A brief report of the function held to launch the journal ISHANI

The function was held on the 14th November, 2004 at 3 p.m. opposite the camp office of Nagaland Gandhi Ashram at Dr. Indrajeet Dutta’s residential complex. It started with the Ashram prayers conducted by the inmates of Sarania Ashram, Guwahati led by Damayanti Baideo. The prayers were multi-religious and were those, that are usually, sung at all Gandhian centres in the country. On conclusion of the prayers, Miss Janmani Talukdar, a student from a neighbouring school, sang a devotional hymn in Sanskrit in her mellifluous voice, which created a solemn mood at the meeting.

The Assistant Editor, Smt. Neelakshi Saikia, extended a word of welcome to the Chief Guest, Smt. Shakuntala Chaudhary, Trustee, Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, and the Chairperson, Shri Anil Kumar Goswami, an eminent academician and former principal of Cotton College. By way of felicitations, they were presented with gamosa, the traditional hand woven auspicious cloth as a mark of respect. A beautiful bouquet of fresh flowers was also presented. The felicitations were offered by Smt. Pranati Konwar Bhagwati, Head of the Computer Section, Sankardev Sishu Niketan and Smt. Binny Bhattacharya, Advocate, both of them voluntary workers of the Nagaland Gandhi Ashram at Guwahati. The meeting was ably compeered by Smt. Pranamika Sharma.

Shri Natwar Thakkar, founder of the Nagaland Gandhi Ashram and the Mahatma Gandhi Ishani Foundation spoke about these two institutions. He mentioned that the Gandhi Ashram established in 1955, would be completing its golden jubilee next year. Speaking about establishing the Mahatma Gandhi Ishani Foundation, he remarked that a need was felt to have a Gandhian voluntary body with the aim of working for the entire North-Eastern region.

Speaking about the journal ISHANI, he explained that the word Ishani means anything concerning the north-eastern direction. This journal, he said, would aspire to be a bridge between the North-east and the rest of the country. His speech was followed by the Chief Guest, Smt Shakuntala Chaudhary, lighting the lamp. The Chairperson, Dr. Anil Kumar Goswami, then presented a copy of ISHANI to her. ISHANI was thus, formally launched. A few copies of ISHANI were also distributed to the guests present. While the lighting of the lamp and the distribution of ISHANI proceeded, the Sarania Ashram sisters sang a song seeking the blessings of Almighty to let the Universe be pervaded with auspiciousness. This created a right ambience uplifting the spirits of all present.

A few distinguished participants then delivered short speeches. Shri Amrit Kumar Goldsmith, North East Regional Head, CASA, who spoke on the laudable efforts of Shri Thakkar in launching ISHANI, gave the first speech. After that, Shri Toshi Ao, a theologian and a young citizen of Chuchuyimlang narrated his experience of the Gandhi Ashram, which is located in Chuchuyimlang itself. He told the gathering that he and his villagers had been tremendously benefited by the Ashram and its activities particularly those of Bee Keeping. Shri Nishinath Changkakoti, IPS (Retd) and former DGP of Assam, was the next speaker. He spoke on the great need for such a magazine, particularly since our present society has been permeated by injustice. He also said that it is important to spread Gandhian ideals in society and he hoped that ISHANI would be able to do so.

Shri VB Gangurde, Deputy CEO, I/C of Zonal Office of the Commissioner, Khadi and Village Industries, spoke at length on how the poor survive in some parts of our country. Shri Umesh Medhi, Founder, Barkhetri Unnayan Samiti, Mukalmoa spoke on his organization and the laudatory efforts of Shri Natwar Thakkar in starting ISHANI. He also talked of the help extended to his organization by Shri Natwar Thakkar. Dr Indrajeet Dutta, Former Director, Soil Conservation, Assam, and a prominent inhabitant of Jonali Path, also talked on the Nagaland Gandhi Ashram and how he, as a neighbour, feels delighted over the launch of such a journal.

Smt Shakuntala Chaudhary then addressed the guests and talked on Shri Natwar Thakkar’s initiation by late Acharya Kakasaheb Kalelkar. She also dwelt at length on the life of Shri Natwar
Thakkar, how he had come to this remote part of the country as a young man and established a Gandhi Ashram in this region. His efforts to launch ISHANI were highly welcome.

A Christian hymn “Take My Life and Let it be Consecrated to Thee” was then sung by the Ao Naga Choir, Guwahati led by Shri Alemwapang Imsong, President, the Ao Naga Students Association. This hymn was a favourite of Mahatma Gandhi and was sung by the Naga choir in a soul-stirring manner.

The address from the Chair by Dr. Anil Kumar Goswami followed. He spoke on the need for such a journal in this region and also talked about the issues that should concern all of us including topics related to the conservation of the environment. He also spoke about his long association with Shri Natwar Thakkar and the high esteem in which he holds him.

Mrs. Abontee Chakravarty, another voluntary worker of the Nagaland Gandhi Ashram, delivered the vote of thanks with warmth and cordiality.

Tea and light refreshments were served to the guests at the conclusion of the meeting.