



# RED LIGHT DESPATCH

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RELEASING SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM MUMBAI, DELHI,  
KOLKATA, AND FORBESGUNJ (BIHAR)

## THEY FORCIBLY HAVE SEX WITH THE GIRLS

By Rambati Bediya

**Prem Nagar, Alwar:** We used to live in Kakra village which is approximately 10 kms away. I was a singer and used to perform. It is the profession of our caste. But in the village we could not live in peace. The villagers used to object to my performing. But I was the only bread winner for the family and this is what we knew as our profession for generations. Even my aunt used to perform. I used to go to places in connection of my performances. I came here liked this place as it is not located near any bustee.

The local Goondas and the ruffians often come here at night, they come to loot us, they beat us, beat the girls. They forcibly have sex with the girls. This is a common incident.

“They are Gujjars. They live in the nearest village. They are so terrible.” I have heard from my father that we are Bediya and some of our forefathers used to beg, some used to perform khel tamasha and some women used to sing and dance...(after a pause) and prostitute themselves...dhanda bhi karte the...why should I lie to you

Most of the Bediyas are in prostitution...but you know, these days you can find women prostituted from all castes, but only us, the bediyas are infamous for doing this.

## IF THEY DON'T ALLOW US EVEN TO VOTE, DO YOU THINK THAT THEY WILL GIVE US JOB?

By Rajinder Bediya

Hazaron Ka Nagla, Sewar: I heard that there are lots of schemes for poor, but those are not for us. There are BPL, Job card, /ration card, Indira Awaas. We all know about job cards, but we didn't go to collect them? I've heard that five or six among us have got job cards assigned to their names...but we didn't go to collect them, because we know that we will not get any job.

Why should we go? I know that we will not get a single day's work. Why did they drop us from the voter's list which is so important...if they don't allow us even to vote, do you think that they will give us job?

When we asked the mukhiya why our names are not included in the voter's list, he told that because we don't live in the village any longer, we are not eligible. But then we could not live in the village as the villagers told us that we have to leave the village. So we came this far away from our village.

The Mukhiya and Sarpanch don't want us to access them. We are very lowly people, hum log bahut chhota jaat hai...hum bediya hai.

We know about BPL cards. We don't have them. We only have family ration cards which we use for collecting kerosene oil. All the families do not have Ration cards, and then we were told that only four families got it though everyone applied.

Can you help me to get my voter's card? I heard it is important to have your voter's card.

We go to Pandit ji (indicating to Dwarka Prasad Sharma) whenever we are in trouble. To us, he is the God

, a couple of times we had to call them when the ruffians were torturing the girls. We then decided to keep quiet. You know, it's your duty also how you build your relationship with people. You know that you are living on the road. So, it is you who will have to maintain the peace. Can you go and fight with people? So, we have to behave properly and keep peace here. Else we will have to leave the place.

You are seeing these women, no? They are all my nieces. Brother's daughter and sister's daughter. They all have children...the children live in Kakra. We want our children to study We try to send our children to school. The mothers earn in the brothel and she sends money in the village so that her child can study...both boys and girls...but if someone is very poor, then she has to put her daughter in to this...

You are seeing these women, no? They are all my nieces. Brother's daughter and sister's daughter. They all have children...the children live in Kakra. We want our children to study.

we have terrible water crisis here. There is a public water tap on the highway right after the warehouse, but it remains dry most of the time. We have to buy water. There is a Bhistiwalla (water-bearer) who comes every day. We have to buy most of the water from him. For a medium size pot he takes 5 rs. We have to buy 100 rs of water every day.

When the woman comes to know about the pregnancy, she stops prostitution till the child is at least 15 days old. The men drink alcohol. The women also drink if the customer wants.

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### WE FIGHT WITH CUSTOMERS ALL THE TIME

*By Suman Bediya*

**Kalsara Bagh, Rajasthan:** I am 17 years old. I have never been to school. Sometimes I go to Bombay. I stay in Paras and Grant road in Bombay. We have to go to a doctor because they don't come to us. Police come every day. They arrest customers and then leave. In Bombay I earn about 2000 a day. It's much better than standing in line here every day.

My father has some land in his name. He's an alcoholic and always immersed in booze. We deliver children in hospitals. Of course we fight with customers all the time. Sometimes they are like devils and absolutely drunk. People don't look at us in a good way. We never go to the main part of the village.

## THE HIGHWAY WAS NOT THERE THEN

*By Gauri Bediya*

**Panchhi Ka Nagla, Bharatpur:** I was born here...the highway wasn't there at the time. We have been thrown out of our houses and our houses were burnt down, because the Government wanted to build the highway on our land.

We have been evicted when this part of the highway was being built. Our houses have been burnt down, we did not get any compensation...nobody spoke for us...For months we were on roads. The Government is most violent on us. They don't like us. They don't want that we live.

Then come the police...they have only one job, to arrest the women or their clients. They harass the clients for money only. They arrest them. Take money from them and leave them. They also round up the women and every time we have to pay Rs. 200-300 and then there is harassment.

We are Scheduled Castes. Our forefathers used to beg, but my Bua was in prostitution. Among us there is a tradition. A girl is being asked if she wants to join prostitution or get married. I opted for prostitution. The married women in the community have to suffer even more. They have to bear lots of children. Each of my brother's wives have borne seven eight children. Then they have to cook, clean run all sorts of errands...the workload is so heavy. Bediyas believe that the bigger is the size of the family, the better. I support a family of fifty members. The drunken men beat girls. You have to be very careful if you are living on roads.

I was 14 years old when I entered prostitution. All the girls in our community enter prostitution at a very early age. If someone has told you something else, she might have said it on purpose. She was lying. All the girls in Bediya community enter prostitution at the age of fourteen or fifteen or even less. I entered prostitution on my own will. I studied up to class V. I used to like going to school. I liked to study.

You see I was the eldest daughter and my brothers were young. So being the oldest among them all, I always knew I will have to do it. Of course I was upset initially, but then what could I do? Had my brothers been earning, I probably would not have to do it.

(She paused for some time and then said in a very low voice) Hum logon ko kuchh aur dikhta nahin hai...even the men don't earn...how would they earn? They don't have any skills. They can't go to schools...it is always like that...you know that you have to do it because that is your profession...your aunts have done it...my aunts used to do mujras at Bharatpur King's palace...otherwise the family would starve...So even if the girl is heartbroken, she enters on her own. Who can see her family starving?

These days lots of girls from here go to Delhi, Mumbai...I can tell you that among 110-120 girls only 50 are left here. The rest have gone to Mumbai dance bar...

We are facing steep competition. Lots of girls are being introduced. Earlier we used to go to hotels in Bharatpur. Now, even the girls from college are coming to the hotels for pocket money. Earlier we used

to earn Rs 2,000-3,000 a day. Now it has gone down to Rs 400-500 a day. After paying for food, tuition fees of the children and police payoffs how much money can you really save?

I had entered prostitution because I was the eldest daughter in the family. My daughter entered when she was fifteen. She has a one and ½ year old son now. I have another daughter and one son. I have put both of them in to school. I desperately want my younger daughter to study. I don't want her to see here standing with us.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The social category generally known as the Denotified and Nomadic tribes of India covers a population approximately of 60 million. Some of them are included in the list of Scheduled castes, some others in the Scheduled Tribes, and quite a few in Other Backward Classes. But there are many of these tribes, which find place in none of the above. What is common to all these DNTs is the fate of being branded as 'born' criminals. The Denotified and Nomadic tribes make up about 60 million of India's population. There are 313 Nomadic Tribes and 198 Denotified Tribes.

India's Draft National Policy in Tribals does not include Denotified or Nomadic Tribes. The term 'Criminal Tribes' originates from the British colonial times. The British initiated the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871, referring to around 150 tribes for their so-called "criminal tendencies, "giving the police wide powers to arrest them, control, and monitor their movements. The law in effect was that anyone born into one of the tribes, under this act, was seen as a criminal. In 1952, the Indian Government withdrew the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 throughout India and enacted Habitual

Offender's Act. Both the Criminal Tribes Act and the Habitual Offender's Act negate the universally proclaimed principle that "all human beings are born free and equal". The listing of these Denotified and Nomadic under the Habitual Offender's Act also negates the principle of the criminal justice system – innocent until proven guilty.

There is no political will to eradicate such ongoing racism and violations of the tribal people and therefore any initiatives to do so have no success.

The residual effects of 1871 Criminal Tribes Act are manifested in the wide range of atrocities perpetrated on members of these so-called "criminal" tribes by those whose prejudice has not subsided. Deep-seated discrimination has led to various types of horrific treatment of many of these tribes in different parts of the country. Many tribes booked under this Act are without the knowledge or awareness that the destruction of their lives and the situation they are in is due to the State and the nontribal people.

- Rajasthan figures in the top six States in terms of complaints received at the NHRC as per the Annual Report of 2002-03
- According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) figures for 1998 issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Rajasthan ranked fourth in the ratings of recorded crimes against women Rajasthan has been on the apex of the list of States topping the chart of atrocities on dalits by the upper castes.
- In Rajasthan, reported that on an average a woman is raped every sixty hours and that one is murdered every nine days.
- In 2005, 0.27% IPC crimes and 0.06% Special & Local Laws crimes were reported on an average. In one minute in the State.97.54 percent IPC cases were investigated and 82.21 percent of them were charge sheeted.

## THE DRUNK MEN COME IN GROUPS

*By Sushila Bediya*

**Hazaron Ka Nagla, Sewar:** We came from Bakdhari, around fifteen minutes walk from here. It was our village, but the people there used to torture us so much... rob our cattles, snatch anything we had... so we came here. After my father lost his legs, he tried for some time to sell toys, but the income was so less, and we lost all our land. My brothers live in Alwar with my mother. They work in an oil mill there.

I used to live with my grandmother in Alwar. I studied up to class IX. But then I had to drop out and come here. I loved to study. We were so poor, we had to come here. Anyway, it is our profession. We are Bediyas we are always open to all kinds of violence, anyone can come and harm us...we always live under fear...hum hamesha dar se jeete hai...koi bhi aa sakta hai, kuch bhi kar sakta hai, humko bachanewala

to koi nahin.... The police come and extort us...the drunk men come in groups.

The villagers used to torture us all the time. You can't do this here...they meant prostitution...they used to put sanction against us...put fines against us...we were not allowed to fetch water from the local water sources...any child from our community was not allowed to go to school, mix with anyone in the village. The villagers used to hate us. We don't want to live in a village where we are so much hated. We are better here, all by ourselves.

We are SC, but we don't get any benefit. People hate us. I have heard that my forefathers were beggars...some of them used to perform acrobatics...khel tamasha...tamashebin the...but most of us are into prostitution...my Bua was in

prostitution, even her Bua was in it... It is intergenerational; purkhon ka dhanda...even my bua was into it. But I tried to save my daughter...but we could not...

We live on the mercy of the people...have you seen how do we live? Anyone can walk in any time...We don't get any water...We don't have sanitation facilities, if we go to defecate or urinate in the adjacent fields...they chase us...we have to go far in the fields and have to keep changing the locations so that we don't get beaten up. If our children go to school, other children tease them so much that they return home crying every day...this has always happened to us...our children can't go to school, how can they get a job and how can we change

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## I HAVE ALSO ESCAPED FROM BULLETS MANY TIMES

*By Jameela Nat*

**Khasmati, Raj Ghar Highway, Alwar:** I have 12 children. I was born in this village and my ancestors come from Machadi village. I am from the Nat community. My gotra is Chardi. I don't know what it is. The government has not

classified my community in any category. First we used to sing, dance, beg, and wander from village to village. But now we are in prostitution and singing in clubs. From my community nobody has fought the British. I do remember

famine. There are no women's organizations here. Beating and violence of course takes place all the time. If there is fighting or violence then the police try to arrest the culprits. Hindus and Muslims fought each other in 1943. My father was beaten. When the police raid the brothels, they only arrest the girls. Most of the time the women have to run around to get justice against violence.

I had a very good experience with Eicher Company. Once I found a purse which had the address of Eicher Company and 7,000 rupees. I thought this was somebody's entire monthly salary. I felt very bad. I went to Alwar with the purse and returned the purse. A man tapped me on the back and said "Can I help you in any way?" I said, "I want a job." They treat me with great affection there. Now I have saved some money. I tried to start a small business of my own but I was unsuccessful.

I am not in school. I would love to study but the school was very far away. That is why I could not study. No child in our community has any scholarships. All the children go to school now. There are about 100-150 children in this community but the girls are sent to school just until class five.

We already know about primary medicine. All families in the Nat community know this. Once I had typhoid and that is when I took medicines from a doctor. Most women give birth in hospitals. At that time they're given a TT

injection. But if there is any complication in the delivery then the women are taken from Malkhera to Alwar. If they need an operation they get it done there.

Most people drink alcohol. We are all in the habit of drinking and that is why we drink. Kalsera is about 1 km away from our area. We go there sometimes to buy things. But when we go there we are looked in a very funny way.

I have no land and no deeds for any land. I married someone from this community by my own wish. I do small contract work but I'm always short of money. I always have to put my life at stake because I have also escaped from bullets many times. I would love to work in some company. There is a bank in Kalsera Gaon in which people save their money. But my household expenditure never works properly and I'm never able to save money. Every month I need at least one sack full of flour and one thousand rupees worth sack of grain. I had taken a loan to look after cattle. I wanted to keep goat and sheep. I repaid it. Most of my money is spent on food and clothes.

Nobody in my family has a BPL card. I have never heard of Narega. The Anganwari center is in the main village of Kulsara. Our children don't go there but I've heard that they serve porridge. No woman from my community has any work. I want in the future that after my children finish studying that they get a job and a life of izzat. We want the government to help us.

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**FACT IN FOCUS****LESS THAN 25PER CENT OF THE GRAIN MEANT FOR THE POOR ACTUALLY GETS TO THEM**

- Since 2004 thousands of tribal dwellers on forestlands in southern Rajasthan are facing the threat of eviction, following notices by the State government's forest department. In fact the forest officials even allegedly destroyed the houses and ravaged tribals' belongings without due process of law
- According to a study carried out in Baran Udaipur and Dungarpur district, there have been a series of malnutrition deaths
- In 2004 a Supreme Court commissioner's team concluded that the tribals were living in a situation of hunger and starvation. As per the report of the team a large proportion of the Sahariya population was at a high risk of mortality because of chronic malnutrition and hunger. Using a Body Mass Index, the survey conducted by the team in Sahariya villages found 100% boys and 93% girls at a high risk of mortality.
- As per the Rajasthan State Human Rights Commission, the State is a topper in committing dalits' human rights violations. The commission strongly believes that in spite of the presence of strong laws against untouchability and human rights violations, the condition of Dalits is the worst in Rajasthan
- The dalits are also devoid of the social security measures being provided by the State. Less than 25per cent of the grain meant for the poor actually gets to them
- Dowry crimes and dowry deaths continue unchecked. Traditional biases against women flourish which is evident in the accusations of witchcraft and subsequent attacks on single and widowed women who own land or other resources.
- Female foeticide claimed innumerable lives of unborn females. Domestic violence has figured prominently and so has caste violence.
- Trafficking of women for prostitution has emerged as one of the major areas requiring urgent attention.17% women in Delhi brothels belong to Rajasthan and 27 out of 32 districts in the State are identified as intensive brothel based and unorganized commercial sexual activity hubs. These also involve a number of denotified criminal tribes who did not have any opportunity of employment and carry on prostitution as their source of sustenance
- As per the statistics provided by the National Commission of Women in 2004, 400 Women suffered rights violations every day in Rajasthan. As per the CBI, Rajasthan is among the top seven States where maximum number of rape cases are registered. Rajasthan accounts for 8 % of the total crimes against women that take place in the country.

- NCW statistics also claim that 70% of the child marriages happening in the country are reported from Rajasthan. According to a report by the National Crimes Research Bureau (NCRB), Rajasthan makes it to the third spot regarding incidents of atrocities against women and second for atrocities on women from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.
- Every year 50 thousand female foetuses are destroyed in Rajasthan and nearly the same number of women are subjected to near fatal experiences, as most of these abortions are carried out under unsafe and unhygienic conditions.

## KARATE CHILDREN OF BABUAN

*By Belle Staurowsky*

**Araria, Bihar:** They yelled, they kicked, they palm striked. They yelled even when they didn't have to. They correctly identified a good fighting stance. They hopped (or tried to). And I just about fell over when all three lines (there were 26 girls squeezed into that little dirt alley) punched and kiai-ed in unison as I counted in Japanese. They even counted along in Japanese.

And then there was the giving of the certificates. I would sign at the top and date it, and then I would write the girl's name down at the bottom and draw a line for them to sign on. Each girl signed her own name, and then I would hand the certificate to her and say, "Thank you for being in my karate class." At first, I don't think they really got it, and just looked at the piece of paper kind of quizzically. But as word got around about what the paper was and what I was saying, the smiles were very big at the acceptance of that paper. I think Rinku, aka Silent One, had the biggest.

And so it is my honor to present the Graduation of the Karate Girls of Babuan, Class of 2010: Nilam, Rani, Poonam, Aarti, Puja, Aarti II, Kanchan, Gunjan, Asha, Kajal, Archana, Seema, Sahdna, Preety, Manisha, Rupa, Chadhani, Neha, Punahm, Baby, Rinku, Asha II, Ranju, Rupa, Hina, Babita, Manju, Micky, and Ritu. 'Tratthi' is Hindi for palm. And the girls performed excellent 'tratthi' strikes two days ago at Babuan. It was

also a way to get them to use their voice. Silent One did a little better; she started silent, but took less encouragement this time to get to yell out. Another girl could not manage more than a squeak, and not for lack of trying. Mouth full open, the muscles in her little neck straining, only a modified screechy whisper escaped. So I am working with her, too. I am tired with not just bags but luggage under my eyes as I sit here typing. The fan died in my room two nights ago, so not even that relief from heat, so sleep has been elusive. I am guzzling some of the coffee I brought to wake myself up; I'll be leaving in 45 minutes. This will be my last class with these beautiful youngsters. My heart is so heavy, and yet I have to be happy for them, for the experiences they have and will give me. I want to make this last class useful. I want them to learn. I want them to be heard from this day forward.

I mentioned the bad behavior of the gentleman(men) to my Apne Aap contact, Kalam, and he was very disturbed. I then requested that my next class not allow any men. So I was very happy when I arrived yesterday to Babuan, with karate girls crowding around the house's gate, and there were no men, save the schoolteacher's father and uncle, and some small boys. I did, however, catch a brief glimpse of the one offending bird brained gentleman later in the day as he peered at our class from a yard away... : )



## MY DREAM

### WHEN WILL DENOTIFIED TRIBES JOIN THE MAINSTREAM?

*By Arti Bedia*

**New Delhi:** Nobody knows the true story of Nats, Bediyas, Banchrahs, Sansis and Kanjars. Some say we are descendants of the celestial dancer, Menaka or that we are from the Aryan clan. We don't know ourselves where we are from and who do we descend from. But I wonder if our communities will ever be able to lead lives of dignity and will our women always be subjected to this? I will tell you what I know about girls and women in this community. The birth of girls is celebrated in our community. This is because the men in the community feel that the girls are saleable commodities. If she is prostituted, we can live off her earnings.

Anyone from the upper castes-Brahmins, Thakurs-always looks down on us. People from outside the community don't even think that this girl is studying, she may get married

or that people from her community may take jobs. They only look at girls from our community with lust and want to continue doing so. In the Panchayat nobody accepts that we are poor. They think we earn a lot from prostitution. They don't want us to Below Poverty Line cards to get subsidised food from the government.

The media always find something spicy to write about. In fact they tell even those who don't know about us, where we are and how to find us. They even write that this community feeds its girls something special so that they mature faster.

The police think we are thieves and arrest the men whenever there is any crime in the area and then ask our women to sleep with them as a payoff. If you ask them to write a complaining, they say you are

doing something illegal, you will be arrested. They say that girls and women in the sex trade can never be raped. The government is making sure girls from all other communities except ours is being educated.

For how long will our communities be neglected? The children from this community, who want to move ahead, are first stopped by their own communities. We are always worried that if we reveal that we are from this community, we will be mistreated. Most of our earnings are spent on drugs and alcohol and what is left is spent on medicines. We begin to believe we cannot move ahead because of the mistreatment by outsiders. But today, many girls and boys from these communities are studying, leaving the village and taking jobs. Yet I am tormented by many questions.

- Are girls from these communities' commodities?
- Don't they have the right to have dreams?
- Don't they have any right over the income they earn with such pain?
- Don't we have a right to lives with dignity just because we are born to denotified tribes?
- Will outsiders try to understand the problems of our communities?
- Can a discrimination free society be created?
- Will boys and girls be able to overcome their caste identity and fulfil their dreams?

