



RED LIGHT DESPATCH

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DELHI, KOLKATA, AND FORBESGANJ (BIHAR)

My Dreams

“ To be a business woman”

Delhi: My name is Seema Kumari. I am 22-year-old. I have been associated with Apne Aap since 2010, after completion of my Class XII.

Also, I am doing my B.Sc through distance learning and from a very tender age my aim in life was to become a nurse--to be able to facilitate needy, helpless, and sick people. Mostly, I want to provide financial support to my family members.

Earlier, it was challenging for me. But Apne Aap, an anti-sex trafficking NGO gave me an opportunity to earn livelihood, at the same time pursue my higher education.

At present, after being associated with Apne Aap since four years and helping at risks and vulnerable to prostitution girls and women, I feel kind of connected with. Now, I am more determined to work for their uplift.

For me, dreams come and go, and I have too many of it to delve upon. Some are possible and some are just a wishful thinking.

But, one thing I am certain of, is utilizing my skills to bring out beautiful handicraft items and sell it in the market. I want to impart that skills to the girls and women of marginalized and give them a livelihood options. I want to give hope to the survivors of trafficking!

How Rani Khatoon was rescued (beneficiary)

—*Fazul, Senior Project Officer (Legal)*

Kolkata: During our field visit in and around Munshiganj we received information that Rani Khatoon, a 14-year-old girl, who resides at Munshiganj red light area with her foster mother Rabeya Khatoon is planning to travel to Mumbai. We also came to know from our community leader that Rani Khatoon was abandoned by her birth mother when she was only four-month-old. Subsequently, she was brought up in the harsh environment of flesh trade and forced prostitution as her foster mother Rabeya Khatoon was in prostitution at that time. Apne Aap staffs approached her foster mother seeking permission to admit Rani in the local school, when she was just 6-year-old. The team successfully convinced Rabeya Khatoon. Thus, Rani was admitted

into the local school. Since then she was involved in different activities including dance, computer, stitching etc along with her schooling.

In the month of October 2014, we received information that Rani Khatoon and her foster mother were planning to travel to Mumbai. After receiving the information, our Kolkata office team met Rani and her mother several times. We were informed that within a period of fifteen days an arrangement of about forty thousand rupees would be done and they would return with the said amount to repay the debt.

(Continued on page 6)

Apne Aap’s children at the Shiamak Davar’s Dance Centre

—*Varsha (beneficiary)/ dictated to Pankhuri Sehgal*

Delhi: My name is Varsha and I study in standard VIII. Unlike my friends who aspire to become a doctor, teacher, engineer or a fashion designer; I have always dreamt of becoming a well known choreographer. I love dancing from a very young age, however, my interest in dancing further developed through a television dance program called Dance India Dance (DID). I used to imitate the performances of the participants and it was so much fun for me to see how the choreographers train the contestants. I never knew that my short dance performance in front of Ruchira Di and Rani Muk-

herjee will give me this golden opportunity to join Shiamak Davar’s Dance centre.

The entire day I wait for my evening dance classes where some of the best professional choreographers teach me different dance steps on Bollywood numbers. Initially, I was extremely nervous and used to fear that other members who are financially well-off will make fun of me because of my poor English speaking skills and my not so good clothes.

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Apne Aap's letter to the Prime Minister of India — Supported by other national women organizations

Shri Narendra Modi,
Prime Minister of India,
New Delhi, India
November 5, 2014

Dear Mr Modi,

We the undersigned- victims and survivors of prostitution, women's groups representing marginalized communities of caste, class and ethnicity, and anti-trafficking organizations representing those trapped in brothels, bonded labor, child labour and other forms of servitude, are extremely concerned with reports indicating that the Chairperson of the National Commission of Women, appointed by your government, plans to put forth a proposal to the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India to legalize prostitution in India.

The vast majority of prostituted females, in India and our sub-continent, are poor, low-caste and teenagers. We are literally the "last" the "ant" who need uplift – "uodaya" NOT legalization.

Our vulnerabilities are based on our caste (eg. Denotified Tribes, Dalits, OBCs), class (families from where women and girls are mostly trafficked earn less than Rs 25 per day), sex (majority of those who are prostituted are women and girls), and ethnicity (eg. Hill Tribes, Adivasis). We are denied access to education, land, livelihood, housing and capital due to our sex, caste, age and class. Prostitution is our absence of choice, not a choice. We want you to address our vulnerabilities by investing in our access to legal and social services like education, housing, jobs, and health care. We want you to hold those who exploit our inequality legally accountable, not legalize them.

Any kind of justice evades us. We are not even considered worthy of legal protection. The move to legalize prostitution is to legalize our sexual availability and our commercial rape just because we are poor, female, low-caste and teenagers.

You had said in your speech on 15 August 2014 that gender inequality was a male problem and we need to bring up our boys differently and hold men accountable for crimes against women. Legalizing prostitution, in fact, will enable men who buy and sell us for profit to get away scot-free. It will legitimize the demand for prostitution as clients will legally be able to buy sex and pimps and brothel keepers will legally be able to sell girls.

In a legalization framework, it is not the prostituted who are protected but the traffickers, pimps, procurers, and the buyers of sex. A number of governments, recognizing prostitution as gender-based violence and ine-

quality, have passed or are in the process of passing legislation *solely* decriminalizing those sold for sex - the prostituted (recognizing their vulnerabilities)-, while criminalizing the purchase of sex, or the demand. Countries that have passed demand-focused legislation, including Sweden, Norway, are witnessing a decrease in sex trafficking and street prostitution and decrease in violence to women, including those trapped in prostitution. Equally important is a critical shift in cultural norms in those societies, where men increasingly recognize the purchase of women for sex as an exercise of power, control and domination over women.

Evidence informs us that two of the only four countries in the world that have legalized prostitution, such as Germany and the Netherlands are witnessing an exponential increase in sex trafficking. These governments also wrongly anticipated legalization as a potential tool to increase prostituted women's social protections, reduce prostitution-related crimes, and curb sex trafficking. Instead, law enforcement in these countries are acknowledging egregious abuse of power of brothel owners, and an inability to control organized criminal trafficking networks, as well as other illegal, dangerous, and damaging forms of violence against prostituted women.

We believe India would face the same devastating results should it opt for legalization of prostitution. Prostitution is inherently exploitative and unequal, inflicting harm on women and society. The survivors of prostitution denounce the violence they experienced in brothels, on the streets and elsewhere and reiterate desire to exit and to prevent other women from being equally exploited

The new I.P.C Section 370 criminalizes anyone who recruits, transports, harbours, transfers or receives a person using certain means, including deception, abduction, or abuse of power for purposes of exploitation, including sexual exploitation. Section 370 and 370A mirrors the definition of trafficking in the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking against Persons, Especially Women and Children (the Palermo Protocol) that India ratified. The Government of India would undermine these principles should it opt for the legalization of prostitution. It needs budget allocations for women and girls to be prevented from being trafficked, protected from traffickers and to able to start new lives.

We request you to give us an appointment where a delegation of us can meet you and brief you about the harms of legalizing prostitution and share good and best practices for helping the prostituted women and girls while ending sex-trafficking.

Diary of a Social Worker

Sanju Kumari /Translated by Bhawana Joshi

Bihar: I had never thought of getting associated with an organization working for the betterment and uplift of the girls and women living in community which is involved in prostitution. It is not the first one, but many a times I have seen such communities. What made me wonder was why were they involved in flesh trade? Were they being coerced into or it was their choice?

One day, all of a sudden, I got the opportunity to work as an instructor in a centre run by Apne Aap. My work involved imparting education to the children of the women in prostitution. Prior to this, my work also involved visiting each and every house in the community and mobilizing the children to come to the centre.

I still remember the day of my first community visit. I was extremely nervous at that moment. However, Meena ji and Fatima ji pacified me and dispelled all my doubts and apprehensions, and, helped me in bringing the children to the centre.

Time flew by. A strong bond has been established between these children and me, and, I am happy with the way things are going on. I feel obliged to be associated with the organization of such repute. I feel honored in contributing towards working with the women and teaching their children, and, will continue to do so in the future too.

After working here for two years, I have come to this understanding that the women in prostitution are not because of their choice but due to absence of choices. I have been training the girls living in and around this community in sewing and embroidery with the sole aim of expanding the livelihood alternatives.

Life teaches many lessons. Each lesson has interesting and inspirational story to speak for itself. For few, life is a journey with negligent amount of hurdles. Such people are born with good luck. Whereas, for the rest, life is a never ending struggles. To them, life poses challenges for their own survival and some times it seems bleak and simply hopeless.

And, I am happy to be a part of a movement which works to change someone's lives, positively. We execute the work by helping the girls and women, be in prostitution or at risk or vulnerable, to achieve their right of a sustainable and dignified livelihood

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Did You Know?

In India:

- There are 2.3 million women and girls in prostitution
- A quarter of 2.3 million are under the age of 18
- There are 1,000 red-light areas

Globally:

- About 58 % of all cases of trafficking detected globally are purpose of sexual exploitation
- About 75 % of all trafficking victims detected globally are women and girls
- About 20.9 million adults and children are bought and sold for commercial exploitation
- About 1 in 10 men in the world have bought commercial sex

Shelter Home for Mamta Sardar

—*Mamta Sardar (beneficiary)/ dictated to Praveen Kumar*

Bihar: My name is Mamta Sardar and I am 15-year-old. My father's name is Bharat Sardar and I am from the village Charthamba, PS – Brahmapur, in the jurisdiction of Murshidabad, West Bengal.

I have a younger sister who is nine-year-old now. I have a step-mother. When I was of 10-year-old, my mother died from a disease and my father got married for the second time.

My step-mother used to beat me up repeatedly and when she was in a bad mood, I was starved for days at a stretch. One day I decided to run away from my house and I have no clue how I ended up in Nepal.

In Nepal, I was hungry, no money in my pocket and no knowledge about the foreign land too. After several days, I met an owner of a beer bar and he appointed me to work in his bar to earn money for about a year.

One day, the Nepal police raided the beer bar and rescued me with some other girls. After some inquiries and legal procedures, they handed me over to the Indian Police in Jogbani police station near about the Nepal border on October 16th 2014.

On the same day, the Jogbani PS in-charge contacted an activist Fatima Khatoon and Mohd Kalam, who works for an organization called Apne Aap Women

Worldwide, Forbesganj, Araria. The police asked them to help me out and also directed them to hand-over to my parents. The member of Apne Aap received me from the concerned police station.

The activists contacted the member of Child Welfare Committee, Araria with regard to the case and as per the suggestion; they gave my custody over to CWC Araria on the same day. Later, following the direction of the chairperson of CWC, I was admitted in the shelter Home, Araria.

Since two months I am living in a shelter home. I am quite happy now. I don't want to go back to my home. I want to pursue my higher education and become a police inspector some day. So that I can protect people from this kind of situation and save the lives of other girls.

Since two months I am living in a shelter home. I am quite happy now. I don't want to go back to my home. I want to get higher education and become a police inspector so that I can protect people from this kind of situation and save the lives of other girls.

Get yourself involved!

Be a part of the campaign!

Click a selfie and share it with us on the Facebook Page 'Cool Men Don't Buy Sex' <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Cool-Men-Dont-Buy-Sex/624526271001934> with #CoolMenDontBuySex #Selfie #ApneAap.

The Cool Men Don't Buy Sex Campaign is a call to end demand for sex trafficking which highlights the role that men play in fostering the sex industry.



Apne Aap's "Cool Men Don't Buy Sex" campaign was born to draw attention to the demand side of sex trafficking - the traffickers, pimps, and purchasers of sex. Apne Aap advocates for the criminalization of these individuals – they are responsible for maintaining sexual slavery and continue to exploit women and girls every day in India.

SHARING THE LIGHTS FROM DARKNESS*—Ashma Bibi (beneficiary)/ dictated to Aruna Singh*

Kolkata: I am Ashma Bibi from Munshigunj red light area and I am a member of a self empowerment group. This is a group of 10 women and on a monthly basis, we save an amount of Rs. 30/- each in our group's bank account. From there, we use the money in difficult days by withdrawing it in the form of loan from the deposit. This way we get the benefits of group. We seasonally make diyas (earthen lamps, wax candles) before festivals like Durga Puja and Diwali.

Like every year we made diyas (earthen lamps, wax candles) and sold it in different places. This year we participated in two-day exhibition named "Parampara" at The Oberoi Grand in Kolkata which was held on 8th and 9th October 2014 from 11 a.m. to 7:00 pm. We sold different types of diyas (earthen lamps, wax candles)--- Diya thali, Diya dala, Pancha pradip, Handi diyas etc.

On the first day, we reached to the place at 9 a.m. We noticed that the entrance gate of the exhibition was beautifully decorated with lights and flowers. Then we reached out to the organizers looking for our table to exhibit the diyas.

Each organization was allotted separate table outside the hall where they displayed their products. After having our table we decorated the table with diyas. There were three NGOs who participated in that exhibition-- Ektara, Parivarikee and Apne Aap Women Worldwide.

I visited the other hall where there were stalls put up for clothes, bags, candles, sandals, jewelry, kitchen appliances, interior decorative items, leather items, wax candle and chocolates etc. The stall owners were from different parts of India such as Delhi,

Mumbai, Rourkela, Jaipur, Kolkata etc.

During free time, the other stall owners visited our stall, bought diyas and were curious to know about our organization and products. We told them about our group and Apne Aap also.

The visitors of the exhibition praised the diyas made by the women. Also, there was a food stall, which was of Oberoi Grand itself and each stall owner provided coupon for tea/coffee, breakfast and lunch.

Overall, I found a good exposure to sell the diyas in that hotel and we are expecting to participate in the coming year too.

Ashma Bibi is a member of Apne Aap from the beginning of establishing of Apne Aap community centre in Munshigunj. She was in prostitution for a long time. Now she is working in Apne Aap as a community outreach worker and living a dignified life.

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Write to us for any queries or comments at contact@apneaap.org



contact@apneaap.org

The World Outside

—Experience of Jyoti Khatoon at college in Patna

Bihar: My name is Jyoti Khatoon. I was one of the first few girls who received sponsorship for quality education by Apne Aap Women Worldwide at the age of 6 years.

For my primary education, I was enrolled in Basti Vikash Kendra, Uttari Rampur run by Apne Aap. I completed my Class V from there. To further my education, Apne Aap provided assistance for my admission in the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) and hence received my completion certificate of Class VIII.

I also passed my Class X board exam and now I am studying at Shri Arvind Mahila College, Patna from the sponsorship provided by Apne Aap Women Worldwide under its sponsorship program.

I am the first girl in my family who got the opportunity to pursue higher education.

Also, my journey to Patna was exceptionally exciting; also, I was bit nervous and unsure about the new place. Because, Patna is an extremely populous city, with assimilation of different culture and people from across the globe.

I got my admission in Shri Arvind Mahila College,

and permission to stay in the girl's hostel. Also, I enrolled myself in different coaching centres to facilitate my studies.

I was morally and financially supported by Apne Aap in my endeavor for quality education.

In hostel, there are many girls who have come from different background and location. I got inspiration and support from these girls to overcome my fear.

However, I am poor in spoken and written English language. It worries me sometimes. And I am working really hard to perfect it. My class teacher and tutors are supporting me to build my confidence. I am spending extra time to understand the language, culture and the city life better.

Also, I am quite happy now and I have decided to make my life special by continuing with my higher studies, so to fulfill my dream someday.

I thank Apne Aap and its team member to boost my confidence and for encouraging me to get my higher education.

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In the meantime, we tried to convince Rani, her foster mother and her neighbors to postpone the travel plan, as her school examination were scheduled to start within few days. And also how could they arrange forty thousand rupees from an unfamiliar place like Mumbai. What surprised us more that a lady bought their train ticket to Mumbai and she had already reached there by that time.

On a priority basis, we discussed on this issue with our Kolkata team members like Tinku Didi, Gargi didi, Sahana didi, Taj Sir for our future strategy to stop Rani's Mumbai visit, as there was overwhelming possibility of trafficking. Finally we came to conclusion that we must stop this visit considering different risks factor.

On 27th October 2014 we informed Child Line along with all necessary information and documents and requested to take necessary order/orders. On the same day we received orders from Child Welfare Committee, Kolkata and got favorable response to rescue Rani Khatoon from her foster mother's custody. On that day, at about 8 pm Child line with the help of police rescued Rani Khatoon and after preliminary investigation she was safely handed over to Child line and the very next

day she was produced before CWC Kolkata and after a detailed discussion with Rani Khatoon, her foster mother, Child line and Apne Aap. Then the CWC panel decided for further counseling of Rani Khatoon considering her vulnerable condition gave the next production date. Fazul, Tamal and Sahana didi from Apne Aap also appeared before CWC with all necessary documents and prayed for sponsorship of Rani's education. Earlier, Apne Aap sponsored her education at the same time provided food for Rani and her foster mother Rabeya Khatoon, who is partially blind and cannot arrange for their daily meal. Finally CWC passed direction to support Rani Khatoon and took one bond from her foster mother and other neighbors that they should secure the safety and security along with police and Apne Aap team. Also, requested to assure that Rani and her mother would not leave the place without prior permission from CWC. It was also directed to prepare a report on Rani's education and other issue and send it to CWC Kolkata monthly basis.

Now Rani is safe and secure and involved in extracurricular activities along with her school education.

This incident clearly shows how poverty and unpaid debt increases the chance of trafficking and how with timely intervention, a potential sex-trafficking can be prevented.

My First Day at Apne Aap

—*Khushboo Viswakarma (beneficiary)/Dictated to Aruna Singh*

Kolkata: My name is Khushboo Viswakarma and I am 16-year-old. I am from Karl Marx Sarani, Kolkata. I live with my parents, elder sister (studying in B.A. 3rd year), older brother (drop out from Class-X) in my home.

My father is an alcoholic and does not contribute from his earnings for the family welfare and even snatches away the wages of other members at home. Due to financial crisis I had to discontinue my education at class IX. As I want to study further and to learn computer; so I needed to work to pay for my schooling.

Meanwhile, I met Mona di, elder sister of one of my friends. She told me About Apne Aap Women World-wide and the stitching and sewing classes which are provided in its centre. Then, I came to Apne Aap with my friend Manisha and talked to Lila aunty and she explained about the classes to me.

After that I met Aruna di, Sangeeta di and Fazul da. I share my personal information with them, for instance, my family condition and education in detail. While talking to them, I became so emotional that I started crying. They consoled me like a sister and I felt so welcomed and loved like never before.

Later, I realized that there are many girls and women who have similar stories to share and whose condition is worse than mine. I also learned more about the organization and its work from dada and didi. I also knew about other activities which Apne Aap is running. My heart felt very light that day.

The next day I came to know from the Apne Aap members that there will be an art workshop and two girls are needed for that.

I and Sultana di were selected for that. I took the details of the workshop which will be for five weeks and from this workshop we will be getting a stipend.

Also, we will get more exposure to learn drawing, which we don't know now. I agreed for it and these days I am going to the workshop regularly and learning from there. I shall be coming to Apne Aap centre for stitching, sewing and for computer classes too after this workshop.

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Later, I realised, what at all that matters is dance. I have been told by my dance teacher that if you want to be a true dancer, you have to let go of all your fears and just experience the fun of dancing. I do the same and want to continue doing it for the rest of my life.

I am preparing for the January auditions of Dance India Dance to be held in Delhi, and this is possible only after I have gained confidence and a new direction from Shiamak Davar's dance classes. My ultimate goal is to impress Shiamak Sir by my dance so that one day I'll be able to be a part of his professional troupe.

If someone asks me to describe my experience at the Shiamak Davar's Dance centre, I can only say, it's magical.

There are others out there who dreams for such

an opportunity, and I feel extremely privilege to be among the few for getting the chance. It has changed my life in many ways. I will live my dream, both for myself and my mother.

All I want to say is a big thank you to Apne Aap for making my dream come true and also letting my family believe in my dream.

If someone asks me to describe my experience at the Shiamak Davar's Dance centre, I can only say, it's magical.

Poems

My Mother

How sweet my mother is!
She plays with me, she gives me milk
She gives me new toys
Tell me stories
How sweet my mother is!
She cooks for me, feeds me
She puts me to sleep and wakes me up
She rocks me in her lap
How sweet my mother is!

Name: Radha Kumari

Age: 11 years

Class: V

From: Munshiganj (Kolkata)

Rainbow

Rain falls pit pat
How heavy rainfall !
How beautiful a rainbow
What a stunning appearance
I love to see this with its whole colour !
As lovely as flowers
It is the most beautiful of all !

Name: Jyoti Shaw

Age: 12 years

Class: V

From: Munshiganj (Kolkata)



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