



RED LIGHT DESPATCH

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DELHI, KOLKATA, AND FORBESGANJ (BIHAR)

My Dream To become a police officer —Suraj Das

Kolkata: My name is Suraj Das. I am 6-year-old. My mother's name is Uma Das. My mother is a social worker. She works with Apne Aap as a youth leader and sanitary unit supervisor. We live at Munshiganj redlight area, Kolkata. We belong to a very poor family. It's difficult for my mother to provide education for all of us. From 2017, my mother admitted me in Apne Aap Bridge course, where aunty of Apne Aap taught me to read and write. Later, they enrolled me in the Khidderpore Academy high school where I am studying now.

We are the blessed children in the redlight area. We could at least go to schools. I learnt drawing from Apne Aap.

Apne Aap is just everything to me now; I get a lot of opportunities since I joined. Once during English class, my class teacher asked what I want to become in life. I told him, "I want to be a police officer". I know being police might be a difficult job for me, but I want to try. Because, it is my dream. It has a lot of authority in the society and they are important people for enforcing the law and providing a sense of security to all. If I feel good about something, I want to choose that as my career. I will try my best to keep this as my aim. Being aimless in life might distract us from our goal and in this place that is quite possible.

Dharampura girls and women celebrated International Women's day

— By Chandavati/ as translated by Khushboo Mishra

Delhi: My name is Chandavati. I live in Dharampura with my family. My husband works as a labourer at a construction site. Sometimes I too help him at the construction site, which further gets added to our family income.

I have three children and fortunately all of them go to school. My youngest daughter studies at MCD Primary school in standard IV. My daughter is very good in her studies and always comes first in her class. The class teachers and school Principal appreciate and love her. I feel very happy when I see so many people loving my daughter.

She has also attended community classes and robot training workshop supported by Apne Aap. My daughter

told me that Apne Aap staff comes to her school and organise various art classes, craft classes, storytelling session, open mic session etc due to which many children have started coming regularly to school and enjoy these sessions.

In January, I had attended pottery workshop organised in community by Apne Aap. That workshop went for two weeks and Anupama Nagaraj had come from America to teach this art form to us.

On March 8, Apne Aap had organised International Women's Day. All women and girls from Perna, Sapera and Singhi were invited to celebrate this occasion together.

(Continued on page 6)

Submission of petition at Jan Sunvai Program

— Irfana Khatoon/ as dictated to Praveen Kumar

Bihar: My name is Irfana Khatoon and I am a member of Kishori Mandal run by Apne Aap Women Worldwide in Uttri Rampur Basti vikash Kendra, Forbesganj, Bihar. Since the last three years I am associated with Apne Aap. I am doing my Bachelor of Arts from Mahila College Forbesganj.

My father's name is Md Karim. He sells vegetable to earn a living. I have three sisters and two brothers living in the land allotted by government in Forbesganj Mela ground. The house is constructed of mud along with dwellers. We are very poor. It is not possible for all us to get education from my parents earning. Fortunately, all of us are getting education and our

parents are working really hard to make this possible. My parents sell vegetables nearby our house, by arranging it on a sheet and sitting under a tree the entire day. It is a difficult to earn money for run the family.

One day, I hear about the organization named Apne Aap Women Worldwide, whose main mission is to end sex trafficking and empower marginalised girls and women, and run a community centre near our village. I went to Apne Aap centre with my friends and met Sanju Didi, Meena Didi and Fatima Didi. I asked Apne Aap staff to tell something about their organization and also explain how it works for the girls.

(Continued on page 7)

Op-Ed— ‘Battered bodies and minds: invisible diseases of women in prostitution’ published in the Health Post

This article on survivor activists was written by Gunjan Sharma and published at Health Post.

Grizelda Grootboom, a prostitution survivor, is suffering from a life-threatening infection. Her knee hurts and she feels breathless as she talks -- perhaps a side-effect of hundreds of injections a pimp gave her in her legs in initial years of prostitution so that she could not retaliate.

The medicines she takes for this severe infection that she probably acquired from one of her customers, pushes her digestive system to the limit and makes her run to toilet every half an hour.

Grizelda was gang-raped by a group of boys in her village when she was 9. Her mother remarried and left Grizelda to fend for herself. She was forced to live on the streets of her village near Cape Town.

At 18, she moved to Johannesburg where one of her friends promised to help her find a job. But instead she was trafficked on arrival in Yeoville, a Johannesburg suburb.

The pimp she was handed over to kept her tied up in a dark room for two weeks to force her into sex slavery.

There are millions of women like Grizelda. A 2014 report by Scelles, a French charity foundation, says that there are about 40 million sex workers across the world -- most are victims of human trafficking, lured, duped or forced into sexual slavery by pimps and traffickers, largely due to their poor socio-economic status.

They work in brothels, massage parlours, strip clubs and find it hard to escape.

Most of them are bruised emotionally and physically and suffer from a number of diseases -- a result of repeated sexual assaults. But unfortunately, concerns about their health have been limited to protection against unwanted pregnancies.

Jackie Lynne, 64, from Canada, for example, starts her day by popping up a handful of coloured tablets and capsules. While she is suffering from a host of diseases, what bothers her most is the complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a neurological condition. "It happens to people who experience trauma over a long period. At times I feel that my mind would blow up," says Jackie.

Her mother was into prostitution. Jackie was a child when she was first raped. "All the men and women in my surroundings were into sex trade. I was repeatedly raped and was made to believe that I was good for prostitution only," she says, looking at a bird sitting on a tree at India International Centre, Delhi. Jackie and

many other prostitution survivors were in Delhi recently for the Second World Congress against the Sexual Exploitation of Women and Girls organised by CAP International (Coalition Abolition Prostitution) and Apne Aap Women Worldwide.

"My mother tried to save me but she couldn't. I took to drugs to forget the pain that came with each sexual assault," she says, her eyes still fixed on the bird. "There was no way I could escape prostitution, so I gave in. I had no choice."

At 20, Jackie decided that she didn't want to continue as a sex worker. "I have been undergoing psychotherapy and taking anti-depressants for 40 years but it seems impossible to return to health. There is one part of me that still cries and asks why it happened to me," she says. "But at the same time, I feel lucky that I could escape."

Women in prostitution often face physical violence at the hands of pimps. "They used to bang my head on the wall if I resisted. I didn't suffer from a serious head injury but there were many who did," she says.

Sex workers not just sustain severe injuries but also contract deadly infections, suffer from unwanted pregnancies, undergo unsafe abortions. Majority of them also suffer from drug addiction and alcoholism. The constant stress also leads to number of metabolic diseases and deficiencies. They suffer from severe joint pains as most of the time they are forced to wear high heels.

At times, pimps use tranquilizers and other drugs to break their resistance, as they did in Grizelda's case. "Every time they wanted me to entertain a client, they would give me a shot in my leg. It was painful and I lost control over my own body," says Grizelda.

Once they took her to a dark room, where they made her bleed to terminate her pregnancy. "They used some instruments and medicines. Post abortion, they stuffed my vagina with sponge to soak the bleeding," says Grizelda. "They even forced me to have sex with a client that very night and when I refused, I was brutally beaten up. They severely hit my legs; I got multiple fractures and it took me months to recover," she says.

In fact, there is a high prevalence of depression and other behavioural and psychiatric disorders among these women. "When organisations talk about harm reduction, it should not just mean reducing unwanted pregnancies. These women need holistic healing that can take care of their emotional, psychological, physical well-being," says Sarah Benson, president, CAP International, a coalition of 14 abolitionist NGOs working for women in prostitution.

Diary of a Social Worker*Ruby Khatoon*

Kolkata: I am Ruby Khatoon. I was born in Munshiganj redlight area. My mother was a prostituted woman. As many know that there are some people, who are yet to accept the prostituted women and their children as part of the larger society.

But, I feel different with Apne Aap Women Worldwide. I am respected. I don't feel ignored and made to feel belonged.

The staff members of Apne Aap visit the redlight area on a daily basis. They often talk with the mothers and children living in these areas. I have been seeing them for the longest time. And I remember the names of each members of Apne Aap, that too from a very early age. I address them as aunty or uncle.

The aunty from Apne Aap took me in by admitting me a crèche class. They trusted me by enrolling my name in a formal educational system. The organization was generous enough to take the complete responsibility of my education.

My journey started then. I am a teacher at one of Apne Aap centre now. My duty is to supervise IGP unit. I am teaching the community mother and children of Red Light Area. I feel immensely happy as I am giving back something to the society.

After joining Apne Aap, I have discovered myself in a different way. I believe that I have found objective of my life; as a woman, as a teacher, as a mother and also being part of the larger society.

I learn every day. I take inspiration from the activities conducted by Apne Aap. It often makes me wonder how devoted the staff members are towards the girls and the women. They are dedicating their time and effort for the helpless, vulnerable women and girls who are in prostitution and at risk to prostitution. The organization has been fighting for the eradication of trafficking and exploitation of girls and women in prostitution.

They took me to Apne Aap crèche class and helped me basic education. Later, I was admitted in a formal educational institutional. And Apne Aap took all the responsibility for my education. I learned embroidery, craft, dance, tailoring and drawing, everything from Apne Aap.

Apne Aap also helped me in getting admission in a high school.

I had learned another important thing from the staff of

Apne Aap. They thought me how to remain humble and be polite to every person I come cross with. It is so important to be sensitive.

Currently, I have joined Apne Aap as one of the staff members in a tailoring department. Also, teaching and helping others to learn more. Many of us are producing beautiful bags, bangles, jute purses, etc. We sell the products.

It is difficult to turn away from the bad things that are happening around. Every day I see how so many helpless women are humiliated, beaten up by their pimps, brothel keepers in redlight area. Their pain and sufferings has stirred my heart and soul. I decided to work for them.

As a woman, my responsibility is not limited within my own family, being a human I owe something to the society as well.

Apne Aap has given me such a wonderful opportunity to work for these women. Working with Apne Aap, being in constant touch with the girls and the women it gives a new meaning to me life.

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Prostituted daughter's woman admitted in a reputed school

— Pira Das / as dictated to Anish

Kolkata: My name is Pira Das, daughter of Kajoli Das. She lives in Sonagachi. It is sad to realize and admit that my mother is still into prostitution. Everyone around is aware of the fact that my mother is a prostituted woman. My mother was always worried for my safety. She says that the place where she stays is a dangerous area and not safe for girls and women. So, she sent me to live with my relatives in Barasath. These days, she doesn't even take me to Sonagachi. I feel sad and I miss my mother a lot.

My mother had enrolled my name in a school at Barasath. But her mind was not in peace. She keeps thinking about my safety. Suddenly, someone had told her about an NGO working for girls and women in Sonagachi. I was told the name is Apne Aap. People informed me that the organization had admitted many children from the redlight districts to RK Mission.

My mother approached Apne Aap by visiting their office and later became the member of the organization. Then, she had requested the staff members to save me by giving me the chance to admit in RKVM boarding school.

It was like my mother's and my dream were coming true. We were relieved when I got the permission to get admission in RKVM. In January, Apne Aap staff accompanied my mother and me to the school.

Finally, I was admitted in the boarding school. It was a new birth for me. My life has started afresh with other children in the hostel and the staff of RKVM. My life is more disciplined here. In the hostel, we get up at 5 AM in the morning. We wash ourselves, and sit for the prayers. Later, we got for our morning study, breakfast and get ready for the school. In afternoon, we return from school and change into our hostel clothes. Also, I love my evening play time in the hostel ground with snacks.

It is like a routine. Everyday, we follow the same routine. After school and sports timing, we get freshen up and to the temple for prayers. In late evening, we sit with the teachers and complete our home work. Also, try to learn something new and prepare ourselves for the next day in school. We finish our dinner by 8:30 pm. It is followed by entertainment time, in which we are allowed to watch TV for an hour. Finally, we are put to sleep. We follow these rules religiously.

I know that following this rules, I am training my mind and my habits to become someone important, who can overcome all the difficulties in the life. We learn to respect our seniors, care for our juniors and people in general. We are taught to think about others and everyone around us.

Earlier, there was not many who would think about my well being, my education, my health, my personality growth. But, in RKVM, I am care for and feel protected.

In future, when I complete my education and get a job, I would like to go back to the place, where my mother lives and help admit as many children as possible at RKVM. I want to help them in becoming strong and having an honest personality so that they can take care of his/her family members and also the society.

I am forever thankful to Apne Aap, who has provided me the opportunity study in the prestigious school RKVM and helped shape my dreams. It has helped me a lot.

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

Denotified tribes celebrates International Day against Racial Discriminations

— *Atul/ as translated by Khushboo Mishra*

Delhi: My name is Atul, I live in Dharampur Sapera basti. I belong to the Singhi caste. I live with my parents and five brothers and one sister. My family is very poor as my father is a cobbler and my mother sells toys on the streets.

My family is barely able to sustain itself. The major occupations of my community are repairing shoes, cleaning ears or selling toys on the street.

Currently, I am in 6th grade in Government Boys Secondary School. My brother and I go to school. I am the eldest among my brothers and sister.

Apne Aap had been conducting many activities in the place where I live. Recently, in another such awareness program Apne Aap staff organized session on racial discrimination. It was International Day against Racial Discriminations.

The staff had initiated the session. And I feel that it is so important for each individual to realize their potential in life. Most of our community members' income is significantly low. We hardly have money to survive and unfortunately, this leads to the slow death of our dreams and aspirations. Most remains unfulfilled. And there are times, when we feel like dreaming will only break our heart.

During the celebration against racial discrimination, we painted our faces, in order to eliminate the colour differences of our skin. We wanted to spread the message that regardless of our skin colour, occupations, castes, we are human beings.

We were taught that how one might be dark or black or yellow or brown, and how these colors

shouldn't matter when it comes to showing love and affection. We are all equal. Why should our skin colors speak on behalf of our human rights? We were happy and organized sack racing competition.

We realized that life is beautiful, we just need to understand life beyond our surrounding as we usually get caught up in the small world around us. If we wish to, we can make all our dreams come true, we just have to identify and focus on our dreams.

My dream is to become a teacher so that I can empower those around me. I want to make people aware about the opportunities available for them beyond their community occupation. **Apne Aap made realize that we are like other people and equally have the chance to become what we want; we aren't restricted to our community occupation. If we wish to we can be doctors, police men, businessmen etc, we just have to awaken our inner belief and believe in ourselves.**

Apne Aap staff often come to our community. They conduct sessions to make us aware about different social issues. For instance, racial discrimination. Moreover the organization taught us about cleanliness and the importance of education. They made us believe that all our dreams can come true if we work hard for them and have the will to achieve our dreams.

I would from the bottom of my heart like to thank Apne Aap, Women Worldwide for awakening our lost dreams and making us realize our true potential and calling in life.

Join our campaign to [#QuitChildLabour](#). Sign the petition to revoke laws that enable [#intergenerational](#) prostitution <http://ow.ly/z2zH303xsS1>

Follow us on www.facebook.com/apneaap
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Write to us for any queries or comments at contact@apneaap.org
contact@apneaap.org



My First Day at Apne Aap

—Anahita Mir

Delhi: My name is Anahita Mir. I have studied in Jamia Millia Islamia. Often I used to wonder that the one thing that comes to mind when we hear the word sexual exploitation is rape. Seldom is our attention drawn towards other forms of sexual exploitation like prostitution, child marriage etc.

Talking about sexual exploitation is a taboo in our country. It's always surrounded by hush hush, and talking about Prostitution is out of question. Women engaged in prostitution are that part of the social strata which everyone knows exist but are invisible to the general population.

For a very long time, I have been curious about the choices of women who put themselves out in the dark alleys to be taken advantage of by soul less monsters. One thing that kept bugging me was why anyone having a sound mind would choose to live a life of subjugation and humiliation. Raised with the strict community standards about the right conduct of women I could never summon the courage to investigate the reasons that push these women into dark dungeons of the society. The Last Girl First conference in many ways was enlightening and empowering.

The association with Apne Aap started a few days before the commencement of the conference when I met their wonderful team in Delhi. They were warm and

welcoming. It was my first experience at an international conference. The theme of the conference stuck chords with me. To describe the experience of the conference in a few lines is impossible. There are seldom such instances in our lives which transform your outlook completely. **Events which shake you to the core and make you realise how ignorant you have been. For me this opportunity to volunteer didn't just give me an experience to be mentioned on my resume but it changed my attitude towards the world.**

Hearing the ordeal of the survivors made me wonder in awe about the strength and conviction with which all these women fought hard to reassemble their lives. Their determination gives me courage to face any challenges life throws at me. Listening to an illustrious panel of social workers, legislators, lawyers and civil society members speak about putting an end to discrimination and abuse faced by millions of women and girls worldwide has reaffirmed my faith in people.

I believe it encouraged everyone present in the conference to speak up against injustice. It's impossible not to commend the excellent work done by Apne Aap in helping numerous women come out of their dreadful situation. The determination of all the members of the organisation is infectious.

Continued from page 1

The event started wishing everyone Happy Women's Day with a hug. Apne Aap members informed us what is Women's Day, the importance of this day and how it is celebrated worldwide? All organisations, whether public or private, celebrate International Women's Day for their female employees. **I never saw such special treatment given to women, often considered as the weaker sex, anywhere in our house or at the construction site.**

Apne Aap members shared stories of many brave women. They talked about their background, their struggles, and challenges and how they overcame it successfully. We heard about lives of Indira Gandhi, Pratibha Patil, Kalpana Chawla etc. They also reminded us about the women and young girls who visit our community to meet us. These female travelling to meet us from far off places is a great inspiration.

When I meet these women I dream of my daughter to become like them, achieving great success in life. I never got the opportunity to go to school. Thus, either doing household chores or working at construction site, I accepted this

as my destiny. But I send my children to school so that they could do better with their lives. I always keep my eyes on my daughter. I make sure she is safe in community and keep visiting her school to meet teachers and principal to be update about her performance in school.

On the occasion of International women's Day, I saw women from all caste communities coming together and sharing a common space. When Apne Aap organises programme in community, they try to bring people closer from all caste. **Earlier, the women from Perna, Sapera and Singhi didn't ever use to see each other but now they come and share space with each other. Though they still seem hesitant to talk to each other openly but it's a relief that things are slowly changing in the community.**

Apne Aap members also shared information related to the government run schemes like Sukanya Yojana, Ujjwala scheme and other benefits announced by Prime Minister this year. It turned out to be very informative meeting. They provided us the details of how to avail these facilities and encouraged us to dream for us and our daughters. It feels to have a support from an organisation who is ready to help us whenever in need.

The World Outside

— *Kajal Kumari/ as translated by Amit Kumar*

Bihar: My name is Kajal Kumari and I am a student of class 10 in a high school in Forbesganj. I am thankful to Apne Aap Women Worldwide for providing me and other girls alike to learn different skills including computer.

Apne Aap centre runs a computer literacy program for those people from poor and marginalized communities. Many people from our community have never even touched the keyboards of computer and getting to learn is living in a dream for me.

I am from a very poor family. I never thought that I could attend a computer class. Earlier, when I used to see girls in the television, working on the computer, I used to imagine how it would be if I was in there place.

However, life and circumstances had made me believe that such a wishful thinking was just a dream. Because, being a girl and coming from poor background increased the level of hardships even to attend my regular schooling. We lack financial support.

And then, we heard that Apne Aap started a computer classes in the centre. I was super excited. I knew that the organization would give me the opportunity. My happiness could not be contained. It was first step for my

dreams to come true. Now, I won't feel jealous of the girls in the television.

The first thing I did was to convince my parents. I started my class immediately. I come every day to attend the classes in the afternoon after school hours for an hour from 2 pm. The class takes place at the Apne Aap's office premises in Forbesganj. The project of computer literacy was started by Apne Aap, affiliated by NIELIT Delhi.

Initially, we were 10 girls in the batch and later it increased to some more. Most of the students get admission for basic course in gaining computer skills. The course is of three months and I am really enjoying it. I want to learn more.

I am planning to join the higher courses in computer literacy after completing my graduation. I think it will give me an opportunity to have a bright career. It will fit the qualifications to dive in this competitive world. Above all, I can support my family once I get a job.

Thanks Apne Aap for giving me this opportunity to learn computer and dream.

Continued from page 1

They explained that the organization has adopted 10x10 approach and how it works. Later, they asked us to join Kishori Mandal, in which we met other girls from our neighbourhood, who are some of the members in the program. We felt encouraged to join Kishori Mandal.

Initially, Asset Card were distributed among us and it was difficult for us to understand. We asked Apne Aap staff to help us with it. Sanju di helped and we pasted our photos in it. We started visiting Apne Aap on a regular basis and participates on almost all the activities organized by the organisation.

One evening, after leaving from Kishori Mandal, we saw group of women were standing under a tree holding a piece of paper holding in their hand. I asked my mother about it and she said that it was notice from the government to evict us from the place where we are staying. I asked my parents to seek Apne Aap's help.

We visited the office and Apne Aap asked us to submit all the papers to prove of occupancy in the area for a long time. The papers were submitted and a letter was draft for the District Magistrate to prevent

this type of torture on poor and homeless people. The DM is a good person and he interfered in this matter and ask the officers to stop this kind of activities and wait for the further instruction from him. We are relieved to hear about the updates.

Later, we heard from Apne Aap member that a Jan Sunvai program were to be organized on 18th March in our community centre, where the Chief Guest is a retired chief justice Mr. V. N. Sinha, Senior police officer of Maharashtra Mr. P. M. Nair and DM of Araria Mr, Himanshu Sharma along with their colleagues. We decided to narrate our woes of displacement by the government and seek for their support. We have also prepared a petition for it. During the program, we submitted the petition to Mr DM and read it carefully. Our mothers were also present in the program. After reading the petition, the DM sir instructed the organization to prepare a list of people and asked the SDO to find out the government land where they will be rehabilitated. The officers also said that, the people settled in the government property shouldn't be displaced, until and unless there is an alternate option to rehabilitate us.

Poems

Little Things

Little drops of water
Little grain of sand
Make the mighty ocean
And the pleasant land.
Thus the little minutes
Humble though they be,
Make the mighty ages
Of eternity.
So our little errors
Lead the soul away
From the path of virtue
Far in sin to stray.
Little deeds of kindness,
Little words of love,
Help to make earth happy
Like the heaven above.

Name– Pooja Kumari
Area: KGBV, Simraha, Bihar

The Days of the Month

Thirty days hath September
April, June and November
February has twenty-eight alone
All the rest have thirty-one,
Except leap-year---that's the time
When February days are twenty-nine.

Name– Nisha Kumari
Area: KGBV, Simraha, Bihar



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