



RED LIGHT DESPATCH

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RELEASING SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM DELHI,
KOLKATA, AND FORBESGANJ (BIHAR)

My Dreams

Pooja Kumari

Basti Vikas Kendra is a lovely place to come to everyday. I enjoy coming to this centre, meeting friends, talking to them freely and being part of so many activities that include group meetings, stitching, and playing. I would have never known so many things that I know now had I not been a part of the Kishori Mandals. The meetings that are organized are really very informative, and teach us to be independent.

On 31st January there were a few visitors who came from USA to meet us at our center in Uttari Rampur. It was a winter morning and we were very excited about the visit. We were preparing for quite some days for the visit. We prepared greet cards for all our guests. We drew pictures and wrote our thoughts on them.

When our guests arrived, we greeted them with the cards and a bouquet. There were seven of them. I never thought that they would be so happy to get our cards. They tried to understand whatever was written in Hindi by getting them translated by the Apne Aap Didis Bhaiyas who were there. They held the cards so closely to them that I was moved. There was a welcome song sung by our friend, Sanjana. Abhilasha di & Gargi di translated all that we sang and spoke to them in Hindi.

My responsibility was to explain to them all that we do in the Kishori Mandal. I was nervous, but managed to say whatever we had agreed to say. I could not look at them as I was feeling very nervous, but when they clapped I felt very good and confident. Later, my friend Bina talked about her struggle in getting back to school and coming to the center. I could understand that she was also very nervous. This was the first time that we were talking in front of so many foreigners.

Finally, Fatema spoke. Our mothers and aunts who are part of the Mahila Mandal were also present. (Continued on page 6)

Women and Girls march to Araria Mahila

Team Bihar

Forbesganj: It was 30th January, 2014. The environment at the Araria Mahila college grounds was that of festivity: women and girls excited about everything happening on stage and shouting slogans of their demands for a life of dignity and a life free of violence. There were more than 1500 women and girls who had gathered in the college ground on the occasion of the visit of eminent feminist, scholar & activist Gloria Steinem and other donors from USA.

Nearly 1000 women and adolescent girls from Kishori Mandals and Mahila Mandals in Forbesganj participated in a huge rally at the Araria Mahila College, which is 50-80 kilometers away from where they live. They all came together in buses and tempos to Gauri Chowk in Araria. Some groups of women started as early as 8 a.m. in the morning to reach the venue in time. The excitement knew no bounds. We all gathered there – a large group of women and children, standing in queues with placards in hands to start the rally. We walked from Gauri Chowk to Araria Mahila College shouting slogans against vio-

lence against women, sexual violence, child marriage and demands for justice. It was interesting to see how the girls led the rally. Women joined in shouting ‘manavta ki yehi pukar/roko nari atyachar’, ‘bal bibah bandh karo’. It turned out to be a very unique way of putting forth their demands publicly; mothers supported their daughters while daughters guided their mothers. The march went on for nearly 45 minutes.

At the college, a stage was set up for the program. Along with women and girls from AAWW, there were students from the college and other intellectuals and social workers who had gathered at the venue. They all found it very exciting to be a part of such a big movement for the first time in their lives. Dr. Abhilasha Kumari, Executive Director at AAWW, led the rally from the front and gave the welcome speech before the gathering of nearly 1500 women, men and girls. She stated the importance of such a rally, especially in coming together from across borders to reinstate our

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Sitting in a Circle with a feminist icon : meeting Gloria Steinem

Himani/Sulekha

New Delhi: On January 13th, ten girls from the Perna community of Prem Nagar visited the Apne Aap Women Worldwide head office at the India International Center in order to meet the renowned American feminist Gloria Steinem and hear about her feminist ideologies and journey against gender inequality. The girls who participated belong to different adolescent groups from ApneAap’s center.

Ruchira Gupta, founder of ApneAap Women Worldwide, introduced Gloria to the girls. An interactive session between her and the girls then followed, guided by Soumya Suresh. Everyone introduced herself and then the well

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Volunteer Journal

Jaipur Lit Fest

Kara Myers

Feminist icon Gloria Steinem and Apne Aap's Founder-President Ruchira Gupta were greeted with warm applause as they took the stage on the first afternoon of the 2014 Jaipur Literature Festival this January.

During their hour-long conversation, the two women discussed issues relating to modern day patriarchy, the global issue of sex-trafficking and prostitution, the trauma of body invasion, and the power of sorority and friendship.

Steinem also spoke of her new book, *As If Women Matter: The Essential Gloria Steinem Reader*,

which was edited by Ruchira Gupta and addresses many of the topics touched upon at the literary festival.

The conversation began by problematizing the institution of pornography. Steinem states, 'pornography is a function of injustice' in the way that it subjugates women while also perpetuating racist and classist ideology. In her book, Steinem juxtaposes pornography with eroticism, stating that the latter "contains the idea of love and mutuality, positive choice and the yearning for a particular person," while the pornography implies "a form of sexual slavery."

Steinem went on to discuss reproductive freedom, the importance of intersecting social movements, and the way in which her time spent in India as a young woman influenced

her later in life. "India made me who I am today, I hope you're satisfied," she joked.

On a more serious note, Gupta and Steinem also addressed the policy debate of legalizing or criminalizing prostitution. Steinem offered a solution in what she calls "the third way" which would decriminalize the victims of prostitution, and penalize and educate the customers. She ended the discussion by reminding the audience that, "the means do not justify the end, the means are the end" – a Gandhian principle of non-violence that is also encouraged by Apne Aap Women Worldwide.

Kara Myers is currently interning in the Apne Aap Delhi Office. Her interests run deep in the area of women's rights and development.

Girl Led Journey- I

Radha Kumari

Kolkata: It was the 29th of January, when I took the donors from Direct Donor Action (DDA) and Gloria Steinem, through Apne Aap Women Worldwide, to a small journey through a day in my life. I wanted them to be a part of my world.

I first took them to the Community Centre in Munshigunj and showed them where I study because I love studying and want to be a doctor. I also showed them the place where I sit and eat my mid-day meal in the centre. After this, I took them to Paddapukur, a small lake in Khidderpore. I like this area a lot and wanted them to see it too.

Next I took them to my house. I was so happy to take them there and make them meet my mother. They loved the smell of the food which

my mother was cooking. They even sat on my bed and saw my books and toys.

Lastly, I took them to Dahi Ghat. There is a bridge on the Ganges which I love to visit and I love seeing the big and small bats which pass the area very frequently.

I was very happy to share a part of myself with them and I hope that they come back soon to visit again.

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(Continued from page 1:
'My Dreams')

aunts who are part of the Mahila Mandal were also present. They gifted the guests with bags that they make at Nomi Network and they spoke about themselves and their work. The program ended with our guests thanking us and promising to come back. We all loved taking pictures with them.

I will definitely look forward to more such programs as we seldom get such opportunities of interaction. We all went back happy and ready to share the happenings with our family and friends.

Op/Ed

Jaipur Literature Festival, Ruchira Gupta

The women's rights activists Ruchira Gupta and Gloria Steinem are keeping a diary of their travels throughout India as they meet the country's young feminists, writers and thought leaders. In this installation for India Ink, Ms. Gupta and Ms. Steinem take part in the Jaipur Literature Festival.

Jan. 17, Friday: Gloria and I walk under a canopy of brightly embroidered umbrellas toward Diggi Palace, a 200-year-old Persian-style estate, in whose courtyards and gardens the Jaipur Literary Festival has just started. We are officially here to hold a public conversation about our new book, "As If Women Matter," but unofficially we want to meet student activists, new and old feminists, writers, poets, storytellers and book lovers in this five-day feast of people and ideas.

Gloria and I are determined to make this an organizing meeting, not just a one-way speech, and the way to do that is to tell our own stories so that we can invite others to tell theirs. I explain that I gave up a journalism job to start *Apne Aap*, together with 22 women in prostitution; all of us with the lofty aim of living to see a world in which no woman is bought or sold. I had won an Emmy for field producing a documentary, "The Selling of Innocents" on sex-trafficking from the villages of Nepal to the brothels of Mumbai, but wanted to do more than just write about the issue.

After my story, Gloria tells hers. She, too, was striving to make a living as a journalist, when she went as a reporter to cover women

who were telling their own abortion experiences in public in order to explain why this procedure should become legal. That is when she realized that women were restricted, to not just be cheap labor themselves, but also to produce cheap labor or heirs. After all, their bodies were the means of the most fundamental production — reproduction. She found the media at that time limiting — they would treat women's issues as cultural and men's issues as political — and so started *Ms.* magazine, which changed how women's issues were reported forever.

In this way, we were soon connected with strangers in our audience, who too were radicalized after the Delhi gang rape and had begun protesting publicly against the sexualized violence targeted at women, religious minorities, Dalits, lesbian, gay and transgender people in India.

Questions flew fast. The conversations cut across generations and countries as Gloria explained that feminism — the belief in the full economic, social and political equality between women and men — is the only solution. It is the first birth-based hierarchy that we experience, and if this is tackled inside our own families we will remove the building block for all hierarchies.

I see nods and determination among the young women and men as if they are saying: *Maybe I'm not crazy after all; maybe the system is crazy.* New feminists are born right here.

Jan. 18, Saturday:

Back in the Writers' Lounge, we meet Surina Narula, who along with her husband has instituted a \$50,000 prize for literature on South Asia. They are Indians living in London, but by this generous prize that is the equivalent of \$50,000, they make clear where their hearts are. Surina explains her work on children's causes, asks Gloria to present the prize. She also explains her hope that legalization will lessen the damage of sex trafficking and prostitution.

As Gloria explains, she once hoped so, too, until she discovered that in places like Nevada and Germany, legalization allowed governments to say, "If prostitution is legal work like any other, then unemployment and other benefits will be withheld from women who refuse it."

Surina is surprised, and interested that there is now a third way that gets us past the disastrous polarization into legal or illegal — which only gives prostituted people a choice between two kinds of prison. Sweden and other Nordic countries plus France have decriminalized and offer services to those who are prostituted, and criminalize the pimps and brothels who sell them.

Conversations like this make the Writers' Lounge worth the whole festival.

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(Continued from Page 3: 'Op Ed')

Jan. 19, Sunday:

I hear hope in the stories of hard choices they have made this year. One young woman speaks about challenging her father for assaulting a friend; another speaks about making public the sexual abuse of her daughter at home, a third about filing a police case against the relentless domestic violence that her mother faces and a fourth – a young man about silencing the jeers from his male friends and family when he enrolled for women's studies in university.

Gloria listens and responds to each woman and man seriously. She links their inequalities to each other and to the power systems that control us and makes them understand that their truth is profoundly political. I see them leave with a spring in their step and straighter shoulders.

Jan. 20, Monday:

Back at the festival, I see young women and men in the white caps of Aam Admi, the explosive new political party named after the Common Man. Something like an electoral version of the Occupy Movement, it has come to power in Delhi, and I hope more sparks will fly in this election year.

The political leaders on stage are speaking in banalities, but the young women and men try to nail them down with specific questions: What cap will their party put on election spending? How much will they actually budget for girls' education and women's safety versus defense expenditure?

One political leader says only that each person must look into his own conscience. The young women and men are not buying it and try to ask follow-up questions, but are silenced by the conference organizers, who tell them this is not a political meet-

ing. We leave smiling, happy to see democracy at play, as we see the young people regroup and plan their next strategy.

Jan. 21, Tuesday: Gloria and I are asked to fill in for a boxer who could not fly into Jaipur because of the fog. We wonder how our audience will react to an impromptu session on feminism instead of tips on masculinity by a macho boxer. We smile at our mistake when we realize that we are substituting for a very feminine female boxer, Mary Kom, a winner of an Olympic medal. We, too our victims of stereotyping!

A lively banter gives us a chance to tell questioning men in the room that the feminist movement is not going to retreat. It is not a public relations campaign, says Gloria, but a revolution. It will free men, too, allowing them to play a greater role on child rearing. And on that triumphant note, we leave the Jaipur Literature Festival.

Guests from USA comes to our KGBV

Poonam Khatoon

We were all very excited on the day that Martin Bhaiya came and told us that we were to have visitors from the USA. When visitors came two years ago during the Learning Tour, we were all very small so our didis did a majority of the events. So, we were excited that this time it would be our turn. We also felt that our didis had done so well, we would have to try very hard to match them. We sat with Martin Bhaiya and Sanju didi to discuss the program. We decided that there would be songs, dances, karate and I volunteered to do the anchoring. We started our rehearsal. Martin Bhaiya helped me a lot in learning how to be an anchor, as I was feeling nervous about speaking in front of everyone.

Finally, 31st January arrived. We were very excited from the morn-

ing, dressing up for our events and doing the final rehearsals. We were told that they would be late in coming, as they were having meetings in other places. We started the program with our welcome song.

The guests arrived when we were in the second song. We stopped for a while to welcome them, then our songs and dance continued. They were in a hurry so we had to cut our program short. We then had a karate performance, which the guests greatly appreciated. We felt very good about that. I felt very proud welcoming Ruchira di to speak to us. We all felt very happy to have Ruchira di and Gloria with us, as they had both come earlier. They spoke to us and Gloria thanked us for the dance and karate performances. We were very happy.

The only sad part is that we could not interact much with them. We had made preparations for a program of one hour that we had to cut it to just 20 minutes. We would have loved to take them to our rooms in the hostel. We look forward to having another opportunity in the future.

Poonam Khatoon, 15 years is a very bright student of KGBV. She comes from a very vulnerable background. She is a part of AAWW's Kishori Mandals and learns Karate and Computers. She is a very active member of the Kishori Mandal, very vocal, always trying to articulate her thoughts and feelings without hesitation.

Girl Led Journey- II

Uma Das

Kolkata: On January 29th I took 7 women from the DDA as well as feminist Gloria Steinem to the places where I spend a majority of my day.

I first showed them the Apne Aap Women Worldwide (AAWW) centre in Khidderpore. I showed them the computer room where I take my computer classes. We then moved towards the Community Centre of AAWW in Munshiganj. That is the place I stay in and I showed them where I sleep and where I eat. I also showed them the place where I take dance classes with the children.

I then took her to my house in Munshiganj where my mother stays. I was really happy to see that she remembered meeting my mother, when she had visited Calcutta few years back. She was really sweet to sit on the bed and take pictures with me and my mother.

Lastly, I took her to Dahighat. I visit that place whenever I am sad. I love watching the waves in the water and wanted to share that with Gloria and the other women, Donna from DDA. I felt very good after sharing my life with them. I was very happy to see that they took out so much time from their work

friends in and around this area. Next I took them to my house which is in Steam Gully, right next to the Red Light Area of Munshiganj which is in Steam Gully, right next to the Red Light Area of Munshiganj. I showed them where I sleep and eat. I made them meet my mother.

They also saw that I make jewellery and bought some necklaces and bracelets from me. I then took them to the community centre of Apne Aap in Mynshiganj. I wanted to show them where I study, where I take my dance lessons and where I meet my friends.

Girl Led Journey - III

Anwari Khatoon

Kolkata: On 29th of January I took the donors visiting from United States of America and Gloria Steinem on a journey into my daily life. I wanted them to understand me by living a few hours of my life.

I first took them to Paddapukur in Khidderpore, which is a small artificial lake in the area. I took them here because I love spending time here and playing with my

Last I took them to a small bridge in Dahi Ghat which is right above the Ganges. I told them that I like visiting the place a lot because "I love the breeze and that makes me forget my daily struggles".

I was really happy that they all could take out time and come and see my life so closely. They were genuinely interested in knowing me. I loved sharing a part of my life with them and hope that they will remember me always.

(continued from page 1: 'Sitting in a Circle with a feminist icon...')

known feminist talked about her life journey as a feminist and how she became successful in her life. Gloria added in her talk that children, unless it's shamed out of them, are often found saying two things — 'its not fair' and 'you are not the boss of me'. "I think this feeling is in there. It's somehow born into us. If we can bear it and maintain it, we can create an environment of mutual respect and democracy that will

reverberate outwards and normalize, and make the world a little better, a little more fair, a little less hierarchical, a little more just and a bit more like this room.

The girls asked Gloria, "how can you help me to become like you?" She responded by saying, "you can become better than me. By remaining focused and working hard towards your goal."

Then the meeting followed by a round of questions by the girls to Gloria Steinem regarding her feminist view in the Indian context and how they can fight in the society as most as most vulnerable in the society.

The meeting got its final touch by media coverage of Gloria Steinem with Shekhar Gupta from Walk the Talk of New Delhi Tele Vision (NDTV) along with the girls from Dharampura and Premnagar in Najafgarh.

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Girl Led Journey *Rani Khatoon*

Kolkata: On 29th of January I took Gloria Steinem and members of the DDA team on a journey through a day in my life. I believe for anyone to understand me, they need to peek into my daily affairs and hence I was more than glad to take them along.

I first took them to my computer teacher, as education is an extremely important part of my life. I made them meet and talk to my teacher and was very happy to meet them.

I then took them to the Community Centre in Munshigunj and showed them the place where I sit and study. I also took them to the terrace where I was given my mid-day meal.

After this, I took them to my house so that I could make them

meet my mother. My mother is my friend, philosopher and guide; she is my everything and if they wanted to know who I am, I had to make them meet my mother. They were so happy to meet her and also took many pictures in my house.

At the end I took them to Paddapukur lake in Khidderpore, to make them see where I play and enjoy with my friends.

I have never had anyone from outside visit my house before and I really enjoyed it. I was also really happy to see them be so interested in my life. Thank you Apne Aap.

(continued from page 1 –Cover Story)

Struggle from across borders to reinstate our fights for justice and end all forms of violence against women. This was followed by 4 girls of our Kishori Mandals singing songs. women empower followed by 4 girls of our Kishori Mandals singing songs of women empowerment and songs protesting against violence against women.

The girls also presented a play depicting how child marriage and trafficking adversely affects a girl and deprives her right to education and safety. The gathering was also addressed by Md. Kalam and Fatima, two members of the community who have been part of AAWW for the past ten years. Basuki Nath Jha, Principal, Araria Mahila College also spoke, congratulating AAWW for organizing such a program.

Prof. Ruchira Gupta, Founder President, AAWW and eminent Feminist scholar & activist Gloria Steinem then followed. Gloria spoke about a coming back to the grounds of Araria Mahila College as it was her second visit. She spoke about how she could feel and understand the movement growing with the enormous participation.

She expressed her solidarity with the struggle of all women and girls of AAWW. Ruchira Gupta spoke about the days of initiating the organization, the struggle and the hurdles, the journey of all these years and where we are standing now. The program ended with a vote of thanks and pledge to further our struggle against sex trafficking prostitution and work towards accessing rights and justice for the women and girls.

Sonagachi Walk *Sahana Dasgupta*

Sonagachi: On 27th of January, iconic feminist Gloria Steinem-together with 7 American-DDAwere led through Calcutta's Sonagachi, one of the largest Red Light Districts in Asia, with the members of Apne Aap Women Worldwide (AAWW). We reached Sonagachi at around 6:30 p.m. The women were very surprised to see the flurry of activities going on in the streets; the dimly lit alleyways, the drunken men, the loud music and the women standing outside the brothels trying to entice their customers.

We walked from in front of the famous dance bar, "Rahat Palace" towards the most famous building in Sonagachi, "Neel Kamal". Both these places are famous for housing the most beautiful women in the whole of Sonagachi.

We then moved to the poorer parts of Sonagachi, where most of the prostituted women were dressed in flashy clothing trying to attract the customers in front of the pimps and land-ladies who stared continuously. It got quite difficult to

navigate our way through the lanes because of the unimaginable number of people who were present on the streets at that hour.

We then went to the AAWW office of Sonagachi where the women were made to see the computer room where computer classes are held. I informed them that the women who have concerns come to this centre to talk to us as they consider it their safe place.

The women were quite happy to see that we were able to find a place to start the community centre within Sonagachi. The team members of AAWW and I helped answer the questions that the women had after their walk on the streets of Sonagachi. "So many of the foundations that exist in the US are working top down, but what is necessary is to humanize the process, to not adhere to the old way of organizing but follow the simplest way, which is bottom up," Gloria Steinem said.

Apne Aap Women Worldwide Petition to United Nations

Ruchika Nigam

Apne Aap Women Worldwide is deeply concerned about recommendations contained in two United Nations Reports released in 2012 (*HIV and the Law: Risks, Rights and Health* published by UNDP; *Sex Work and the Law in Asia and the Pacific*: an UNDP, UNFPA and UNAIDS backed report) and a clarification note issued by UN Women in 2013 entitled *Note on Sex Work, Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking* on these issues.

The two reports and note not only ignore the experiences and views of victims and survivors of prostitution but make recommendations in direct opposition to international human rights standards agreed upon in consultations with member states and ratified in protocols and conventions and therefore contradict international law. Apne Aap Women Worldwide started a online signature campaign in December 2013 addressing UN Women to state their position on the matter and on the dangerous precedent set by such backdoor entry recommendations that override agreed upon UN Protocols and conventions by international members states.

PETITION TO DR MLAMBO-NGCUKA: SAY NO TO UN WOMEN!

We the undersigned- victims and survivors of prostitution, women's groups representing marginalized communities of caste, class and ethnicity, and anti-trafficking organizations representing those trapped in bonded labor and other forms of servitude, would like UN Women to circulate a new note on sex trafficking and prostitution recognizing the realities of our lives.

1. We do not want to be called 'sex workers' but prostituted women and children, as we can never accept our exploitation as 'work'. We think that the attempts in UN documents to call us "sex workers" legitimizes violence against women, especially women of discriminated caste, poor men and women, and women and men from minority groups, who are the majority of the prostituted.

2. Body invasion is inherent to prostitu-

tion and cannot be legislated away. If we accept prostitution as work, the UN needs to hold consultations with all Member States and civil society representatives as it will be in contravention of UN standards defining what is accepted labour and livelihood. The nature of work should not be different for one class or caste of human beings just because they are socially and economically weaker. This would be in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

3. We want you to recognize that the majority of prostitution is an outcome of trafficking, as defined in the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, where the "abuse of a position of vulnerability" is recognized as a method of trafficking. It is our vulnerabilities that are taken advantage of to seduce, trick, coerce or force us into prostitution. These vulnerabilities are based on our caste (De-notified Tribes, Dalits, OBCs), class (families from where women and girls are mostly trafficked earn less than INR 25 per day), sex (majority of those who are prostituted are women and girls), and ethnicity (Hill Tribes). We are denied access to education, land, livelihood, capital and often to justice. Traffickers take advantage of this by offering us food, a bed, some cash, jobs, marriage, housing. Local and legal authorities that take pay-offs or free services from us often abet them.

4. We want you to recognize that our survival strategies are not a choice but an absence of choice.

5. By legitimizing prostitution as a form of 'work', delinking prostitution from trafficking, we feel that UN Women has let down marginalized girls and women, without even a proper consultation. It seems, that UN Women's policies are controlled by AIDS management agencies, who want to protect male clients/ Johns from disease, rather than women and girls from repeated rape by male clients.

6. We ask that UN Women advocate with other UN agencies, as the agency

charged with representing the voices of women, to recognize that commercial rape is the same as non-commercial rape and to remove all demands advocating for decriminalizing pimping and brothel-keeping. We want an end to impunity for all those who take advantage of our vulnerabilities to sexually exploit us. We want them to be held accountable and we want laws that penalize and punish them. By calling for the decriminalization of pimping, UN agencies are effectively helping the sex-industry and impeding our access to justice.

We want UN Women to stand by agreed upon international conventions and protocols. To retreat from these protocols would be illegal and unethical.

We therefore ask UN Women to circulate a revised note calling for more gender sensitive language in all UN documents, recognizing and promoting the rights of girls and women from lower caste, minorities and other marginalized groups. In particular:

1. We request that UN Women changes the word 'sex worker' in all documents to 'victims and survivors of prostitution' or 'prostituted women and children'.

2. We request that UN Women acknowledges that the majority of prostitution is an outcome of trafficking and calls upon all states and UN agencies to reduce the vulnerabilities of women and girls that make them easy prey for traffickers.

As citizens of countries including India, Nepal and Bangladesh we are surprised that UN Women could issue a note without consulting Member States or Civil Society representatives. Both the note and its subsequent clarification contradict international law, as detailed in the conventions and protocols mentioned above .

Ruchika Nigam works as Senior Advocacy Officer at the Head Office of Apne Aap at New Delhi.

Gloria Steinem and Ruchira Gupta discuss Feminism at Oxford Books

Cristina Winsor

New Delhi: The crowd was rapt at Oxford Book Store at Connaught Place, as famous American feminist Gloria Steinem, passionate as ever at the age of 79, discussed connections between her life's work. She talked about promoting equality for women, and the fight to end sexual trafficking in India and worldwide. She presented her new anthology of essays, *As If Women Matter: The Essential Gloria Steinem Reader*, with her friend and ally, Apne Aap Women Worldwide Founder and President Ruchira Gupta. Steinem stressed her belief that prostitution should not be considered a legitimate form of labor or work, given its inherent body invasion and the absence and stark lack of choice women have to face while selling their bodies. She pointed out that prostitution is a form of human rights violation. It is a manifestation of continued inequality between men and women around the world. She spoke of what she described as "the third way" for legal systems to confront the sex industry: it looks at criminalizing clients/pimps and johns and those earning money off the prostitutes. It stresses on not criminalizing the prostitutes themselves as they are victims.

Steinem spoke of the deep entrenchment of gender inequality worldwide, and her firm belief that this is what has allowed us to normalize prostitution and make it inevitable. She asserted that children learn by example in their own families about power dynamics relating to relations and roles based on gender, race and class. It is these such learned structures in the microcosm—are what lead people to act in accordance with these norms in larger systems of society. "If we can introduce democracy in our own families, then it would be easier to see democracy outside," she said.

Extracts from *As If Women Matter: The Essential Gloria Steinem Reader* —

In most cases, gender inequality is what we experience first as children in our families, so we feel that those roles are natural, even good, and the domination of one gender by another seems normal. Even if we find such sex inequalities deplorable, we often think they are inevitable. After all, if we accept inequality within our own home and among the people we love, we'll accept it anywhere.



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Organizing communities to end sex trafficking—every woman free, every child in school