



# Red Light Despatch

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## My Dream

By Bibi Meena

My name is Bibi Meena and I am 35 years old. I live in Uttari Rampur Red Light Area as I was married to a man named Allaudin there. We belong to the Nat community and my husband's family used to prostitute the daughters in their house. He was married earlier and his two daughters from the first marriage are being prostituted. I have four sons and three daughters. Three of my sons are working on daily wages and the youngest is studying at Apne Aap Basti Vikas Kendra. Two of my daughters Sahana and Ruksar were studying at KGBV earlier but my husband pulled them out of the school in 2010. My husband had bad intentions but then I resisted and admitted them at the nearby school and they were studying from home. I had to fight with my husband and his family to not prostitute my daughters. Sahana and Ruksar are growing older now and that is increasing their risk in the Red Light Area. Since the past few months I am being pressured continuously by my husband and his family for protecting my daughters. As it was dicey to keep them in the Red Light Area, on 1<sup>ST</sup> October, I took my daughters and left my husband's home and went to Apne Aap office. I requested them to keep my daughters at KGBV. I told them the risk, the girls are in and so they gave shelter for my daughters there in KGBV. I left for my parents house, but I still receive threats from my husband. I want my daughters to be safe. I want them to study and have a living of their own, a dignified living. I don't want them to see sitting outside a home of Red Light Area and struggling to live. When my daughters are at KGBV, I feel that they are safe. I feel that nothing wrong will happen to them.

## I won an award from NOMI

By Gahni Devi

**Bihar:** I am a resident of North Rampur, Mela Ground. Mela ground is a place located close by North Rampur Red Light Area. I am 35 years old and I have two daughters and a son. My husband is a lower grade employee at Bank of Baroda. My husband spends all his salary in alcohol consumption and takes no responsibility for the family.

The place where I live with my family is a government land and we are living there by illegal occupation. Government has several times sent notice to us, to vacate the place but as we don't have a place to go elsewhere we are still sticking to the place. Many a times I get worried and concerned about the education and future of my children. I never want them to have a life like mine and they also revolve in the vicious circle of poverty.

I joined the Self Empowerment group of Apne Aap with a

hope that I can learn lot of things and gain lot of information with which I will get capable enough to take up the responsibility of my family.

Meanwhile a survey was conducted at my community from NOMI Network and I got selected through the process of selection which was through the survey and then a group activity which tested the skill of stitching and tailoring. After I started attending the training, I could grasp the activities taught quickly and because of that I was selected as the best trainee and was awarded with a gift by the founder president of NOMI Network. I felt very proud when I was appreciated in front of everyone. Considering my hard work and commitment, NOMI has appointed me on a temporary basis as a support staff.

(Continued on page 2)

## “An Uncomfortable Truth”

An event for thought leaders of the business world

By Anupam Das

Apne Aap and Young President's Organisation (Kolkata) organized an event to familiarize business men and –women with the peril of sex trafficking at The Grand Oberoi in Kolkata on 25 August 2012.

The event was started with a film named “One Life No Price” on the lives of survivors of sex-trafficking, a film documented

by UNODC with concepts by Dr. P. M. Nair. After the film was over a brief presentation was made on Apne Aap's proposed solutions to sex-trafficking. The presentation was also used as the medium for portraying the life of survivors and the various challenges that they are experiencing.

(Continued on page 2)

## Apne Aap Workshop at Shantiniketan

*By Upasana Chakma*

**Shantiniketan, Birbhum**, the cultural fountainhead of Bengal; the land of red soil, was the backdrop for the much needed workshop for 15 Apne Aap staff from three project locations of Bihar, Kolkata and Delhi. The workshop was intended as a platform to share individual experiences earned from engagement in the Apne Aap programme activities so that standards can be set for reporting as well as documentation. It was hoped that the workshop would help improve everybody's understanding of the government livelihood schemes, new enactments and policy changes. The workshop would also review the scope of network and advocacy emerging from the programmes and actions.

Each day of the workshop began with a very interesting game that was much appreciated to get over the languor of a hearty breakfast spread provided by the hotel.

Topics that were covered included discussions on the need for a standard documentation format, as well as a sound M&E system in place. One of the most interesting and productive sessions was a discussion on trafficking, which covered not only the definition of trafficking to the laws pertaining to trafficking, the loopholes and ways to address those loopholes. We learnt that according to the UN protocol of Palermo, trafficking is defined as "...the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation". Each component of this definition was discussed and understood. *(Continued on page 8)*

*(Continued from page 1 "I Won An Award From NOMI")* Before joining Apne Aap and NOMI, my life had no aim. I used to wonder how to lead it and how would I manage the family. I thought of committing suicide many a times but then I stopped, realising my children need me. Those days when I lost hope are now a nightmare for me, and today I am much confident that if I work hard I can be self dependent and make a livelihood which will serve my family and with which I can provide education to my children.

*(Continued from page 1 "An Uncomfortable Truth")* A request for supporting the survivors was also made at times during the presentation and discussion thereafter. After the presentation participants were briefed on Sonagachi and the "dos and don'ts" of visiting the red light area. The team set off for the Sonagachi visit into groups of six. On the way to Sonagachi the film "Selling of Innocents" by Ruchira Gupta was shown in the bus. After the visit was over a discussion was held in the bus about what people have learned from the visit.

After returning from the field visit everyone participated in a panel discussion moderated by Karuna Singh, in which the panellists (Ruchira Goswami and Bharati Mutsuddhi) placed their points of view on sex-trafficking from human rights and gender; and law and activism perspectives respectively.

Ruchira Goswami spoke of the limited choices for women and girls in our society, especially the underprivileged ones forced by circumstance into prostitution, from which they are then unable to escape due to the strong nexus of traffickers, brothel managers and brokers.

Bharati Mutsuddhi, who is a lawyer herself, believes

in the activism model of achieving justice for women and girls. She said that by shining a light on the legal aspects of sex-trafficking, we being the modern day agents of change can stop sex trafficking. Survivors like Uma Das, Ayesha Begum and Sita Devi kept the participants spellbound by sharing their real life experiences about how they have survived after they were trafficked and forced into prostitution. Uma Das also shared the various challenges that she has faced and grew up with living in a red light area.

After the panel discussion and the survivor speeches a small request was made to support the *Cool Men Don't Buy Sex* campaign and staff member Kalam's fight against traffickers. Participants were benevolent in supporting the Self-Empowerment Groups with small donations at the venue.

The program ended with a resolution that the YPO would be supporting the cause and would like to help the women and girls in carving out a dignified life from what they have. A similar event will be organised with WPO in December 2012 to generate a movement against sex-trafficking among the industrial and corporate fraternity around the world.

## Working with hidden populations

*By Rebecca Stewart*

On a recent trip to Bihar in connection with a research project, I had a first hand encounter of how difficult it is to gain the trust of the Nat community, and how rough the terrain is for the existing Apne Aap staff.

Bihar has a reputation for being one of the poorest and least developed states in India, with high levels of lawlessness and caste violence.

What I saw was bony cows driven along the road by young guys in mismatched flares and checkered shirts. Colourful saris pulled up over staring eyes, shining in the dark faces of young girls. Everyone seems to be either a fresh faced teenager or hard-life middle aged here. I suppose having so many children ages you. There is no one who seems to be my age – that is, the stage of life I am in. No one is still unmarried and childless at twenty-seven out here, not unless they are very unlucky.

After a community meeting one day, and a full day of data collection by the Bihar staff the next, my supervisor and I set off for the second day of data collection (but our first). At the first house, two young women were drawing mehendi on each others' hands in preparation for some village wedding celebrations which was to occur that day and the next. The bright colours of purple and green of their saris stood out against the sky blue wall of their 'pucca' concrete house. They said their father was a driver, but I later learnt that this was unlikely (due to wealth of the house, and the fact that he was hanging around not doing any driving) and that they were most likely being prostituted.

As we were nearing the end of the questionnaire three older women appeared and stared yelling and berating the young girls. We were asked to leave the house, and after this heard some shouting and loudspeakers. Members of the village had come together to protest about the surveys and demanded that we, the research team, return them. The women eventually came into the compound, middle aged prostitutes (or ex prostitutes) gathering around in their colourful saris. They were angry, and shouting. They had faces like stone. It was inspiring to see how empowered they were and how they spoke up with their demands – if their demands were not to keep quiet a system which disempowers them!

The reason for the sudden change in feeling is still

unknown – one of the members of the research team was also a member of the community and had briefed them on it beforehand, and a full day of data collection had already occurred, so the idea and contents of the survey were not new to them. As one woman came to tell us later, it may have been because of a previous incident where they were asked to sign something that they could not read, saying that they were engaged in prostitution and were going to stop doing it. As she said that this point "This is what we do. What other option do we have? We cannot just stop doing it".

In any case, it was our duty to return the information that they had given to the researchers – both in terms of research ethics, and also in terms of a continued relationship with the community.

I just remember looking at these young fresh faced girls and imagining them having to go to bed with multiple men every day, and wondered why they would fight to keep this life. Fight against a survey which didn't even ask about this aspect of their lives, but hinted at things which may point to it – occupations of family members, for example. They have so little trust in authority, even sympathetic groups like Apne Aap, as they have been lied to and disenfranchised in the past and because they know that general society frowns upon them – when they are not visiting their rooms after dark, of course.

The house we were staying in fed us meat and rice for lunch, and turned on the generator to make the fans run for us. They can afford this expense easily because this was obviously the earning from the women's prostitution. I couldn't help feeling that the more I ate, or the more the fan ran, the more sex these women would have to have. It made me feel so sick.

In research methodology terms, this group is called a "hidden" population – one which is difficult to access, due to their operation outside the mainstream and subsequent fear and distrust of authority. If I take one thing away from this internship, it will be this experience: my textbook learnings come to life, and the frustration that comes with it, knowing that they won't talk to us because they need help the most, and if they won't talk to us we can't help them.

Column

Volunteer Journal

## My Journey Through the Bihar Program

*By Uma Das*

**Bihar:** This September I went to Forbesganj along with Sudiptadi, Fazulda and Manish bhaiya to see how the Bihar program is being run. Frankly speaking I was more interested to meet my old friends in Bihar, whom I met in one of the workshops in Kolkata at the beginning of this year!

The Antodaya Center at Forbesganj was nicely decorated and was very welcoming. I had met Fatima, Poonam and Jyoti in Kolkata on several occasions earlier. During that time Poonam became my friend. In fact during the visit of Ms. Hillary Clinton I got much time to chat with Poonam and spent some time with her. This time I could reconnect with my other friends like Anwar Bhai, Manjar Bhai and Rustam Bhai who have got trained for carpentry with me.

I sat in one of their staff meeting, where I met all the staff and got introduced to each other through a game. After the meeting was over I got to learn how every child goes through the education component at the center and is helped to realize the importance of education in their lives. I saw how the children study together, their sitting arrangements, place where they take their food and play when the studies are over. I couldn't meet any student but came to know from the teacher how each and every student passes his/her day in the center.

After the in-house orientation I got to visit the Uttari Rampur Red Light Area in the vicinity of the Apne Aap Antodaya Center. On entering Uttari Rampur I got cautious of the typical sights seen in a red light area in Munsiganj, where I stay. To my surprise I found quite a stark difference from my own place Munsiganj. "The place didn't look like a red light area at all". I found series of houses placed at regular intervals with a few people outside. When I moved through the place on a rickshaw I seldom saw any women or a girl standing outside for solicitation at the door steps. Neither I saw any skimpily-clad woman nor did I find any broker or pimp trying to negotiate with visitors to the place. I heard that earlier Uttari Rampur happened to be a busy red

light area buzzing with business. Nowadays after ten years of constant fight by Apne Aap and the women of the area, only a handful of houses have remained where the exploitation is still thriving among the Nat community. Apne Aap's intervention has shrunk the red light area to a dying brothel.

Next day as per plans I went to visit the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) and talk to girls staying there in the hostel. I saw how the girls live and study in the hostel. I was overwhelmed to see the discipline and punctuality with which the children stay in the hostel.

I also enjoyed the work of Supei (from the NOMI Project) in Bihar where she has started teaching several groups of women and girls on how to earn their living making designer bags. I was astonished to see women themselves signing their attendance register instead of putting thumb impression, which they were unable to do before joining the training program.

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I got to meet all the three Kishori Mandals who gather on a particular day for meeting and discuss their group activities. I came to know that contrary to how we run Kishori Mandals in Kolkata, the groups in Bihar don't have their separate group leaders rather they have considered Fatima as a common leader for all the groups. The individual groups don't have their own members' portfolio.

Next time if I get a chance to visit the same program I would like to again visit the red light area and talk to all girls living there and get to know how they could bring such a change in the society. The whole trip was quite interesting in the sense that it opened a new world for me, where I could imagine a similar drastic change at my own place Munsiganj. On my return journey from Bihar with the rattling noise of the train I continuously remembered my dream, the dream I have already started to see about my own place, Munsiganj; ...*that the day won't be far away when Munsiganj will turn into a place where no girl or women will be commercially exploited for sex...*

## Our Visit to Bihar

*By Sudipta Dasgupta*

Day 1: I went to Bihar Office that she will come to Kolkata very had to all stand on them and later along with Mr. Hindol Dutta and soon. And she also shared the on one by one the pieces were Uma Das, to learn about the pro- whole process of training. She told taken away. Those who failed to grams run by the Bihar unit as us here she has 3 groups for stand on one piece of paper were well as to learn the techniques to NOMI training, and they all came disqualified. work with in Red light area. We in different time and different After that I interacted with the Bi- went to visit Uttori Rampur to ab- schedule and also they come on har team along with Mr. Hindol sorb the red light area's atmos- their own interests. She explained Dutta. We had a group discussion phere as well as to learn the meth- that at first she had given small regarding S.E.G & also Govern- odology of SEG meetings. Uttori pieces of clothes to women and ment Schemes. The Bihar Team Rampure is 1.5 km from the Bihar also gave them instruction regard- has seventy-one groups engaging office. There, Apne Aap has a ing production. They all were fol- in Livelihood Programs and also Center for Education, which is lowing that. three Learning Programs for ado- also used as a place to hold meet- Day 2: I went to Uttori Rampure lescents. We went to Kasturba ings. We interacted with Kalpona, centre along with Uma Das. We VGandhi Balika Vidiyaloy a teacher at this center as well as met with seven girls from the ado- (K.G.B.V). We all enjoyed spend- Fatema, a community mobiliser in lescents group. We started our ing time with the children. Uma Uttori Rampure at Bihar. After team building session with some Das performed a dance and Puja that we met Supei, who is here for games, one such game was that we (student of K.G.B.V) sang a song. her NOMI project. Supei told us were given 4 pieces of paper we

### **Update: “Cool Men Don’t Buy Sex” Campaign**

*By Anupam Das*

The “Cool Men Don’t Buy Sex” campaign has picked up pace as we are in the process of collecting signatures wherever we are extending our programs. Most recently, at the District Level Awareness Session on Sex-trafficking at Jalpaiguri district we collected 35 signatures. We have made this campaign an integral part of all our activities. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of October we are going to kick start our series of awareness workshops in colleges and educational institutions in Kolkata to generate awareness on sex-trafficking and how Apne Aap has been working to minimizing it. The CMDBS campaign will be an integral part of these awareness workshops and we hope to garner high numbers of signatures and generate mass affirmations supporting the ITPA amendments. Requests have been made for staff to email all their contacts to support the campaign, and as

such we are getting good feedback on the online signing options.

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## “From Migrants to Residents” Conference

*By Md Kalam*

**Ahmedabad:** On June 1, 2012, the police of Araria district arrested me without any interrogation or investigation. Before that, they handcuffed me and made me parade in front of the media who were present there. Why me? Why have I been targeted by the police and the conspirators? These were the only questions that haunted me through the five nights I spent in jail with the criminals. Owing to tireless efforts of my organization, I got out on bail. But as I came out I remained very depressed. Who could shut people’s mouths? Who could stop people from ogling at me as if I am the worst criminal they have met in their lives? While I was getting more and more depressed every day, Ruchira di told me to go to a conference where representatives from de-notified tribes like us, the “Nat” who were labeled as Criminal Tribes during British rule would come to assert their rights against systemic marginalization. The conference was arranged to commemorate “Independence Day”, 31<sup>st</sup> August, 1951. On this day, the de-notified tribes were freed from their ‘settlements’ made by the British to keep the nomadic communities in a prison-like structure to restrict their mobility, where they were forced to live for nearly a century. Their ‘Independence Day’ arrived three years after the citizens of India got their independence in August 15<sup>th</sup> in 1947. I learnt about ‘Budhan Theatre’ who has been organizing the conference, and how they are using theatre for development as language of resistance for their community. I decided to go.

I reached Ahmedabad on 1<sup>st</sup> September around midnight. Tinku di and Subir Rana had already been there since the previous day. The session started early in the morning the next day. I was introduced to Dakxin Chhara and Kanji bhai Patel from Budhan Theatre. They were expecting me as I was one of the speakers in one of the panels.

The theme of the conference was “From Migrants to Residents” focusing on the issue of right to housing for the nomadic, semi-nomadic and de-notified tribes. The representatives from various nomadic and de-notified communities like Chhara, Nat, Gond, Rajgond, Sapera, Jogi, Sansi, Bhanu came to attend the conference. Some came in their traditional attire. Nearly 200 men, women and children came to attend the conference. It was looking like a carnival.

The conference was organized in the Hall of Gujarati Sahitya Parishad.

The conference started with a Welcome note from Roxy Gagdekar, one of the founder-members of Budhan Theatre. The following speech was by Navdeep Mathur from Indian Institute of Management-Ahmedabad, who was also one of the founder members of Budhan Theatre. He spoke about the objective of the conference. He told that usually he goes everywhere to teach, but when he comes to Budhan Theatre, he comes to learn. He has hugely appreciated how Budhan Theatre has been able to raise the consciousness of a whole community through theatre and library. He then invited Dakxin Chhara (Bajrange), Kalpana Gagdekar, Ankur Garange, and Jayendra Machhrekar, the members of Budhan team, to talk about their experiences. They all spoke about their experience as members of a community which is still being labeled as



*A still from the play “Budhan Bolta Hai”*

‘criminals’, how their fathers or brothers have often been picked up by the police at slightest pretext. They talked about the day when writer Mahasweta Devi came along with Ganesh Devy to their Chharanagar community and donated money from her Provident Fund to start the library cum community centre. It was the day of Resurrection for

them. That was the day when they came to know about other communities like Chhara. They came to know about ‘Shabars’ in West Bengal, whose member Budhan Shabar has been picked up by police in charges of petty theft and killed by police in police custody. A years-long case fought by Mahasweta Devi against the killing has led to a landmark judgment by the Calcutta High Court to pay a compensation of rupees 100,000 to the wife of the deceased. This has inspired them to start a theatre group in the name of Budhan Theatre and their own experiences as a community who have often been picked up by the police as branded ‘thieves’ has been transformed into a play, “Budhan Bolta Hai”. This street-play has become the voice of the community and through numerous performances they have reached to people all over India. Kalpana has talked about how she has learnt to speak through the language of theatre.

*(Continued on page 7)*

.(Continued from page 6 "From Migrants To Residents Conference") She talked about how "Kahani Meri Tumhari" (The Story Yours and Mine) has been born out of a desperate need to talk about her experience. She spoke about a particular show when she was very close to give birth to her child and everybody has asked her not to perform. But she felt a strong urge and has been saved several times from tripping over. That day she has realized how important theatre is for her because when she performs in a theatre, she does not act, but speaks about herself to the world.

The next session was focused on the eviction of members from Sansi community who live under the railway bridge in Maninagar. Gujarat Govt. has evicted them in the name of beautification of city. After seven years of legal battle with the Govt, they have been sent to a place which was previously a dumping ground. It is far away from the city with no access to markets, schools, or hospitals and since they all are wage labourers, they would lose their wage work. Kalpana Gagdekar told how they had to take it up to Supreme Court and even after the SC has ordered Gujarat Govt. to compensate them with land, the Government took two years to give them land and finally they have sent them literally to a dumping ground because this is the only 'vacant' land Govt. of Gujarat could find for them. Now the issue before the community is whether to accept the offer or not. While some people are willing to take the offer and some still wanted to continue with their struggle, the majority have decided to move and make the place habitable as this would at least give them a permanent address.

In the next session, I was the main speaker. I talked about my past experiences of anti-trafficking work with Apne Aap. I also spoke about my recent experience of police harassment. Everybody congratulated me after I finished speaking and encouraged me to carry on my work with women and children. Dr. K.M. Metry, the Director, Tribal Studies Department, Hampi University, Karnataka, commented that I should not refer to the Nat community as a whole whose mothers and daughters are in prostitution. He told there are Nats who are not prostituted. I told him that in my experience, most of the Nat families in Bihar are prostituted. Even if some of them are not, there are always vulnerability because of the marginalized situation they live in.

After I spoke Tinku di from Apne Aap, Subir Rana from JNU, Mayank from TISS, Mumbai and

Dhiman Bhattacharya from Jadavpur University, Kolkata spoke about their experience of working with de-notified tribes.

Around 7 pm we all set out to watch Budhan Theatre's new experiment with environmental theater. What I understood from the concept of environmental theater is that it takes place in the same environment where the community lives. The houses or shanties are used as stage, the daily usables are used as props. The surrounding sound is used as music. They performed a Hindi adaptation of Maxim Gorky's "Lower Depths". I will never forget the use of overbridge as Wings, the occasional entry of dogs

***"When I asked two of the lawyers why they have chosen the profession, they told me that it is mainly to protect themselves and their community from police harassment"***

while the play was on, or the passing of trains. The actors were portraying a community living on the railway tracks. The portrayal was so life-like that in spite of severe heat, sitting on pavements (literally) in the middle of a slum, people could not move an inch from their places and

people hovered over the bridge to see the performance.

The next day, I went to visit the Department of Tribal Studies at Gujarat Vidyapeeth with Dr. Metry and Tinku di. When we were entering the department, we saw the models of villages and lives of tribal people in Gujarat. The clay models were life-size and every detail was there. It was awesome. We went into the library and chatted for quite some time with Dakxin, Roxy and Dr. Metry. I was so inspired to see how people were building movements on their issues, how they were organizing themselves to assert their rights.

The day after that, Tinku di and I went to Chharanagar where Budhan Theatre has its library-cum-community centre. Chharanagar is a huge area at the outskirts of Ahmedabad with approximately twenty thousand people inhabiting three square miles. The settlement (or forced labour camp), which the British constructed to lock inside members of several nomadic communities who according to them were criminals, is very close by. It is now turned into a vagrant's home under Social Defence Department of Gujarat Government. Chharanagar is famous for its home-brewed liquor which otherwise is a prohibited in a dry state like Gujarat. Curiously, I found many lawyers among the Chhara community. Dakxin told us that there are approximately 2000 lawyers in the community. When I asked two of the lawyers why they have chosen the profession, they told me that it is mainly to protect themselves and their community from police harassment. (Continued on page 8)

*(Continued from page 7 "From Migrants To Residents Conference")* They told me that it is very common for the police to pick up any member from Chhara community and beat them mercilessly. In several cases, people died after the beating. I asked if the black coat of the lawyer could stop the harassment. They told that people joining the legal profession has to some extent could effectively stop police harassment. But they felt it's a long battle with the Government to reclaim their rights.

I asked them how they think that Budhan Theatre's work is bringing social change, and they said that Budhan Theatre is reaching out to people through theatre and is making common people aware of the community. The library and the school became a centre of activity for the children.

I then went to some of the houses where liquor was getting brewed. I saw outsiders sitting in their courtyards and the women serving them liquors. I asked Jayendra, who was guiding me if there are incidences of prostitution. Jayendra told me that there is no incidence of prostitution in the community.

Then Jayendra told me that he would take me to a place where memories of his ancestors are still there. He brought me to a place with iron fences on four sides with huge fort-like concrete building. Jayendra told me that this was the place where his ancestors, for several generations, had been forced to stay in prison-like circumstances. It was called Settlement. The British used to consider certain nomadic communities as permanent 'Criminals'. Ironically, these were the communities who resisted the British rule. They thought that if the 'Crims' can remain locked inside, they can never get out and disrupt the civil life.

*(Continued from page 2 "Apne Aap Workshop at Shantiniketan")* It was most helpful as we have never had such a basic lesson on trafficking which is absolutely needed for all staff of an anti trafficking organisation such as Apne Aap.

Another memorable moment of the workshop was when we had a team building exercise through art therapy with melodious flute renditions by a student of Visva Bharati University in the background. We got another glimpse of the cultural heritage of the place when we witnessed the breathtaking Santhal dance performance at a Santhali village that

was arranged for staff entertainment after the workshop hours. More than being a platform for sharing concerns and understanding the organisational strategies, the workshop acted as a medium to bridge gaps between staff from all three locations who rarely get to meet and interact. The after workshop hours actually acted as a medium for a true team building exercise where the staff got to forget for a few hours the responsibilities that they have to get back to and enjoyed the company of likeminded people who had come together for the same cause that they all believed in.

After five years of Independence, in 1952, they got released from the Settlement and the Criminal Tribes Act 1871 was replaced by Habitual Offenders' Act, which is still in use. I was thinking of our own Nat community in Bihar. The members of Nat community have still been forced to live in red light areas. Aren't these a new form of settlements for them? After so many years of Independence, the Nat and many communities in Bihar, Rajasthan and other states are still left to live as outcasts, so that the mainstream societies can exploit them whatever way they want to; to recruit the men as foot soldiers or



*The previous Chhara settlement. It still has barbed fences and surrounded by high walls. It is used as a vagrant's home for rehabilitation now. From one settlement to another.*

criminals for organized trafficking rackets or criminal gangs and use the women as prostitutes. And the men and women as long as they live will have to bear the stigma of 'thieves', 'criminals', 'prostitutes', 'traffickers' and 'pimps'.



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## Did You Know?

### In an English study of johns:

- 19% believed there were girls aged **under 18** in strip clubs or massage parlours they had visited
- 48% said they believed **most** women in prostitution are victims of pimps (this reflects what is known to be true from observation and research studies)
- 50% said they have used a prostitute who they knew to be under the control of a pimp
- Nearly one third (31%) of the interviewees, often those who bought sex in the Soho area, had used prostituted women who were controlled **by a woman pimp.**
- 25% of the men interviewed had encountered a women in prostitution who they believed was **forced** into a brothel, massage parlour or another type of prostitution
- Of the johns interviewed, 55% believed that **the majority** of women in prostitution were lured, tricked, or trafficked

From Farley, M., Bindel, J., & Golding, J.M. (2009) "Men Who Buy Sex : Who they Buy and What they Know". London: Eaves



The *Red Light Despatch* is a monthly newsletter published exclusively by Apne Aap Women Worldwide. It compiles articles, testimonials, speeches and interviews by women participating in Apne Aap's Self-Empowerment Groups (SEGs) and other initiatives, as well as by staff members, volunteers, and media figures. The central objective of the RLD is to offer a space for the unique voices of our girls and women. The particular writing style has been implemented to best preserve the original tone of the speakers.

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