



# RED LIGHT DESPATCH

VOLUME VI, ISSUE 6

JUNE 2013

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

Column  
**My Dreams**

**By Mintesh**

**Dharampura, Najafgarh:** My name is Mintesh and I am 25 years old and work as a labourer. I belong to the Jhimmar caste.

I got married 10 years ago and have two daughters and two sons. We are very poor. I had a troublesome marriage. My husband used to torture me so I went to live with my mother and brothers in Prem Nagar.

My husband was characterless, but I was bearing everything because he was my husband. I was sacrificing everything for the sake of our marriage. But, when it became unbearable, I left my in-law's house. I wanted to commit suicide but because of my children I could not. I was living with all my problems; I never shared them with my mother because she is poor and could not have helped me. It would have only given her tension. My father had expired when I was 6.

One day I met the Apne Aap team and shared my problem with them. I became a member of their *Mahilamandal (Abhilasha)* and attended every meeting and session with them. They explained to me my rights as a woman and extended support. They told me that I should lodge complaint against my husband with the police. I did everything they suggested.

(Continued on pg 7)

## **Girls Break Tradition to Write their Destiny**

**By Juhí**

**Forbesganj:** Passing Class X is very special to me and the community I belong to, the Nat community. It opens doors to a life that Nat women have not seen. I owe this to the encouragement and help of my mother and Apne Aap for enabling me to reach this level.

I was always interested in studies. I started with studying at home, then school and later, from May 2007 at the *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya* (KGBV).

When I joined school, I was happy and excited because I was moving to a new place, meeting new people, making new friends and meeting *didi* – the teacher. At the same time, I was also nervous as I was leaving my family. But when I came to KGBV, it was like joining a big family. I enjoyed studying and the environment of the school.

Later I returned to my home in Khaspur to study from home and also sat for the examination from there. I was a bit nervous, but the desire to pass the examination was strong. Even after the examinations were over, I was nervous about the result, wondering whether my hopes and dreams would come true.

Fortunately, it all went well. On June 5, Papa came home with my result; I had secured first division. My happiness knew no bounds. Everyone at home and in the neighbourhood were also very happy and proud of me.

Besides me, three other girls also passed Class X. It was a landmark for my community as it had never happened before. I now want to carry on with education and realise my dreams.

## **Topsia Jansunwyai**

**By Mumtaj Bibi**

**Kolkata:** My name is Mumtaj Bibi. I live beside the Topsia 4 no. bridge near Park Circus station. On November 10 last year, our slums were destroyed.

We were 383 families living in the area, mostly from the lower caste Muslim communities. Some work as rickshaw pullers, daily wage earners, beggars, rag-pickers with an average monthly income between Rs. 1500 to Rs. 2000. We were forcefully evicted on November 10, 2012, with help of cadres from a political party. The police were there but they did not take any action against the hoodlums. They did not provide any

notice before the eviction. We are bound to go. We are in a very complicated situation; there is no scope of study for children; elderly are there. One old person had died.

They evicted us by threatening and gave very less amount of money. With that money there is no chance to buy any house. We have not been able to find any place to stay and are living under the open sky with constant threats of rape and murder. Ever since the eviction children have stopped attending school. Some have gone missing and we fear they have been trafficked.

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## My First Visit

By Tamara Gates

**New Delhi:** My first visit to Apne Aap's Delhi field office in Dharampura added an exciting, altering dimension to my internship. Travelling by combination of metro, bus and cycle-rickshaw from plush South Delhi to bumpy, unkempt roads of Dharampura, we arrived at the centre with a group of young girls outside waiting to greet us. Then followed the customary mayhem that comes with being the new girl in the field: my blonde hair invited cries of 'you look like a ghost!' while my toe-ring led to a stream of questions about my 'husband' (I wear it purely as decoration, but it's a symbol of marriage there).

No electricity made the morning a challenge in the heat, and I learnt inside an unlit, sweltering office about the Perna and Sapera castes living in Dharampura. I was shocked when told that these tribes make their income mainly through inter-generational prostitution, and have done so for decades. I came to Delhi expecting to be affected by the gravity of Apne Aap's work on sex trafficking, but receiving this briefing in Dharampura was the most startling learning experience so far. It alerted me to the way that prostitution is deeply engrained into familial custom in parts of India; and that there is much work to do in this

community, where exploitation is normalised. What I found most surprising is that some women from Dharampura accept this unimaginable lifestyle. In a recent interview, one Perna woman said, 'It happens to every girl, you get used to it.'

Where discriminatory values and traditions fail to provide reasonable alternative livelihoods for Dharampura's women, it was reassuring to witness first-hand Apne Aap's intervention: After a cup of chai in a Sapera family home – along with an introduction to their collection of

### Column

### Volunteer Journal

snakes – we paid a visit to a household of women who are making Jute bags and products to sell as part of an ongoing Apne Aap project. I placed an order for an owl-shaped towel rail that was too sweet to resist. Back at the centre, I met some of Delhi's most at-risk girls who are enrolled onto an Income Generation Project, Sewing New Futures, and many were busy at work stitching colourful hankies and learning Applique skills in time to sell their handicrafts at Delhi's upcoming Art Fair. So far, very uplifting. But the most poignant part of my day was meeting those girls and women who

can no longer be helped, even to help themselves.

I was introduced to one such young woman during a Perna community survey on my second visit to Dharampura. Listening to her stilted conversation with field staff, (inspiration enough for me to learn more Hindi), in her mother-in-law's home, it became upsettingly clear that this seventeen year old will no longer be attending Sewing New Futures workshops as intended. Crucially, she is seven months pregnant; and gesturing discretely to her stomach, implied that she is all-too-aware of the life ahead of her in a few months' time. Heartbreakingly, she asked field staff, please don't let the same thing happen to my younger sisters.

My experience in Dharampura that day made me question how you can even begin to dismantle such rooted tribal traditions, and revealed the stark highs and lows of activism within this vulnerable community, where the word 'exploitation' seems to be unheard of, let alone understood.

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## Unique Experience

By Megha, age 12, as told to Priyanka Singh

**Dharampura:** I belong to Perna caste which has been practicing intergenerational prostitution for decades. Many in this caste do not get a chance to go to school. But I am fortunate that I am going to school. I want to become a Police Officer so that I can eradicate this evil in my society.

Apne Aap is helping a lot of girls and women of Perna community as

their centre is located near our community and they conduct many activities there.

On June 19, 2013, I got an opportunity to participate in a programme by Nehru Yuval Kendra (NYK) at ITO, Delhi. The programme was to celebrate 'Youth Week' and included a discussion. The topic of the discussion was 'Youth and human values in changing environment'.

We, (Rita, Monika, Salma, Hasina and I) reached there with Monika *didi* and there was crowd of around 300 youth. There was a speech going on about Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi – their life story, how strong and dedicated they were and how they devoted their life for the welfare of others.

There was also a talk on harmful effects of television and internet on

## Op/Ed

### A Bulwark for Unwed Mothers

**New Delhi:** The woman, whose lover had fathered two children but refused to pay child support, must have felt vindicated when Justice C.S. Karnan ordered him to pay maintenance, in the Madras High Court.

By holding the man liable for the upbringing of his offspring, begat through non-marital sex, the judge has created a more level playing field for single mothers, and relief for children. After all, sex and reproduction is between two people and both should be held responsible for its consequences, regardless of the legal status of their relationship.

Many of us have grown up watching Amitabh Bachchan films in which the eternal mother Nirupa Roy was discarded by husband or lover. In one, she had to bring up two children, one who became a criminal and the other a police officer, both seeking justice from a society which gave so much power to a man, that he could produce children but play no part in their upbringing.

These films narrated the plight of many unwed mothers in India who became second class citizens simply because they had sex without marriage, with or without their consent, were loving and responsible enough not to abandon their children. They ended up economically and socially marginalised.

While national data are not available, a survey conducted by Kerala's Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Department found 563 unwed Dalit mothers in the state. The Kerala Women's Commission puts the actual number at more than 2,000. An investigation led by Deputy Police Inspector-General S Sreejith found that there were more than 1,000 unwed mothers in the tribal areas. According to the KWC, most unwed mothers are 14

to 20 years old and some ended up in prostitution to feed themselves and their children.

Historically and even today, many unwed mothers are Dalit or tribal women, who have been forced by an unequal caste system to be sexually available for upper caste men as their accepted destiny. Their children from such encounters contribute to the cheap labour on which India's economy runs. The women's options are foreclosed, as their time and resources are consumed, bringing up the child.

Justice Karnan's order reflects an empathy with the woman's plight. India's culture, as depicted in the Ramayana, Mahabharata, the Puranas and the Upanishads, reflect struggles between various schools of thought, representing what is right from the point of view of the patriarchal upper castes and what is right from the point of view of various Dalit and tribal groups. Laws and codes are written, challenged re-codified in different periods of history.

Rishi Gautama in the Upanishads honours the unwed mother Jabala by taking over the social responsibility of bringing up her son, Satyakam, by giving him 100 cows, unlike Ram who discards Sita in the Tulsi Ramayan when a dhobi questions the paternity of Luv and Kush.

Justice Karman's order will provide relief to thousands of women, who may want their lovers to share responsibility for bringing up the children of that relationship, but may not want to marry the men in question.

We know that often courts and families trap young women and girls in the prison of oppressive marriages by ordering them to marry their rapists; a remnant of patriarchal thinking that a woman is 'owned' by any man who takes her virginity. And many a young

woman, faced with a future of bringing up a child single-handedly, succumbs to economic necessity as much as social stigma.

Today, male responsibility in a sexual relationship is, at best, limited to offering room and board via marriage or using a condom. Marriage is considered a reward that men give women for being 'good.' It provides women with legal rights to home and property for themselves and their children. For thousands of children and their mothers the link between marriage and legitimacy, both legally and socially, has been so strong that it has become a weapon of control by many men.

Justice Karnan's order may become a precedent and free women from exercising a self-destructive option by pinning financial liability on fathers, inside or outside marriage. However, as a society we have a long way to go in creating progressive and equal norms for fatherhood. Men need to, not just contribute towards child support monetarily, but participate in child rearing too. If men spend more time in child care - thus developing the universally human qualities of patience, empathy and others necessary to raise children - violence and oppression inside families may decrease.

Very often social change is triggered by legal change. Legal frameworks and laws often end up legitimising or de-legitimising certain segments of society.

We know that British laws, which criminalised homosexuality, still leave a whiff of scandal around homosexuals. Thousands of Indian communities that the British named Criminal Tribes, still suffer the stigma of being branded thieves, and are cut off from jobs and education, leading to inter-generational

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## **My Tryst with Right to Information Act**

*By Manish K Jha*

**New Delhi:** Theoretically, the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, gives an important power to the common man to hold the government answerable for everything they do or intend to do in the name of 'We the People of India'. By filing an application under RTI with the concerned authority, one can ask them to give the exact status of a concerned file, action taken or other information we may seek.

After re-locating from Bihar field office to Head Office of Apne Aap Women Worldwide at New Delhi, I was given the task of filing an RTI application to collect information on De-Notified Tribes (DNTs) of India. Under these some sects like *Nat, Kanjar, Bawaria, Sansi and Jagri* are involved in inter-generational prostitution which is a core area of our work. As an organization, Apne Aap's vision is to see the day when no girl or woman can be bought or sold for sex; when the purchase of sex is considered unethical, illegal and prostitution is considered a priority public issue of violence against girls and women in each family and community. Apne Aap advocates self-help, self-organizing and self-empowerment to dismantle the system of sex-trafficking. Before filing the application I explored all possible websites, books, journals, articles on the DNTs but could not find anything substantial. I also visited Renke Commission's office that has been appointed by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Government of India. However, I was unable to get any information at all. I was surprised and wondered as to why there were no official records on the existence of DNTs who were labelled as criminal tribes by the British before Independence. DNTs, or the *vimukta jati* are the tribes that were originally listed under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, as criminal tribes and 'addicted to the

systematic commission of non-bailable offences.' Once a tribe became 'notified' as criminal, all its members were required to register with the local magistrate, failing which they would be charged with a crime under the Indian Penal Code. The Criminal Tribes Act of 1952 repealed this notification making them 'de-notified' tribal communities. This act, however, was replaced by a series of Habitual Offenders Acts, that allowed police to investigate a suspect's criminal tendencies and whether his occupation is 'conducive to settled way of life.' DNTs were reclassified as habitual offenders in 1959.

More surprises were in store for me when in an *Indian Council of Social Science Research* journal I found that about 11 crore of India's population belongs to the DNT and our government has neither data nor any specific welfare schemes for them. Also I came to know that there is severe discrimination among DNTs. A Hindu Nat is scheduled under the category of 'Schedule Caste' in Rajasthan while same Hindu and Muslim Nat based in Bihar schedule under 'Other Backward Class'.

After running from pillar to post for collecting information on DNTs, I finally filed an RTI application for seeking information on DNTs who-practice inter-generational prostitution in Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh.

The questions included :

1. A list of DNTs that practice inter-generational prostitution within Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh
2. Total population of DNTs that practice inter-generational prostitution within Rajasthan, Bihar,

Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh

3. District wise break-up of DNTs that practice inter-generational prostitution in (the above mentioned) states
  4. Are there any specific state government schemes for DNTs that practice inter-generational prostitution relating to housing, land and employment?
  5. Names of the schemes, if there are any.
  6. How many schools (Pre-primary/ Primary/Junior High School / High Schools) are there in the area where DNTs practice inter-generational prostitution ?
  7. Provide district wise DNTs population that practice inter-generational prostitution and school ratio.
  8. Is there specific schemes related to girls/women from the de-notified tribes that practices inter-generational prostitution?
- Of the five states where I had filed the application I got response from Rajasthan only and that was also limited in nature.
- These responses are as per the information I asked above :
1. Information is not available.
  2. Information is not available
  3. Information is not available
  4. Government of Rajasthan will give 300 square foot land to Rural and 50 square foot land to urban Vimukta, Nomadic, Semi Nomadic Tribes as per the notification (1685) of Panchayti Raj and Rural Development Ministry, Rajasthan.

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## Printing on scarf with stenciling

*By Seema Rout*

**Kolkata:** My name is Seema Rout. I represent the Amontran group. The *didis* who came from J. D. Birla Institute at Kolkata taught us printing on scarf with stenciling and to make the hair clasp.

Firstly, when we saw that it was made of cloth, we thought that it was very strange and difficult. We wondered how it was made. We couldn't understand. But when she explained to us the process and made one in front of us, we did it very easily. We couldn't believe that we had done. We felt very nice and enjoyed it because we were very excited.

The *didis* told us this art is a hand craft method of printing which originated in Japan. A stencil is a flat sheet of paper or metal in which a design has been cut. The color is applied to the fabric through the cut out areas, leaving the other areas to remain unaffected. Stencil printing can be done on all kinds of fabric.

We can use it in anything and can use any cloth to make it. We can sell it also and many other new designs can be made by us in different way. What we have learnt, we can utilize in many things in future. Like, we can sell it by using of different clothes, color and new designs. I

mean to say that, we, 10-15 girls, by making a group can sell them together or can teach other children same as *didis* came to teach us.

When I joined to Apne Aap, I was just 4. I didn't know what all I could learn and do. But when I joined to Apne Aap, I participated in trainings and learnt many things. I met many renowned people. I also went to different places from the trainings. I felt very nice. They taught us many things and made me knowledgeable.

## PANEL DISCUSSION

**New Delhi :** Apne Aap Women Worldwide organised a panel discussion on 'Building Bridges across Activism and Academia' at New Delhi in June. Besides AAWW's members it was attended by Professor Ganesh Devy, founder, Tribal Academy at Tejgarh and Director, Sahitya Akademi's Project on Literature and Tribal Languages and Oral traditions; and Professor Malini Bhattacharya, former MP and former chairperson, State Commission for West Bengal. Dr. Abhilasha Kumari, Director, AAWW began the discussion by suggesting that the polarity existing between two key instruments of social change- activism and academia- should be narrowed to bring about positive transformation. She highlighted that the knowledge one can acquire from pursuing both activism and academia can be channelled together; she invited the panel to discuss how this could be achieved. Therefore, the consultation represents an important catalyst for this action within AAWW.

'The pursuit of knowledge will never fail in creating social change', Devy, the panel's first speaker, argued. He emphasised that thinking and studying in isolation can and does affect positive social change. He focussed on the historical significance of a collaboration between activism and academia, and that the chasm has only appeared recently. In India today, he notes a pervasive rush to set up NGOs among academics, relaying the 'shame' professors ascribe to their contemporaries if they haven't combined their research with a form of radical social change. Similarly, the activists who are not attempting to shape policy with their work are not considered among the 'elite' in their field. Devy reminded the audience to recognise that any intellectual, whether an activist or academic, will kick-start social transformation in his/her pursuit of knowledge: "*If academia and activists both work effectively and efficiently, both fields will progress.*"

(continued on pg 8)

(Continued from page 1 **Topisia Jan-sunwayi**)

The efforts of the families to get the Police to register cases of missing children are in vain.

We did not go to any media or newspaper. We came to Apne Aap Women Worldwide (AAWW) to share our problem. They helped us a lot. On June 6 a big meeting was held at Rotary Sadan. Media was also there. We developed confi-

dence to face the meeting. There was Ruchira di, Taj da, Milon Kothari, Anuradha Talwar. We came in front of media and newspaper and told them our story.

We are in a very problematic situation. We want to take the issue forward and get more done to help us. We want our rights back. We want a roof to live. We are in a critical condition. During this rainy season we faced many problems which

we cannot tolerate more. There are health hazards-fever, cough and cold, headache. We want our homes back and children to go to school.

We request AAWW to help us; so that together we get our rights back by fighting against the eviction. In the meeting on November 6 we had developed a confidence to fight and can get our rights against the eviction.

## The Harbingers of Change : Community Workers

*By Parul*

It was a sultry June afternoon when I met Jamila *bua* at her house in Uttari Rampur. Her sister was preparing lunch for her pregnant daughter who was weeping silently in a corner. Raju, our team member, told me her husband beats her regularly and refuses to take responsibility of his family. While she requested Raju to counsel her husband, Jamila *bua* told me that he should be handed over to the police and never be allowed to get out of prison. She pleaded with Raju to help them end the abuse on the young pregnant woman. Raju promised to look into the matter. On our way out, the neighbours surrounded us. They have come to see Raju and Martin *bhaiya* to tell them about the issues they are facing and seek advice. At Chunni's house, the discussion was about getting her daughter admitted in a school. Her daughter is a member of the *Kishori Mandal* at BVK (*Balika Vikas Kendra*). Chunni requested both Raju and Martin *bhaiya* to look into the matter. They both promised to take up the matter right away.

~

Meena di is a proud mother. Her daughter Najmin passed Class X with flying colours recently. I met her at the Forbesganj office one evening to gain deeper insights of her community and work. As a community insider she stood up to end prostitution for herself and her daughters. She works tirelessly for the children and girls of the area, picking them from door-to-door and taking them to BVK in the mornings for her crèche. They sit with her under the thatched roof at BVK, learning rhymes, alphabets and numbers. She worries that if she stops this service, their elder siblings will have to stay home to take care of the young ones and would never get the opportunity to go to school or remedial classes. That evening we discussed about the baby girls who are

bought from hospitals; how the girls, influenced by television serials want to get out of prostitution and

### Column **Diary of a Social Worker**

live with dignity; the beatings and abuse that follow after resisting and how girls are seen as blank cheques waiting to be encashed.

~

Another afternoon I met Fatima at BVK. A *Kishori Mandal* meeting was in progress where a group of girls sat in a circle talking with occasional bursts of laughter. Fatima stood in a corner with her little child clinging to her, navigating the girls' conversation. The discussion began with the Chief Minister's visit to some State sponsored schemes for the girl child and somehow, after much chatter, ended up on discussing the relevance of sports in daily life. The humid afternoon seemed alive in the otherwise sleepy neighborhood. On the walk back, Fatima explained how the girls utilize this as a safe space to talk about a range of issues - from local to global. It ensured a space where the girls built up a strong sense of community, bonding, support and healthy competition amongst each-other.

I had always been curious to understand the relationship between pre-determined structures and agency (that which can bring/affect change) ; the ways in which anything close to 'change' is dealt with in the grassroots. A few years into internships, field-work and development sector later, the mandate that appeals to me is not of a firefighter but that of a systemic change that would impact many lives together.

And translating this 'change' to the communities are the foot soldiers, these community workers. Even though each of them have

faced threats, abuse, violence and have been ridiculed by their own community for turning against them - they continue to do their work with passion and dedication. What keeps their perspectives together after all this? What does it take to risk personal lives? Is it the fervor of youth or the mellowness of age?

They tell me that it is the belief that people are the best agents of change. Meena di said that the chapter of struggle and courage is essential to the book of life. And that in the end, justice would prevail. Meena di and Fatima are crusaders and a ray of hope for others in Uttari Rampur area. Meena di's daughter Najmin tells me that she would like not only to be an engineer one day but also be able to do what her mother does and work for her community. Raju and Martin are like Man Fridays, the women and girls seek advice on various matters and also joke with them. That they are trusted is easily noticeable.

It is their tireless dedication and, sometimes, risk-prone work and the ability to carry on despite many odds that help us understand and connect with our work with much clarity and transparency. I dedicate this post to this league of extraordinary women and men in Forbesganj, Kolkata and Dharampura for their resilience, undying spirit and courage.

~

*Kuch nahin tau kam se kam khawab  
-e-sehar dekha tau hai  
Jis taraf dekha na tha ab tak udhar  
dekha tau hai*

- Asrar-ul-Haq Majaz

Though elusive, yet we dare dream of the dawn,  
We never looked there, now we look for the morn

## Did You Know ?

***By Rajesh Sinha***

If there were no demand for commercial sex, sex-trafficking would not exist in the form it does today. Some common misperceptions behind failure to identify trafficking victims are :

**'Trafficking doesn't happen here.'**

Approaching human trafficking as a crime that occurs only in far off places ignores situations of forced labor or sex trafficking that may be happening closer to home. Human trafficking is not a problem that involves only foreigners or migrants, but one faced in nearly every corner of the world involving citizens who may be exploited without ever leaving their hometown.



**'It's cultural.'**

Holding a person in servitude is not a cultural practice; it is a crime. Some victims are subjected to trafficking by members of their own family or ethnic group. Misperceptions that this is a shared value among an ethnic group ignore the methods of force and coercion used by individual traffickers, and can create a zone of impunity in an ethnic community, with the result that victims in that group will never see their abusers brought to justice. These prejudices fail to reduce victims' vulnerability to exploitation and often obscure the true demographics of who is subjected to certain types of trafficking.

**'She's free to come and go.'**

Popular images of human trafficking include dramatic kidnappings and people held under lock and key. More common, but less visible, methods of control include psychological coercion, debt bondage, withholding of documents and wages, and threats of harm. As in domestic abuse cases, observing a person out in public or taking public transportation does not mean that she is free from the effective control of her trafficker.

"Trafficking doesn't happen where prostitution is legal." The occurrence of trafficking does not depend on the legality of prostitution; it exists whether prostitution is legal, illegal, or decriminalized.

Sources: US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report 2013)

*(Continued from pg 2 Unique Experience)*

They told us about how internet is affecting the mind of youngsters. They said it has given access to pornography which is leading to more violence in society.

They explained various healthy habits like bathing, exercising and obeying parents. They also told us the meaning of youth – full of energy, emotional and dedicated. They also told us about the effects of junk food on youth and how it was a bad thing and changing eating habits of youth.

*(continued from pg 3 A Bulwark for Unwed Mothers)*

prostitution. We know that women in prostitution consider themselves and are considered by mainstream society to be 'bad', while men who exploit them are excused as simply being men. One reason for this is that more women are arrested under the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act for soliciting in a public place than are their pimps and clients. It's the women who end up with criminal records.

The Madras High Court judgment has led to debate on the legitimacy of sex, marriage and paternity and created an opening for India to

move towards a more gender equitable society like Sweden where unwed mothers are paid maintenance support and the father, who is required to pay, must reimburse costs paid from public funds for the maintenance support in full or in part.

*(Continued from pg 1 My Dreams)*

me and my children back to his house. Now I am living with my family very happily, something which had become a dream for me. I am very thankful to the Apne Aap team for its support.

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(continued from pg 5 **Panel Discussion**)

An audience member stressed that art can be an important platform for criticism and a tool for social change. Gupta illustrated this point with her reference to Ferdowsi's *The King of Kings*, a masterpiece of classical literature that preserved and revived the Persian language. She argues that this confirms the poet, or the 'intellectual academic', can be an activist. This point about activism possible within the written word sparked a lively response from Shomona Khanna who highlighted knowledge that cannot be preserved in script, such as inter-generational medicinal knowledge that exists within indigenous tribes. Hereby, this form of activism lies in practical experience that cannot

always be documented easily.

Bhattacharya's ethos centred on teaching and learning as interconnected process, and the notion that the dialogue that occurs between a teacher and her student, is '*activism of a kind*'. The questioning mind signals an academic one, she said. However, Bhattacharya believes the change in nature of higher education and social work has failed to allow teachers to fulfil their roles as activists. So, she reminded staff at Apne Aap to never stop questioning the framework within which its work to perpetuate the forces of positive social transformation created.

Gupta finalised the discussion by highlighting some obstacles to bridging the gap between academia and activism, suggesting that

change is affected by economic motivation, reaching the 'lowest hanging fruit' rather than *Antodaya*, or 'the last girl', a key foundation on which Apne Aap is built.

Kumari concluded the discussion by affirming that introspection is important for all future Apne Aap projects if the charity is to continue making headway with bridging the gap between academia and activism: '*We must reflect on their content and continually engage with communities to assess impact...and we must fight to make spaces for ourselves [to engage in positive dialogue].*' Adaptability, she added, is a vital feature of all AAWW projects that ensures they remain meaningful to the communities served.

(Continued from pg 4 **My Tryst with Right to Information Act**)

5. Free Land allotment to Urban and Rural Vimukta, Nomadic, Semi Nomadic Tribes for their economic and social development
6. Collect Information from Secondary Education Department
7. Collect Information from Secondary Education Department
8. Information is not available

After getting the response I came to know that there is no concrete information on DNTs that practice inter-generational prostitution.



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## Red Light Despatch

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Publisher: Apne Aap Women Worldwide

RNI Number: DELMUL/2008/27727

Printer: SSCreation, New Delhi