

Tour Report on Tour Programme of Shri A.N.Tripathi, Secretary, Maharashtra State Commission for Protection of Child Rights at Kasturba Gandhi Trust, Sarania Ashram, Guwahati (Assam) and Nagaland Gandhi Ashram Chuchuyimlang, District Mokokchug, Nagaland, and meeting with N.G.O. IMPULSE, Childline working on child rights in shilong dated 25/1/2014 to 29/1/2014.

Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, Assam was established in 1946 and on 9th January of same year, inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhiji. Mahatma Gandhiji entrusted Smt. Amal Prabha Das with it's entire responsibility. Smt. Shakuntala Chowdhary, 94 years and Hema Kakoti who is 90 years old are main pillars of trust. Trust is looked after by Smt. Damayanti Devi. The Ashram run, Gram Seva Kendra at various places in Assam, training courses on handicrafts, constructive activities, maternity and child care work, training for the gram sevikas. Courses on maternity and child welfare also run for tea gardener. "Tantamukti and Nidhimukti" work also run by the trust. Various programmes such as "Buniyadi Shiksha", education by handicrafts is being run. Sarania Ashram is example of self reliance and self help, manual labour and women empowerment. The Government officers and other stake holders working in this field are needed to visit for training.

2. Nagaland Gandhi Ashram, Chuchuyimlang is located at a hilltop in Ao Naga village, Chuchuyimlang in the district of Mokokchung. The Nagaland Gandhi Ashram was established in the year 1955 by Shri Natwar Thakkar whose spirit came from true nationalism generated during the freedom struggle. The objective set before the Ashram is to promote national and emotional integration through voluntary service on Gandhian lines and to conduct activities and programmes for the welfare and all round development of the people of Nagaland and North East India. Inspired by the Late Gandhian stalwart, Acharya Kakasaheb Kalelkar to

the youth to work for emotional integration of the people inhabiting the frontier regions with rest of the country. Thakkar volunteered to take up this cause. At that time Naga Hills were under ferment then due to political agitation demanding sovereign status for Naga Hills, it took a violent turn towards the close of 1955 and culminated in worst form of violence in 1956. The Ashram instinctively took upon itself to the peace making surrounding villages in a quiet, informal manner. The disturbed atmosphere of the Naga Hills created a delicate and dangerous situation for the Ashram. There was major attempt on the life of Thakkar in the year 1957 and as Nagaland was experiencing a battle like situation there were occasional brushes with danger and threat. One constant feature of those days was almost daily meetings with the village elders. It had become a habit for them in those days to rush to Thakkar for his help, advice and intervention in event of any emergency or any misunderstanding with the guardians of law and order.

The activities over the years :

Even in the midst of the mission of peace making, a major activity was taken up, the vocational training school for the school dropouts. Later on physically handicapped youth were also admitted although the facilities and infrastructure was limited. The trainees were provided boarding and lodging facilities free of cost. Some of these erstwhile trainees are self-employed and are continuing to practice the trades in which they were trained.

The Ashram also undertook other activities in due course. There were obstacles to face, the disturbed atmosphere, poor infrastructure, dearth of committed workers and limited financial resources. In the background of these limitations a direction emerged – to conduct the activities in the

nature of trials. All these trials were aimed at socio-economic development and welfare of the people.

Many activities were taken up by the Ashram during its existence of last forty eight years. These can be broadly stated as follows –

- a) Sending groups for training in Hindi and in electrical linemen ship at Wardha and Delhi.
- b) Vocational training for school dropouts and physically handicapped
- c) Khadi and Village Industries.
- d) Running a small dairy on an experimental basis.
- e) Trials of introducing non traditional agricultural crops
- f) Sericulture activities related to Eri and Muga farming
- g) Medical aid-conducting outpatient clinic and holding medical relief camps
- h) Developing a small library with books on Gandhiana, Indian history and culture, people of North East India, cottage industries etc.
- i) Promotion of goodwill, harmony and understanding between Nagas and the rest of the country through personal contacts, observing national days, and organizing meetings, conferences etc.
- j) Holding seminars to cultivate better understanding about special features of the North East and the problems peculiar to the region.
- k) Education through handicrafts under the concept of Buniyadi shiksha / basic education.

All the Khadi and Village Industries Programmes were undertaken with the support from Khadi and Village Industries Commission. This work was pioneering in nature. The programmes attempted were:

- i. Running of seven Khadi and Village Industries sales outlets.
- ii. Bee-keeping centers in different parts of Nagaland.
- iii. Power driven oild Ghanis at Chuchuyimlang.

- iv. Experimental unit to produce Gur and Khandsari at Chuchuyimlang
- v. Carpentry and black smithy unit.

Out of all the activities mentioned above the propagation of modern bee keeping was most rewarding as it is now practiced in all parts of Nagaland. The Ashram is the pioneer in this field.

The Ashram has been visited by late shri Morarji Desai, Shri Kakasaheb Kalelkar, Smt. Indira Gandhi etc. During my visit I have seen various activities taken by Nagaland Gandhi Ashram and remark given by various dignitaries. In the disturbed area work done by Nagaland Gandhi Ashram exemplary and such work can be taken in naxal affected districts Gadchiroli.

3. Dr. G. Ram Chandran Gandhian stalwart in the visitor's book has concluded his remark as, "The Unique Ashram. Nagaland Gandhi Asram is, no doubt, an Ashram with a difference. In its external appearance it differs from many other Gandhian centers of service elsewhere. It has however steadfastly adhered to the Gandhian prescription of cultivating a spirit of dedicated selfless service for the well being of society. Dr. Ramchandran points out this feature of the spirit behind the Ashram at the end of his observation. Briefly speaking, the Nagaland Gandhi Ashram has functioned more as an embassy of the good will of the enlightened citizenry of the nation for the Nagas. This is the sum and substance of all the work and efforts that has taken place through the Ashram over the years. Cultivating harmony, peace and good will, experimenting with programmes of socio economic development and welfare, promoting interaction between different sections of the local community and with the rest of the country were the efforts and activities. Our sights are fixed on the Polestar of national and emotional integration."

4. In Shilong Secretary met with N.G.O. named IMPULSE network. The Secretary discussed various issues with Director Ms. Hasina Kharbhih. She is fighting for cause of children working in coal mines in Meghalaya. She is working on rehabilitation programme for coal mine's child and child

trafficking. IMPULSE Network has rapport with N.G.O.s working in South and South East Asian countries on the issue of child labour and child trafficking. She assured to provide required help and also assured to provide list of resource persons and other help for International workshop going to be organised by the Maharashtra State Commission for Protection of Child Rights. Secretary met with the volunteers of N.G.O. Childline in SHILONG (Meghalaya). As majority of the Child trafficking is happening either via Mumbai or on Mumbai as a final destination, therefore it is required to develop system with active support of Childline.