



RED LIGHT DESPATCH

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DELHI, KOLKATA, AND FORBESGANJ (BIHAR)

My Dreams “To be an artist” Dolly, 16 years

Kolkata: My name is Dolly Mahato. I have described the beauty of nature in my drawing, by showing house, trees, river, boat, fishes, stones and mountains. I have drawn the best things from nature.

Through this picture, I have tried to convey the message to the world regarding the importance of nature. For instance, trees are cut down ruthlessly without thinking that they are our life support. We breathe fresh air and the greenery contributes for our beautiful world.

Another reason for drawing this picture is that I am very fond of nature and its colourfulness that beautifies our world. That's why I have drawn a small village in my picture.

I am delighted because through this picture I have won a beautiful Gold Medal. I am happier today than I was yesterday, even when I chose to draw this picture.

I want to be an artist in future and I pray people value the contribution of nature work towards sustaining its beauty for eternity.

Dolly Mahato is one of the beneficiaries of Apne Aap Women Worldwide.

Open Letter to Ruchira Gupta, President of Apne Aap —Fatima Khatoun

Bihar:

My dear Ruchira di,

I, Fatima Khatoun want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. When I learnt that I will be playing for Kaun Banega Crorepati, I could not believe it. And when I was on the hot seat of KBC, it was a dream-come-true moment for me. I was also remembering my childhood days.

When I got married at the age of 9, I barely understood what marriage really means and by the time I could start dreaming about my marriage, all my dreams were already killed. I used to helplessly watch how girls were forced into prostitution in my own family and in the neighborhood. When I started identifying my pain with theirs, I decided to fight back. I

decided to fight for myself and on their behalf. From that day onward, Fatima's struggle against exploitation of girls and women begun. Every time, I used to get beaten up, my conviction and determination was getting stronger. Eventually, I have been able to free three girls from sex trade within my own family. In fact, I have helped two girls get a plot of land each from my mother-in-law as compensation.

But I was still waiting for someone who will support me in my struggle and help me get out of my own surrounding. One day, I learnt that a school is going to start within my own village. But alas! I was not allowed to get out of my house.

(Continued on page 6)

“Appeal for the upgradation of KGBV in Bihar High Court”

—Tinku Khanna

Tinku Khanna is the Head, Networking and Advocacy of Apne Aap Women Worldwide

Bihar: In response to the PIL filed by Apne Aap Women Worldwide, the High Court of Patna has been continuously passing orders which have strengthened the anti-trafficking initiatives in Bihar with far-reaching consequences.

The PIL has been filed in January, 2013. Finding none of their efforts bearing any fruit, the organization finally approached the Patna High Court in a Public Interest Litigation, detailing its travails and seeking the implementation of the Constitutional mandate of Article 23, and the statutory provisions of the Immoral Traf-

fic Prevention Act, 1986. It further sought the following directions to the State Government and local authorities:

- Appointment of Special police officers as required by ITPA for proper implementation of the law, and further directions that any raids conducted in red light areas must be accompanied by women social workers;
- Maintenance of proper Shelter homes in Bihar, as required by the law, and duly certified by the Social Welfare Board;

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Op/Ed : An eye-opener called Naina
- Ruchira Gupta's column in The Telegraph

A naked light bulb swings above an older man as he heaves over a young girl's body. A torn curtain flutters in the breeze. The first man leaves and one more walks to the bed. A woman in a green sari screams 'Naina, Naina' as she rushes towards a house in a dirty alley called Coolie Para in Katihar. The little girl looks out from behind a barred window, as a man smashes the woman's head into a water tank.

I watch from my seat in an auditorium in New York as the brothel manager drags the little girl away from the window. I am at the premiere of a movie called *Meena*, directed by former "Charlie's Angel", Lucy Liu. The girl at the window is Naina and the woman in the green sari is her mother, Meena, seven years ago.

Another scene flashes on the screen. A woman gets off a police van, marches into the brothel to Naina and says she is Ruchira, come to take her away.

The surreal experience of watching myself on a screen recedes, as my mind wanders to Lalten Bazar, a make-shift red-light area lit by oil lamps, in the middle of a dirty flood zone, with huts made of bamboo sheets and beds divided by torn saris. Eight years ago, chatting on a string-bed outside her hut, Meena had told me how the same man who had pimped her to hundreds of men when she was eight, was now pimping her daughter, Naina. We resolved to get Naina out.

I did not tell Meena that I knew as little about police complaints and judicial processes as her. Or that my grand plan was to rent a car, show up at the police station and with the help of the English language and an outdated press card, browbeat the reluctant superintendent of police into busting the brothel.

We did get Naina out, but the officer disappeared after taking us to the police station. Hungry and hot, we waited in the twilight for a word from him. A hostile mob from the Coolie Para stood outside. We passed time, swatting mosquitoes and texting friends in high places. A journalist friend living nearby showed up with a few street theatre activists.

Next day the sessions judge refused to give Naina's custody to Meena, saying she was a woman of "bad" character. However, he wanted to return Naina to the pimp because she had referred to him as 'Papa'. I ran out and found a lawyer typing under a tree and retained him on the spot.

Our lawyer did not know the law! But then neither did the judge. I decided to argue for custody myself. I made up sections of the law on the spot. Sections that we got into a real law last year. I quoted from the UN Protocol and the Swedish law and invented clauses of

the IPC. At one point, I asked the judge if he had any proof, except his mother's validation that he was her son. Our fate hung in balance as a hushed court and an angry judge stared at me.

At night I called an editor in Patna, an MP in Delhi, and a nationally known constitutional lawyer. They got a quote from the advocate-general saying that the law should be interpreted in the child's best interest. As a face-saver Naina's custody was given to the state of Bihar — neither to the pimp nor to the mother.

There was no children's home in Katihar. The police would take her to Patna. We were loath to let Naina out of our sight. With no money and no ticket, we hopped onto the train with the police.

Naina was angry with her mother for first abandoning her, with us for then rescuing her and with the government for putting her into a children's jail. She was frustrated by the alphabets she had to learn and the numbers she had to count. She bit another girl in the shelter, threatened to commit suicide, refused to meet her mother. Inmates in the shelter beat her.

I began to wonder what was the point? Maybe it was better to let her waste away in the brothel. The world had nothing to offer her. The mother stopped talking to me, the daughter stopped talking to me. My ego made me stubborn, to prove that prostitutes could rescue their daughters, that prostituted daughters could start new lives and that all injustices could be turned around. I coaxed, cajoled, yelled, shouted, but hung in there with tuitions, medical treatment and counselling for mother and daughter. A parallel thought process on the larger futility of it all was futile.

I was right.

In just seven years, Meena has moved out of the red-light area and now owns a thatched hut with a bamboo fence. Two school-bicycles of her younger daughters lean against a wall. Naina can read and write in English, Hindi and Bengali, blogs occasionally, has found her own husband and has a one-year-old son. The pimp and the brothel manager are in jail.

When the lady from UNICEF in the after-movie panel said I was an unsung hero, I did not feel unsung, but alone. No one could rescue me from the sense of alienation I felt from a world that did this to many Meenas and Nainas all the time.

Later at the reception, an upmarket Jewish dentist offered to do my dental work as a gesture of solidarity. Getting my teeth fixed in his fancy designer office on Madison Avenue, I realised that this was only one of Meena and Naina's gifts to me.

Diary of a Social Worker

Poonam Devi/Dictated to Praveen Kumar

.Bihar: I am Poonam Devi and I am 31-year-old. I live in Kuber Tola, Forbesganj (Bihar). I joined the Kiran SEG in 2009, run by Apne Aap Women World Wide in our neighborhood. I have four children—two daughters and two sons.

My husband is a daily wage earner and the monthly income of my family barely comes around Rs 4000. Generally, we prefer to purchase our monthly groceries and other necessary items only once in a month, as we reside far away from the city.

Since 2009, I am associated with Kiran SEG and deposited Rs 60/month as a member. We are 12 members in our group and have saved Rs 720 per month, which is deposited in the Central Bank of Indian, our group's bank account.

The society I belong to is a male-dominated one. Usually, men are considered as the decision maker at home and in the social order. Our elders believe that women's job is to look after home and their children. Before joining the group, my knowledge about our rights and entitlements were negligible.

However, after becoming a member of Apne Aap family, I learned about our rights and legal policies related to women. We were empowered by trainings provided to us by Apne Aap members. Initially, we used to silently endure the atrocities meted out against us, but with the support of Apne Aap, we started to protest the violence against women and girls in our locality and society.

Individually, when we tried to raise voice against the criminals in our locality, we were threatened, but after joining Apne Aap's SEG, we used to give them befitting response, as we are more socially and legally empowered now.

It is an incident of June 2014 related to one of our group member Gulabi Devi who wanted to get her 14-year-old daughter married off to an old man, hailing from UP. When we heard the news, we tried to make her understand the negative results of child marriage, as it is an offence. Despite our request, she tried to proceed with the marriage of her underage daughter.

Meanwhile, an agent, who took money from the girl side to search a bridegroom for her, tried to intimidate us and threatened to lodge an FIR against us. But we replied sternly that “we all know the legal process and don't threaten us about FIR. We know the difference between legal and illegal. If you don't stop this marriage, we will go to the police station and lodge complaint against you.” Thereupon, we requested to stop the marriage.

For some days, the discussion continued but later the would-be bridegroom fled back to UP and we succeeded in our mission to stop the child marriage and thus, saved a life of a young girl.

At present, I am happy with my family members and others in our society. I express my gratitude to Apne Aap for supporting and encouraging us to make our voices heard in the society in context to stop atrocities against girls and women.

Individually, when we tried to raise our voice against the criminals in our locality, we were threatened, but after joining Apne Aap's SEG, we used to give them befitting response, as we are more socially and legally empowered now.

Did You Know?

In India:

- There are 2.3 million women and girls in prostitution
- A quarter of 2.3 million are under the age of 18
- There are 1,000 red-light areas

Globally:

- About 58 % of all cases of trafficking detected globally are purpose of sexual exploitation
- About 75 % of all trafficking victims detected globally are women and girls
- About 20.9 million adults and children are bought and sold for commercial exploitation
- About 1 in 10 men in the world have bought commercial sex

Legal Aid and Awareness camp

—*Sita Devi (beneficiary)/ dictated to Aruna Singh*

Kolkata: I am Sita Devi from Munshiganj which is a Red light area. I am 56-years-old.

I had been trafficked when I was 16-year-old and was pushed into prostitution since then. I work as a domestic help nowadays. I have been coming to AAWW, since it was established in Munshiganj and gradually became a member of a SEG. I started to participate in different activities, meeting and events of AAWW and learned many things and also grew confidence.

Few days ago, there was a legal camp in Munshiganj where Taj (Mohammad) Sir came and enlightened us on many different laws of our country. There were also some law students who had come. There were discussions on laws against trafficking; domestic violence etc. There were more than 50 women and girls who came to that legal camp.

Many of these women discussed issues that happen in our day to day lives. We were told how prostitution and trafficking were illegal under the Indian Constitution and how to stand up against such heinous crimes against humanity, how to form larger groups to protest so that our voice is heard, how we could approach police to lodge a complaint or take the help of the area councilor. **We were asked to raise our voices against domestic violence as it is a punishable offense and to**

lodge a complaint against the individual who physically and mentally assaults us.

We were also informed that child marriage is illegal in our country.

Before the age of 18 no girl can be forced into marriage. If anyone is doing so; he or she and her relatives who are involved will be punished and sent to jail (correctional home). It was created by law keeping in mind the ill effects of child marriage; such as early marriage results in early pregnancy and it leads to pre-mature death of the child and health hazards to the mother. This all occurs due to illiteracy in women.

There was an intense discussion in that camp and we were enlightened of many things, which we were unaware of before.

Get yourself involved!

Be a part of the campaign!

Click a selfie and share it with us on the Facebook Page 'Cool Men Don't Buy Sex' <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Cool-Men-Dont-Buy-Sex/624526271001934> with #CoolMenDontBuySex #Selfie #ApneAap.

The Cool Men Don't Buy Sex Campaign is a call to end demand for sex trafficking which highlights the role that men play in fostering the sex industry.



Apne Aap's "Cool Men Don't Buy Sex" campaign was born to draw attention to the demand side of sex trafficking - the traffickers, pimps, and purchasers of sex. Apne Aap advocates for the criminalization of these individuals – they are responsible for maintaining sexual slavery and continue to exploit women and girls every day in India.

Topsia and Munshiganj girls and women opened bank accounts under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)

— Mumtaz Begum (beneficiary)/dictated to Fazul

Kolkata: My name is Mumtaz Begum. Presently I live beside the railway tracks of the Park Circus Railway station with my husband, son and with other evicted families. My two daughters were shifted to my relative's house for their safety after eviction.

After forceful eviction most of us lost our valuable documents like voter card, Aadhar Card, Ration Card, Bank Pass Book, Pan Card, Birth and Death certificates of our relatives and children. We initially tried to get all these documents, re-issued as these documents were important instruments to our housing rights. So, we submitted deputations and letters to different government and political bodies for our proper rehabilitation and compensation.

During my outreach in the Topsia field, I received information about different private and non authorized organization and their agents who collected money from our area by promising unrealistically huge returns after maturity of that amount and being illiterate no one could verify their credibility. Soon I came to know that many of our community men and women lost all their investments in these unauthorized or fraud organization / company as the organization /company closed their ventures and fled.

During that time, Fazul dada from Apne Aap informed us about "**Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana**". He also informed that to open this account no money is required as it is zero balance account. Not only that under this scheme, beneficiaries who open an account on or before 26th of January, 2015 are entitled to accidental insurance cover up to Rs 1 lakh and an additional Rs.30, 000/- as life insurance cover. Beneficiary can also avail RuPay Debit Card under this scheme. This scheme is very helpful because one does not require any documents except one to open an account under this scheme.

After receiving that information from Fazul da, I along with some of our community women went to a nationalized local bank and collected the application form issued to open our bank account under this scheme. Then we filled those forms with the help of Apne Aap and submitted the same along with necessary documents, photographs and signature. The bank officials issued one counter part of our form and handed it over to us with an official seal and signature and told that after one week we could get our pass book by producing those form counterparts. After one week we collected our pass book from the bank.

On that day, I stood very proud as it was my first bank account as well as the first for my family. I can now safely deposit and withdraw money and there is no chance to lose my hard earned money or to get robbed.

I came to know that women of Munshiganj red light area too opened their account under this scheme with the help of Apne Aap. This is the recognition of the fight for our rights under law and we achieved this with the help and guidance from Apne Aap.

After forceful eviction most of us lost our valuable documents like voter card, Aadhar Card, Ration Card, Bank Pass Book, Pan Card, Birth and Death certificates of our relatives and children.

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www.twitter.com/apneaap**

Write to us for any queries or comments at contact@apneaap.org



My First Day at Apne Aap:

—Aarti

Delhi: My name is Aarti and I belong to Sapera community. I have three sisters and three brothers. My father is no more. My brother Mohan plays drum for a living, and also looks after us. I stay with my mother. I was married off at the age of 16 years. My in-laws used to torture me. My husband never supported me. I was physically and mentally tortured by them. I have one daughter and they did not accept the birth of my daughter either.

I gave up after being so humiliated; I came back to my mother's house. My husband and I got divorced after that. Later, I was married off again, unfortunately it was no different from my first marriage and I received the same kind of treatment.

Four years ago, Apne Aap's mobilisers approached me in one community meeting. I was amazed by their sheer determination—they visited our house everyday. So, finally I decided to go to the centre. I attended a Gender Training workshop, since then, I've come to the centre regularly.

On my first day at Apne Aap, I was mentally and emotionally broken. I hated everyone around. I had lost all the strength in me. But when I met other girls and

women at the centre, I realized I am not alone in this.

Every woman had some traumatic pasts which made me relate to them and empathise. I saw them come to the centre and learn new skills, acquire new knowledge which gave me the strength to do the same.

Now, I am part of income Generational program of Apne Aap where I learn new skills which will help me to become independent.

I want my daughter to become independent and successful too. I want to continue my study further, with the help of Apne Aap. I am going to sit for 10th exam from Open Learning.

On my first day at Apne Aap, I was mentally and emotionally broken. I hated everyone around. I had lost all the strength in me. But when I met other girls and women at the centre, I realized I am not alone in this.

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However, Apne Aap was there to make my dreams come true. Eventually, I have become a part of their struggle. No girl wants to get sold. After joining Apne Aap, my mission was to give them back their dreams. You (Ruchira didi) have always been there in my struggle to make my own and others dream a possibility.

Do you remember Ruchira didi, you have always tried to strengthen my self-confidence? You have also ended the fear of discrimination within me. Thank you Ruchira di for making me feel equal. The society who once made us outcasts, has now come out to support me. The law is on my side. Even the men, who used to come to buy the girls in red-light area a couple of days back, now have vowed to stop buying sex.

Do you know didi that the local administration, police have promised to extend their support in our struggle? The day, when the Superintendent of Police of our district has sent a car for me and Kalam sir to facilitate us, I was on top of the world. I was remembering the unforgettable night, when another SP of our district had dragged my twelve-year-old daughter off the bed and forced her to stay inside a locked room with other children in the name of rescue while he has sent the victim girls back to their traffickers! That day, you showed me courage to fight against that corrupt police officer. You took me to important meetings, various human rights

forums where I have pleaded for justice for my girl and other innocent girls like her.

I also remember how you had argued with the 'Mukhiya' (head man) of our community when in that afternoon meeting with our group, you learnt that I have been ostracized by the caste-council of our village for daring to write in the 'Lal Batti Dastabej'? The same men from our community who once used to tease me by saying that I attend more meetings than Nitish Kumar, our Chief Minister has today proclaimed that I am the 'pride' of the community. The members of our community have decided that within next three months, we would turn this red light area into a 'green light area' and would hang boards on which we would write "The Girls are Not for Sale Here". I feel so proud today when all the girls say that they want to become like me.

And all of these have been possible because of your constant support. You have made me courageous by standing beside me in my every fight. You have rejoiced over each of my victory. I have never been loved as a child. But today I am getting love and honor from everywhere. You have helped me reach that destination. Thank you very much, Ruchira didi.

Sincerely,
Fatima.

The World Outside

— *Hoor Bai (Beneficiary)/ translated by Shweta Khattar*

Delhi: My name is Hoor Bai and I am a resident of Perna Basti. My husband passed away a few years back, after which all responsibilities of the family fell on my shoulders. I have four daughters and one son. He is my brother-in-law's son. I have adopted him.

I was unable to manage my family and so had no option but to get into prostitution which has been running in our family for generations. I wanted my daughters to be successful, but I could not think of a way to help them. The whole world seemed dark and unpleasant.

Soon, we had mobilisers from Apne Aap visiting our community every day. They told us about the objectives of the organisation. I wanted my daughters to be exposed to the world outside, so I started sending my daughters to the centre daily.

Every time I watched a successful woman speak on TV, I wished and hoped the same for my daughters. But with the pressure of caste and community I let this thought fade away and accepted the reality.

Three years back, Apne Aap held a Gender Training which I attended. That is when I understood the world outside. I got to know the rights and opportunities of women in our society. That day I decided to educate my daughters and to help them stand on their feet.

My daughters got the opportunity to go on various

exposure trips with the support and help of Apne Aap. They even got a chance to meet a superstar apart from foreigners who told them stories of their country.

Now, my daughters are among the fortunate ones who got a chance to be part of a huge dance academy. It was only possible because of Apne Aap.

It's true the world outside is way beautiful than the darkness we were captured in.

I wanted my daughters to be exposed to the world outside so I started sending my daughters to the centre daily. Every time I watched a successful woman speak on TV, I wished and hoped the same for my daughters.

Continued from page 1

- Implementation of the directions of the Supreme Court in the pending PIL entitled Budhadev Karmaskar vs. State.

In this pending case, the Supreme Court directed- **“the Central Government and the State Governments to ensure that the admission of the children of sex workers in appropriate classes in the Government schools and Government sponsored schools and the schools run by the Municipal and District level authorities is not hampered in any way, because of their impaired social status.”**

Ever since the PIL has been filed, the Government of Bihar has been forced to spring into action for appointing Special Police Officers to deal with crime of trafficking. Not only that, Special Courts has been set up in each district to expedite the trials related to trafficking. The Bihar State Legal Services authority has promised to provide all sorts of legal counseling and support to the victims of trafficking.

Justice V. N. Sinha has suggested the Directorate of Social Welfare and the Petitioner Organization to draft

a submission for victim protection and rehabilitation jointly. He has asked each Child Welfare Committee to identify at-risk children living in their jurisdiction and draft individual Child Protection Plan for each one.

If carried out with meticulous planning, this will alter the situation of child trafficking in Bihar.

The authorities concerned have already filed Affidavits where the CS's Affidavit has agreed to the Petitioner's argument that Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya can be used as a major preventive as well as rehabilitative institution for at-risk girls and survivors of sex-trafficking.

The Police have committed to strengthen the District Anti-Human Trafficking Units and fourteen most vulnerable districts will have a Police Station which will deal solely with the crime of trafficking. However, the Final Orders are yet to be passed.

Ringling the true spirit of Gandhian principle of Antodaya, Justice V.N. Sinha during one of his deliberations has observed that any government may come up with very lofty schemes, however, the point is to reach its benefit to the last person, the 'last girl' in Apne Aap's parlance.

Poems

I
ap-

Thank you, Lord

I thank you, my lord
I thank you everyday
I thank you for everything
For showing me the right way
Thank you for love and care
I get everyday
Thank you for your blessings
Which you shower everyday
Thank you for my family
For a safe house to stay
Thank you for all the friends
I get to play.

Name: Varsha

Age: 11 years

Community: Perna

Help the needy

Come friends, let's do some work
We should help everyone
Never should we lie
And hurt anyone
Come friends, let's do some work
Tell each other good things,
Never wish bad for anyone
Help the needy
Come friends, let's do some work
Give water to thirsty
Give food to feed the hungry
Bring happiness to poor
Come friends, let's do some work.

Name: Aarti

Age: Nine years

Community: Perna

precipitate the presence of Apne Aap in our community and to build courage and strength in us.



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