



# RED LIGHT DISPATCH

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DELHI, KOLKATA, AND FORBESGANJ (BIHAR)

## *My Dream*

**Kolkata:** My name is Abeer. I am 10 years old. I live under a bridge in Kolkata. I live with my parents and my three sisters. We do not have a house of our own. Our small hut is made up of rags and pieces of scrap that me and my siblings collected from the city.

I study in class 3. I go to school everyday. **My dream is to become a scientist when I grow up.** I want to find cure for diseases that kill children and adults in our country. I want to make medicines that are affordable so that people who are poor can also buy them. In my neighborhood I have seen many families struggling to get treatment for diseases because they cannot afford medicines. Some of the treatments are too expensive for them. When I grow up I want to help these people in need so that no one has to die because of lack of money to buy medicines.

## *Celebrating Gandhi Jayantii* *Kiran Kumari*

**Bihar:** My name is Kiran Kumari and I am a student of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Avasiya Vidyalaya Simraha run by the organization Apne Aap women Worldwide which situated in Forbesganj. I am studying in class 8th with the other 22 girls who are also staying here with us. This is a girls' hostel where 100 girls from different cast and community live together for study. We take part in studies in addition to studying here. We are taught karate, sports jump, sewing embroidery, dance music and other activities here. Along with these activities,

we are here to open forum, gender related information, legal information, asset training. Along with all this, a lot of cultural events are also organized here in which our parents are also invited and we exhibit their art in front of everyone and are also rewarded. We all get together here and study with respect. I have all the facilities for us not only in the hostel here.

*(Continued on page 6)*

## *Texture Design workshop at Primary school* *Renuka*

**Delhi:** My name is Renuka. I am 12 years old. I live in Dharampura, Najafgarh in Delhi. I study in class 6. My favourite subject is science. I love to learn about the world around us. The different animals and plants found on earth interest me a lot. I also love drawing and making colourful pictures. There are a lot of activities which happen in our school. Apne Aap Women Worldwide NGO conducts these activities. They work with women and children in Dharampura area near my school. A lot of workshops are held in our school. They bring

people from many backgrounds to our school. The people tell us about their life and inspire us with their stories. They also conduct many activities in school like painting, origami, sports lessons etc. This time we were told that a texture design workshop will take place in our school. I got very excited about it because it meant we would be using colours.

*(Continued on page 7)*

*Dancing her way out of fear: tale of hope from Kolkata's red-light area*  
*Surya S Pillai*

New Delhi, Oct 22 Born in a red-light area in abject poverty, she was married to an abusive man when she was 16 and fought a four-year battle to get custody of her son. The odds were stacked impossibly high, but Uma Das fought back and is today a much sought after dance teacher.

Just 25, she also manages a unit to make sanitary napkins in Munshiganj, the red-light area in West Bengal's capital Kolkata.

Walking firmly on the path towards independence and empowerment, Uma Didi, as she is known, is a beacon of hope for other young women in Munshiganj who, like, her, refuse to be sucked into the vortex of flesh trade.

"My mother was sold to a brothel. I was born in a red-light area. All my life, I have seen fear in the eyes of young girls. My mother fought tooth and nail to protect me from the flesh trade," Uma told in a telephonic interview from Kolkata.

When she was 19, Uma witnessed a sex worker being burnt alive by a customer over a paltry sum of money and decided she would not allow young lives go up in flames.

The activist saw hope in dance and used it as a potent tool to hit back at patriarchy and poverty.

She joined Apne Aap Women Worldwide, a charitable trust. Apne Aap was founded by 22 women from Mumbai's red light district, with a vision of a world where no woman could be bought or sold.

Undeterred by threats from pimps, brothel owners and others, Uma uses "dance therapy" to help girls of the red-light area choose a life of dignity.

She teaches Rabindra Sangeet Nritya, a classical based dance form invented and devised by Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, to girls in the area.

Uma learnt the dance form at Kolkata Sanved, an NGO which uses Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) as an alternative approach to counselling, psycho social rehabilitation, self-expression and empowerment.

The unique therapy model is designed to heal and

empower individuals from marginalised communities, including survivors of gender-based violence and at-risk children and youth.

"I always wanted to dance. It is my salvation. Today, as a part of Apne Aap, I teach dance to girls of my area. We also run a sanitary pad making unit. Girls are also taught to make jute bags. These girls are often scoffed at for the work they do, but what they need is an avenue to earn their livelihood with dignity," Uma asserted.

Uma is also an international celebrity of sorts. Held out as an example for others, she has met former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and American actor Ashley Judd.

"I met Hillary Clinton in 2012 when she visited Kolkata. I tied a band with the line 'Cool Men Don't Buy Sex' on her wrist. We met Ashley Judd last year when she visited my house as part of an initiative by Apne Aap," she said.

Uma, who helped show many young women the light at the end of the proverbial tunnel, has waged a long, often lone battle against power.

"When I started out, I was a nobody. I got threats from pimps, brothel owners and middlemen. I have led many raids in brothels and rescued young girls. Small kids are lured with the promise of chocolates and sweets. They are then sold off. We worked hard to create an effective circle of discreet informers who tip us off about any immoral activity," she said.

"I want to raise my son by giving him a good education. I still remember that horrible day when a sex worker was burnt alive, I hope no life goes up in flames. I will continue to protect young girls from the flesh trade, just the way my mother protected me." SRY MIN MIN

*(This story was originally published in the Outlook on October 22, 2018)*

## *Experience of Dimagi App Mobile Asset Survey*

### *Amit Kumar*

**Bihar:** My name is Amit Kumar and I am associated as a computer trainer here with the organization Apne Aap Women worldwide forms 2015. I am trying to empowering the girls by giving them computer education here. I have given computer education to 200 girls here so far and some of these girls are now doing some work by learning the computer. And some of these girls are now doing some work by learning the computer. Four of the five girls are doing some work in this organization and some money is also being reduced. Girls do a lot of work by teaching a computer here, I like it very much. The objective of the organization is to make girls of these poor, backward communities, self-sufficient and cohesive, and the institution has been making hard efforts for years too. Being an active worker of the organization, it is also my duty that I should strengthen these efforts of the organization on my behalf.

A tool has been developed by the institution to measure the empowerment of women and girls, which is called asset card here. All the members of the organization meet women and girls, talking to them, filling this card and also checking that they did not really achieve this achievement. We have around 2000 of such beneficiaries in Farbisganj, Bihar, which has been issued the Asset Card through the organization. All the workers we meet from time to time and keep updating this

asset card whether the achievement has so far been achieved and what is still to be done. This is a very effective tool for the empowerment of women & girls.

In 2016, a contact was signed between Apne Aap and the Dimagi Foundation to develop the better option to collect the data from the asset tool. The Dimagi foundation developed a mobile app, through which we can make the data available on the surveys soon and we will not have any problem with this work. We took the training of this work in October 2018 and after two days we started working in the area to collect data. We were engaged in this work by the organizers of the organization, which included Praveen Ji, Khushboo, Shaukat, I, Sanju and Madhu.. We used to make a team of two separate people in the area every morning and used to collect data till late evening. After saying very difficult we were able to compile 50-60 data in one day. And the whole team knew together to collect 300-350 data per day. After a lot of hard work we completed this data collection work in the last 10 days. It was a very difficult experience, but it was interesting that we had completed this task within the stipulated time frame. This experience was also a lot of education for me because I participated for the first time in such 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

## Oil Painting workshop in the community, Tanya

**Delhi:** My name is Tanya. I live in Dharampura in Delhi. I belong to the Singhi community. Our community works as rag pickers and beggars. Our community is very poor. We live hand to mouth. Most people from my community do not have a home. We collect scraps from all over the city and then use them to make small huts. There is no running water in our area. The pipelines run dry as soon as the summer starts. A lot of kids from our community do not go to school. They go out to pick rags and beg. The women make toys out of clay and sell them.

Apne Aap conducted a painting workshop in the community. All the kids from the community got together on the veranda of a house. There were children from Sapera and Perna community as well. We all sat on the floor. Khushboo didi told us that we will learn about oil painting today. I thought we would be painting with oil but she told us that oil

painting means painting with oil colours. They come in tubes. Different oils are mixed in the paint for using them. Oil colours look like toothpaste but only colourful. Linseed oil and turpentine oil are mixed with the paint to make them easy to spread on the canvas. The painting is done in layers.

After telling us about oil painting, we were divided into small groups. I along with four of my friends made one group. We were given many colours to choose from. We had to choose two and use them to pain something. We took red and green colour. We made a beautiful garden with roses in it. It looked very nice. We were given our paintings to take home as well.

### Get yourself involved!

### Be a part of the campaign!

Click a selfie and share it with us on the Facebook Page 'Cool Men Don't Buy Sex' <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Cool-Men-Dont-Buy-Sex/624526271001934> with #CoolMenDontBuySex #Selfie #ApneAap.

The Cool Men Don't Buy Sex Campaign is a call to end demand for sex trafficking which highlights the role that men play in fostering the sex industry.



Apne Aap's "Cool Men Don't Buy Sex" campaign was born to draw attention to the demand side of sex trafficking - the traffickers, pimps, and purchasers of sex. Apne Aap advocates for the criminalization of these individuals – they are responsible for maintaining sexual slavery and continue to exploit women and girls every day in India.

## Receiving school bags from interns Sanju Kumari

**Bihar:** My name is Sanju Kumari Jha and I am associated with Apne Aap Women Worldwide as a center In- Charge in Ant Knya Center, Uttri Rampur run by the organization for the children, adolescent girls and women who belonging from the Nat, Schedule Cast, Schedule Tribes and Denitrified Tribes community. I am associated here from 2013 and working with these people here. This organization has been working here for the last 15 years to prevent women and adolescent girls from falling into the clutches of sex trade. In this connection, we run various programs here in the center for them, and also work to connect with them. For the small children of the survivors of trafficking a school is also run in the center, in which children from 2-3 years to 10-12 years of age who do not go to school, are given education by joining the class. They are also given other items related to books and education by the institution. They are also given food during the day.

From time to time many foreign students come from outside and read to these children and share their various experiences with them. Those people sometimes give sweets, sometimes copies pencils, sporting goods and sometimes even school bags for their children.

In August 2018 three students named Maria, Lisa Uri Kareena, came here from Sweden for three months in connection with their work. They went to the center every day to organize various activities with these children and to teach these children. They used to spent their entire day with these children and they had a lot of love for these children.

On October 10, in connection with their work on the organizations, they had to go to Kolkata. The children were very sad to hear this and these three were also very sad. They had arranged sweets, school bag and footballs for the children too. Children are very happy with all these things. But when these people started to depart, all the children would start crying. They had become very close to the children there. The love they had shown these kids was commendable. They always treated them with a lot of empathy. The children also felt it. They were happy about the gifts but also sad about them leaving. It was a bittersweet goodbye.

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*A testimony about my first field visit with Apne Aap*

*Ana Carolina Belotto*

It was October 9th, 2018 and it was nothing more than another ordinary day in Delhi. I woke up earlier than usual that morning, with a mixture of anxiety and fear for what I was about to experience in my first visit in one of the communities supported by Apne Aap. Although I come from Brazil, an under-development country and as such, full of social problems and inequalities of all types (we are masters on this, believe me), I had never visited a poor community before. I think that explains, in part, my nervousness. The other part, though, came from the fact that I had been told that, in the community we were going, girls on the age of 12 or 13 were forced to get married and after giving birth of their first child, they were sent to prostitution by their own family. They would do between 10 to 15 programs per night for less than \$1 each. It was hard for me to believe that such horrible thing existed in the world and knowing that I would be confronted with that reality scared me in a way it is hard to describe. But in order to continue, I took a long breath and reminded myself of my bigger purpose of travelling to India, which was, through different possible ways, leave that dangerous spot that we call "comfort zone". When I first stepped in into the community, all that fear and anxiety gave place to a feeling more close to shock and sadness. The first thing that called my attention was how those human-beings could live (or shall I say survive?) in such inhospitable conditions. I suppose kitchen and toilets are words out of their vocabulary, once the cooking and the realizing were all done in an outside area, all to-

gether with cows, goats, dogs, tons of trash and a stink water channel that reminded me of a sewer, although clearly could not be it, since basic sanitation was not part of the reality there. Inside the huts, women were sleeping, trying to physically recover themselves from the exhaustive night out at "work". The majority of them did not want to talk to us, I suppose because of shame of simply mental and emotional exhaustion – which I believe they cannot recover from through an afternoon sleeping. Some of them, nonetheless, were outside and those kind and curious eyes turned on my direction made me go deeper in whichever feelings I was experiencing at that moment. The high point for me, though, was meeting Asha. Around her 13 years old, on the contrary of the community standard, she was going to school and told me with excitement how she loved it and how she wanted to be a singer when she grows up. Meeting her was like turning a switcher inside my mind from extreme sadness to hope. Hope that, instead of the final, set destination, this is just a stone on the pathway of what could be a much more dignified future for those people. The day was October 9th, 2018 and it was definitely not an ordinary day on my world, since I came back from that a completely different person. Thank you Apne Aap for the opportunity and for making me feel part of what could be a solution to those people. I definitely want to give back to my community when I am back home and experiencing those 6 weeks with you was the perfect school for that!

*Continued from page 1*

On 15 June 2007, The United Nations General Assembly announced that October 2nd will be celebrated as the International Day of Non-Violence.

Gandhi had a natural love for 'truth' and 'duty'. With his complete dedication and confidence, Gandhi freed India from the British Rule and proved the world that freedom can be achieved with non-violence. Even today his teachings are encouraged to stay away from violence and find peaceful solutions to conflicts. For Gandhi, Truth and Non-violence was his entire philosophy of life.

Like other events, on October 2, the Gandhi Jayanti program was also organized on this. In this program, many important people were present on behalf of the institution and on behalf of our middle school. Some of our

non-practitioners also came. The program started with the offering of flowers on the portrait of Gandhi ji. All the people who were present here offering flowers on the portrait of Gandhiji. After that many people told us about Gandhiji and advised to follow their ideals. The competition was organized to create essay writing, poetry reading and painting on this occasion for us. I got a second prize in poetry recitation. All these prizes were arranged by the organization Apne Aap. We were very happy to participate in this program and in the future we took a path to follow Gandhi's ideals and principles.

Kiran Kumari Student,  
KGBV Simraha

## *Attending Calligraphy Workshop Sunaina*

**Delhi:** My name is Sunaina. I am 14 years old. I belong to the Perna community. I live in Delhi with my parents and siblings. In our community, women of the family go out to earn money. The men of the community do not work at all. All they do is drink and smoke the entire day. The women on the other hand do all the housework and go out to earn as well. I help in the housework at my home. I also take care of my siblings. There is not a lot of time left for fun activities.

Apne Aap Women Worldwide comes to our community very often. They have been coming to our homes for seven years now. Shashibala ma'am works on the field with us. We share our concerns and problems with her. She along with the rest of her team tries to solve the problems.

They conducted a calligraphy workshop in the community. All the children were gathered in the house of a neighbor. They have a big hall where all

of us sat in rows. Khushboo didi was present there with a calligrapher. We started by giving our introductions. Then the calligrapher started the workshop by explaining what calligraphy is. It is an art form. He showed us different types of pens used in calligraphy.

Different strokes are used to create beautiful designs and words. We can even do calligraphy with a simple pen if we know the techniques. We were shown how to use a simple pen to write beautifully. Calligraphy can also be seen on many monuments around Delhi.

We all were given a sheet of paper and colourful pens to choose from. We then proceeded to write our names using the techniques we had been taught. It was quite a learning experience.

### *Continued from page 1*

We were asked if we know what texture means. Then the teacher explained to us that texture means the way that things look or feel. Everything has some type of texture. We describe things as being rough, smooth, silky, shiny, fuzzy and so on. Some things feel just as they appear. Some things look like they are rough but are actually smooth. Different things have different textures even our hands. My hands are smooth but my mother's hands are not.

We were asked to collect different textured materials all over the school and bring them to the class. We made groups and started to look for things which have texture. The teacher asked us to touch things to feel their texture. At the end of the collection we had collected many things like leaves, flowers, cloth, paper, bird feather, some stones and a brush. We then sat in a circle and passed on things to each other and felt the texture of the things

Next we were given poster colours. I was very excited to see all the colours. We were asked to choose from a set of bright colours. We mixed colours with water and then dipped the things we had collected in colours. We then painted with the things. All the different things made different textures on paper. There were different patterns which they made. Everyone had such a fun time colouring with the things. At the end there were so many beautiful drawings we had made. We put up the drawings on our class walls. They looked wonderful. I am looking forward to more of these workshops. They are so much fun.

Poems

**Sky**

Whose sky is that? I think I know.  
Its owner is quite happy though.  
Full of joy like a vivid rainbow,  
I watch her laugh. I cry hello.

She gives her sky a shake,  
And laughs until her belly aches.  
The only other sound's the break,  
Of distant waves and birds awake.

Vandna

**Gandhi**

Clad in white from head to toe  
He walked to Dandi in a row  
He broke the salt law on the shore  
Then troubled the British some more  
He walked with men and women  
He also loved children  
He united the country from north to  
south  
Then he led us to freedom from op-  
pressor's mouth

Riya



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**Red Light Dispatch**

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