



RED LIGHT DESPATCH

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DELHI, KOLKATA, AND FORBESGANJ (BIHAR)

My Dreams

“To Become A Doctor”

Radha Prasad, 11 years

Kolkata: My name is Radha Prasad. I am studying in class V. I live in Munshiganj at Nitya Ghosh Street, which is a Red light area. I came to Apne Aap when I was 6-year-old. I learnt to read from here. Initially, I was admitted in bridge course in this center. Then, I got admitted to another school by Rachna didi and Tamal sir and now I am in class V. I am not the only one to be benefitted by Apne Aap, even my siblings and the other children residing in the red light area, come here to study.

We are given classes in computer, trained in boxing, dancing, drawing and stitching, apart from the tuitions in the centre.

My mother and other women make Paper-bags here, which is the only source of their earning. The place where I live, most of the women and children are humiliated and exploited. It makes me sad. I want this Red Light area to be removed so that there will be no further exploitation of them. I have a dream; I will become a Doctor and will help them as much as I can.

“One Day The Girls Will Grow And So Will Their Needs”

Aarti

Najafgarh: I have been told by some people that new benchmarks to prove our poverty line have been proposed to the government. In my knowledge, the panel have proposed Rs 48/ day for cities and Rs 32/ day for villages. My name is Aarti. I am 23-year-old. I belong to Sapera community and my home is in Najafghar (Delhi). I live in a two room apartment with my mother, six-year-old daughter, three brothers and two sisters. Also, my younger sister Deepmala brought her new born baby girl to live with us. Recently, she (Deepmala) separated from her husband.

It would be wrong to say that we are worried about what to eat on a day-to-day basis. No, we have stop worrying about that long time ago. Now we have plainly decided to skip our breakfasts and just purchase groceries for lunch and dinner, which we can afford to.

Earlier, we tried to determine our

monthly food budget in advance, but we could not administer it successfully, as my younger brother, Mohan is the only bread earner in my family. He does not have a monthly income.

Mohan earn his living by taking our pet monkey to the streets to entertain the crowd—the monkey performs dance, difficult stunts and also poses for the people. On good days, he manages to get about Rs 100-150 per day and other days he makes up to Rs 80. We spend Rs 100 for dal (pulses), Rs 50 for tomatoes alone, potatoes, garlic and occasionally onions. There are days when we want to eat non-vegetable or some other food items but with the limited money and high inflation, we cannot experiment much and hence decides otherwise.

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The World Outside

“Dancing In The Swimming Pool”

Ruby Gupta, 14 years

Kolkata: My name is Ruby Gupta. I am studying in class VII in Kabitirtha high school. I have been coming to Apne Aap centre for a very long time. Here I attend computer classes, stitching, dance classes and many more such activities.

In the month of January we went to Calcutta Swimming club to participate in an event called “Care and Share”. I and my friends of AAWW, in total 30 boys and girls went there. We reached office to go to the club together. When we reached, we found that children from other organisations

had also come.

We, five girls from AAWW did the welcoming dance (Desh rangila) in the dried out swimming pool, dried for the programme. Following this three of our girls sang the Apne Aap anthem: “*Ek do ek do badhte kadam, Apne Aap ke sadasya hai hum...*” The other children also performed. Then, there were different types of games for us like identification of colours, rabbit game, ludo etc. The games were very exciting. We were also given gift coupons. There was delicious food for all of us who participated in the event.

Op/Ed : The Last Girl Standing - Ruchira Gupta's interview in Femina

The weakest person in society today is the person I call the last girl. This person is poor, low caste and female, mostly a teenager between 13 and 19 years of age. The combination of these four inequalities—class, caste, sex and age—disenfranchises her so much that she becomes the most oppressed person in society. All these inequalities ensure that she is cut off from access to education, mobility, nutrition, information, livelihood training, savings and property.

Her vulnerability is taken advantage of for two reasons: to get cheap labour and to produce cheap labour. She becomes both the means for production and reproduction. And that is why she is also targeted for sexual violence again and again. The intersection of these inequalities makes the dominant sex, dominant class and dominant caste believe that poor lower-caste girls should be sexually available for them.

RAPE AS PRIVILEGE

This inequality does two things at the same time. It entitles the upper-caste, upper-class man, making him believe that he use and abuse her body and that it is his privilege to do so. This is reflected in many different ways in India. One, of course, is the area where I work—prostitution, where again and again I have been told if prostitutes don't exist, girls from good families would be raped.

This means that poor and lower-caste women should be sexually sacrificed to protect the upper-caste and upper-class sisters, to feed the unbri- dled sexual desires of upper-class, upper-caste men. The inevitability of their prostitution plays out even in policy circles, where leaders, policymakers and heads of foundations, refuse to acknowledge the absence of their choices and say that these girls and women are “choosing to be prostituted and therefore should be called sex workers”.

THIS IS NORMAL

As per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), more than four Dalit women are raped everyday across the country. I am not at all surprised by this statistics. In my own work, both in urban and rural areas, we know of Dalit women who have been kidnapped, assaulted, raped, even murdered for witchcraft etc. The negligence, atrocities, the failure to address those atrocities, and the impunity of those who commit them—all of these things need to be curbed. And the process needs to begin at the police station. Police stations are full of upper-class and upper-caste men, and, at best, they just tell the survivor that this is where you come from and to deal with it. At worst, they might even be part of the problem itself.

When we started working in Bihar, we started a small classroom in a red-light area. But even the people in power there told me, '*Yeh community ka kuch nai ho sakta*. Nothing can be done for this community. You are

wasting your time.' This attitude needs to change. One way to do this is to take them out of places like this and get these girls into hostels where they will receive an education, guidance and options to choose from.

A SYSTEM SO BROKEN

In Haryana, we recently rescued a girl from the Peran community. She was married at the age of 12, and pimped by her husband into prostitution at 15. Through one of our students who attended our classes, we came to know about the case and complained several times to the Child Welfare Committee and to the police, who did nothing. When at 15, she phoned us, asking to be rescued, we put her in a shelter.

But unfortunately and ironically, this girl who was a child in need of protection was housed with children in conflict with the law. Not surprisingly, she was beaten up, asked to clean the others' soiled clothes, and was generally worse off there. The system was failing her at every level. It failed her when she was pulled out of school and married off, sold off, and even she had been 'rescued'. We are now looking for some other accommodation for her. But is it a surprise then that the girl thinks she was better off with the husband?

IT'S NOT ABOUT THE TOILETS

Among other things that Badaun rape case has brought attention to is the fact that Dalit women in rural areas have no access to toilets. But, in my opinion, it is not about a public toilet—it is about safety as to so many levels and providing girls and women with better opportunities. There have been several schemes where low-cost housing has been given to Dalits, with a common public toilet. These toilets are so filthy that people prefer defecating in the open. It is the same decision that any woman who has ever travelled on the country's highways and has stopped for a break at a filthy public restroom or petrol pump has to make. That's why toilet is not the answer.

CHANGE STARTS AT HOME

In my opinion, the biggest challenge we face is the normalisation of the rape of poor women in our culture. They are considered disposable, their prostitution is considered inevitable and the men who buy them are considered normal. From the Mathura rape to the Suryanelli case to the December 1, 2012, rape case, a lot of things have changed with each new report.

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Op/Ed : The Last Girl Standing - Ruchira Gupta's interview in Femina

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The two-finger test has been banned, we have acknowledged that rape is not just peno-vaginal. We have addressed what happens to the woman, but not addressed the perpetrator not the police. And at the other end of the spectrum, we need to end the impunity of those who exploit these women. Create a deterrent by actually arresting and prosecuting and convicting them. One of the biggest things we needed to do was police reforms--- this was even suggested in the Justice Verma Committee re-

port, but sadly this part was left out in the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013.

As urban, educated people, it is very important for us to act. How can we do this? People overthink things and often wait to do the perfect things—but the perfect sometimes can become the enemy of the good. That's why, while you wait for change to occur in society, speak up, tweet about this, write about this, call out anyone, even a husband or boyfriend, who trivialises the issues, do everything you can to generate awareness around you. Every little things you do matters, and that is how consciousness will change.

Aseem Asha's Video Workshop

—*Manish Swarnkar*

Bihar: A video workshop was held in Bihar state office by Mr. Aseem Asha (Aseem Asha Foundation) from 25th June to 29th June 2014 and organized by Apne Aap Women Worldwide.

In this workshop, total of 35 Kishori Mandal girls of Basti Vikas Kendra, Uttari Rampur have participated. The main purpose of this workshop was to train the girls on how to take pictures, how to shoot videos and foremost to train them to make short films regarding various social issues.

The films can be used in effective manner by spreading strong social messages to the wider audience, which instead will be helpful in preventing several dreadful practices, that is prevalent in our society.

It will also encourage the girls of Kishori Mandals to choose it as their career in future.

The event started by Mr Aseem Asha giving his introduction to the participants. In response, the girl students also introduced themselves with their names, class and the group in which they belong to and what they aspire to be in future. He asked the students to write stories based on their personal experiences. The topics that were given to the girls are –

- Discrimination among the different castes
- Fear during raid and rescue
- Experience of Kali Mela (Mainly

highlight the theatre issues)

- Domestic Violence
- Experience of rally on molestation
- Experience of Nat Caste.

Mr Aseem taught the girl students about 'story boarding'. He told them about film making, and said

that there are various parts like 'story Boarding', 'story writing', 'sound recording', 'editing' etc.

After the completion of the stories, the different students' groups submitted it to Mr Aseem Asha. Then, the all the groups were called upon one by one to present their stories. During the whole process, Manish K Swarnkar, Sanju Kumari, Fatma Khatoon, Meena Khatoon and Santu Roy helped the worker and Mr. Aseem Asha for a smooth event.

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Diary of a Social Worker *Sunita Yadav*

Delhi: I got married at the age of 21 years. I was a victim of domestic violence. I was harassed on a regular basis for dowry and as a result I had to come back and start living with my parents. I got admitted to a B.Ed college but the taunt of my neighbours broke my morale. I decided to work hard, succeed in life and work for hapless women like me. I felt like I was a burden on my family and wanted to have financial independence as soon as possible.

After joining Apne Aap Women Worldwide on 16th January, 2012 I came across women who were forced into sex trade by their own husbands and listening to their ordeals made my pain and suffering seem like a trickle.

I couldn't believe that there were people who were ready to sell the dignity of their mothers, sisters and wives for easy money. I decided to help them out as much as I can.

Once I was lying in my bed and the thought, and had face the thought, which was haunting me for a long time— I help survivor and victims by giving the girls, mental and physical support, but I wasn't able to fight for my own rights.

So I decided that before I could help them out I needed to help myself. I decided to go against my family and file for divorce.

My parents and brothers were not happy with my decision to seek divorce. I was taunted by others. I, however, got a divorce and since then my family stands by me in every decision I make.

I have developed a very informal relationship with several victims who come to the organization for support. I help them to fight for their rights.

One such girl Momal from Dharampura shared that she was looked down upon by her community because she was dark and frail. I made her understand that beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. One's physical appearance has nothing to do with being beautiful. It is her work and her endeavors that make her beautiful. Today she is a dance teacher who supports her family financially. She is 18 years of age, unmarried and working despite the fact that women in her community get married within 14-15 years. She helps her mother in bringing up her siblings.

We do not always get to witness happy endings. At

times, we are helpless, despite all our efforts, we failed to give better life to the survivors from trafficking.

One such example, Kalpana (Name changed), a girl from Prem Nagar was pushed into prostitution by her husband. Later, when she objected to this and went back to her parents, she was subjected to violence.

Kalpana was a strong girl to go against her family and husband. I could feel the connection between us.

She wanted us to help her, so Apne Aap rescued her. But now Kalpana, who is an underage age has been put for a shelter in Nari Niketan, Haryana.

Kalpana cries to take her out of the shelter home, as she is ill-treated by the seniors and made to do odd-job by other in-mates. I feel helpless because we cannot do much.

These girls are like birds who are meant to fly free in the open blue sky.

They do not want to raise their voices against their family but at the same time they also want to dream big and fulfill their desires. I now feel my only aim in life is to help these girls out no matter where I am. I want them to aim high and be able to achieve it. Even though I know I can't possibly help all, if I succeed in helping out even a handful I will consider my life fulfilled.

The Journey of Sunita Yadav

“Even though I know I can't possibly help all, if I succeed in helping out even a handful I will consider my life fulfilled.”

NON- FORMAL EDUCATION CLASSES AT SONAGACHI

Kolkata: In Sonagachi center we have successfully started the Non-Formal Education classes from June 2014. The classes start from 10 am to 1 pm and 4:00pm to 5:00pm with 12 children at present.

The continuous mobilization, home visits and support from the local people, helped us to gathered 12 children,



from the age-group of three years to eleven years. Among those 12 children, two of them were a school dropped-out students and the rest are the children of crèche.

All the twelve children are from Sonagachi red light area and are at risk of being trafficked at any point of time in life. Their mothers are categorized under “Women In Prostitution”.

The mothers who are into prostitution do not have much time to cater towards their child. Generally, the women are busy with their clients. During that time, the children do not have anywhere else to go to and they can be seen around roaming in the street of Sonagachi.

In terms of education, the vulnerable children fail to get the required support and guidance from their mother.

Even those children who are attending schools eventually becomes a drop-out case, due to the lack of guidance from their elders. So, to provide the children a safe space and educational support we have planned to start the NFE, remedial and bridge course at the Sonagachi center.

The children started to come for their study and in some cases, even the mothers are encouraging them by helping them to join the crèche classes. The local community people are also spreading the news about the classes.

Keya, a WIP from Sonagachi, has been appointed as a teacher in the elementary education to teach the crèche children.

We also guide the senior students for their after-school tuition who comes to our centre in afternoon.



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My First Day In Apne Aap:

Sanjay Verma

Delhi: My first day at Apne Aap Women Worldwide gave me a new kind of experience. This organisation works towards the eradication of the sex industry and at the same time providing the victims an alternative source of livelihood.

This organisation is working to provide education to the women and girls who are into prostitution so as to mainstream them and link them to dignified means of livelihood.

Apne Aap firmly believes that sex trade should be abolished and the people who are a part of this should be introduced to an alternate way of living. To fulfill this, the organisation has set up different centres at various places near the red-light areas. Here, we train them in disciplines like tailoring, cutting and also make them computer literate so as to make them economically independent and enable them to be a part of the mainstream society.

This organisation also rescues girls and women who are forced into Prostitution.

On my first day, I had the opportunity to meet the people who are a part of this organisation and realised that their endeavour to help these hapless victims of flesh trade was heartfelt and genuine. I am so thoroughly touched.

Everyone here feels that the women and girls in flesh trade deserve a life of dignity and integrity, a right they

are denied.

These people through their work have tried to make the lives of these victims better, helping them to dream big and guiding them towards the fulfillment of those aspirations. The dedication and hard work of the staff has motivated me and more importantly their will power to stand up for the right cause even in times of difficulty has humbled me.

Doing full justice to its name, Apne Aap is like an inspiration to every single person directly or indirectly attached to it.

Going ahead, I am looking forward to contribute to their efforts and add on to it.

“Everyone here feels that the women and girls in flesh trade deserve a life of dignity

(continued from page 1) However, we do take chicken three to four times in a year, especially during festive season, from October to December--- During that time even my other younger brother gets opportunity to play ‘dhol’ on marriages.

Mohan owns a bicycle and he prefers to perform the street acts within the radius of 3-4 km. He says, “It’ll save the transport fare”.

For lunch we use around one and half kilogram of flour to prepare Chapattis for 10 members in the family, including the monkey, whom we consider as one of our own. Even when we eat one or two chapattis each, the monkey is allotted the largest share with five rotis. As my brother says, “he (the monkey) earns for the family and we have to keep him healthy.” The evening meals are no different, except some days we cook curry with chapattis.

There was a time, when I was considered healthy and beautiful in my community. Now I feel old, really old. My mother says, I have become thinner, darker and look more fragile after my marriage.

I and my sisters do not have the desire to look beautiful or apply any make-up on our face. On a second thought, maybe we just cannot afford to buy anything which is beyond our basic needs. The salwar, which I am wearing now, was stitched by me, when I had attended free training classes; cut

ting and tailoring provided by Apne Aap Women Worldwide. This was before my marriage. Now I am under medication and back to my mother’s house because of the regular physical and mental assault by my husband and the in-laws, as a failure to meet their dowry demands.

My concern is, if the panel’s proposal is accepted by the government, under which category we are going to fall. How it’ll affect us? My daughter and sister’s daughter are very young now, and one of them can also avail free education and other facilities in the government school in our locality. But I am worried, in years to come, the girls will grow and so will their needs.

“Child Marriage and Gender Inequality: The Precarious Position of the Girl Child” — transcribed by Sameera Rizvi (intern)

Delhi: Save The Children International is due to release a report this August entitled **Status of the Girl Child in India**, from which Anubhati Patra shared some key findings:

- There is a clear link between the amount of girls being married and trafficked at early ages during times of disaster and crisis.
- There is strong causality between poverty levels and incidence of early marriage.
- When boys and girls were asked about their perception of gender, there was a clear delineation of entitlement, dominance and control that boys articulated in matters of every day life relative to their female counterparts. From a young age, girls understood their purpose to be providers of care and pleasure.
- The vastly higher frequency of girls getting married before age 18 versus boys was shown to be indicative of the value placed on either gender.

The data clearly articulates that the numbers align with the gender perception that we see in society. Using the data from her research with Save the Children, Anubhati Patra answered why gender is an important concept when it comes to the girl child.

Ms Patra explained how the girl child innately receives the most vulnerable position in the family unit, which transfers outwards to her place in society.

The two governing principles of patriarchy and kinship system predicate that families and communities are perpetuated by men from everything to inheritance, last rites of ancestors and community legacy.

In order to understand how gender affects the girl child's rights, one must examine how this social order translates into our everyday activities, as gender is embedded into all tasks.

The conclusion, it seems, is that the girl child has no specific place in the family. The boy's place is secured by the fact that he will grow up to inherit property, earn and will take care of parents during old age, and will therefore stay in the house (*patrilocality*).

The household has a clear-cut role for the boy from the beginning of the child's life, whereas the girl's role is generated when she is a wife, that too a mother-in-waiting who *without a male child carries less importance*.

Therefore, from a survival perspective there is little incentive for parents to have a girl child who would eventually be married off. Protection (concerns of safety revolving around a woman's virginity) norms further illustrate the burden of raising a daughter, for which **child marriage** is often the simplest solution.

Consider the following questions, which bring the conversation full circle to girl's rights and trafficking:

1. Are girls married off earlier when household resources are scarce? Are they more dispensable in poor families?
2. Number trends show that girls get trafficked less when there is greater enrollment and access to school-- is education the answer for at-risk girls?
3. Is early marriage a reiteration of control/patriarchy? It is much easier to maintain dominance over a spouse who is considerably younger.

The two governing principles of patriarchy and kinship system predicate that families and communities are perpetuated by men from everything to inheritance, last rites of ancestors and community legacy.

Poems

Bitiya Rani

I am the princess of my mother,
Doll of my father,
A little star for my brother,
And the dearest to my sister,
I am the angel to my grandfather,
Nightingale of my grandmother,
And the heart of the whole family,
My name is Bitiya Rani

— *Sunaina*
Age : 12 years

Parrot

I have a parrot;
The parrot eats fruits,
The parrot is beautiful,
The parrot lives in a cage, happily,
And the parrot mimics ‘Ram Ram.’

— *Harwansh*

Age : 8 years



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