonous gas began spewing out of the Union Carbide pesticide factory in Bhopal. Methyl isocyanate and other deadly gases moved quickly through the city, overwhelming masses of people. For fear of compounding their legal liability, Union Carbide would not identify the agent, leaving doctors to treat victims without an answer to their agony. Choking, with violent convulsions, many drowned in their own body fluids. Thousands died that night.

The gas leak triggered the world’s worst industrial catastrophe. More than 20 years into the Union Carbide gas tragedy, over 20,000 people have died and 100,000 more still suffer severe, chronic and disabling illnesses. Victims are plagued by breathing difficulties, damaged eyesight, gastrointestinal problems, reproductive complications, genetic deformities, unremitting fatigue, rising cancer rates and more ailments affecting nearly every system of their assaulted bodies.

Union Carbide left Bhopal without cleaning up the site, leaving thousands of tons of highly toxic chemicals in sheds, storerooms and solar evaporation ponds. These chemicals have leached into the earth, contaminating the groundwater source for 25,000 Bhopalis who live nearby. Union Carbide and its new owner, Dow Chemical, based in Midland, Michigan, USA, refuse to clean up the factory, provide proper compensation and long-term health care to all of the victims, or reveal decades of their research on methyl isocyanate.

In the context of utter neglect by Union Carbide and the Indian government, the Sambhavna Trust Clinic opened its doors in 1996. The clinic is an independent, community-based, non-governmental medical and educational initiative. Funded principally by individual donations, Sambhavna offers modern and traditional therapies at no cost to the victims.