The serial blasts which took place in Guwahati on the 30th October, 2008 were a shocking event. Nearly a hundred people were killed and many times that number injured in varying degrees. The people suffered for long not only due to the physical injuries and losses but due to the trauma resulting from being either a victim or a witness to the blasts. In this issue of *Ishani*, we are presenting an eye-witness account of the blast at the Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) Court in Guwahati. The author of this account, Shri Khanindra Mozumder, who is a lawyer by profession, shares with us his heart-rending experiences on that fateful day. He has dwelt on the uncertainty of human existence carrying with it the message, “Do good. And do good now, for who knows you may not have another opportunity to serve your brethren.” Shri Khanindra also gives us another vital message through his narrative. The message is to refrain from harbouring an unnecessary ego, for you never know that the person you did not find worthy of your attention may turn out to be your guardian angel under critical circumstances.
The 30th of October, 2008, Thursday, Morning 9.30 a.m. I, Khanindra Mozumder, a lawyer by profession, reached the Chief Judicial Magistrate or CJM Court at Guwahati. After reaching the court, I was engaged in some case-related writing work at the Bar Association room. At exactly 9.45 a.m., a person came up to me and asked me for my pen. Since I was busy writing, I told him, “I am writing. I will be able to give you the pen only after some time.” Afterwards, the person took a pen from somebody else of which I was not aware. Little did I know at that point of time that that person was Mahesh, a newly joined security personnel at the CJM Court, who was killed in the bomb blast later that day. If only I had given him the pen when he had asked for it. The uncertainty of human life! And how some things leave a lasting regret.

At 10.30 a.m., I entered the Courtroom, and after attending to the cases I had in hand, I came out to the gate of the CJM Court at 11.10 a.m. Then I met our mohari or court clerk Shankar. Shankar told me that he had to go to pay his CellOne Mobile Bill. I told Shankar jokingly, “Diwali has gone by. You haven’t given me even a paan.” Shankar exclaimed at this, “My God, for the first time you have asked me for a paan, why will I not give you one.” Then Shankar took me to the paanshop and instructed the shop-owner to prepare a paan. Both of us had came out of the side door of the Bar Association
building towards the Brahmaputra. After taking the paan, I was going towards the Bar Association building when Shankar hailed me saying, “Sir, see this envelope.” I first asked him to bring the envelope to the Bar. He, however, requested me to come down. So, to see the envelope, I advanced four to five steps downwards towards him and the Brahmaputra. Just as I took the envelope in my hands, there was a tremendous bomb blast. It was exactly 11.20 a.m. Immediately on the bomb bursting, I said to Shankar, “Shankar, has the transformer burst?” Shankar shouted, “No, Sir, it is a bomb blast. Run, Run,” and he dragged me towards the Brahmaputra. I looked back towards the blast site and heard the scream of women, “Save me, Save me. Oh! I am killed.” I could see black cloudlike smoke covering the ground. Then when the glass of the Bar Association building began falling, I started beating a slow retreat towards the Brahmaputra, which transformed into a run. Not losing my bearing, I immediately phoned my elder brother and told him about the incident. It was then that I noticed that my hands were bleeding and some glass shreds were embedded there. I also noticed the people scattering helter skelter as if an ant procession had been disrupted. Regaining possession over my senses, I slowly came up to the Bar Association thinking I might help somebody. Then Shankar ran towards me and said, “Sir, you have saved my life, protected me from a sure death. If you had not called me to have a paan, I would surely have been killed.” Shankar’s bike was near the place of the bomb blast and had he not been called by me, he would have been on his bike about to go to pay his BSNL Bill, when the bomb burst. Similarly, if Shankar had not called me to see the envelope, I would have been grievously injured, perhaps even killed.

I saw a huge fire before the Bar Association building as the bikes had started burning. So it was not possible to go and rescue anyone. I saw the burning corpses; it was impossible to distinguish between males and females. Then I went outside once on to the main road on the Forest Office side after some time and saw the dead bodies being covered by white cloth and the injured being taken away to hospital. The fire brigade had not yet arrived. I went inside the Bar Association and met my immediate colleagues who were all safe by the Grace of God. At that moment of time, our senior Shri Dilip Kothari, who was conducting a case in the Sessions Court came running in search of us (myself and my colleagues attending his chamber as his juniors). When he met us, I noticed a stream of tears falling from his eyes. After some time, the Fire Brigade arrived at last and doused the fires. About 2 p.m., I left the Court. It was still a chaos outside with sound of ambulances, and people hurrying here and there. I went to my senior’s house and dressed my wounds. Then I came back home.
Even as I narrate these incidents, I see the whole picture vividly before my eyes and I feel sorry and pained at the cruel death of so many innocent people, whose families have become incomplete. Many a world have been disrupted; some victim had newly married, some had little children. I have received a great shock in my life from which I am only now almost recovered. I pray nobody on Earth gets such a shock in his or her life ever. Reflecting back on these past traumatic events, I have learned some lessons. Firstly, alertness is very much required in these dark and uncertain days. Secondly, we should not loiter about gossiping in crowded places, busy intersections, and especially in parking places. This applies to all. Lastly, we must not harbour an unnecessary ego. If I had harboured the pride of being a lawyer and not listened to Shankar, the clerk, I don’t know in what state I would have been today.

* Shri Khanindra Mozumder is a practicing lawyer with the Gauhati High Court. Besides his law degree, he holds a post-graduate degree in History from Gauhati University and another degree related to computer education. Philanthropy is his hobby and he has helped out scores of individuals and families with practical and relevant advice to overcome their problems. An adept in meditation, Shri Khanindra possesses wonderful insight into the fascinating world of Indian spirituality.

Record-breaking Sale of Gandhi Books in just 5 days

There was an overwhelming response to Gandhi Books Exhibition-cum-Sale. Gandhi Books of worth Rs. 3,10,000/- were sold within last 5 days from 27th to 31st January, 2009. 'An Autobiography' of Mahatma Gandhi, and a set of five important books, 'Selected Works of
Mahatma Gandhi’ were the top-selling books at the exhibition. About 3500 copies of 'Gandhi's Autobiography' and 210 copies of 'Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi' were sold. We were happy to note that most of those who frequented the stall were youngsters. To commemorate Gandhi’s 61st Death Anniversary, 300 books on & by Gandhi, Vinoba & Sarvodaya were displayed & sold at 50% discount by Mumbai Sarvodaya Mandal & Gandhi Book Centre with the financial assistance of ‘Babulnath Mandir Charities’ from 27th to 31st January at specially erected Mandap at Hutatma Chowk and at Gandhi Book Centre, Nana Chowk.

In the present context of increasing violence, terrorism & crime, Autobiography and other books of Mahatma Gandhi are inspiring many people all over the world. Gandhiji has left indelible footprints on the sand of time. Even after 61 years of his departure from the world, his thoughts and deeds have not waned.

More than 2.5 Lakh copies of 'An Autobiography' of Mahatma Gandhi in twelve Indian languages are being sold every year. After reading Gandhi books, many people have decided to follow the path of Truth and Non-Violence and are striving to sustain morality by practicing peaceful conflict resolution which is the need of the hour.

http://www.gandhitopia.org/group/mgnd/forum/topics/recordbreaking-sale-of-gandhi