



RED LIGHT DESPATCH

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DELHI, KOLKATA, MUMBAI AND FORBESGANJ (BIHAR)

My Dream To become a Scientist -Neeraj, aged 12

Delhi: My name is Neeraj. I live in Dharampura. I study in 4th standard at nearby MCD School. I have six members in my family.

I belong to Singhi community and with harsh living conditions; we are not encouraged much to have a goal in life. Most of us are not educated. Dream is like an alien word here. Overwhelming majority of us are from poor economical background.

People among our community are earning their daily bread by rag picking, ear cleaning and selling toys in the traffic signals. It has been going on since generations. My mother sells toys and brings food for us. Despite blatant reality of our harsh living condition, I dared to dream. I don't share it with anyone else though.

I aspire to become a NASA scientist. I want to study more. From my imaginations, scientist is someone with long hair, wear spectacles. Also, they work on computer and reads books.

In our community, even someone who has studied 8th standard is considered as an intelligent person and is highly respected. I have been given this opportunity to go to school but can be asked to drop out anytime. I am not sure till when I can continue my education, as sometimes, my parents want me to help them in earning livelihood and drop out from school. I wish I don't have to.

"Everyone deserves to be successful"

— By Poonam/ as translated by Laboni Basu

Kolkata: I am Poonam Khatoon. I am a native of Forbgesanj, Bihar. I have been a member of Apne Aap since 2007. I am extremely grateful to Apne Aap, because under their supervision and enormous help I was able to finish my 12th standard from Bihar.

I, along with Juhi, another student from Forbgesanj came to Kolkata and went to have a look at the college at Park Street. When we reached the campus we were speechless. Studying in such a big and reputed College such as St. Xaviers was beyond our imagination. We went inside the college and saw the large classrooms, the library, the students and the teachers. We were awestruck. It was exciting to be there.

Laboni di spoke to the management staff regarding our admission. We interacted with the management and told them that if we could be admitted in this college, then we would be very happy and would work hard to do well. I assured them of our dedication. Also, the building was very attractive and so was the environment.

We came back to Apne Aap Center and discussed among ourselves about the collage and prayed that we could study in this college. Being a part of St. Xaviers would bring great joy and paved our way for future success.

We don't know whether we will get a chance to study at St. Xaviers College or not.

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Apne Aap's girl clears class 10 board exam

— Soni/ as dictated to Mohd Kalam

Bihar: My name is Soni. I remember that when I was a child, I was brought to the Education Center of Apne Aap Women Worldwide by Fatima didi. I was taught by the teachers of Apne Aap and they took good care of me along with other children.

I was the naughtiest among my classmates. I enjoyed those days with other children and the staffs of Apne Aap. I acquired my basic education from the Apne Aap Center; it gave me motivation to continue my Education.

When I wanted to join Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), Kolkata for my education I had to face strong opposition from my family. I

remained strong and forced them to admit me into KGBV. I started living there and made many friends as well. It was a very different life at this school and I enjoyed every moment and started learning new things at the school. During that time, I came to know that Apne Aap is working for the rights of marginalized women and children. I had also achieved my rights and received a chance for free education with the help of Apne Aap Women Worldwide and it became a turning point in my life.

Apne Aap is my home, and I love to stay in this new found home of mine.

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Op-Ed— Ruchira Gupta's article "English-vinglish: Language and legacy" published in The Telegraph, India

Ruchira Gupta is a feminist campaigner, writer, visiting professor at New York University, adviser to the UN, and founder of Indian anti-sex trafficking organisation Apne Aap Worldwide. This article was published under series of articles titled Bihar Safar-nama

Shivanand ji called this morning. Shivanandji has been to jail five times, twice for protesting the use of English in government work. The slogan was:

"Angrezi mein kaam na hoga/Phir se desh goolam na hoga"

(Work will not be in English/The country's enslavement must finish).

A recently retired Rajya Sabha MP, Shivanand Tiwari was the student leader who had pulled Lalu Prasad into politics. Shivanand ji had filed a case against the Shankaracharya under the Harijan Atrocities Act. The Shankaracharya had refused to debate the shastras with Rajneesh in a Patna meeting on the grounds that only the "Twice-Born" ie Brahmins had the authority to debate the religious texts. *Aryavarta*, one of the leading Patna papers, took the side of the Shankaracharya. A young Lalu was enlisted into the Socialist Youth Federation by Shivanandji. His first protests and sloganeering was outside the office of the *Aryavarta*.

Shivanand ji is from a socialist family, influenced by Dr Ram Manohar Lohia. Doctor Saheb's democratic socialism, derived from Gandhi and Leon Trotsky, aimed at the seven revolutions or ending inequalities between castes, sexes, races, countries, an end to the arms race, oppression in personal life and undemocratic principles in language, dress, food or thought.

His followers, led by Pune feminist socialist Indumati Kelkar, had launched an all-India movement for preserving and promoting Indian languages.

Nobel laureate Dr Satyen Bose, of the Bose-Einstein theory on quantum physics, held the Calcutta conference and wrote a book on this. In 1983 Shivanand ji had cycled from Delhi to Guwahati as part of an "angrezi-hatao" rally.

My parents were also firm believers. As a child I resented their refusal to talk to me in English when I came home from school. I made up by reading as many books in English as I could.

Now, as a journalist who writes in English, I am grateful that I am bilingual and can slip between the two languages easily. I feel sorry for my English-speaking friends who do not know the grammar and have just a smattering of Hindi words in their vocabulary. They

can only speak to each other and, therefore, can only participate in the richness of India through Bollywood films.

I also feel sorry for our Prime Minister who insisted last fortnight on speaking English in an incomprehensible accent to the US Senate, with the help of a teleprompter.

Other premiers of very powerful countries like Germany and France had spoken in German and French to the US Senate backed by a translator with an American accent. Our Prime Minister would have served the country better by speaking in Gujarati, if not in Hindi, to highlight the diversity of India.

I recently edited a fiction anthology on the prostituted woman in Indian fiction called *River of Flesh* with 21 stories translated from 12 Indian languages. A reporter in the US asked me: "Are all these languages still spoken?" That is when I realised the greatness of Nehru's "unity in diversity," and Lohia's "angrezi hatao" programmes. What we take for granted no longer exists in the US, which once had 296 spoken languages. Along with the languages, history, knowledge and memory are lost. Americans think democracy came from Rome, when the first democracy was practised by the Iroquois Nation on their own land. It was a better model - power was circular and consensual in nature rather than hierarchical.

In Purnea city, I, thankfully, do not meet any official who insists on talking to me in English. However, in Patna, I have met middle-aged MBAs who refuse to speak in any language but English. English and the suit and tie have begun to symbolise the aspiration to power. Better jobs go to the English-speaking. Arundhati Roy writes more powerfully than native Britons or Americans in English. The world is more interconnected and global. English is the language of information and technology.

So, then, should we accept English as both a global and an Indian language? Should English be taught in all schools and be used in all government offices? I asked this question to Lalita Bayanwala, principal of the Shishu Bharti School in Forbesganj, today. "Yes," she said, "but if we lose our own languages, we will silence our children. English should be taught, as should Hindi, but we need to also teach languages closer to home and at home - Maithili, Bhojpuri, Avadhi, Angika, even Bengali and Nepali. Only then can we communicate with the children.

(Continued on page 3)

Diary of a Social Worker

—Sangeeta Singh

Kolkata: My name is Sangeeta Singh. I have been associated with Apne Aap since April, 2012.

Initially, I was a student with the organization and later was appointed as a computer teacher. It has been a long association with Apne Aap and I feel proud about it.

I live with my parents and a younger brother in Kidderpore, Kolkata. When I started working with Apna Aap, I was still a first year student, doing my B.Com (Hons). It was somehow a mixed feeling of happiness and responsibility that I was a teacher as well as a student at the same time. It is difficult to forget this feeling, the feeling of doing something for the society: Beautiful.

I came in association with Apna Aap as a student way back in 2010. A friend of mine advised me to join the organization to learn computer, as she had also enrolled for the class. I to date thank her for referring me this. From being a student to a teacher with the same organisation. I couldn't have asked for more. I have come a long way.

Initially, I was a student with the organization and later was appointed as a computer teacher. It has been a long association with Apne Aap and I feel proud about it.

After I completed my computer training from Apna Aap I was offered a job by Mr. Tamal Mukherjee, a staff associated with Apna Aap.

Working with Apna Aap has given me a lot of expo-

sure to reality of life. It has made me more experience in the work that I do. Especially, working at the grass root level and seeing the reality how people suffer has made me strong both emotionally and mentally.

Today after being associated with Apne Aap for nearly four years, I can proudly say that Apna Aap is like a second home to me which has given me enough confidence to stand up on my own feet and face the world. I have been teaching children of prostituted women and those from marginalized communities. I listen to them on a regular basis. I understand their fear, their anxiety, and their dreams in life. I am close to them.

In 2013, I was given a chance to go to New Delhi for a further NIIT Teacher's computer training for five days with my senior Tamal Mukherje. It was for the first time that I had visited Delhi. It was like a dream. I saw smooth, wide road. I went to Apne Aap Delhi office, met the staff members.

During my training session, I had met others NGO's members who were working with the same goals. It was an unforgettable learning experience.

Again in 2015, I got a chance to attend training on asset holder database software called Dimagi at Forbesganj in Bihar Apne Aap Center. It was week training by a lady named Maryum from the US.

I learnt creative software designing programme. This also first time in my life. We had met with other Bihar and Delhi colleagues, many field visits of the home-based brothels. Learnt their struggling stories and empathized with them. It had somehow expanded my knowledge in this area too.

I would like to show appreciation to Apna Aap team and beneficiaries who are like a close knit family to me. They have helped me to be what I am today. ways.

(Continued from page 3)

We teach English but we often use Hindi or Maithili as the medium of instruction. That makes it easier for children to understand. If they are not strong in their own mother tongue, they will not be strong in any language. My children's mother tongue is often Maithili."

Angrezi hatao does not mean discarding English. It simply means a) keeping local languages for official purpose so that the governed can com-

municate with the governing, and protecting and promoting all India languages - regional languages and local languages.

Finland, which has been rated as having the best education system in the world, teaches English in Finnish to its children. All the children grow up knowing at least three languages.

My First Day at Apne Aap

—Devika Shekhawat

Delhi: My name is Devika Shekhawat. I am doing my B.A Programme with History and Political Science at Stephen's College.

I got to know about Apne Aap Women Worldwide through Facebook. A "Feminism beyond Boundaries" talk was scheduled to happen in the month of August 2015. I was extremely excited to attend the session and reached Oxford Bookstore where I got introduced to the organization and its work. I went back and read more about Apne Aap and the kind of work that they do.

I was so impressed with the organization's work that I went ahead and invited Apne Aap for a session in my College on the "Inequality in Prostitution" where Ruchira Gupta and Rachel Moran spoke to the students about the prostituted women. The session was extremely informative and eye-opening for many students and we learnt a lot about the prostituted women and the inequality the women faces. We understood the importance of looking at the absence of choice when we look at the context of choice of the prostituted women. I further learnt about Apne Aap and really wanted to join the organization and help it in whichever manner I could. So during the summer of 2016 I finally got an opportunity to work with Apne Aap.

Joining Apne Aap has been one of the best decisions I have taken in a long time. **I feel as though I finally have the opportunity to do something to fight injustice against women. It's an amazing opportunity to learn and grow.**

Working with Apne Aap and interacting with its members and attending a session organized by Apne Aap. I learnt about the intersecting inequalities of the prostituted women in India and how her intertwining inequalities are what push her into being prostituted.

Also, I got a chance to visit the community and interact with the women and children. It was an interesting ex-

perience for me and an opportunity to learn from women's experience and livelihood. Apne Aap had organized an open mic session on Anti-Drug day at its Community Centre at Najafgarh where women and children openly spoke about their experience with drugs and narcotics.

And later I attended a consultation on the draft bill "Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2016" introduced by the Ministry on Women and Child Development, Government of India. **After attending the consultation I learnt a about Indian laws on Prostitution and Trafficking and the loopholes in the laws and regulations. It gave me an understanding of how to question and deal with laws which talk about prostituted women.**

Apne Aap gave me opportunity to interact with women and children from marginalized background and do something for their rehabilitation.

Earlier, in schools and also in colleges we have studied about the caste problem in India. Often, there were classroom discussion and interactions with friends on 'Prostitution'. I observed how we often find ourselves in the liberal or should I say neo-liberal cultural interpretations. And that we often forget the realities of choice in which prostituted women find themselves.

Now I feel I will never ignore the realities of prostituted women in India, the intersecting inequalities women face and the questions of caste in class, prostitution and trafficking. I feel as though I am better equipped with creating a discourse about these issues.

Apne Aap has been doing amazing work and I have gotten a chance to help the organization in its aim of ending trafficking, prevention and rehabilitation of prostituted women. It has been an amazing learning experience and I fully intend to continue to work with Apne Aap and help the organization in whatever capacity I can.

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

Difficulties faced by nomadic community girls for hostel admission

— *Manish Kumari/ as dictated to Praveen Kumar*

Bihar: My name is Manish Kumari. My father's name is Manuva Banjara and mother's name is Chhotki Devi. I am 13-year-old now. I am from Banjara community living in Bathana nearby the Railway station. It is a government land. I and my family live there with other member of my community.

Our house is made of basic stuffs, for instance, plastic sheets and clothes tent. Sometimes, we beg and some-days we collect and sell herbs form door to door in vil-lages and also in towns. Not one in our community is literate.

In August 2015, some social worker from an NGO Apne Aap Women Worldwide approached us and had arranged for a meeting with our parents and consulted them on why education is important for the betterment of our people.

After a comprehensive and elaborate discussion with our elders, my parents and other family members in the community had decided to start with a tuition class in our area.

A social worker named Naresh comes on a daily basis to teach us. The organization had provided us slates, copies, books and stationeries for learning. They had also arranged for the sitting and a blackboard too. We started by reading the books and writing in the slate first.

After completion of six months of tuition, we learnt more in Hindi and also some general words in English. For us, getting education is not easy and we struggle hard to continue our studies. After six months, our community migrated from one place to another for the

sole purpose of earning.

We missed our classes. Eventually it was dropped. However, when we returned to our place, the social worker had contacted us and suggested to continue the educational classes. In March 2016, some of us re-turned at the old place and re-started with the classes.

Naresh Sir had informed us that Apne Aap is also working in cooperation with Kasturba Gandhi Balika Aavashiya Vidyalaya (KGBV) by providing hostels to girls in Simraha. **Most of the girls are from poor eco-nomical background and some from nomadic com-munities. Despite many problems, the girls contin-ued their education.**

Apne Aap offered my parents to admit me in this hostel. Luckily, my parents agreed, but there are so many parents in our community who are not willing to admit their daughters in the KGBV hostel.

Basically, most of the community people want their girls to stay back with them and help them to earn some money by begging on the streets. I have given the entrance test for hostel admission too and now waiting for the admission. Our parents and the members of Apne Aap tried to convince our community people. If they agree, it'll open the doors for many girls to con-tinue with their education.

I am waiting for entrance result. I pray to get admis-sion, and other girls hope to get permission from their elders. When will our dream come true?

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



Experience of first summer vacation by de-notified girls admitted in hostel

—Varsha/ as translated by Khushboo Dasgupta

Delhi: My name is Varsha. I belong to Perna caste, which is categorised under denotified tribe. I am 14-year-old and live in Dharampura district of Najafgarh with my mother and younger sister. My other two elder sisters got married at the age of 15 and 16 years.

Earlier, I use to study at nearby MCD School, but observing my interest to study more and other developmental activities, Apne Aap admitted me into Shanti Gyan International School. I Study in 8th standard at this school. As we belong to economically poor background, I never expected to study at private and such big school. My mother is extremely proud of me and my younger sister who is also admitted in the same school in 5th standard.

During the initial days, we were quite uncomfortable at the hostel. As I had studied in government school since I was little. We never gave that much importance to English in my previous school. But, in this hostel, I understood its importance and it was almost impossible for me to hold any conversation in English.

Also, I couldn't even read English paragraphs as other students who belong to more affluent families did easily. The remaining subjects like maths, science and social sciences were also no less than a challenge. **With time, I started to take initiative and got myself involved in many extracurricular activities. Seeing my passion and zeal to learn, even teach-**

ers and other students supported me in learning. I have been given many opportunities to develop my knowledge and confidence level.

This summer holiday when I came back to Dharampura at my home, I decided to share my learning experience with other children in community. I taught many kids how to read and write, how to solve maths problem and to use waste material to make something useful. I also participated in cleanliness campaign at community organised by Apne Aap.

I was sad when I observed that most of my classmates are now married and some also became mother at this age. However, I feel glad to report that I am encouraging other girls too in my community to study and not to get married at an early age. Life is beyond marriage. A girl has the potential of doing so much for the community people and her loved ones before and even after she gets married.

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But we hope that in future other students who are a part of Apne Aap do get a chance to go to this college. Everyone deserves to be successful.

Trafficking of a human being is a tragedy, which is not limited to one region or a community. It is universal. The victims are male and female, child and adult and most of them belong to a poor socio-economic background. Due to lack of education, poverty, no livelihood opportunities, the traffickers prey on the vulnerable ones.

Most of the earnings by the prostituted or trafficked victims are pocketed by the brothel owners, and pimps. According to the report of the National Human Rights Commission of India, over 40,000 children are reported missing every year of which over 11,000 remain untraced. The International Labor Organization (ILO) has mentioned that there are 20.9 million victims of human trafficking globally, with hundreds of thousands in the United States, Children and adults involved for perform labor or services through force, fraud, or coercion

I have learnt how to respect myself and others from Apne Aap. I learn to fight for own dignity as a woman and fight for others to raise voice against injustice. Apart of my education, I learned self-defence skills. I am a strong person today, both physically and mentally.

During my visit to Kolkata, I participated in an art camp and met many new people; most of them were from marginalised communities. Some were from Bangladesh too. I understood their case history, life history and their fight against injustice.

This trip has given me so much. **Now if I get admission in St Xavier, I want to help my community people. I would like to use my education to empower my community women to protecting their self-respect, dignity, and rights. I would like to be a social worker and represent myself for the voice of my community's weaker section women and children.**

I am always ready to protest against crime like human trafficking.

The World Outside

— *Sabina Khatoon/ as dictated to Sahana Dasgupta*

Kolkata: I am Keya (Sabina Khatoon) and I live in Sonagachi. I have been living here for the past ten years, and I have met many different kinds of people. But, I don't remember anybody. Five years ago, I was standing on the roadside and waiting for a customer, there I met a social worker from Apne Aap.

She spoke to us about children's admission into RKVM School. Many of us agreed and fortunately our children got admitted in RKVM and they are staying safely in the Hostel, doing well in their studies, have become disciplined and well behaved. All these results have made us very happy and confident. We have become members of Apne Aap. We attend the meetings, attend to guests, and speak to them, which has greatly increased our confidence level.

Now I will tell you a very different story which I had experienced very recently. We were informed by Apne Aap staff members that some film artists are coming to Sonagachi and they want to spend time with us. Film artists Mrunal Thakur and Riya came to Apne Aap's center where all of us spent time together. They came to visit us in our brothel and met other women as well.

We all became friends. One Didi from Apne Aap requested them that if they could give us chance to see a film shoot in Bombay. We never thought the chance would come to us this soon through Apne Aap. Within a month we got a call from Tabrej Noorani and his team. They had sent plane tickets for us. It was thrilling. More

than we could ask for. We went to Bombay on May 2, 2016. It was a wonderful experience to be with such a talented team.

They had arranged a very good hotel for us where we stayed in the night. Next morning, we went to ESLR Studio in Bombay. We had never seen a Film Studio before. All of them welcomed us. Tabrej Sir spoke to us in the most polite way possible. He told us that we have to stay with the team for at least a month till the shooting is over, and also he offered us to act in the film.

We couldn't have been happier. We acted four times in the film. We got a chance to watch the film shooting as well. Though the role was small, yet it was a unforgettable experience for us. This is the starting point in my life. I was hoping that maybe in near future, we will get bigger roles and people will recognize us.

We are forever grateful to Apne Aap and Ruchira di for giving us such a good chance, where we traveled by flight and acted in the film. Our neighbors are very proud of us and many of the women are now willing to be members of Apne Aap. I wish we could get more women in our team to increase our strength.

I wish great success to Apne Aap and Tabrej Noorani and his team.

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Tinku di is the best didi I could have asked for, I can share my feelings with her, she is my inspiration. I am also inspired by Ruchira Di.

I completed my education at Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya and went to Patna for higher studies. In Patna I completed my tenth class examinations and passed with second division marks in the year 2016. Now I have come to Kolkata for further Education. After discussing with Tinku di, I have decided to do a Hotel Management Course. I went to Hotel Kenilworth with Tinku Aunty to see the hotel and the environment. I was quite surprised and impressed to see the hotel and its atmosphere. I have decided that I will go for a Hotel Management course in Hotel Kenilworth.

I want to make the future generation aware about Apne Aap Women Worldwide and their work. **I will share my story with other children and let them know how to achieve what they want with self-determination, dedication and support from organization like Apne Aap. I want every child to get education and proper training like I did so that every child can dream, and**

work towards their goal in life. Apne Aap Women Worldwide helps people like us grow and dream.

Now when I sit alone I think about my past and all the times I have cried, I can never forget the difficult moments of my life and the suffering I have been through, which at last came to an end. All thanks to Apne Aap. I understand that education is a basic tool needed to fight against torture and get a chance to fight for women's rights and now because of Apne Aap I know how to fight for women's rights as well.

Throughout my life I have got strong support from Apne Aap and Ruchira aunty. I am confident that even this time they will support me and enroll me into Hotel Kenilworth to learn Hotel Management. When I was young nobody thought about me, I never believed that there could be someone in my life. **Apne Aap taught me to think about myself and my future. They taught me how to fight for my rights. I will complete my course, get a job and I will bring more children to Apne Aap Education Center and help them achieve what they want. This is my commitment to Apne Aap.**

Poems

I want to be a.....

I want to be a teacher...
To teach children
Give them a light for their life
I'll extend silent arms to fight against
injustice.
I want to be a sky....
To take all the knowledge and fly high
I'll give space to all
I'll teach how to deal with light and dark as
well.
I want to be a tree...
I'll give oxygen to all.
I have taken carbon dioxide from you.
I want to be a daughter
I want to go far
I desire freedom
I want to fight against trafficking.

Name– Arjun Shaw

Class: IV

Area: Kolkata

Light and Dark

I am Light, you are Dark
I give happiness; you give sorrow to others.
Everybody loves me a lot, nobody loves you
You are right, Light.
I am dark.
But without me nobody recognize your im-
portance.
People hate me and that is why you are
loved.
Nobody asks me what is happening to my
heart.
I see people crying, and give smile to you.
I feel pain, you feel pleasure.
Without me, you are incomplete.

Name– Swapna Prasad

Class: III

Area: Kolkata



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