



Red Light Despatch

Volume V Issue 7

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My Dream

*By Bharti Singh
(as told to Anupam Das)*

Munshiganj, Kolkata: I am a group member of the Dhobi Self Empowerment Group. Ten women from Munshiganj formed the group with the help of Apne Aap and to do a laundry business. I am now 25 years old. I am living in a home in Munshiganj, Kolkata, with my parents.

Munshiganj is a small red light area situated on north-east corner of Watganj near Kidderpore dock. I am living in the red light area but I do not want to live here, but don't know how to move out. My socio-economic conditions & health condition is not good. I do not have any birth certificate, or any kind of identity proof card, because of which I face many problems. My mother arranged my marriage when I was only 18 years old. But after some years my life became a big change. I suffered from domestic violence day by day, but I was patient. In the mean time I give birth to a baby.

One day my husband bit me and he demanded dowry from my mother and he also told that if they are not able to give that amount than I would not be allowed to enter my matrimonial house, would not have any food and even that my husband would not take *(continued on page 2)*

Another Girl Taken Away

By Soumya Pratheek

Uttari Rampur, Bihar: Walking through the Red Light Area of Uttari Rampur, my eyes got stuck on the girls and women who are being forced to stand in front of the home-based brothels with dark makeup to attract the customers and feed the pimps and brothel managers. I could always see the helplessness in their eyes, asking for their right to live, the right to have ownership of their own body and soul, the right to have a safe place to live, and all the rights of being a human being. At one side there are these women who are already forced into prostitution, on the other side I can also see those small girls who are living in those brothels being groomed or being brought up to be prostituted.

One among those girls was Kajali, daughter of Chunni who was also prostituted once and now is a survivor due to Apne Aap's interventions. Kajali is one of those million girls who was abandoned by her parents at a hospital, maybe

because she was a girl. Chunni brought her in as an infant and brought her up with an aim to prostitute her once she grows up. But when Apne Aap started working at Uttari Rampur and we started the residential school “KGBV (Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya), Chunni also got motivated by the vision of Apne Aap and she joined Apne Aap's Self Empowerment Group and also sent her adopted daughter, Kajali, to KGBV.

I saw Kajali the first time when I went to Chunni's house during one of my regular field visits. Every time I saw her she was hiding in the small mud thatched room inside the house. why she pulled her out from KGBV. Even after continuous motivation and interventions from Apne Aap there have been incidents when the parents of the girls in the Red Light Area pull them out from KGBV and then force them into prostitution. *(Continued on page 5)*

How I Can Punch Like A Man

By Uma Das, as told to Anupam

Khidderpore, Kolkata: “*At first I was scared to wear the gloves and stand in front of someone who would hit me and I will have to defend*”, Uma said this to Aneesh, the trainer of the recently started Boxing classes at Antodaya Center at Khidderpore, Kolkata.

On the very fast day of joining the class I was told to skip 100 times,

to which I wondered, that being a fat girl how will it be possible for me to skip 100 times? But I kept on trying and could complete only 60 times. Aneesh (the teacher) guided me to punch the sand bag with both the hands. At that time I wondered, how I can punch like a man. I started my sessions along with other students and enjoyed being in a group.

(Continued on page 2)

Diary of a Social Worker

“Dealing with Police Terror in Bihar”

By Manish Jha

Forbesganj: Since Childhood I always thought that Police was a constituted body of persons empowered by the state to enforce the law, protect property, and limit civil disorder; their powers include the legitimized use of force. My long collective memory most commonly associated with police services of a state, are that they are authorized to exercise the power of that state within a defined legal or territorial area of responsibility.

But all changed within a span of a week when I came across a kind of Police terror while working at Bihar and suddenly my perception, which I cultivated since childhood, changes and my subconscious mind knocked at my operative system saying that ‘Police terror is the intentional use of excessive force, usually physical, but potentially also in the form of verbal attacks and psychological intimidation, by a police officer.’”

I came across two of its kind last month when a Senior Cop first verbally assaulted me by throwing me out of the local police station which was neither constitutional nor logical, and secondly psychological intimidation by giving statements to the media of filing a Station House diary against two of us.

This led to a kind of chaos among the team Bihar which is deeply hurt and demotivated after Anti-trafficking activist and Apne Aap Women Worldwide staff member, Sri Mohammed Kalam, was arrested in Forbesganje without proper investigation on fabricated charges of trafficking. We were

already dismayed and outraged to find that the arrest was made without proper inquiry and then hearing of above mentioned allegations completely shattered us.

Since then, slowly and steadily, we are dealing with unwanted Police terror in our own unique way (Apne Aap known for its uniqueness) by doing things more passionately that we are best at and without thinking much of the terror which is a by-product of our long and successful fight with traffickers, pimps and brothel owners. Also Apne Aap is urgently calling for police reform so that law enforcement officials prosecute the buyers and sellers of sex, not the women who are victims of the trafficking and the activists working to stop the exploitation. NHRC, UNODC, MTV and many national and international charity organizations are with us and by using different media like audio-visual, social networking, internet, blogs, signature campaign, etc. we are dealing with Police terror in a wonderful way.

Last but not least, because of our approach, vision, and mission on ending sex trafficking last week we rescued a girl from local bus stand and reunited her with family who were in great danger of getting trafficked, and got accolades from the same Police station where once I had been given the marching orders.

(Continued from page 1 “How I Can Punch Like A Man”) From the very next day, I could skip 70 times and felt confident of my achievement. Slowly I started doing different exercises with the help of Aneesh. I had body-aches as I was not used to exercise. Aneesh told me that if I do it on a regular basis then it won't ache at all. Presently I am attending the classes regularly. I have decided to teach boxing to others girls similar to me once I become a trainer.

(Continued from page 1 “My Dream”) any responsibility of our minor child. My husband refused to provide any medicines to the child so there was no option but leaving my matrimonial house. At that time I left my husband's home and came to my mother's house. I was suffering from eye problems from his torture. I wanted to do some job for my child and as well as to

take some training like Nursing and Petrol Pump. I had dropped out from class IX.

But I had lots of wishes and dreams. I want to leave this red light area and wishes to take a home for my mother as well as son. I want to live with dignity. I dream a lot but can't express properly.

Prostitution Is The Absence Of Choice

By Alix Dolson

I have been in India for a while now. Things are different in India. In Canada, prostitution is very rarely the only choice for women, though it may not be her first choice. In Canada, we do have services and a social safety net that is supposed to protect people from making harmful choices in desperate times. In India I saw a different level of desperation and destitution.

I recently went and visited the Apne Aap project site in Dharmapura, about an hour outside of Delhi. In this 'urban village', certain castes practice something called intergenerational prostitution. In the Indian caste system, everyone has a place, and the caste you were born into dictates how you will make a living. While the caste system is not officially practiced anymore, its legacy has been hard to avoid. And so in this village that I visited, the traditional livelihood imposed on girls of some of the castes is prostitution. The girls are married young, and after giving birth to their first child, they are subsequently prostituted out by their husbands. The husbands act as pimps, procuring customers and driving their wives to appointments. And that's just the way it is. Girls are raised

knowing this is their fate. Fathers arrange marriages knowing what awaits their daughters in their new home. It has become a part of the culture, so it's been normalised as a part of every day life.

In many traditional communities in India, and especially in this village, kinship is very important. A person just doesn't pick up and leave the community.

Column

Volunteer Journal

So even if a girl was to become educated and secured a job for herself in Delhi, leaving the community is not an option. And that is a hard concept for me to grasp, especially since I have an awesome family life but have still left home to pursue other things. And it's not that the girls are all trapped, locked away and miserable. They love their parents, and their parents love them. The traditional family unit is intact, and people care for and look after one another. I saw fathers playing with their daughters; yet as soon as those girls are old enough to conceive, the fathers will essentially sell them to the highest bidder for a lifetime of prostitution. It's a

hard thing to understand.

And so I started to ask myself: Are these girls being trafficked? Are they enslaved? It's not the usual trafficking story that you hear, with an unsuspecting Nepali girl being led to a big city brothel under false pretenses, and is then locked in a small room with no chance of escape. Here, these girls remain in their communities, often living just down the street from their parents' home. So they are not locked away; yet still, can we really say that they have a choice? If these girls were to defy their parents and leave the village in search of something else, they would be rebelling against everything they hold dear. They would be leaving behind their families and the life that they know, and they couldn't return. I doubt I would have the strength and courage to do that. I left home to pursue my dreams knowing that my family loved me for doing it; I know that my community of family and friends support me in everything I do, and that I can return any time to their open arms.

These girls don't have that alternative. If you leave, that's it; there is no coming back. So knowing the consequences of that decision, do they really have a choice?

(Continued on page 5)

Celebrity Update

By Lindsey Swedick

New York: Apne Aap has received tremendous support from American Celebrities in the campaign to stop police corruption as it relates to sex trafficking and have the charges against an AAWW activist dropped. Ricky Martin and Ashley Judd have urged their twitter followers to join Apne Aap's campaign through tweets like, "*Please help @Ruchiragupta @apneaap combat police harassment as they combat sex trafficking in India: bit.ly/Q6MVju .*" Nicholas Kristoff has tweeted, "*Sad to see police in Bihar, India, harassing @Apneaap activists trying to battle sex trafficking. http://apneaap.org/index.php .*" The support keeps coming every day!

Networking

Apne Aap's presence in the US is giving the anti-sex trafficking movement increased exposure, as Ruchira Gupta works with local groups to develop new ways of approaching the problem and inspiring activist to continue in their invaluable work. In recent months, Apne Aap participated in a protest, held by the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, to shut down Backpage.com, a website where sex is bought and sold every day, with the illegal participation (mostly by force) of minors. Apne Aap partner, Equality Now, is assisting in

Apne Aap's Cool Men Don't Buy Sex campaign and our Police Corruption campaign. During Ruchira Gupta's time in the US, she has met with officials from the NYC Mayor's Office, regarding her involvement with a law recently signed in NYC that requires taxi cab drivers to be trained to identify sex trafficking victims. Many more organizations have committed to partner with Apne Aap in the coming months, as we continue to take on police corruption and the demand for purchased sex in India and worldwide.

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A Bird Which Was Flying In The Sky

*By: Pushpa**

Dharampura Najafgarh, New Delhi: I "Pushpa" am a 16 year old, staying with my family at Dharampura. I am member of Kali Kishori Mandal group. I associated with APNE AAP WOMEN WORLD-WIDE six month back as member of Kishori Mandal, student of computer teacher and member of bhangra group. I studied at 6th standard and dropped my school because my family and community do not allow the girl to go school so I had to leave school. Although I wanted to become advocate but I could not do that due to my family and my society.

Now I am learning many things from APNE AAP. I wanted to be a good dancer. I learned bhangra by an intern at organization office. Now days, I am very happy to learn bhangra and I got a chance to perform in an event. Event was organized by HAR Khabar Media Private Ltd & Global Film and Music on 17-6-12 at Shiksha Bharti Public School, Sector-7, and Dwarka Delhi. I performed in a group there.

Before performing, I was being very nervous among the participants when I reached to stage to perform the program in front of audience. I managed myself and try to control over my emotions and nervousness as we started dance. Audience began clapping loudly and enjoying with bhangra, they began to dance with songs and really enjoyed with whole performance. All of them appreciated our team to group performance. The judge of program was out of control by seeing the program and she joined our team to dance. I was very happy to perform at that stage and associated with them.

All performance of our participants was appreciated very much by audience and judges. Around 8.30 PM program was ended and they moved from there. Before leaving the venue, our participants were so happy to get appreciation from all and respect for their skills and performance.

The program was so good and encouraging to me. I got appreciation by audience and was feeling a bird which was flying in the sky. I was just imagining so it was really so nice platform where I got a chance to express my talent and skill in front of audience. I hope. I will do perform well in my future and get more appreciation by public. After this, I performed at another platform on the occasion of celebration of mother day "MAA" program and got a certificate from there. Now, I will perform at another platform at PATTODI through family network. Really now my parents appreciate me always and be happy to see me as a dancer. I hope that I will become a good dancer with the help of APNE AAP.

(Continued from page 1 "Another Girl Taken Away") Apne Aap has filed case against those traffickers and has put them into conviction. So, I gave a statement which also sounded a warning, that Kajali should go back to school and should not be hurt. Both Chunni and her husband (who was once a customer at her place and then started living with her) understood what I meant.

Kajali started coming at Basti Vikas Kendra, the community centre of Apne Aap for various activities and gradually she started speaking to me and I understood that she wanted to go back to KGBV. I sought help from Fatima, Meena and Kalam, who have known Chunni for a long time, to convince her to send Kajali back to KGBV. Chunni was an active member of the Self Empowerment Group in the Red Light Area and she had attended so many trainings given by Apne Aap and she started understanding the need of sending Kajali to school. Finally, she sent her back to KGBV in October, 2011.

When Kajali came back to KGBV she was a very silent and introverted girl, but it was surprising that after a week when I visited KGBV she seemed very different. She was teasing her friends, laughing, and being very talkative. I asked her teachers about how she is doing and they said that she is very interested in studies and indulges in all the activities in

the school. Everything was going fine, when suddenly a rescue operation was done by the police at Uttari Rampur Red Light Area, from where Kajali comes from. Her step father was also arrested by the police and Kajali's mother expected Apne Aap to help her. But we were clear in our statements that as he was living upon the earning of a girl who was prostituted from their house, we will not help him. Kajali's step father got a bail and came out of jail.

After that Chunni took Kajali from KGBV on a leave saying that she was not well and there needed to be someone to take care of her for some days. Even after knowing the risk in which she was, and as we are helpless because we can't deny the biological right of a mother, we had to give her a leave. But Apne Aap staff used to follow up with her on a regular basis. Recently in July, I got a call from Fatima, our activist in the Red Light Area, saying that Kajali is being sexually exploited by her step-father and Chunni is being beaten up by him as she resisted it. I wasn't shocked because by this time I have made myself strong enough to fight against this. So, here starts another fight of Apne Aap against the system of exploitation of a girl. With a promise that we can come up with a story in this RLD about how Kajali is back in KGBV and is safe....

(continued from page 3 "Prostitution Is The Absence Of Choice") It is hard to imagine the rigours and pressures of Indian social structure until you see it first-hand. Growing up where I did with the family that I had, it's really hard to imagine not being supported to follow my dreams, wherever they may lead. I doubt that I have the courage to do what I have if it meant sacrificing everything I knew and loved. But then what can we do? It is really hard not to feel powerless when you meet a teenage girl who you know is going to be married and prostituted within the next few years. The community support is there; if there is an alternative that proves to be just as lucrative as prostitution, most of the parents would choose that for their

daughters. They love their children and want the best for them, provided they are able to bring in as much money as they would in the sex trade. The go-to solution of educating and then finding a job doesn't work for every community. So it takes some creativity. One really promising project has just been launched by a fellow Apne Aap team member. This project trains girls to design and sew clothing that will then be marketed internationally. The girls are involved in every step, including sourcing, design and production. They are even required to save some of their earnings from the training stipend, preparing them for a successful future. This type of project gives girls in the village an alternative to prostitu-

tion that doesn't require them to give up the community that they know and love.

So change is possible. And that's what I need to remember when I meet these girls whose fate has already been decided. With some help and support, it is possible to change this fate, and the fate of future generations. Sexual exploitation is a major problem, and when you look at the big picture, it can be pretty overwhelming. While Apne Aap and other NGOs won't be able to eliminate prostitution, or human trafficking, or slavery, we can make small changes in the lives of individuals. And after meeting some of these girls, and knowing that they may be able to escape being exploited, that's enough for me.

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I Want To Learn More In Computers

By Isha Praveen, 15yrs , Kishori Mandal (Sarojni Naidu)

Araria, Bihar: My name is Isha Praveen and I am very thankful to Apne Aap Women Worldwide organization, who has given the opportunity to learn computer. I am from a very poor family and I never thought that I could attend a computer class. When I used to see girls in the television working on the computer, I used to imagine myself there. But I knew that it's just a dream because I had to take lot of hardships to even go for my regular schooling due to financial condition and moreover being a girl.

But when Apne Aap started the computer classes and when I got an opportunity to attend the classes I was very excited. I convinced my parents and started my classes on 12 June, 2012. I come every day to attend the classes in the morning before school hours for an hour. The class happens at the Apne Aap's office in Forbesganj. During the inaugural ceremony of the computer classes, I met the president of Asset Foundation, Mr. Umashankar Ray, who has sponsored this programme. He was a very nice man and he asked us to talk in simple English, with which our English speaking capacity will increase. This is a basic course in computers of three months and I am really enjoying it and I want to learn more in computers.

After my 12th grade I want to join graduation course in computers. I feel that it will give me an opportunity to have a bright career and moreover I can support my family once I get a job.

Kalam Had Rescued Me Too!

By Naina Nat Khalifa

Dharampura Najafgarh, New Delhi: When I came to know that Kalaam Chacha has been arrested I wanted to know why he was arrested? What could he have done? When I inquired from all my colleagues I came to know that an adolescent girl was used as a pawn by the traffickers in order to entrap him in a false case of trafficking.

I know all about the Nat community. When they form enmity with somebody they will make sure that the person is ruined. Kalaam Chacha has been working for the Nat community for all these years and he has formed many enemies due to his efforts to end the practice of prostitution in this community. When I came to know that Kalaam Chacha had to spend the entire night in jail I was very worried how all this would end.

When I came to know that he has been granted bail (with support from Apne Aap) I was very happy. I thought if Apne Aap is with him then all is fine. He will not be alone in this and those who have falsely accused him will ultimately be caught. I know Kalaam Chacha is a very strong person. He has fought many such battles before.

Kalaam Chacha's case is still going on and I am with him- He will surely be able to prove his innocence. I know that he is innocent and he has been falsely accused by the traffickers. After his arrest, when Tinku Di had asked me whether I would be willing to travel to Bihar to testify for his innocence my reply was 'Yes...I certainly will'. After all he had rescued me too!



apne aap
women worldwide

Did You Know?

This month's DYK is based on *The TIP Report 2012*, which is an annual report released in June by the US Department of State to discuss the details of Trafficking in Persons throughout the world. This year, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited AAWW's Kolkata center in May, prior to introducing the TIP Report.

How many people are victims of modern slavery?

It is estimated that, worldwide, 27 million people are victims of modern-day slavery or what is called trafficking in persons. This includes sex trafficking, forced labor, debt bondage, involuntary servitude, forced child labor, and unlawful recruitment of child soldiers.

Why do law enforcement officers in India often look the other way?

Many corrupt law enforcement officers facilitate the movement of sex trafficking victims and protect suspected traffickers and brothel keepers because they receive bribes from the establishments and sexual services from the victims. Some even tip-off sex and labor traffickers to impede rescue efforts.*

What does it mean for India to move up in Tier ratings?**

Beginning in 2011, India has moved up to a Tier 2 country. This is positive news for India, as it means that the Indian government is making significant efforts to create laws prohibiting human trafficking, to penalize individuals involved in human trafficking, to identify and protect trafficking victims, and to enact prevention efforts.

Where is sex trafficking happening?

Sex trafficking is happening worldwide. However, in India 90% of trafficking is internal. Women and girls from India's most disadvantaged social castes are trafficked within the country for purposes of forced prostitution. Religious pilgrimage centers and popular tourist destinations are vulnerable to sex tourism. Rural areas are also becoming more popular because activity is less detected than in traditional brothels in the cities.

How can you track the ways that your life is touched by modern slavery?

Visit the website www.slaveryfootprint.org to follow a questionnaire that allows you to see how your everyday life influences modern slavery. Become aware and learn how you can take action against human trafficking in persons.

*See TIP Report pg. 185

**The Department places each country in the 2012 TIP Report onto one of four tiers, as mandated by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. This placement is based more on the extent of government action to combat trafficking than on the size of the problem. The analyses are based on the extent of governments' efforts to reach compliance with the TVPA's minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking.

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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