



RED LIGHT DESPATCH

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DELHI, KOLKATA, MUMBAI AND FORBESGANJ (BIHAR)

My Dream

**“To become a teacher”
-Shanti Kumari, aged 18**

Bihar: My name is Shanti Kumari. I am 18-year-old. My father is no more alive. My mother is a member of Sita SEG run by Apne Aap Women Worldwide. She is associated with the organisation since September 2009. I have three sisters and a brother. I am from a very poor background.

My brother is a carpenter. He is the sole earner in my family. I am student of class 11th in a local high school, Lee Academy at Forbesganj. I have a dream to become a teacher. I love fabric designing. One day I heard from my mother that Apne Aap Women Worldwide runs a Tailoring Training in Jagdish Mill office campus. Later, I joined the class and started learning tailoring and appliqué under the guidance of Seema di. I enrolled my name for computer class in Apne Aap. I participate in all the programs and activities here.

When I become a teacher, I will teach the students who are unable to access education due to money constraints. It's our right to get education. I pray to succeed in my mission. With the money I earn I also want to feed my family. My mother is a great support to me. I met Ruchira di and now she has become my role model.

I am so thankful to Apne Aap team for showing me how to dream.

Najafgarh girls exchanged handwritten letters with the students from the US

— *By Tannu/ as dictated to Jasneet Kaur*

Delhi: My name is Tannu, and I am 14-year-old. I am from a community which is labeled as denotified tribe. We are nomadic in nature. I had to discontinue my school-going, as my family keeps on moving from one place to another.

Recently Apne Aap enrolled me into the school again. Now I am regularly going to school in class VI. I am determined to study sincerely and become a police inspector one day.

My father abuses alcohol and he is admitted in a rehabilitation centre at the moment. My mother sells bed sheets in the local market. She is the bread earner of our family. I have one brother and three sisters, and some days we have a tough time to manage.

Recently, as a part of our monthly excursion, we went to Sanskriti Foundation – a beautiful and peaceful place which has big gardens, museums and different activity places. We all loved the museum, which had on display different things from our history. It also had some things which we have read in our school books. My favourite part was the wooden house.

We had a special guest that day between us. Jasneet didi and Mamta didi informed us that four girls in USA had formed a small association called ‘Girls for the Last Girl’ in their school to connect with us and be friends with us.

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A minor boy rescued from the Sonagachi red light area

— *Contributed by Sudipta Dasgupta*

Kolkata: Apne Aap started working in Sonagachi since 2014. It is one of the largest red light districts in Asia. Here, we generate awareness among community people regarding their natural rights. We have a centre where little children can access to education programme. They are the children of girls and women living in Sonagachi redlight area.

We also have women coming in our centre to seek legal support, adult literacy, learn sewing stitching and dance. We provide safe space to the prostituted women.

Many women in prostitution come to live temporarily in this area with their children and they leave them here alone and runaway from this place.

Apne Aap team rescued a minor boy from Sonagachi red light area. His name is Ariyan Mondal and he is 5-6 years old. He was brought to this area by his mother Salma Khatoon.

They came to live in Sonagachi in mid November. According to the landlord, Salma Khatoon had informed them that she will be visiting her house owing to her father's illness. **She left her son behind, promising to return after a day. However, she did not return as promised and even her phone was switched off.**

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Op-Ed— “Crime and punishment from Tehran to New York”

—Ruchira Gupta’s article published in Daily O

Ruchira Gupta is a writer, feminist campaigner, professor at New York University and founder of anti-sex-trafficking organization Apne Aap Women Worldwide (www.apneaap.org) Twitter: @ruchiragupta

When I lived in Iran, there was a small item in a paper that caught my eye. An 18-year-old boy, about to be hanged for murder, got a last minute reprieve, after the victim's family heard him play the flute.

Paymand, was convicted of killing a drug dealer at the age of 16. He already had the noose around his neck, when he was asked his last wish. He asked to play the ney, a Middle Eastern flute. His playing so moved the family of the victim that they asked for his execution to be halted.

A few years later in New York, I read about Rais Bhuiyan, a Bangladeshi-born naturalised US citizen, who was fighting to get the man who had blinded him and killed two others, off the death row. In the days following September 11, 2001, Mark Stroman attacked three people, killing two of them. He was targeting anyone he considered an "Arab", calling it revenge for 9/11.

"What Mark Stroman did was a hate crime, and hate crimes come from ignorance," said Bhuiyan. "His execution will not eradicate hate crimes from this world, we will just simply lose another human life."

Bhuiyan's efforts made Stroman reassess his basic values. "At that time here in America everybody was saying 'let's get them' - we didn't know who to get, we were just stereotyping. I stereotyped all Muslims as terrorists and that was wrong. I had some poor upbringing and I grabbed a hold of some ideas, which was ignorance, you know, and hate is pure ignorance. I no longer want to be like hate, I want to be like me," he said.

In India, last month I read that Jyoti Singh Pandey's parents were running from pillar to post to get an amendment to the Juvenile Justice Bill, reducing the age of criminal liability so that the 17-year-old boy, who was part of the gang of six that raped and murdered their daughter, would not be let free.

Thanks to their leadership, public pressure mounted and the Bill passed. Accused no 6 had been freed after three years of completing his sentence - imprisonment in an Observation Home, weeks before the Bill passed. They felt that they got only partial justice for their daughter but future victims would get justice as a result of their campaign.

I wonder if life for the convicted boy will be better on the streets than in the Observation Home?

I wonder if the thousands of questions Jyoti's parents have will ever be answered?

I wonder if the fear of the new JJ Act will stop other boys from joining gangs or participating in rape and other masculinity rituals?

Had Jyoti's parents met and talked to accused no 6, would they have found some answers? Would accused no 6 have been able to start life with a sense of greater accountability and responsibility?

Can there be a criminal justice system that shifts the focus from offender to victim and from punishment to whatever makes things right?

Linda White, the mother of a daughter, raped and murdered by a 15-year-old in Texas, USA, campaigns relentlessly for criminal justice policymaking that can be both pro-defendant and pro-victim.

White decided to meet her daughter's rapist and murderer in prison to hear the full story rather than imagining what the offender did or thought. In her meeting with Brown, she learned how he and his friend had tricked her daughter, Cathy, into giving them a ride; ordered her down a road "leading to nothing," raped her at gunpoint, shot her in the leg to "slow her down" so they could escape, only to decide - after discussing it in front of her - to eliminate the witness to their crimes altogether.

Through tears, Brown explains how Cathy urged them to leave with all her belongings and promised not to report them. "And then with the gun pointed towards her, she said, 'I forgive you, and God will, too.' And then she put her head down."

Brown makes no excuses during the encounter. Not about his catastrophic upbringing. Not about being too high to know what they were doing that day. Not to stress that it was his friend who pulled the trigger.

Linda White shows Brown photos of his victim. She conveys to Brown that his resolve to live a better life is the only atonement he can make and all that she asks of him.

25 years later, when Brown is out of prison and gainfully employed they meet at a café.

Diary of a Social Worker

—*Seema Kumari*

Delhi: My name is Seema Kumari. I am 25-year-old. I was born in Patna. My mother teaches appliqué work and Madhubani painting to women of different communities in our place. She has trained 20 women at my house. I had learnt Appliqué and Madhubani painting from my mother.

My mom is my idol. My first craft work was Radha-Krishan and Kadam tree. It was sold in more than Rs 5000. I was pleased with the idea that I could earn a living from my art work.

After that I decided, I will work with my mother and help to train other women in learning the skills. I got the opportunity to be associated with Apne Aap Women Worldwide since 2010. During the time of joining I wasn't familiar with the word "trafficked" or the "sex slave". I realise Apne Aap is doing a challenging work.

I started my work with Apne Aap at Delhi office. I worked with the communities, in which inter-generational prostitution was prevalent. **It was shocking for me to sink in that one's own family can force their daughters in prostitution, and worse it has been there since ages, and still continues even after 67 years of Independence.**

The girls used to confide in me that they had been asked by their family members to sell their body in order to earn money for the entire family members. After months, I developed bond with girls and women. They said that it is not the life they had chosen. The girls wishes to live life without violence and gain respect for their children. It made me realised. They are controlled by their family or the buyers.

I, however, know that change does not happen overnight. We work relentlessly. We need to extend our support for them, each one of them. May be a day will come, when the women in prostitution will be able to stand for their daughter and most important for themselves.

My work demands me to teach them appliqué and

other craft work, but their life has affected in many ways, and subconsciously I became their counselor too. They have done beautiful appliqué work on sarees, scarves, and cushion covers.

We have marketed their work in many different places including art fair in Delhi. The girls know the value of their work.

Later, in 2014, I was officially transferred to Forbesganj, Bihar where Apne Aap has been working since 2004. I got the setup unit of vocational batch. After joining I realised that my work will help them to earn their livelihood. I felt the responsibility was overwhelming. I had some selected girls and women for appliqué class. They are attentive and patience.

After six months training, they are producing beautiful appliqué work on sarees, scarves and cushion cover. Now we started receiving order for cushions and silk scarves with appliqué work from Kolkata. Currently, we have sold off items worth Rs 25,000 rupees. Depending on the demand, my production unit had produced one thousand and two hundred bangles and 150 pouches. The demands for products are increasing every passing month. We celebrate on occasion of earning good amount.

I am thankful to Apne Aap who has given this opportunity to make my dream come true: to learn and to teach.

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He makes clear he's here to show White what he's made of himself outside of prison: continuously employed, paying his bills, deeply committed to his church. He wants to serve as an example to young people of the perils of drugs and street life and of the promise of redemption. "It's the best I can give back to everybody," he says, "so I welcome it."

"Every day that I'm out here," he continues, "that was one more day I was telling you I was sorry for what I

had done. I would show you through my actions and my proof and what I do out here that shows you I wasn't that kind of person of what I was back then. I was so worried about hurting you."

"Yeah. At the end I was thinkin' about y'all. Wasn't thinkin' about me no more. I was thinkin' about y'all. Cause y'all believed in me. Y'all gave me strength," Brown said.

KGBV Girls receives sports equipments from the District Magistrate, Araria

—Ritu Kumari/ as translated by Praveen Kumar

Bihar: My name is Ritu Kumari and I am a student of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), Simraha. The hostel runs in association with Apne Aap Women Worldwide, an NGO trying to empower the last girls in the society. I study in class VII here with ninety nine other students. It is a residential school.

I belong to an economically poor family. My village name is Bhadeshwar. My father is Sachendra Jha and he is an agricultural labor. I got admitted in KGBV in 2014. I was in class VI. I continued my education since then.



On 16th December 2015, a meeting called by The District Magistrate Mr Himanshu Sharma from Araris, for all the hostel wardens working in KGBV. They had inquired about sports activities run by the school within the premises.

The information was shared by Mr Sharma. Later, he distributed Carrom board, Football, Volleyball, Badminton and Shuttlecock to the children.

Our warden Mrs. Chanda Kumari also received these

materials. When we heard about the new sports equipments, we were elated. We started screaming with excitement and celebrated with other hostellers.

Finally, when we received the sports equipments, it was very meticulously entered by accountant Mr Kumar, who had assisted in distributing to the girls.

A time table has been chartered out. We all received the sports material and made to sign in a paper to give our confirmation. I am loving the new items.

I am an active girl. And I am aware how participating in different sports activities is keeping me emotionally and physically healthy.

We are thankful to the district magistrate for his generosity. We will continue to study hard and at the same time participate in sporting activities.



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

“Basic needs are human rights: Reaching the last girls”

— *As contributed by SK Fazul*

Kolkata: The West Bengal Federation of United Nations Associations on the eve of Human Rights day organised a programme titled “*BASIC NEEDS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS: REACHING THE LAST GIRL*” on 9 December 2015.

Founder of Apne Aap Ruchira Gupta, Justice Indira Banerjee, High Court Calcutta and other respective law makers including Former Chief Justice of Supreme Court Justice Altamas Kabir were invited as speakers during the event.

The focus of the topic was on the last girl and her basic human rights, which is guaranteed by the UN Declaration as well as Indian Constitution.

During the occasion, Justice Samapti Chatterjee, Calcutta High Court emphasized on the basic human rights of the poor, illiterate and low caste women, which are generally denied by the society. She did not exclude the rights of the rich and educated women living in the male dominated society. Girls and women, who are treated like a second class citizen. She recommended to create awareness among the society.

Later Ruchira Didi from Apne Aap explained the last girl concept. **She said, last girls are those girls who are from low caste family, female, poor, illiterate and obviously teenage girl who has no right to decide anything even about her marriage, child**

birth, body parts. Nothing. The last girls are not given chance. Every decision is taken by her father, husband or her son.

And how we can find the last girls everywhere: in developing countries like India as well as developed countries. In those countries their human rights are violated every day just because they are last girls.

Further, Ruchira Didi highlighted the concept of Ahimsa (non-violence) and Antodaya (upliftment of the last woman) to uplift the women and girls and how **Apne Aap is working to uplift those last girls so that they can claim their basic human rights.**

Ruchira di requested everyone present in the hall to close their eyes for a minute and think the face of a teenage girl is the last girl, then rethink of our role to give justice and basic human rights to that last girl.

Former Chief Justice Altamas Kabir also told about some path breaking judgments of Supreme Court and different declarations signed and ratified by India to give justice to the last girl and described how judicial system can play an important role to give justice and basic human rights to the last girl.

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contact@apneaap.org



My First Day in Apne Aap

—*Brotati Mridha*

Kolkata: I am Brotati Mridha. When I first decided to join Apne Aap in October 2015, I was anxious as well as elated. Anxious as I had no first-hand experience of working for an NGO, elated as it was my opportunity to give back to the society. With more than 20 years experience in corporate world after completing MBA, I felt it was time I stepped out of my comfort zone to do something

A phrase I had read in The Telegraph referring to the work Apne Aap did: “If this is not God’s work, then I wonder what is” leapt up in my mind. So with elation as well as some trepidation, I started off. Rhona Scott, our General Manager, very kindly agreed to take me to the Shastitala office as I was not familiar with the locality. We then went to the first floor of the building where I was introduced to my colleagues. Liladi, Rachna, Fazul, Anis, Sangeeta all greeted me with smiles on their faces. As I struggled to remember names I was surrounded by smiling curious faces of Asma didi, Maya didi, Rabeya didi & so many others.

I saw that the walls of the office were decorated with photographs of remarkable women as well as wonderful posters made by Anis and some drawings by the children who were taught there. What the children had written and drawn gave me an insight in to their aspirations and dreams. It was an eye opener as to what gems lay hidden in these little children and the immense pos-

sibilities they had. All they needed was some support to get off to a flying start.

My first day kicked off with morning meeting. I came to know that the Sanitary Pad manufacturing unit was facing severe problems due to termite infestation and immediate action was needed. The Pest Control had been called and discussion regarding fees etc was carried out.

I was also introduced to Sahana didi who is looked upon as a treasure house of information having been associated with this organization for so long. She looks upon the survivors and children as her own relatives and tries her level best to provide delicious and nutritious midday meal for the children as economically as possible. When I heard the details of the contribution she had made to this organization and the risks she took I was in awe of this frail woman who had so much courage! She spoke to me so easily and with such kindness that I felt that I had known her for a much longer time than having just met.

I also met Tinku who made me feel at home quite contrary to being the high & mighty director which I had expected. There was a lot of energy in the center and it buzzed with activity throughout the day. At the end of it, I felt that in a small way I had made a beginning to understand what work in NGO entails and how lives are changed and dreams are materialized here.

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We were very excited to meet our new friends from, who had come all the way from the USA. They are also the members of the Girls for the last girls group. We were introduced to Lucie, who is a very sweet and charming girl, no older than us. She was travelling to India with her mother Jill, who was also very loving and affectionate.

They told us that their friends and other students in their school were excited to be friends with us, and had written letters for us. When we saw the letters, we screamed in excitement.

They were beautiful hand written letters on colorful sheets, some had pictures on it too! I cannot read English properly, most of us cannot, so we were helped by everyone around to read the letters.

It was very inspiring to read the messages written by our new friends. Then we all took one sheet each, and wrote letters back to them. Some of us wrote in English, some of us in Hindi. **I wrote my letter in Hindi to an unknown person, who will be my new friend. Never in my life had I written a letter even to my**

close friends. This was a new experience altogether.

The thought that someone in other corner of the world, will read my handwritten letter, was overwhelming even to imagine.

Lucie also said that her friends will respond to our letters by email and send it to Jasneet didi, who will then read it out to us.

We had a pleasant time talking and sharing our life stories with Jill and Lucie, while we had lunch together with them. We clicked a lot of pictures with them. I loved spending the day there. I want to be a part of more visits and learn about different people and their

They were beautiful hand written letters on colorful sheets, some had pictures on it too! I cannot read English properly, most of us cannot, so we were helped by everyone around to read the letters.

The World Outside

— *Muskaan/ as dictated to Juanita Kakoty*

Delhi: I am Muskaan. I am thirteen-year-old and I study in the eighth class at Government Girls Senior Secondary School near Delhi Gate. I am from Perna community. My father's name is Ajay and my mother's name is Rajesh. I have a younger sister and a brother. My siblings study at a private school, Hind Baal Mandir School at Roshanpura.

My father leads a band-baja party at weddings.

On 24 December 2015, a small Christmas celebration happened in our community at Dharampura. Apne Aap Women Worldwide and ENACTUS, a volunteer student groups organised it for us. I really enjoyed it. So did the others.

The girl who dressed up as Santa Claus was liked by all of us! She told us many good things. We loved the song 'Jingle Bell Jingle Bell' too. And we also had an impromptu dance session as Sunaina's little brother came and played the drum for us. Everybody danced, including the didis from Apne Aap and the didis and bhaiyas from ENACTUS.

We also got storybooks that day. And we read out stories from those books to each other right there. We also got toffees.

It felt good to see Mamta didi and Shashibala didi singing Apne Aap anthem that spoke against the limitations imposed upon a girl in every society; about the underage girls who are married off early and the restrictions the society imposes on them. The fear, and struggle against prejudices.

I have been associated with Apne Aap since 2011. I have learnt many new things through Apne Aap like video-making, poster-making, storytelling, etc. Apne Aap also put me at the Shiamak Dawar academy in Janakpuri to learn dance for a while.

I also saw many new places within Delhi because of Apne Aap, through the educational tours and workshops it has conducted for us. I never thought I could see these places ever in my life!

My parents never let me go anywhere. But because of Mamta didi and Shashibala didi's persistence, they allow me to visit the office or go wherever it plans some trip for us.

I am very thankful to Apne Aap for all that it has done for me.

Continued from page 1

After 15 to 20 days, the land lord and his wife approached Bortala police station. The police advised them to wait for some more days for the boy's mother to return. In the meantime, asked the landlord and landlady to look after the well being of the child. The Lady Constable (Ms. Rita) said, the concerned land lord and his wife adhered to their suggestion.

On 24th December 2015, the maternal uncle of landlord approached us and informed that the boy was abandoned by his mother and requested us to help him find a home. However, he was reluctant to involve himself in police case.

On 28th December, I discussed the matter with my seniors and decided to visit the police station with the boy. A day later, we visited Bortala Police station along with Ariyan Mondal, the land owner and his wife.

Mr. Subhojit (Police officer) who interacted with the land owner and the land lady doubted on their intention of looking after a boy without personal benefit. After a long discussion between the officer and landlord a General Dairy was filed. After submitting the diary, the investigation officer called CINI. We came to know that Goutam Singh, his wife and a police officer went

to the children home along with Ariyan, to admit him there.

On 30th December 2015, The Child line called up Apne Aap's legal officer and informed that Ariyan is going to be produced before Child Welfare Committee, Kolkata. We had informed them about Ariyan before going to Bortala Police Station.

We checked with Ariyan and he is doing fine with other children in the shelter home. We hope he starts his life afresh with joy and happiness.

In Sonagachi, we see many Ariyan-like children wandering alone, but due to lack of information we are unable to reach out to the concerned authorities. Ariyan is an obedient boy; he is excellent in his studies.

Being a woman, a mother and a human being, I understand that every Ariyan needs love, care and protection.

Thanks to Apne Aap team who stood by Ariyan and his welfare.

Poems

Gajar aur tamatar

Gajar Aur Tamatar
Baccho khao Kachhi Gajar,
Nimbu, Khira aur Tamatar,
Lal lal tum ban jayoge,
Sundar bachhe kahalayoge

Name– Riya Goswami

Class: VII

Area: Mumbai

Padh likh kar raho chaukas

Ek, do, Tin, Char
Maan mein rakho swachha vichar
Char Paanch Che Saat,
Hardam Karna Miithi Baat,
Saat Aath Nau Das
Padh likh kar raho chaukas

Name– Ritesh Goswami

Class: VII

Area: Mumbai



Second Floor, D-56
Anand Niketan, New Delhi

Phone:
+91 11 24119968

E-mail/Web:
contact@apneap.org
www.apneap.org

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