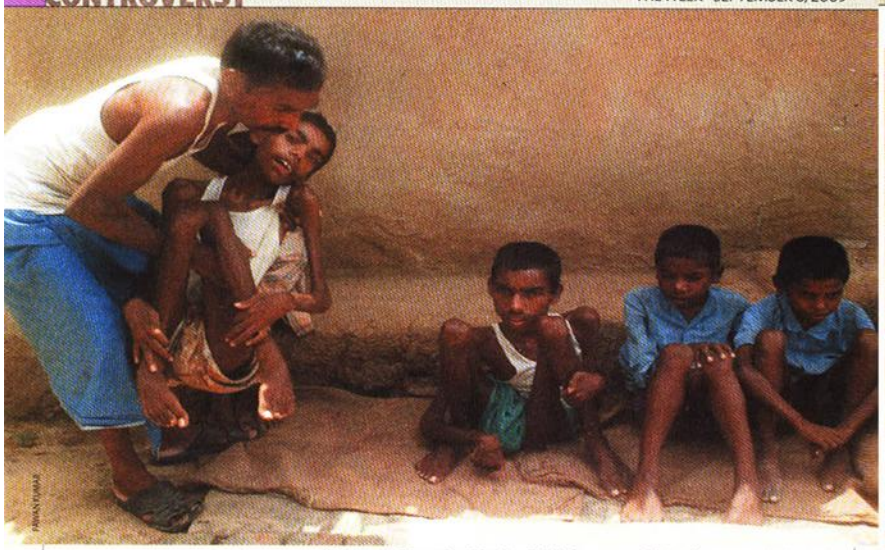

Statues can't see: *Jeet Narain with his four sons suffering from muscular dystrophy*

In behen's backyard...

A father in Uttar Pradesh begs the President to let his four boys die

By Ajay Uprety/LALGANJ

As the four brothers sat on the stony ground to have lunch—a plate of rice and a glass of water—houseflies buzzed around in swarms. Some alighted on the rice, rubbing their hairy legs. But the boys did nothing to shoo them away. They cannot. The siblings—Durgesh, 22, Sarvesh, 20, Brijesh, 16, and Susheel, 13—suffer from muscular dystrophy, a hereditary condition that causes muscles to weaken and waste away. Their father, Jeet Narain, has now written to the President, seeking permission to euthanise the boys.

Pale and weak, Durgesh said: "We have been living like insects. We need our parents' help to meet all our needs, even for eating and using the toilet. I have given up hope. Every day I wake up wishing I were dead." The brothers were well at the time of birth, but started falling ill around the age of six.

"It began with weakness in the calf muscles," said Narain. "But as the disease grew severe, they started falling down while standing and walking. Gradually they became unable to walk." When doctors in Lalganj failed to diagnose the condition, Narain and wife Prabhavati took the boys to the Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Lucknow. "I was told it is a congenital disease with very little hope of cure," he said.

The family stays in Basai Kalan village in Mirzapur district, about 400km from Lucknow. The couple has a young daughter and they are afraid that she, too, might develop the condition when she turns six.

A farmer with just two *bighas* of land, Narain is struggling to feed his family and treat his children. To add to his income, Narain opened a tiny shop, but closed it down, as the boys needed constant assistance. He borrowed Rs 1.20 lakh from a bank and is now in debt. Though he has not kept a record, he has spent Rs 5 lakh for treatment of his sons.

"I cannot go to work. I have to carry them even to the toilet," he said. But like every mother, Prabhavati is ever hopeful. "I do not understand what the doctors say," she said. "They say is an incurable disease. But I still fe their condition can be improved wi proper medication."

Narain said he got no support fro the state even though he had been the ruling Bahujan Samaj Party. H said about a year ago he had sent letter to Chief Minister Mayawa through the local MLA. The MI later asked him to submit a fresh l ter as he had lost the first one; t second letter, too, was of no use.

Narain is peeved that none of t local leaders or cadre of the BS helped him despite knowing h