



RED LIGHT DISPATCH

VOLUME IX, ISSUE 10

NOVEMBER, 2018

DELHI, KOLKATA, AND FORBESGANJ (BIHAR)

My Dream

Delhi: My name is Priyanka. I am 10 years old. I live in Najafgarh, in New Delhi. I belong to the Samera community. We are a community of snake charmers. The men from the community do snake shows and monkey shows to earn money. They also go to catch snakes and treat snake bites. I study in the Municipality school near my house. **My dream is to be a writer when I grow up.** I took part in a recitation competition in my school. I read a poem and also won a prize for it. I loved speaking in front of so many people. Some day I would want to recite poems written by me. I am trying to learn new words to help me write better.

Health Camp with Mahila Mandal in Forbesganj Munny Devi

Bihar: My name is Munny Devi and I am a member of Mahila Mandal run by Apne Aap Women Worldwide. I am a resident of Kali Mela Ground Forbesganj and from DNT Dom community. We are very poor deprived and vulnerable and living in the govt. land making a hut with our family member and other relatives. We are very poor and feed our families by doing bamboo work. We live in the house on the government land and the government officials are threatened to withdraw from us again and again from the land. Due to not having

our own land, we have not yet been linked to any government facilities. We revolted around the office of all the office-bearers several times but no benefit till now and we sat down for tired. One day, Mina and Madhu Di had suggested that why do not you go to the office of the organization Apne Aap and meet with the Praveen Sir.

(Continued on page 6)

Anisha shares her experience of participating in a Dwarka singing Anisha

Delhi: My name is Anisha. I am 13 years old. I belong to the Perna community. I live in Dharampura, Najafgarh along with my family. In our community, men do not work at all it's the woman who go out to earn money and sustain the family. The men in our community mostly stay at home.

I recently took part in a singing competition which was held in Dwarka in New Delhi. Dwarka is very close to Najafgarh where I live. My family and friends encouraged me to participate in the competition. Everyone was supportive of me and it gave me confidence to take part in such a competition.

I am very fond of singing. I love to listen to songs all day. I learn the lyrics of the latest songs and try to practice them as much as possible. I am planning to take proper singing lessons in the future so that I can better my singing abilities.

(Continued on page 7)

The Red Light Despatch: A Publication By And For India's Sex Workers
Mayukh Majumdar

If there's one thing that has dominated conversations in 2018, it's the topic of 'fake news'. A term popularised by US President Donald Trump, it has found mass appeal – it appears that if there's one thing that brings the left and right together, it's their mutual hatred of journalists. Of course, while it is unfair to club every media person like that (there are thousands who brave death every day to bring us stories), it is also true that the fourth estate has become heavily contaminated.

However, this article is not about the power dynamics behind Fox News and The New York Times but about journalism that seeks to give a voice to a marginalised community without actually doing so. This is where the Red Light Despatch comes in.

While armchair journalists debate on the terrible conditions faced by sex workers and filmmakers and authors glamourise their lives, this publication run by a grassroots organisation called Apne Aap actually allowed the women to share their fears and tribulations.

A report in *Al Jazeera* states that during a newspaper reading session conducted by Ruchira Gupta, the founder of Apne Aap, she was informed by Fatima Khatoon (who was then living in the red light area of Forbesganj in Bihar) that the mainstream newspapers didn't really include them. The stories that claimed to give them a voice, only managed to produce a copy that resembled the original superficially. The *Red Light Despatch* changed that – sex workers wrote and read stories about their lives and there was a certain community feeling that was created. Now, a woman working in Delhi's Dharampura could read about another in Kolkata's Sonagachi.

The eight-page-long monthly contained stories which are written by women in Maharashtra, West Bengal, Delhi and Bihar and these are then edited by Gupta and her editorial team. The paper was registered in June 2009 and distributed physically

in multiple red-light districts and NGOs and also mailed to a list of people.

A report in the *Indian Express* states that the articles are written in three languages – Hindi, Urdu and Bengali – and translated in Hindi and English. Gupta told the paper that she refrains from editing too much lest she spoil the flavour of the writing. "*Red Light Despatch* is not a top-down approach to reporting on prostitution where women are portrayed as cardboard creatures. This humanises them. This is to end the voyeurism. These are women who can feel the pain, suffer repeated body invasion, and are there because of the absence of choice," she further told *Al Jazeera*.

Disclaimer: Apne Aap Women Worldwide being an abolitionist organization, does not support the use of the word 'sex work' for prostitution of others. We prefer using prostituted woman to highlight the inherent exploitative nature of prostitution.

This report was published in Mans World India on November 27, 2018.

Diary of a Social Worker

Delhi: I have been working with Apne Aap since 2017 in their Delhi office. I have had the opportunity to conduct many seminars and conferences. We recently conducted a conference on noted feminist and writer Simone De Beauvoir. The conference marked the 70th year of the publication of Beauvoir's noted work *The Second Sex*. It is interesting to see what Simone de Beauvoir records and writes back in 1949 which still, resonates with our ideologies. Even today, decades down the line her philosophy serves us reflection, thought and inspiration.

17 years ago when Apne Aap started its journey as a social movement to end sex-trafficking, it grappled with the exploitative system deep rooted in patriarchy. It committed to ensure the rights of the last girl. The Last Girl is someone who is poor, who is female, and who is a teenager. In India, she is Dalit, backward caste and backward class. She exists everywhere at the intersection of gender, caste, class, age and race with vulnerabilities. Her prostitution is an absence of choice not a choice.

Quite rightly, as De Beauvoir's philosophy explains that 'a prostitute does not have the rights of a person; she is the sum of all types of female slavery at once' (p. 614). As she highlights that it is not the moral and psychological situation that makes prostituted women's existence miserable but her material condition for the most part (p.624). We see this when we work in the caste ghettos which are surviving through inter-generational prostitution, where unemployment is rife, poverty is a given condition, socio-economic and political marginalization is a norm. We see the negotiations and struggles that women in prostitution undertake for their survival. Therefore, Beauvoir's writings give us the framework to enrich our understanding about the lives and existence of women and the system in which they live.

The conference was held at Alliance Française and saw attendance of a lot of students, academicians as well as activists. It was a very successful conference.

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

*Storytelling workshop at a Primary school as part of a Festival of Voices,
Khushboo Mishra, Delhi*

Delhi: Storytelling is famous since long time in Indian culture. The practice of telling bedtime stories by grandmothers has seen a shift to a more broader areas like to the coffee table books in metropolitans and recently to the schools and to the marginalised communities to bring out the change.

In the month of November, we organised a storytelling workshop as part of the festival of voices. This festival meant only one thing. To raise a voice. To bring forth the topics which are not discussed, which are buried deep within the soil, over which the women and young girls are exploited.

During the storytelling workshop, our Resource Person shared two stories of courageous women who fought the entire community to save their daughters. One story was of a woman from Manipur, the north eastern state in India and the other story was of a woman from Madhya Pradesh, the central India. The stories encouraged the young girls at the Primary School to take a

stand for the right things and fight back if it is wrong.

During the session, the girls also prepared their own stories in a group of four. They made flash cards, used chart papers and markers to present the story. The stories made by the girls were clearly based on what the girls see around in the families, in the communities and in the school like early marriage, girl education, early births, death due to diseases etc. For example, a group presented a story where the family married their sixteen year old daughter to a forty year old man, a widower with two children; just because he was from a financially well off family.

At the session of the session, all the stories were combined and a discussion took place around the social issues.

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.

Experience of Open Mic Session *Arti Kumari*

Bihar: My name is Aarti Kumari and I am a member of Kishri Mandal run by Apne Aap women world-wide in the Jagdish Mills Compound office for IGP class girls. I have joined here in IGP class from august 2018 to learn stitching. I am belonging from a very poor Mallah family. My father does the job of a rickshaw puller and my mother is maid servant. We live on the Kali Mela ground on the govt. land with our family members and other relatives. We don't have any facilities given by the government because we are not counted as proper residents of this place. Time to time we are given threats by the government office that we will be removed from here. I have 5 siblings and along with my parents a total of 7 members in my family. I am studying in class 12th and also do the job of stitching the clothes of others to earn some money and help my parents.

I heard about the organization from my friend who also came here for learning stitching work earlier. This organization named Apne Aap Women World-wide working for the empowerment of the girls and women who are belonging from very poor, deprived and vulnerable Nat community and other de-notified communities especially the victims and survivors of sex trafficking. I was glad to hear about the organization who is working for this mission. I

also from a very poor family so I want a favor from the organization side for the betterment of our lives.

When I joined here, I see there were many activities and training programs organized by the organization for the empowerment of the girls who joined here. One of the activities is Open Mike Session which is called a "Khulla Manch" is also organized. This is an open forum where we sit together, talk together, share our good and bad experiences with each other and talk on every topic which we want. There is not any obstacle here for it.

In this session, we sit together in a round circle and share our experience to each other. This session is very interesting and it teaches us how to speak in front of other persons and increase our boldness. I enjoyed the session and like it very much.

Aarti Kumari
IGP Class
Forbesganj, Bihar

**Follow us on www.facebook.com/apneaap
www.twitter.com/apneaap**

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



Celebrating Children's Day in Kolkata

Kolkata: On 14th November every year, India celebrated Children's Day. This day marks the birth anniversary of India's first prime minister Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru. Fondly known as Chacha Nehru among children, he advocated for children to have fulfilled education. After the prime minister's demise, it was decided that India will celebrate Children's day on 14th of November.

This year, Apne Aap celebrated children's day in Sonagachi centre and also at the Hasting's learning Centre in Kolkata. All the children participated in the celebrations. All of the children gathered at the centre when they were informed about the celebration. We started by telling them

what was the importance of the day and why we celebrate it. After that we commenced the celebrations. We sang songs for children. Some children did impromptu dance performance which was liked by everyone.

We then cut a cake to mark the celebration. It was a huge cake. Everyone got a slice of it. All the children left really happy from the centre.

Continued from page 1

They will surely help you some of them. After that all of us got to meet to Praveen Sir in the organization's office, Jagdish Mill and told them all the problems. He listened to our things seriously and assured us to help. At first he talked to the Ward member and asks him to prepare the Aadhar card for all of us and within a week by the support of Madhu Di we all received our Aadhar card through online process.

Praveen Sir prepared an application to the SDO Forbesganj on behalf of us and we all put their signature on it and he meet the SDO and submitted him the application. The SDO listen the issue carefully and insured that he will do something for the poor women. After few days, he calls Praveen Sir in his office and asks him to arrange a camp for it in the organization's community center. A camp was organized on the given date and we all approx 100 women present there on time. The SDO came here at 11 am with the team of Block department, Health department and Jeevika, He introduce the BDO and ask him to give the detail information to us about the govt. facilities and the process how we achieve

it. He also distributed form for various Govt. facilities which can we achieve through the administration. Health department started the health checkup camp and we all get checked by them and medicines were distributed by them among us. The SDO asked the Jeevika team to form a SHG among us and trained us for different livelihood program through the SHG.

We all received form for the govt. facilities, filled it and submitted it back to the BDO, We also received free medicines from the Health Department. And after a day Jeevika member came to our place for the formation of SHG and we formed 8 SHG here. Our forms were submitted in the Block Office and now we are waiting for the cards. All this has been possible only by the efforts of the organization Apne Aap Women Worldwide. We are very thankful to the organization to support us and proud to be a member of it.

Munni Devi
Mahila Mandal
AKC, Rampur
Forbesganj, Bihar

*Sweaters distribution among the vulnerable children at Ant Knya Center
by Shree V S Gupta*

Bihar: On 17th November sweaters were distributed among 40 children of Ant Knya Center from Shree V. S. Gupta. All the children who received sweaters belonging from very poor marginalized Nat and DNT community and living in the Red Light Area with their parents. They are coming in the center on regular basis for Bridge Course and Regular classes. All the children are very happy to receive the sweaters at the beginning of winter season. His parents were not so capable that they could buy sweaters for their children. The children along with their parents were quite happy because now they were not worried about frosting their babies. They all were very grateful to the people organization and Shri Vidya Sagar Gupta for this.

The sweater distribution program started from 11 o'clock in which children and many of their parents were also present. The sweater distribution program started from 11 o'clock in which children

and many of them were also present. A list of children's names was made by Sanju ji and they were summoned by one by one and the sweater was given to them as per their body size. After distributing sweater, sweets were distributed among the children, through Shri Vidya Sagar Gupta, so that the children were very happy. Shri Vidya Sagar Gupta asked children to come to the center every day and explained the importance of education. The children were very happy too and they also wished to come to the center every day. After the completion of the sweater distribution program, the children's lunch was served and everyone also ate food. All the children thanked Shri Vidya Sagar Gupta and the organization for sweater and finished their studies and went to their own home.

Continued from page 1

I along with my parents reached the venue very early in the morning. When I reached the venue, there were already hundreds of people waiting in the cold November morning.

We first registered ourselves at the registration counter. The counter also had a huge queue of participants. There were so many varieties of singers from all over. Everyone was practicing their songs and exercising their vocal chords. Some were singing and some were practicing aalaps. The parents and guardians were encouraging the participants and guiding them. The cold November morning was resounding with the sweet melodies of so many singers. I was surprised to see such an electric atmosphere.

The participants were friendly with each other and shared tips and gave suggestions to each other. I was nervous about my performance. Soon I was called inside for my turn. The stage was so huge

and the auditorium seemed larger than what I had seen before. I had butterflies in my stomach when I walked upon the stage. Everyone there was no warm and welcoming that my nervousness faded in to excitement.

I took the stage and sang my favorite song with all my concentration. I ended my song to a resounding applause. All the judges at the competition praised my performance. I was quite happy with how it turned out. But the biggest surprise I got was when it was announced that I was among the twelve people selected to go forward in the competition. I couldn't believe myself when I heard the announcement. Among so many talented singer I got chosen. I am extremely happy.

Poems

Rain

The rain is falling plop plop
The drops are big like diamonds
The thunder goes boom
It scares the mice to hide
The lightning is so bright
The clouds are showing their might
I sit on the window and wait
The rain will stop and I will be out the
gate

Renuka

A man who runs

There once was a man who liked running.
He said, "See the lovely tinning!"
It was rather daily,
But not very jail he,
And he couldn't resist the outgunning.

Ashu



56, Third Floor,
Anand Niketan
New Delhi

Phone:
+91 11 24119968

E-mail/Web:
contact@apneaap.org
www.apneaap.org

Red Light Dispatch

Editor: Ruchira Gupta

Editorial team: Tinku Khanna, Praveen Kumar,
Anahita Mir

Publisher: Apne Aap Women Worldwide

RNI Number: DELMUL/2008/27727

Printer: India Enterprises, New Delhi