



# RED LIGHT DESPATCH

VOLUME VIII, ISSUE 10

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DELHI, KOLKATA, AND FORBESGANJ (BIHAR)

## My Dream To Travel the World -Nisha Kumari

**Forbesganj:** My name is Nisha Kumari. My father's name is Vijay Das. My mother's name is Usha Devi. I am a resident of PCI Chowk in Forbesganj. I am pursuing my B.A. (Honors) in Home Science from Jeera Devi Sheetal Shah Mahila College. My friends and I have been coming to the Apne Aap Center for 4 years now. I have learned how to stitch here. I have also taken part in rallies and learned to raise my voice here.

It was like a dream, when two of my friends and me were lucky to be part of video shooting/a video. We really enjoyed ourselves.

I have lived in Forbesganj all my life. I want to see the world, the world outside. I want to study further too.

**“It was like a dream, when two of my friends and me were lucky to be part of video shooting/a video. We really enjoyed ourselves. I am have lived in Forbesganj all my life. I want to see the world, the world outside.”**

## Acquiring an Adhar Card

- *Gujjo Khatoon / as told to Sanju Kumari*

**Forbesganj:** My name is Gujjo Khatoon and I am living in the red light area of Uttri Rampur Forbesganj. We donot know the world outside. One day we hear about Apne Aap NGO who runs a community center in our locality. We went there with the other women of our community and met Sanju Ji who is the center in charge there. We also met Meena Di and Fatima Di. Fatima Di is from our community and we know her from earlier days. We want to know which type the activity the NGO run there. Sanju Di told us about the activities run by the NGO here in brief. We all surprised to hear about this type of work of intervention for our society. Basically we understodd that

the organization works for the upliftment , protection and empowerment of the victims and survivors of prostitution and also work to empower at risk girls and women. In this centre they do different type of activities and run Mahila Mandal and trained them and support the to become empower to fight the traffickers and pimps to save their future.

*(Continued on page 6)*

## Ruchira Gupta and Apne Aap Archives released by Stanford Libraries and UC Berkeley

- *Khushbakht*

**California:** October 23rd, 2017 marked a very special milestone for Apne Aap Women Worldwide. Recognizing our unique contributions towards the abolition of sex-trafficking, Stanford University and the University of California Berkeley launched “The Ruchira Gupta and Apne Aap Collection” as part of a larger project called Archive on the Legacies of Conflict in South Asia.

Apne Aap's work has developed some of the foremost strategies to combat sex trafficking. Our Founder Ruchira Gupta's holistic community-centered approach addresses both the vulnerability of at-risk girls and women and the vic-

tims and survivors of sex trafficking. This approach has been adopted by organizations all over the world, including UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Fund), as best practices. Stanford University and the University of California Berkeley are now collecting and preserving all material produced by Ruchira Gupta and Apne Aap in order to provide an accessible resource for students and researchers all over the world.

*(Continued on page 7)*

## Op-Ed— Gandhiji and the Indian National Movement

- Ruchira Gupta

*The following are excerpts from Ruchira's article, 'Satyagraha and the Feminizing of the Indian National Movement.'*

The Indian National Movement put up a successful challenge to the brute masculinity of British power by essentially and deliberately feminizing its freedom struggle. M. K. Gandhi called the struggle *Satyagraha*, or the vindication of truth. To Gandhi, this meant that the ends do not justify the means, but the means are the ends; the means we choose dictate the ends we get. 'If you use violent, coercive, unjust means, whatever ends you produce will necessarily embed that injustice,' he wrote. It began in India on 18 April 1917 when Gandhi refused an order of British colonial authorities to leave the district of Champaran, where he was documenting the plight of farmers who had been forced to grow indigo for British planters instead of essential food crops. Under the system known as Tinkathia, one third of the land had to be given for indigo cultivation. This applied to what was called 'factory land' and land under the zamindari system, and not all land. He agreed to submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience, 'in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience'. Thirty years and multiple satyagrahas later, including the famous Quit India movement, after two hundred years of domination, the British were forced to leave India in 1947. When the British left peacefully, the world learned a new possibility from this first case of a nation that gained its independence without a war. It laid the foundation for other struggles of the weak against the mighty and eventually liberated the largest number of humankind in the world—stretching from South Africa to the USA. A large and populist women's movement that had been struggling for almost a century against such customs as child marriage, purdah (veil), sati (burning of widows), temple prostitution (devadasi system), rehabilitation of children of brothels, women's lack of education, and discrimination against widows had already existed, when, at the age of 45, Gandhi returned to India after 20 years in South Africa. Also, around that time, Annie Besant, Margaret Cousins and Dorothy Jinarajadasa were working to establish various women's organizations so that a whole generation of women leaders was created. They established the Women's Indian Association in 1917.

However, these changes elicited little response or enthusiasm from the masses. Women in the poorest homes still had to be reached. So what tipped the

balance and turned this movement into a mass struggle? It was Gandhi's emphasis on the means being the end. Satyagraha made politics spiritual, a truth force, that won over women. Truth, non-violence, fearlessness, ability to manage sexual desire and/or celibacy, control over the possessive instinct, control over greed, control over the palate, manual labour, swadeshi or using of locally made goods, opposition to untouchability and rejection of the caste system, respect for all religions were the tools of the Satyagraha.

Women learnt from participating in *Satyagraha* that one can be strong, even if seemingly weak, to protest against injustice. They also learned that breaking traditions and social taboos for a higher calling was morally uplifting.

His argument for the eradication of 'untouchables'—people outside the caste system whom Gandhi renamed '*Harijan*' or children of god—included a call for caste Hindus to clean sewage in *Harijan* colonies; a reversal of their positions and jobs. His rejection of goods whose raw materials were grown in India, then shipped to British factories and sold back to Indians at a high price, was also a call to support village artisans by buying their goods instead. Millions of volunteers, especially women who could not leave home and did not have an education, were given something tangible to do. Rich and poor, women and men, and entitled and disenfranchised all joined in. Coming to know each other and challenging their customary beliefs about each other changed them. Young high-caste men and women worked in *Harijan* settlements, housewives spun yarn or threw their foreign-made possessions into bonfires, men and women supported wounded soldiers, aristocrats gave up their inherited titles and became known for their personal actions, and factory owners donated funds and personal services to schools and ashrams. These actions changed not just the poor but also the powerful, not just women but also men and not just teetotalers but also alcohol drinkers.

India's freedom struggle included an unprecedented number of women, created an unmatched number of women leaders in politics and society, and feminized, through a process of transformation, to a large extent, millions of men who participated. It also transformed the British by appealing to their better selves and their sense of fair play.

## Diary of a Social Worker

### Difficulties of Staying in a Red-light Area - *Meena Khatoon / translated by Praveen Kumar*

**Forbesganj:** My name is Meena Khatoon and I am from Charmari village, Bhutan. In my earlier days I was trafficked and came to Katihar and started leave in the Kuli Para Red Light area Katihar. I was forced into prostitution and leaved there for approx 10 years. I gave birth two children there and when I get a chance, I ran away from the place and reached in Forbesganj approx 100 kilometer from there but my daughter who was approx 3-4 years left there with the traffickers. I was helpless and nobody who help me to rescue my daughter from there.

When I reach Forbesganj. I met a person who shifted me the Red Light Area now in Forbesganj. I again back to a red-light area here I married with a man and gave birth two daughters here. I stayed here from 2001 and open a small shop in front my house. After a few years, in 2004 I met Tinku Khanna a senior member of an NGO Apne Aap Women Worldwide and she offered me to join the NGO who works for the betterment of the life of prostituted and at risk women and girl. They have opened a center in the red light area in Uttri Rampur I August 2004. I have joined with us there and do the activities as per the program planned for the centre.

In 2007 with the help of Ruchira di, the founder of

Apne Aap, rescued my daughter from Katihar brothel and now she is leading a better life with her husband and a baby in Delhi. My son was now reading in a college with the support of my daughter in Delhi and living with her.

I left the Red Light area in 2011 with the support of Apne Aap and buy a small piece of land in the other place named Bhagkohalia in Forbesganj and now living a better life here. My two daughters are now living with me in Forbesganj and continue their study form a college. My younger daughter is living in Patna and study in Magadh Mahila college in Bsc with Mathematics by the support of Apne Aap. I am a senior member of Apne Aap Women Worldwide now and leading a simple and peaceful life outside the red light area. I am very thankful to Apne Aap specially Tinku di who shown me the way of better life and support me in the critical situations.

## Advocacy

### Talking About Sex-Trafficking at Studio Adda - *Juanita Kakoty*

**Delhi:** On 14 October 2017, I participated in StudioAdda's *15th HashtagAdda* on 'Crimes Against Women in India.' The other panelists were Geetha Nambisan (Jagori), Shaheen Malik (Human Rights Law Network) and Shikha Mittal (BeArtsy). It was wonderful to share the space with them and bring forth personal and organisational experiences to weave a conversation on issues of importance for women. Geetha spoke of the need to re-construct cities as safe spaces for women; Shaheen – who is an acid attack survivor – expressed the personal anguish of a survivor, the constant negotiation with one's identity post attack, and exhorted all never to purchase acid from shops. Shikha moderated the session and urged all to look within and see how one has been perpetuating patriarchal values in one's life. I spoke about how Apne Aap Women Worldwide has, in the last 15 years, not only conducted field and policy interventions toward ending sex-trafficking but has also managed to establish that to address sex-trafficking one needs to address the intersectionalities of caste, class, gender, age, etc. I also shared field experiences to convey how hard it is for one to exit prostitution and that prostitution is but gendered and sexual violence.

## Being Displaced at Topsia, Kolkata

- Mumtaz Bibi / as told to Sara Khan

**Kolkata:** My name is Mumtaz and I have been working with Apne Aap for many years. Initially, our meeting was set up with the lawyer fighting our case but that was cancelled last minute. I suggested that we still have a meeting since I had already taken time from the women. So, Sahana di, Sara & Rachna decided to meet with the women.

We have been fighting this battle for almost 5 years. Many women have moved away from Topsia while, others think there is no hope. But, there are still a few women willing to go till the end. In the meeting that took place, we talked about various things. We talked about important things and even joked over some tea and biscuits. Sahana di has been visiting us for years and many of the women see her a mother.

But, it is getting more and more difficult to garner support. Before, I could gather 100 women for one meeting, now barely 20 show up. Many think there is no hope, since this battle has been going on for years now.

We talked about how many of us had to marry off our children young to protect them from traffickers. We also talked about how simple things like going to the bathroom have become difficult. We don't have any bathrooms. There is public bathroom near our houses which charges Rs 6 for a shower. Imagine a family of 5- we'd be spending Rs. 30 per day and close to Rs.1000 per month just to use the toilet.

We need more meetings like this which will assure the women and their families. Meetings where women can just talk about their difficulties and hardships will even go a long way.

We have been fighting to get our rights for a long time. If we don't win this would be all for nothing.

We don't want to give up. But, we need Apne Aap's continued support and encouragement.

**“But, it is getting more and more difficult to garner support. Before, I could gather 100 women for one meeting, now barely 20 show up. Many think there is no hope, since this battle has been going on for years now.”**

### Did You Know?

#### **In India:**

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

#### **Globally:**

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

## Celebrating Diwali

— as heard by *Khushboo Mishra*

**Najafgarh:** *My name is Balma.* I belong to Sapera community. I study in MCD Primary school and live with my mother. My father died few years back and brothers travel to different cities for the work. I, recently, celebrated Diwali in the community with Apne Aap team and other community women and friends. We made rangoli in a group and decorated it with colours and diyas. Apne Aap team also distributed snacks and juices. It was a fun filled Diwali.

*My name is Ankur.* I belong to Sapera community. I celebrated Diwali in the community with Apne Aap team and other children from the Perna, Sapera and Singhi community. I reached very late to the celebration venue and didn't make a rangoli. Last year, I too had made a beautiful rangoli in the shape of five petal flower. This year I was watching others making a rangoli.

*My name is Bebo.* I belong to Singhi community. By the time I reached to the celebration venue, all the rangoli colours had finished. I enjoyed snacks and Khushboo didi also distributed Biscuits in our community after the celebration. I ate five packets of cream biscuits.

*My name is Gunnu.* I do not go to school. I was very happy during Diwali this time. I had participated in the Ceramic workshop organised in January. Anu didi came from New York to teach us how to make ceramic items. I enjoyed the workshop and used to finish all the household chores before she use to arrive. On Diwali, I received Rs 1000/- for the work that I had done during the ce-

ramic workshop. Apne Aap raised money by selling those items and distributed the money among the women and girls who had participated in this workshop. I had bought a beautiful jeans and tshirt with that money.

*My name is Sunaina.* I belong to Perna community. I study in 7th standard at a government school. I made rangoli during the Diwali celebration in the community and decorated it with the beautiful coloured diyas. After making rangoli, we all wished each other and were given snacks by Apne Aap team. Some women and girls were also given money for the work that they did during the ceramic workshop in January 2017. Anu didi was very humble and taught us how to make ceramic items patiently. I also received Rs 500/- for my work during the ceramic workshop.

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## The World Outside

### My Experience at St. Xavier's College —*Juhu Khatoon / translated by Shinjini Chowdhury*

**Kolkata:** My name is Juhi. I am a second year student at St. Xavier's College, Kolkata. My experience at college has been fun. The first day, Jha Uncle took me to college. Later, he told me numbers of buses that ply to St. Xavier's. I was scared. "How will I travel to college?" I thought. But now, everything is alright.

Initially, it was scary. Everyone would speak in English and would often stare at me. I could hardly converse in English. I was afraid of what people would say if I made mistakes. However, my first history class was a lot of fun. We learnt about later Vedic political life. We also had a lady teacher for history. She was great. She helped me a lot and, because I told her that I have difficulty with English, she would ask me whether I have understood. English class was difficult. I could not make much progress at the beginning as I hardly understood anything! But, I made new friends who helped me. I learnt from my friends. They care for me and I get to know something new from them each day.

I really enjoy my time at St. Xavier's. I have good friends. The canteen makes tasty food. Whenever Laboni Di comes to college, she eats something there and treats me and my friends as well.

Adiwasi Diwas is celebrated in my college. This is new for me as this day was never celebrated in Bihar. Everyone wears saris. We even celebrate Mother Teresa's birthday. I wore a sari on that day and had a lot of fun.

**"Initially, it was scary. Everyone would speak in English and would often stare at me. I could hardly converse in English. I was afraid of what people would say if I made mistakes."**

#### *(Continued from page 1)*

We all become the part of Apne Aap Mahila Mandal and take part in all the activities on daily basis in the center. One day We hear a news that a "Jan Sunvai" program arranged by the organization in the center for the women and girls of our community and the DM of Araria, former Chief Justice Mr. V. N. Sinha and retired Police officer Mr. P.M. Nair will be present in this occasion. This program was organized there on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2017. We have ask to present their and submit a petition to the officers to do something for the betterment of our lives. On the time we all about 100 women and girls were present the center. The program starts at 11 am and we all meet with the officers and submitted petitions to the. In this program the DM of Araria announced that and instructed the SDO Forbesganj to arrange a camp in the center for preparation of the Ration card for us on the second day. We all filled with glad and welcome the announcement of Mr. DM by clapping the hands.

Next Day on 19<sup>th</sup> March at 3 pm, SDO Sri Anil Kumar with his team members reached our center for filling the forms to prepare our ration cards. Ruchira di, Tinku di, Praveen Sir and other senior members

from Apne Aap also present there. We have asked earlier to reach there with all the govt. ID, s and relevant documents for preparation the ration card. We all stand in a queue and wait for our terms. Form filling work starts and we all approximately 25 women filled their form for ration card. Forms were collect with the documents and next day they asked us to prepare a affidavit from court regarding it. Next day on 20<sup>th</sup>, we all visited the court with Sanju di and prepared their affidavit and submitted the entire document there in the ration card office. A receiving was given to us as a proof.

After a long wait of 6 months, finally in October we received their ration card. Now we are waiting first time to receive their low cost ration from govt. shop. It is only possible with the support of Apne Aap. We all are thankful to Apne Aap and proud to be a member of Apne Aap.

**My First Day at Apne Aap**  
**My First Visit to the Community**  
 — *Hakim Afzal*

**Delhi:** So, it's a day before Diwali on 18/10/2017 that I leave for the Apne Aap Women Worldwide office in Delhi expecting a usual work day, only to be surprised by what awaited me as I entered. I was informed earlier that the team will be visiting Dharampura, which is home to the communities we are working with in the Najafgarh area of Delhi. At the office, the team was making arrangements for this field visit and just after exchanging our own Diwali gifts, we set course, expected to be joined by other team members already present at the location.

As we approached close, I could not help but notice the stark disconnect of this area with the structural magnanimity of the urban lifestyle in Delhi. Beautiful residential complexes got replaced by shabby closely packed apartments, narrow lanes full of pot-holes in place of wide and concrete lanes, empty dirt filled plots in place of green and clean parks and unkempt drainage overflowing across the path we tread. We reached the end of the road and there was our destination just outside a house where a flock of children aged somewhere between 4 years to 13 years were busy making "Rangoli" on the road.

Warm greetings were exchanged and the children, excited at our arrival, rushed to greet us, occasionally posing for selfies and pictures. Our deputy-director Ms. Juanita Kakoty instantly started conversing with the women folk who sat inside the

house on a marble flooring overlooking the road. She engaged with them on everything from Apne Aap's work and goals in the area to issues about family planning and economic prospects for women, sharing her own personal experience and also experiences of other successful women. Meantime, we got busy helping the young ones in lighting up the earthen lamps as a mark of celebrating the festival of light. The little ones showed awareness shouting slogans for a cracker-free Diwali and sharing their knowledge about the festival.

Women and children who participated in the ceramic workshop organized earlier by Apne Aap were monetarily rewarded and with that and a promise for a continued support, the gathering was dispersed. We then moved around in the neighbourhood, meeting women of other caste-communities and engaging with them as well. Observing such a connect with the community, I really felt I was part of a truly noble and rightfully essential change.

*(Continued from page 1)*

The Archive will also set in motion plans to campaign for The Last Girl- the girl who is the most vulnerable to trafficking, and is usually poor, low-caste, and a teenager. This campaign aims to lobby foundations, governments, international organizations and UN agencies to start investing in The Last Girl.

This Archive installation and launch of the research, education, and advocacy initiative was held in the Stanford Library, and was attended by prominent intellectuals, researchers, and supporters. The Ruchira Gupta and Apne Aap Archive Collection was presented by Dr. Angana Chatterji, who spoke about the journey and impact of both Ruchira Gupta and Apne Aap, delineating how Gupta built Apne Aap up to become a formidable player in the global anti-trafficking movement. It was an emotional moment for all of us who work with or have worked with Apne Aap throughout the years, and a

turning point for open access to tried and tested anti-trafficking best practices.

**“The Archive will also set in motion plans to campaign for The Last Girl - the girl who is the most vulnerable to trafficking, and is usually poor, low-caste, and a teenager. This campaign aims to lobby foundations, governments, international organizations and UN agencies to start investing in The Last Girl.”**

## Poems

### Oh Rainbow!

Oh rainbow, oh rainbow,  
How lovely are your colors?  
Oh rainbow, oh rainbow,  
How lovely are your colors?  
Purple, red and orange too,  
Yellow, green and blue so true.  
Oh rainbow, oh rainbow,  
How lovely are your colors?

**Selected by:** Bharti Kumari  
**Area:** Forbesganj

### A New Year

A new year has begun  
January is the month number one.  
It is the start of a whole new year,  
There is nothing to fear!  
A new year for trying  
Not for sighing.  
What goals can you make?  
For your own shake.  
For a better you,  
For a year this is new!

**Selected by:** Amrita Kumari  
**Area:** Simraha



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## Red Light Despatch

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