



# Red Light Despatch

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## My Dreams

### I Want to Lead a Bold Life Too

By Sushma\*

**Munshigunj, Kolkata:** I am an 18 year old girl staying in Bari, Munshigunj in Kidderpore. I began attending the Apne Aap centre as a child and have been a part of the organisation ever since. We came to know that Bobbi and Zoe were going to facilitate a workshop where different kinds of activities would take place on 'Leading a Bold Life'. These activities could become very helpful to girls like me in real life. I participated in 'Leading a Bold Life' from 9<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> January organized by the Apne Aap team in West Bengal.

The session started with an introduction; Bobbi and Zoe introduced themselves and then we introduced ourselves. Zoe began the day with an energy boosting activity; the group stood in a large circle, Zoe turned to the person on her right and made a theatrical expression, combining a spontaneous noise and movement. This unique combination of expression was passed around the circle, from person to person. After returning to its origin, the next person created a new combination that was passed around in the same manner. (Continued on page 6)

### I Was Abused but I Feel Stronger Now

By Julie

**Forbesganj, Bihar:** I was 12 years old when I left home. I was tricked by a man named Ishfaq who said that he loved me and wanted to marry me. I was so young and because he showed me love and promised to take me away from poverty, I followed his instructions. I did not know what I was doing. I did not realize that he was not true to his intentions. I thought he was really in love with me. I eloped with him from Assam and he brought me here to Forbesganj. He was very nice to me during the initial days but then he asked me to present myself before a man to whom I was sold. I did not realize why he was asking me to present myself. I thought that man was a friend of his. Later I realised that I was being presented to be sold. By then it was too late. I realized that the person I was so much in love with and had trusted with all my heart was acting as a pimp and pre-

senting me to people and earning lots of money out of it.

That was just the start as he then continued to present me to different clients. When I resisted he started beating me, he didn't give me food and threatened me by saying that he would sell me in Panchipada (a big Red Light Area) if I didn't cooperate. I didn't want to go there, the only person I knew and I loved was Ishfaq.

I thought he would change his mind and marry me after some years; but he never had such intentions. For him, I was just business material. Before, he used to live with me in the Red Light Area. He built the house where I am staying now with my income. After some years however he married another woman and moved out of the Red Light Area. He became the village head and grew to become influential; he also started trafficking many other girls. I was a slave to him. (Continued on page 3)

### I Felt Satisfied to Share My Story with Other Sisters

By Nareshbhai

**Dharampura, Delhi:** I attended the training that Apne Aap Women Worldwide held at the centre in our village with 'That Takes Ovaries'. 'That Takes Ovaries' held an open mic session so that all of us women from the area could attend and share stories of a time when we were courageous. I have never had training of this kind before and I found it encouraging and enjoyed it very much.

There were talks for mothers and their children. We all sat around in

a circle and everyone would get up to speak their stories aloud individually.

I really liked this since we were seated together and everyone had the opportunity to speak so freely and openly. The chance to hear everyone's stories in such a way is rare for us as we are usually busy in our own homes and unable to interact as much as we would like. Apart from sharing stories we got a chance to play games and sing songs and dance. (Continued on page 3)

## First Impressions of the Field

*By Anusree Garg*

**Delhi:** The locations of Apne Aap's field offices have been purposefully and dutifully picked. In Delhi, Apne Aap has selected the locations of Dharampura and Hasanpur because these villages engage in intergenerational prostitution—an institutionalized practice that forces women to work in Delhi's brothels while the daughters of these women are bound to the same misfortune. Since prostitution is the main source of the village's income, intergenerational prostitution serves an all-encompassing and systemized tradition of entrapment for vulnerable young girls of the village.

I was fortunate enough to visit four places, two of which were known for intergenerational prostitution, during my field visit. We went to the field office in Hasanpur, visited a sewing class near to the Hasanpur office, and visited the villages of Prem Nagar and Dharampura. All four places were relatively near to Delhi or within an hour away, which reinforced the fact that forced prostitution and trafficking occurs every day in our hometown.

We were greeted at the Hasanpur field office by Manohar, the State Co-ordinator of the Delhi field

office. We toured the facility, which included viewing the computer class, the medicine distribution and health clinic, and the sewing class. We later communicated with some girls from the computer class and heard some positive and somewhat surprising answers. For example, all these girls had completed primary schooling and were pursuing B.A. degrees and B.Comm degrees through correspondence mail. They were slightly shy at first, but it was clear that they loved and enjoyed learning with the shared goal of

*Column*  
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pursuing jobs and utilizing the skills they learned at Hasanpur. One girl hoped to combine her computer training and sewing work to design clothes with computer programs—a very realistic career option for her. This was tangible progress both in mindset and ambition, which was mirrored in all the girls in the computer class.

After Hasanpur, we visited a sewing class taught by a young woman named Seema. She had actually learned to sew by attending a sewing class in another vil-

lage. A group of women, some young, some old, were seated on the floor surrounded by pieces of cloth in various colours, chatting and working simultaneously. As Manohar accompanied us to this centre, he initiated a productive talk with the women asking them to outline and create the next steps after this six-month sewing course finishes. Though the idea of setting up links with Delhi vendors seemed a little confusing and hazy at first, by the end of the discussion the women seemed enthusiastic and it seemed hopeful that these women would soon take the reins. In the future a direct linkage between these women and Delhi vendors could be established, increasing profits for the women and securing financial independence and responsibility.

The two villages Dharampura and Prem Nagar affected us most emotionally during our field visit. We first visited Prem Nagar, a village known for intergenerational prostitution. Although Apne Aap had worked in the village before, Apne Aap is currently not running any programs at Prem Nagar. In the future, Apne Aap hopes to work with the girls in the village and establish some long-term programs. *(Continued on page 7)*

## I Couldn't Help Myself, but I Saved Another Girl From Prostitution

*By Shama Bibi*

**Kidderpore, Kolkata:** I participated in an open mic session from 9-14th January 2012. I was born and brought up in a very poor family in Murshidabad, West Bengal. We were nine brothers and sisters in my family and had not sufficient financial support for our daily expenses. We were very eager to get jobs as my father was a farmer and it was very difficult for him to collect our daily food. I was only 15 or 16 years of age at that time when one of our neighbours offered me a good job in Kolkata. He told me that the salary was very attractive and I could send it to my family for their daily needs. Trusting the words of my neighbour, I went to Kolkata with him. When we reached Kidderpore he assured me that he would come back after completing his urgent work, but he did not return. Then I was forced by the landlord of my house to be a prostitute in order to pay for where I was staying.

One morning, a few years later, I came to know from my neighbour that a new girl had been brought to our area by a pimp who wanted to sell her. *(Continued on page 6)*

# ‘Top Ten Things I Want to Occupy’

By Ruchira Gupta

The word that caught my imagination and symbolizes 2011 is Occupy. I love its spirit and its message and its human presence. I love that occupiers in Libya ordered pizzas online for occupiers in Wall Street. I loved the smart women who immediately set up an online presence called Occupy Patriarchy.

And in tribute to Occupy – here are the Ten Top Things I Want to Occupy, from least to most:

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|--|---|--|
| <p>1. Last month I wanted to occupy the mind of Anna Hazare to see if he had actually read the Lok Pal Bill. This month I don't care about Anna Hazare, I'm just afraid that the Bill will put all of Bollywood in jail for unaccounted sources of wealth.</p> | <p>pleasure, mutuality, free will. We've eroticized dominance. I have a T-shirt that says: <i>Eroticize Equality!</i></p>   | <p>George W. Bush after Osama Bin Laden was found in Pakistan and not in Iraq or Afghanistan.</p>  |
| <p>2. I'd like to occupy the ego of Amitabh Bachchan to see how the man whose most famous dialogue was "<i>Mere paas Ma hai</i>" (I have a mother) now says "<i>Mere paas bahu (Aishwarya) hai</i>" (I have a daughter-in-law)?</p>                            | <p>4. I want to occupy Wal-Mart. I wouldn't buy a toothpick in Wal-Mart. Watch "The High Cost of Low Prices" and you'll see what I mean.</p>  | <p>8. I want to occupy the future of Mamata Bannerjee to see if she really does return land to the farmers of Singur and Nandigram.</p>  |
| <p>3. I want to occupy pornography and liberate erotica. After all, it's in the words – <i>porne</i> means female slave in Greek; <i>Eros</i> means love,</p>  | <p>5. I <i>don't</i> want to occupy "chick flicks" and "chick lit" – after all, Madame Bovary would have been "chick lit" if not written by a guy – but I'm willing to - providing we also occupy "prick flicks" and "prick lit."</p> | <p>9. Altogether, I want to occupy hierarchies and substitute circles. We're not ranked with each other or with nature – we are linked.</p>  |
|  | <p>6. I want to occupy the mind of Ahmadinejad when Rafsanjani says the revolution in Iran is stolen from him.</p>  | <p>10. Finally, I want to occupy the imperialism and colonialism that makes us accept that New Year begins on January 1st. In India new life starts mid-January when the Sun meets Saturn and the weather starts changing from winter to spring.</p> |
|  | <p>7. I want to occupy the mind of</p>  |  |

## **I Was Abused but I Feel Stronger Now** *(Continued from page 1)*

I have two children, and I have nothing to give them. I asked him to register the house in my name so that I would have some type of savings for my kids; but he has registered the house in the name of his children born by his legal wife. He is now asking me to go away from the house but I am not ready to give up this time. I have joined Apne Aap and now I feel that I am stronger. I was fighting against him alone but now I feel that I have many other women with me who are in the Mahila Mandal. I carry on this fight until he gives in and I can have a place to call my own.

## **I Felt Satisfied to Share My Story with Other Sisters** *(Continued from page 1)*

We all live in the same community and we hardly stop to even say a "Namaste" to each other or take part in each their lives. After coming here I realised that there is so much we can share with each other. We may live in houses right next to each other but never know whether our neighbour is going through any difficulty that we can help with. Usually no one shared their story or problems in their lives easily. But here in the open mic session everyone easily shared their story with no inhibitions. It was really great to see the courage that everyone was displaying. Sometimes I am able to learn through my children after they learn through Apne Aap's programmes. For example, I learn through my daughter Shilpa who attends classes. My daughter attends the drawing classes and learn reading and writing. I heard she is even learning computer.

If a training session like this ever happens, I will definitely try to come again. Since the staff from That Takes Ovaries came from so far away, the least we can do is attend the session for a while. I think that Apne Aap and That Takes Ovaries conducted this session so that they could teach us and make us feel better and happy. It allowed us to experience something new and for us that was a good thing.

# When I see Change in Front of Me, My Fear Goes Away

*By Shashibala*

**Dharampura, Delhi:** My name is a Sashi and I am a Community Mobiliser in Dharampura. I originally decided to work in Dharampura because it was quite close to where I live and it only takes a half hour for me to get here. I believed that although it is generally difficult to work with the community here, I would be able to manage since I have worked in communities similar to this one before. At the start I just wanted to see how people work here and see what little I could do for the community.

Initially, I was a little nervous since I did not know what I would talk about with them and how I would ask questions about their livelihood. And it did concern me that people did not want to serve themselves here and whenever we tried to put in effort, very little seemed to happen. I had heard much about the community being so difficult from the previous community mobilize who was working there. The community had been quite unreceptive towards all the efforts that had been taken and I was apprehensive about how they would accept me and allow me to help them.

However, for the past month some progress has been

made. At first some people talked in a very polite manner and others in a very cold, sad, and crude manner. It felt as though they were giving us a lot of excuses but since we visited again and again, by the end of the month they slowly got closer to us. This past month we have come to know the community, how it functions and have provided them with training. In the future I sincerely want to work with others. I want to make genuine bonds and relationships and explain to them that we're working for their benefit. Individuals in the community are at times unwilling to share stories about their lives but I am confident that no matter how long it takes, good work will eventually be done.

Through activities that are starting here—like the computer course that has just been established—and as people make relationships amongst each other, we too will become part of their community. We will continue to provide training, to establish new programs, to make the effort to talk and explain to them that we're doing all of this for their well-being. Although I was initially scared, in my heart now I feel very good about our program and working here. I feel good and truly happy when my hard work changes someone's life. When I go home, I feel very proud of what I have done.

## We Are Young but We Are Brave

*By Noori Khatoon\**

**Topsia, Kolkata:** I am now 15 years of age. I participated in an open mic session on 11<sup>th</sup> January organized by Apne Aap, Kolkata. From the Apne Aap team we came to know that Bobbi didi and Zoe didi would conduct a workshop where adolescent girls like me would have the opportunity to learn activities that could be practiced regularly.

On that day I, along with my other friends from Topsia, reached the Apne Aap centre at about 10:30am. At first Bobbi introduced herself and asked everyone to introduce themselves. Then she showed us some physical movements and told us to copy the movement, showing it to the person next to us and after completing one round she told us to change the movements, in this way we change movements after completing one round of the circle. After that Bobbi told her story of leading a bold life; she then asked to tell each of us to share a story. All of us told stories of boldness in our daily lives.

When she asked me to share my story of boldness, I spoke about one of the incidents in my life, when I was merely 12-13 years of age. One evening I went to a public toilet then some young boys tried to tease me by blowing whistles and making other irritating tones. When I returned from that toilet one of the boys tried to pull at my *dupatta* (piece of clothing), so I turned back, took off a shoe, slapped his face with it and ran away from that place. I think this was one of my boldest acts during my lifetime; I felt very brave to share my story and learn that many of us were doing great acts of bravery in our own lives.

By attending this meeting I personally feel that, if girls like us join this kind of training then we will be benefited. In the training we learnt different kinds of breathing techniques, and other physical activities which will help us to lead a healthy, less stressful and bolder life. Furthermore if we spread it to our locality then other girls like us will benefit from these practices. I also feel that this session will help create a kind of friendliness or co-operative attitude among us which will be beneficial to our community. I think if we follow these activities regularly then our life would be more meaningful and successful.

# I Had the Courage to Save a Young Girl from Prostitution

*By Meena*

**Bihar:** I was once in prostitution. It took a lot of courage to be able to get out of it. With the help of Apne Aap, I was even able to save my daughter from the brothel. I fought with the pimps and saved my daughter from the evils of prostitution.

Sometime after leaving the Red Light Area, I don't recall the exact month but about three years ago, I wound up my crèche classes and went to the community as usual to have a chat with the people and the women of our Mahila Mandal in the Uttari Rampur Red Light Area. While I was standing in front of one of the houses, Chunni came to me and I realized that she had something to tell me. She took me to a place where we could be alone and told me something that really angered me. She told me that a man named Md. Sultan, a man who regularly visits her, had brought a small girl with him about nine years of age. He claimed that the child was his daughter and the girl addressed him as "Abba". Md. Sultan told her that if she gives him Rs.2000 he will give the girl to her and he will give her Rs.500 if she helps him sell the girl.

She wanted to save the child but didn't want any chaos in the community and nor should the police

get involved since the community will turn against her if this happened. I informed Kalamji about this situation and told him not to inform the police. He soon came to the house, tied the man to a pole and five minutes later a police jeep came in front of Chunni's house. Chunni got very scared and she started shouting at Kalam and me.

The police took the man and the girl with them. Kalamji also went along with them and when he came back he informed us that the man is from Supol district and the girl is his daughter. His wife passed away and his daughter was staying with her aunt. The man tricked his sister and took his daughter just to sell her. Hearing all this, the police called his sister and told her the truth and then his sister took the girl into her custody. Md. Sultan was arrested. When the police was beating up the man, the girl cried which was not nice to see but Kalamji told us that we have done a bold act.

I think this is one of the bravest things that I have been able to do. It's a great feeling when you think that you have helped someone, even though that girl didn't know what was going on. I was able to make a positive change in her life and that gives me a feeling of fulfilment which I am happy to share.

# I Was Married Off When I Was Nine Years Old

*By Shilpa*

**Dharampura, Delhi:** I am 13 years old. I have been married for four years, at the age of 9. I have seven siblings, four brothers and three sisters, most of whom are married. They were, for the most part, married at young ages as well. At nine years old I did not understand that I was getting married, I only really became aware of my marriage several months back. When I did get married, during the ceremony it was all strange for me. I didn't even realize what was going on. I don't stay with my husband or talk to him. All I know is that, that man is my husband. I haven't been to his house yet. It is a tradition in my community to get girls married off early but not send them to their husbands house till they grow older. I am unsure of the age of my husband and when I will meet him again. I don't know if I will move to live with them soon, nothing is really made clear to me. I don't know when my parents will send me away, I'm not sure I want to know.

My sister is married to another man in the same household. However a fight between her and her in-laws meant that she returned. I don't know when she will go back or if she will ever go back. Because of this situation, I am not sure whether my parents will send me to their house. I don't know when the fight will be resolved. I am married to a man who I am not even allowed to talk to. Personally I don't mind my current condition as I am able to stay with my family and friends here.

I thoroughly enjoyed the experience of That Takes Ovaries's open mic night in Dharampura. The best part of the session for me was the dancing, although I enjoyed other parts of their visit as well. There aren't many times when us girls and our mothers can get together in such a way in the community so it was a great opportunity for us all.

I've only attended school for four years but my household allowed me to come to this session. I will continue to learn and study as much as possible so that I can work and be independent. In the future, I would love to learn more about computers and secure employment teaching children.

# I Was Able to Stand Up for Someone Else

*By Nisha*

**Forbesganj, Bihar:** I am a student at KGBV. At home we didn't have a television but we used to go to watch movies at cinema hall in Forbesganj. I used to watch the characters in the story of the movies very eagerly, especially the bold female characters to see how they act because in real life I haven't seen many girls being so bold. In normal life girls are always controlled by family or someone else. It seems that in reality men are bold and women watch them.

With this view in mind, I was surprised when so many women shared stories of courage at the 'That Takes Ovaries' open mic session. Many of the girls were narrating bold acts they have performed in their life time and other participants and the trainers were appreciating them. I also wanted to tell some of mine but I was scared and shy as I didn't have a story involving big achievements of bravery. I wondered if my stories were actually of courageous acts or if they were just normal life stories everyone had experienced. After half day's session, I decided to speak up and share a story of when I helped one of my fellow students in KGBV.

Two years ago, one of my friends took some medicine which turned out to be dangerous and she fell ill. All the other students and teachers were scared as the nearest hospital to our school is 20km away and the only way to get there is by train which comes every two hours. Time was passing by and we were

desperately trying to find any other solution to get out of this problem. Finally we arranged an auto-rickshaw and our teacher asked one of us to accompany them but no one was ready to go as they were scared that they would get stuck in a police case.

I decided to go with the her to the hospital. There were lot of questions going on in my mind – what will happen if the police think I'm responsible for this? What if they don't believe what I say? When we reached the hospital, we pleaded to the doctor and finally he agreed to start the treatment and didn't inform the police. My friend was treated and when she recovered and came back to school all the girls in KGBV, teachers and staff of Apne Aap appreciated me for standing by my friend when she needed help. I wished if my family could see how I was valued and I wondered if they would have done the same.

I felt extremely happy that I was able to help someone else. Many times when we perform bold acts we do it for our own benefit, to stand up for ourselves in our own lives. I know I will stand up for myself when the time comes but this time, I was able to be there for someone else. A bold act on my part was actually being able to support my friend when she needed someone the most. I am really happy that I was able to take participate in a courageous act. I will do so as many times I can again in the future. I am glad I have a story to share with the group.

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

Each participant was encouraged to let out the first movement and sound that came to mind, freeing themselves to become completely uninhibited by fear or timidity. Upon completion, everyone in the circle was instructed to physically display their emotions. A unanimous display of pleasure and comfort, through smiles and arms raised high in the air, was expressed.

Zoe said that they had travelled a long way to tell us their stories about leading a bold life. Zoe told a story about a girl learning to ride a bicycle; she said that riding a bicycle was a bold task as that girl was the first in her village to learn how to ride. She wanted to keep studying but her school was very far from her house so to attend she undertook that bold task. This was very inspiring from me. Initially I couldn't follow how riding bicycle could be something bold; but when Zoe highlighted and explained the reasons for the act, I understood. I started realizing that I too have undertaken bold tasks. After that Bobbi told her story she then asked each of us to share ours. All of us told our stories of boldness in our daily lives. At that time I felt very brave to share my story and I learnt that many of us were doing great jobs of bravery in our lives unknowingly. So I would like to thank Bobbi and Zoe for helping me to recognize the bravery in myself.

## **I Couldn't Help Myself, but I Saved Another Girl From Prostitution** *(Continued from page 2)*

I, along with other neighbours, went to where the girl was being kept under lock and key and broke the door to allow her out of the room. We asked the girl why she was being kept there and she told us that she was actually a Bangladeshi citizen belonging to a very poor family. The person who brought her was a neighbour who had assured to give her a job in Kolkata, but actually he tried to sell her. She came to me with tears in her eyes, asked for help and requested me to send her back to her family. We informed the local police and they rescued the girl from that place. We took the initiative to collect money from our community for the girl. Subsequently the administration took action to send her back. I think this is the one most courageous act in my life so far. I feel very proud to share this story with you all.

## Volunteer Journal *(Continued from page 2)*

Now another NGO infrequently uses that centre to run their own program. Although for the most part the children seemed enthusiastic about this program, not everyone understood the importance of education, instead valuing their playtime more. This was not altogether shocking since this centre runs inconsistently and we were told the teachers had been absent for a couple weeks.

The character and the charm of the children we met in Dharampura were equally uplifting. We visited a small building where two teachers were teaching two groups of girls, one adolescent and one younger. The teenagers were learning sewing and were seemingly having fun whilst working. When asking them what careers they would like in the future, silence and chuckles initially greeted us. We received a few answers, like “police officer” which were immediately followed by laughter. I am not sure if this was due to fun and nervous giggles or if they really believed that the idea of being a police officer or any other strong female job was absurd to them. If in this case the latter, then this would be a belief that needs to be changed. Chatting with the group of elementary school girls was incredibly fun. They were extremely excitable and were bursting to show off their dances, songs, and poems to us. This actually continued for quite a while, until we settled them down to ask a few questions. The most enlightening moment was perhaps when we posed an interesting question to them: do they like being a girl or would they rather be boys. Some instantly yelled “*ladki!*” but had trouble explaining why they believed this way. Others said “*ladka*” and we were told several explanations. One wanted the privilege of riding in on a horse to their wedding, another explained that the boys don’t have to do any work.

I thus believe Apne Aap has a responsibility to teach young girls why being a girl can be just as, if not more, empowering than being a boy. The girls in the village had soaring spirits and optimistically appropriate career ambitions of becoming police officers, pilots, teachers, and doctors. It is my sincere hope that these aspirations become their reality and not the heartbreaking fate that their mothers are resigned to.

Overall, my field day was immensely beneficial to me and gave me further motivation and gratitude for the work Apne Aap does. My visit to these villages not only helped me close the disconnect between the office and the girls victimized by sex trafficking, but reinforced my desire to continue working in the field of anti-sex trafficking.

## An Act of Courage That Changed My Life

*By Aheli Ghosh\**

**Topsia, Kolkata:** I lived in Topsia with my sister and brother-in-law. I don’t like them much as my sister is not good to me at all. I did not want to live with them but had to as I had nowhere else to go. I had no other family and no other people to live with. My sister wanted me to do all the household work and she used to beat me all the time. She never gave me anything and I was scared to ask her for the simplest of things. She felt that just by letting me stay in her house with her she was doing me a favour. She used to threaten me that she would kick me out so I used to keep quiet as I had nowhere to go. I was very unhappy. I begged her to let me go to school but she wouldn’t let me. I always dreamt of going school and become independent of my sister. I knew that if I could go to school I would become literate, I could get a job and wouldn’t have to depend on my sister. But my sister knew that she needed me to stay in the house. Who else will do all her work for her? She wanted me to stay at home, so I could wait on them and bring them food from the nearby church. The church near our house distributed simple lunches consisting of rice and *daal* as part of charity every day.

Once, when I argued with them about going to school, they beat me so badly that I seriously injured my head, but I didn’t give up. I wanted to learn and after a long struggle with my sister, she agreed to let me start attending the Apne Aap centre in Topsia.

At Apne Aap I learnt so many new things. I not only learnt to read and write but got to know so many things about the world. I met other girls and made friends. I took the sewing classes and now I can make bags and my own clothes. I enjoyed going there a lot. Going for the Apne Aap classes has changed my life. Apne Aap conducted an open mic session with Bobbi where everyone was sharing their stories of courage. I shared this story of mine. I was a little scared to share my story at first because it is not easy for me to talk in such a big group about something that is so personal to me. After I had finished sharing my story, Bobbi expressed her amazement and admiration for me and my courage, both in action and in my willingness to share the story. She even gifted me with a small present reasoning that anyone who shares a story of courage deserves a prize. She also encouraged other girls to share their story just like I had done, without feeling nervous as that day we had all got together to celebrate each others’ life stories.

# Interview

**Dharampur, Delhi:** *Neha shares her experience of interacting at the Open Mic Session by Bobbi and Apne Aap Staff*

**Q:** So now the didi who came, do you remember, Bobbi didi?

**Neha:** Yes, yes.

**Q:** Tell me, were you there at the open mic session?

**Neha:** Yes.

**Q:** Then, were you there for the three days?

**Neha:** Yes.

**Q:** Did you like the session?

**Neha:** Yes. I liked it very much. I enjoyed the session a lot.

**Q:** Why did you like the session?

**Neha:** Because I found it to be a unique thing to hear. I have never been a part of session like this. We got to have fun as well as I got to learn a lot of new things. I got to meet new didis and it was a great experience. I liked the different ways they taught us and the games played with us. And they even asked what we would like to do, so we put on a small play.

**Q:** Okay, tell me did you know why the session was happening?

**Neha:** I guess the didis wanted us to learn and experience new things. They wanted to teach us acting and they wanted to teach us how to live a bold and courageous life.

**Q:** Did the didi tell stories?

**Neha:** Yes, she told various stories. Not just the didis, but all of us girls of Dharampura told various stories from our lives. We told stories of courageous acts of our life and we heard the stories that Mamta didi and Shashi didi also said in the session.

**Q:** What about the stories did you like the most?

**Neha:** Just all the different stories. There was even one on the theme of opportunity. Everyone was telling their own stories, like one about saving a child,

and one where a girl's husband drank a lot so she had to show strength. These were all experiences very dear to each person. Generally when we meet and talk no one shares stories in this way. It was a chance for us to all get together and share these stories. We got to know so much about each other's lives.

**Q:** What happened the next day?

**Neha:** The next we showed the clothes that we'd had sewn. We played games and Bobbi didi taught us acting. Mamta didi demonstrated and taught us how fights happen in the house; for example a fight in a household between a mother and daughter. The daughter wanted to watch T.V. but the mother wanted her to go to school. She also showed other different sorts of household feuds and how they could be avoided.

**Q:** What happened the third day?

**Neha:** We had two groups; those above 12 years old and those younger than 12 years old. We were taught how girls can save themselves when they are being harassed - they showed us through a skit. We did an exercise where Bobbi didi stood up and whoever she stood next to would also have to act in the same manner.

**Q:** Why do you think we've put this session on?

**Neha:** We talked about our dreams and aspirations, how to increase our income to pay for school fees, how to convince our parents to let us go to school. They taught us acting, to do things with love and kindness. I enjoyed the sessions a lot. I want more sessions like this where people come together share time and share their lives.

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## Red Light Despatch

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