



# RED LIGHT DESPATCH

VOLUME VII, ISSUE 5

MAY 2014

DELHI, KOLKATA, AND FORBESGANJ (BIHAR)

## My Dreams

### Just To Open A Cosmetic Shop

*Babli Singh*

**Kolkata:** I am a resident of Sonagachi since 8 years. I was in the prostitution for a long time.

I belong to a poor family & in my home at my native place my parents were there. I wanted to help them by earning some money and in that way with a dream of earning some money for my family I started to search for some job. But I have been trapped & forcefully involved in the prostitution. My all dreams crashed there on that very day.

Right now I don't have any one left in my family. My parents died. I had a dream once of being dancer. When I was in school I used to learn dance. I studied upto class VII. My dream now is just to open a small cosmetic shop. As I am growing old & I am not interested to continue my life in Sonagachi. I am happy that a NGO such as Apne Aap has opened their center with a view of providing education to children and also provides income generation skills to the interested women.

I am happy that I have got a place, where I can come & have chat as my wish, can think of something new, can get some trainings that Apne Aap is providing which might help me relive my lost dream.

## 'I Knew My Didi Will Come and Save Me'

*Shweta Khattar*

**Delhi:** "Prem Nagar Centre is around 8 kms away from Apne Aap's Delhi field office. The center is within the village community of Perna, which practices intergenerational prostitution wherein young girls are married off early at a bride price, which the groom's family pays to the bride's family. Once the girl has her first child, then her own family members push her into prostitution.

In April 2014, a teacher at the Prem Nagar Centre was approached by one of the girls, \*Rachel, who complained of being sent to her in-laws forcefully. After being beaten by her brother, she complained again and explained her painful story:

When \*Rachel was 12 years old she was married off by her parents, and her mother-in-law forced her to serve the clients at the family's home-based brothel. One day, \*Rachel hid in a train's bathroom and ran away. She reached her former home in Prem Nagar hoping that she would be safe. To her shock, her brother and mother scolded her; and her family forced her to serve clients.

Her fate was being decided by ruthless people who had put a price on her body. This is when she approached one of the teachers at Apne Aap's center.

The teacher brought the picture to Apne's field coordinator and me.

*(Continued on page 6)*

## These Girls Also Live in Delhi... Where Our Prime Minister Lives'

### "A World Outside My Home"

*Fatima Khatoon*

**Forbesganj:** During my tour to Delhi, I was shocked to see a different world. From my childhood days, I have faced different struggles in my life and it is still continue and from starting I lived with my community in Forbesganj, Bihar, where many people take care their children or girls whom they buy, just for prostitution whereas in Delhi, I saw many of women married their girls with a hope that it can save their daughters lives to become prostitute. I was daze and also hurt to see that almost each and every house, family members give respect to the girls and they live like common people, but the truth is in the name of marriage, parents sell their daughters. Even girls are not safe in their own houses because they are unaware about this business. *(Continued on page 5)*

*Column*  
Volunteer Journal  
**Helped out of the  
Cage of Facade**

- *Jharnaa Malhotra*

Being born and brought up in a mega-city like Delhi, in a country formerly known for being the land of Tandoori Chicken and Snake-charmers, is a privilege in its own way. Delhi is a metropolitan city, which is extremely global, where ones meets people from all over the world and from different walks of life as well.

This political centre is known for the glamorous and urban lives lead by millions and millions, - lives that are so colourful and free *ki*

***“Kaun jaye Zauq  
Par Dilli Ki Gali-  
yan Chhod Kar?”***

I too was one such bird, innocently tasting the juicy flavours of the city until Apne Aap brought me face to face with the bitter ones that exist as vividly as the others, but are somewhere lost or overshadowed by the vibrant scenarios all around. Ones, that people sometimes see,

but choose to un—see, ones that I, who has lived in a city like Delhi, could have never imagined.

Although Apne Aap has been a part of my life for no more than a couple of weeks, yet the realisations that have come along with the discoveries I have made in this little time are going to be here for a substantially longer period because what you see and what you learn from here, is something that you cannot forget easily. Not because it cannot be forgotten, but because it is humanly impossible to forget what might have happened, had the tables not turned the right way for you in your life, and had you been in the place where the other was. It is indeed something one cannot forget.



My task was simple, I was asked to convert about 50 surveys into a brief soft copy by organising and analysing the data.

I had never imagined that a connec-

tion so close yet so far from the sources of this data would cause me to sweat each time I thought about them.

“Aurat agar tang kare ya galat ho toh use maarna sahi hai”, “Humaare samudaaye mein toh zyadatar auratein Prostitution ya Bar Dancer ka hi kaam karti hain”, “Vidhva ya chhodi gayi auraton ki keemat dete hain”.

The words seem so ordinary individually, but the amount of weight carried by each sentence as a whole, is the same as the amount of disbelief we all go through when we come to terms with the fact that this a part of the same palette that our Capital is painted with.

And I’m just one of the many little birds that Apne Aap has helped out of the cage of facade. The number of lives being impacted by this saviour is much bigger than you or me.

So saddle up, people!

Change has come . . .

*By Jharnaa Malhotra  
Operations Intern  
Apne Aap Women World-  
wide  
(New Delhi)*

**Follow us on [www.facebook.com/apneaap](http://www.facebook.com/apneaap)  
[www.twitter.com/apneaap](http://www.twitter.com/apneaap)**

**Write to us for any queries or comments at [contact@apneaap.org](mailto:contact@apneaap.org)**



## Op/Ed : "Empowering from Within Will Bring True Societal Change - An interview with Ruchira Gupta

*The following is an excerpt from an interview with Ruchira Gupta conducted by Nidhi Gupta about the grassroots impact made by the organization in its 11 years and the impediments that lay ahead.*

**Q. Can you tell us about these self-empowerment groups – how are they organised, where all they are present and what impact they've had?**

**A.** The self-empowerment groups are made up of women who are currently in prostitution, at-risk of being prostituted, or survivors of prostitution. When the women first join Apne Aap, they learn about their Four Essential Rights: The Right to Legal Protection, the Right to Education, the Right to Sustainable and Dignified Livelihood and the Right to Safe Housing.

As a member of a group of 10, with the help of Apne Aap representatives, the women work collectively to gain ten key Assets found to be vital factors in their ability to reduce gain independence. Each Asset is crucial to a woman's ability to reduce her dependency on the brothel system and increase her security or prevent her own trafficking and that of her children.

Recently, ten women formed the self-empowerment group 'Sonar Bangla', which means Prosperous Bengal, in the Khidderpore red light area of Kolkata, and were successful in starting a canteen business. Sonar Bangla first began selling food in January 2012 for an Apne Aap event. Since then, the proceeds and clientele of the business have grown and with the help of Apne Aap, the women established a bank account for their profits.

**"Since 2002, Apne Aap has been advocating to define and criminalize trafficking in the Indian Law. Over the years, AAWW has made submissions to the Indian government's Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Planning Commission of India, and the Home Ministry."**

**Q. You have also 'attacked' the demand side of the sex-trade economy with your Cool Men Don't Buy Sex campaign. Can you tell us about this initiative – how is it constructed and what impact has it made?**

**A.** The Cool Men Don't Buy Sex Campaign is a call to end demand for sex trafficking. It highlights the role that men play in fostering the sex industry. Without demand for purchased sex, traffickers, pimps, and brothel owners will be driven out of business. Apne Aap's ultimate goal is both societal and legal change.

The campaign enlists both men and women to put pressure on the Indian Government for the enactment of the proposed Sec-

tion 5C of the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (ITPA).

This amendment will shift the burden of criminalization from women and girls in prostitution to the men who buy sex and the pimps who profit from violent exploitation.

**Q. The sex trade has always been a grey area in terms of defining and identifying 'choice' – both academically and in practice, it is hard for society to arrive at a conclusion about the 'rightness', so to speak, about prostitution. How do you draw the line between forced and voluntary prostitution (if such a thing exists in our society, for reasons of livelihood) in theory and practice?**

**A. At Apne Aap, we believe that prostitution is not a choice but instead results from an absence of choice.**

Given that most women in prostitution come from marginalized castes, classes, races, religions, and ethnicities, prostitution could, at best be considered a survival strategy, but in the absence of any legitimate means of earning a livelihood, I would never consider this a voluntary choice.

Most women and girls are forced into prostitution by circumstances or actual physical brutality.

## Diary of a Social Worker *Santu Roy*

**Forbesganj:** Prostitution: - A prostitute or a tawaif or a devadasi at different times have called them in India- are the facilitators of what some people say the “oldest profession of the world”. People don't only call this profession the oldest, but they also call this profession to be dirty and for the down trodden women and girls.

I have completed my graduation and post graduation in Social Work in which various papers we studied which covers various areas of the development sector. But as far as women in prostitution are concerned, from the starting point I am very curious to work on it. As prostitution is an industry, which everyone knows about, everyone talks about, mostly everyone has seen, but hardly does anyone ever acknowledge it. As it is considered to be “bad”; considered to be for the dirty people.

Since then, I searched various organizations who basically work on women in prostitution in India in the internet as I wanted to lead by example and show the people that the prostitutes are not bad, they too are humans who are in need of our help; the ones who have the ability to help them.

Suddenly I heard from my friends that Apne Aap Women Worldwide will come for Campus Placement in our Department of Social Work, Visva- Bharati. When I was selected in the campus recruitment, It felt like a dream come true for me, as well as an opening for me to make a difference in this world and help these women and children.

From 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2013 (When I joined in Apne Aap Women Worldwide) to

till date, I have experienced how much challenging to work on this field.

Here, when I visited the Red Light Area of Uttari Rampur for the first time, I came to know that ‘Inter Generational Prostitution’ is practiced, by Nat community. As this area is pretty close to Nepal Border, girls and women are trafficked very frequently.

During this period, I tried to understand the real situation of those girls and women who are victim of trafficking by regular visit and talked to them. It was extremely difficult

**30—38 is a Small  
Number but a Huge  
Step**

for me to fathom that such a life exists, where the own mother forces her own child into a trade like prostitution.

**Girls and women who deny to become prostitutes; they are brutally beaten by their parents, husband and/or other relatives. They are the victims of rape, sexual violence, domestic violence, etc.**

Girls are not allowed to study at higher level, even in BAL Mandal, parents do not send their children to study.

But, with hard work and perseverance, some form of change can be seen. I am also witnessing of some of the changes that took place and still continuing in the mind of parents.

For example, in last year 30 children were studied in BAL Mandal, and this year the number increases to 38, which clearly reflects the changing mindset of the parents. Even though it is just an increase of 8 children, but with the slow and steady effort, does one receive some success and though this number might seem small, it is a huge step on our part in achieving the bigger goals.

Girls and women are now able to protest against such violence and get rid of the chain of inter generational prostitution. It is easier said than done, but like change is slow, so will be the process of fighting for the empowerment of these little girls and women. For example,

**“Four of our girls currently study in Patna”**

Many of us talked about the reasons and effect of prostitution in present day context. But it's time to move on to bring positive changes in our society.

It's time to think about the “Last Girl” and provide best opportunities to them so that they can live a life with full dignity.

## 'My Younger Brother can Access Computer, Why Can't I'

Noorein Khatoon

**Kolkata:** I, Noorein Khatoon-16 years, live with my family in Watgunge road, adjacent to the Muniganj red light area. My mother, Nagma Afreen used to work as a house maid in our community as well as in Munshiganj area. My mother found it very difficult to keep me growing away from the red light area.

One day my mother came in touch with Apne Aap and her dream of seeing me in school, studying computer, seems to be realized. My father works in a leather factory. My parents used to stay at Darbhanga, Bihar. Here, in Kolkata we are staying for the last 16 years adjacent to the red light area. The family income is Rs. 3000/- per month.

I was not familiar with the computer, I used to see that my own broth-

er can access the computer well and can do different works through computer. At that time I used to think that my own younger brother can access the computer so why not I.

One day, when I came to know that all my neighbors' children came at Apne Aap to learn computer and take tuition and their involvement in different activities, I met one of Apne Aap's dada and shared my dream to learn computer. At that time, I was not confident.

But now after several months of learning computer, I can easily access computer and work with word, power-point and excel and can even draw pictures in paint shop with the help of the mouse.

This year, I passed Madhyamik from my school named Badhshah Khan, Khidderpore and I am very excited and happy to share that all of my friends, dadas and especially Rachna di from Apne Aap guided me a lot regarding my final class X examination.

As earlier I had a little doubt about my subject English, but in Apne Aap, I was guided by Rachana didi as well as Sangeeta didi and had got good mark, which is beyond my expectation.

My parents were also happy with my final result of Class X and now they are dreaming to get me admitted in good school, so that I can study more and can fulfill my parents dream.

*(continued from page 1: 'The World Outside')*

At that point of time, one question came in my mind that is it a sin to be a daughter? Those girls need full protection as well as education opportunity. Hardly, new bride spend one day with her husband happily in her whole married life. Others force her to lead a life of prostitute.

This is shocking for me, because our general thought about our country's capital is a metropolitan city, where people lead a rich life, where overall literacy rate is higher, people get jobs easily, girls get more protection, and where our Prime Minister, President lives but on the contrary, in GB road girls are sold and buy daily like any other commodities

which give a silent message to the world that those girls also live in Delhi, but they have very little or no access to any facilities. Now I understood it also happens in place like Delhi. In this way, I saw a different world in Delhi, I tried to understand the situation of the girls and at the end, and we have to fight for each and every girl who led their life.

**Follow us on [www.facebook.com/apneaap](http://www.facebook.com/apneaap)  
[www.twitter.com/apneaap](http://www.twitter.com/apneaap)**

**Write to us for any queries or comments at [contact@apneaap.org](mailto:contact@apneaap.org)**



## My First Day in Apne Aap

*Jasneet Kaur*

**Delhi:** As I walked through the doorway into the Apne Aap Women Worldwide office in Delhi, the professional setting mixed with the aesthetic appeal of the office amused me.

I couldn't stop gazing at the posters and manifestos up the walls, which prominently displayed one of the major issues this world faces today: Sex trafficking of girls and women. I spent a few moments introspecting, how we choose to ignore what is happening around us. From that moment onwards, I chose not to. Not only because I had stepped into the office which works against sex trafficking, but because, as a human I could not; could just not.

After a couple of minutes of introspection and nervousness (though I hate to admit it), I met with Swati Di, who asked me about my professional background, and the work I would like to do. What my personal knowledge was about the terms trafficking and prostitution and

what did I feel about these 2 words in general. That made me think and think really hard; think like I probably had not thought about these things before, and that's when I knew that I was where I was absolutely meant to be.

She called Tinku, and told me she would be my guide. As I looked at Tinku and affirmed in a "Yes

**'Don't Call Me  
Ma'am, Call Me Di'**

Ma'am", Tinku snapped back saying, "don't call me Ma'am, call me Di". "Okay Ma'am, err Di", came my reply. Instantly, I knew I had come to the right place.

As the day passed, everyone was so cordial and easy going, not making

me feel once that I was in a new place.

I spent my day reading the literature and watching a few documentaries related to trafficking. The orientation talk focusing on the vision and the mission of the organization with its policies made my mind clear on why I was here and what I would be doing here.

It didn't take long to indulge in deep conversations with my fellow interns, and colleagues at the office. My first day at office filled me with a sense of belongingness to this organization and the people.

I knew that this place will teach me a lot, and will leave a very important impact in my life; one that would help me a lot in my future, as this place teaches you to learn by doing. They visits I have been to and the work I have done, has been unparalleled and one that I will cherish for many more years to come.

(continued from page 1) **Rescue of The Last Girl**

On 10th April \*Rachel started calling the teacher, pleading for help because she was being forcefully sent back to her in-laws. Apne's Aap's community mobiliser and the teacher engaged with \*Rachel, rushing to talk to her at the center.

Finally, a complaint was written down on Rachel's behalf, which she signed. The Apne Aap staff took up \*Rachel's case relentlessly. However, beyond the staff's best efforts, \*Rachel was sent back to Patauda to live with her husband and in-laws. On 25th April, we scheduled a meeting with BBA, an NGO that fights child trafficking.

On May 5th, a team of 8 people left Delhi to res-

cue \*Rachel. A police force was arranged for us, and the protection officer was called right away. We left for the rescue at 2:30p.m. A convoy of 4 cars arrived at 3p.m. and \*Rachel was identified and rescued. \*Rachel was shining her brightest smile looking at us. She was brutally beaten an hour earlier by her husband, but at that moment, she was filled with joy to see us. She knew she had been saved.

On the day of \*Rachel's rescue she told our Apne Aap staff: **"I knew my didi would come and save me, I had complete faith and you did"**.

**\*name changed**

## My Colleagues' Resolve Gave Me Strength

*Sangeeta Shakya*

**Delhi:** I am Sangeeta and I too am part of the Apne Aap Family. As we are part of a grassroots organization to end sex trafficking, it is extremely important for us to visit the field, as it is an integral part of what we do.

So, first we went to our Dharmapura office in Delhi with a few visitors and introduced them with every staff members. We played some videos which were documented by Apne Aap on at Risk children of Prem Nagar and Dharmapura.

The visitors, then met with children in our Dharmapura centre and talked with them about their learning from centre of Apne Aap. Ms. Shweta Khattar explained about the activities of centre and progress of children.

After that, we played the video of **Anand Aruna Murugantham** about the sanitary napkins project and explained the whole idea to set up this unit for women to provide them with alternative Income Generational Skills to our women and children.

After visiting Dharmapura, we moved for Prem Nagar office with our field staffs, visitors and three police men for handling aggressive situation.

Actually Our Prem Nagar Centre had not been opening for 15 days due to our survivor's rescue operation from Pataua. She is a 15 years old girl and living in Prem Nagar with her parents. She had been taking classes in our centre since last three years. After getting married, her husband wanted to force in prostitution, so we had rescued her from Pataua on her complaint with help of police.

Whenever an organization conducts a rescue, there always is some backlash that the organization has to face because of it. That is what makes rescue operations so very complicated, but also it helps u save the life of one more girls, who otherwise would have had to submit to the demands of the trade.

When we reached at Prem Nagar with our team, people got collected

in front of the office and started to quarrel. Tinku ji and field staffs tried to talk with her relatives and other crowd. But they did not want to listen and started to throw stone. They even abused us. This was something I was seeing for the very first time in my life and I was kind of a little apprehensive to move further too, but seeing the resolve of my fellow colleagues, it did give me a lot of strength.

That situation was very dangerous for us and unable to control on that violence. So we decided to come back to Dharmapura Centre with help of police men.

In Dharmapura centre, we had a small discussion for appreciating team with sip of cold drink.

It was our whole day journey of centres. It was indeed a very enriching experience for me as I got an opportunity to see the field hand on and one that I have learnt a lot from.

I would like to say that Apne Aap have such a brave Field staffs.

**Follow us on [www.facebook.com/apneaap](http://www.facebook.com/apneaap)  
[www.twitter.com/apneaap](http://www.twitter.com/apneaap)**

**Write to us for any queries or comments at [contact@apneaap.org](mailto:contact@apneaap.org)**



## Poems

### Flame of Hope

From the small small hopes,  
I had made a small bridge,  
While walking on the roads of life,  
The mistakes that I had many  
made.

Yet when I look at,  
The beautiful sky above me,  
My heart flies like a kite,  
Looking for tat hope in its endless  
darkness.

- Jyoti Thakur  
Age : 17 years

### The Nameless Flower

One shouldn't ask about relations,  
Nor is it something to know about.  
There is no one to support,  
A nameless existence.

If by mistake, someone picks up the nameless  
flower,  
It still remains one without any existence.  
I was not born that way it says,  
But have become like this because of the  
world's silence,  
I had not chosen my cast, creed or God,  
But seems like many of us were made this way,  
A bag full of our nameless existence.

- Tamanna Khatoon  
Age : 16 years



Gate 3/4, Second Floor,  
India International Centre  
Campus, 40, Max Muller Road,  
Lodhi Estate, New Delhi

Phone:  
+91 11 24619968

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

## Red Light Despatch

Editor: Ruchira Gupta, Rakshanda Jalil

Editorial team: Anuja Bhojnagarwala, Mridulika Jha

Publisher: Apne Aap Women Worldwide

RNI Number: DELMUL/2008/27727

Printer: India Enterprises, New Delhi

*Organizing communities to end sex trafficking—every woman free, every child in school*