



# Red Light Despatch

Volume 4, Issue 10

October 2011

*Column*

## My Dreams

*By Karishma Khatoon*

### I Will Do the Things My Mother Could Not

**Forbesgunj Bihar:** My name is Karishma Khatoon and I am 13 years old. I am in 7<sup>th</sup> standard and I stay in the residential school of KGBV, managed by Apne Aap Women Worldwide. We celebrated International Literacy Day this year at our school and I participated in activities like elocution and drawing competitions. When I was taking part I realised that if my mother was also educated and had received these opportunities then she would not have been forced to live in a red light area. She would not have become addicted to drugs and alcohol. Instead, she fell ill and today is nearing death at a young age. If she could have had an education she would have led a life of her choosing rather than be forced to obey others. If she was educated she would have had her own earnings and married an educated man with a good job. We would have had our own house, had clean clothes and good food to eat. I would have been living with my parents, my family and playing with my brother at home. We would have been at school together. Our parents would take us for outings. (Continued on page 5)

### Now I Can Read the Bus Number on the Road

*By Munni Khatoon*

**Munshigunj, Kolkata:** I have been living in the Red Light Area of Munshiganj for the last 15 years. My origin is the village Kandi of Murshidabad District, West Bengal, where I stayed with my parents, brother and sister-in-law. I have never been to school because my family is not well-off. Our primary concern was always around earning money and looking for better sources of livelihood. I often spoke to my acquaintances and friends to see if they could find or refer me to a better job. One day, while sharing my grief with one of my old friends, she told me that a friend of her cousin's brother had come to her place for some personal business reasons. He was a resident of Kolkata and she believed he might have better referrals for jobs. So, I spoke to him immediately and he agreed to refer me to a lady who offers jobs. Being illiterate, I couldn't ignore the al-

lure for a high salaried job in Kolkata and therefore agreed to go with him. I didn't tell my family my family because, I knew they wouldn't allow me to go with him. So, on an auspicious morning I sailed off secretly with him. He introduced me to a lady and asked me to stay with her until she could find a job for me. He left saying he would come again after I got a job. I noticed many of my neighbours were women and girls. A woman came to me and offered me food and started asking me about myself. She told me that I had been sold by the man who escorted me to this place. I was warned that I shouldn't try to go out as she believed it next to impossible. I had no choice.

In our daily activity, all of us felt the pinch of our inability to read and write. We needed to seek help from co-passengers while travelling anywhere in the city.

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### I Relocated From Sonagachi To Kidderpore To Join Apne Aap

*By Ramola Purokayet*

**Munshigunj, Kolkata:** I am a resident of 19/2, Munshigunge Road, Khidderpore Kolkata. I was born in Gosaba. My Father used to sell fruits in the market. I have three sisters and one brother. I was enrolled in a school, but I used to never like studying. We were too poor to eat even a square

meal a day. So, in at 12 years old I started trying my hand at earning at my early teens. I grabbed an offer to learn to make hair clips. I was earning Rs.1000 per month, which was a big help to my family. When I was only twelve years old, my father arranged my marriage. (Continued on page 6)

## I Learnt We Are All the Same People

*By Surabhi Nirkhe, Stanford University*

**Forbesgunj, Bihar:** During the month of August, I was a volunteer with Apne Aap Women Worldwide in Forbesganj, Bihar. I am a student at Stanford University, majoring in Human Biology with a concentration in Women's Health and the Environment. I received a grant from our Centre for Public Service to design and teach a health and life skills curriculum for girls who have been removed from vulnerable situations and are at risk for entering the cycle of intergenerational prostitution. I strongly believe that self-esteem and an understanding of health can empower the girls with a sense of confidence and responsibility for their own bodies and minds.

I taught mainly at the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, but I also had the opportunity to teach a few sessions with the Kishori Mandals in Babuan.

In the month prior to my internship with Apne Aap, I volunteered with Committed Community Development Trust (CCDT) at their residential center Ankur-Asmita in Badlapur, Maharashtra. At KGBV, I felt that the girls were knowledgeable about the threat of traf-

ficking and more comfortable discussing it. At the same time, I found so many more misconceptions and beliefs about health and gender dynamics. My strongest hope is that when the girls eventually return to their homes, they will have been strengthened to stand up for their desires and prove their worth as human beings, not commodities. I spoke to the girls about several works from two books of self-portraits by famous artists. I asked for comments about why they liked or didn't like the art, what they felt when they looked at it, whether they thought

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it was realistic and finally, what they thought the artists felt about themselves based on how they had portrayed themselves in their self-portraits. At first, I got a lot of basic responses. I think the biggest obstacle to using art as a teaching tool in the Indian educational system is that art is taught the same way as math or science. There is only one right answer; art must be realistic and it is good only if it is a replica of its subject. Select students are deemed to be good at art

and everyone else is not. I then split the girls into three groups and they rotated through three different exercises: creating a self-portrait of themselves (using a mirror if they wished), drawing a self-portrait of themselves on one side of a page and comparing it to a portrait their friend drew of them on the other side, and drawing a portrait of themselves as they would look when they grow up. It took a lot of encouragement and constant refusals to make their self-portraits for them, but I was so happy to see that everyone made unique work. I think more activities where they are given complete freedom with art will really help make it a liberating medium for self-expression. In another activity, about self esteem, I read a list of statements to the girls and they rated how strongly they agreed with them on a scale of 0 (not at all) to 5 (completely). The statements were indicators of self-esteem in different ways. They learned that self-esteem can be viewed on a scale. Our self-esteem varies day-by-day, but the bigger changes in scores can be attributed to more significant factors. (Continued on page 7)

## If Educated People Want to Buy Sex, What Does That Mean for Others

*by Amna Khatoon*

**Uttari Rampur, Bihar:** I am glad that I was given the opportunity to attend the function held for International Literacy Day, held at Uttari Rampur Basti Vikas Kendra. The programme in our area, was set up by Apne Aap Women Worldwide and it gives me great happiness to have been a part of it.

When I witness the girls and boys of my community studying and being educated I know that their lives are likely to be secure and safe. Today, as I attend this event, I feel sorry for myself and those from my community who are illiterate. I believe that if we had

also got an education then our lives would be different. I wonder how many things I would have been able to do, what I could have achieved if these same facilities had been available to me as a child. Perhaps I would have never ended up in this profession. (Continued on page 6)

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## To Let/For Sale

*By Ruchira Gupta*

**New York:** When a problem is big and tends to profit a powerful group, there's a time-honoured temptation to sweep it under the rug by assuming it's natural and inevitable. This was true of slavery until the abolitionist movement of the 19th century, and of colonialism until the contagion of independence movements in the 20th century. Now these same forces are at work in attitudes toward the global and national realities of sex slavery.

The biggest normaliser of profiteering from the rental, sale and invasion of human bodies is the idea that it is too big to fight, that it has always existed, and that it can be swept under the rug by legalising and just accepting it. Those who profit—in this case, the global network of sex traffickers, sex tourism operators and brothel owners—are the major force behind the argument to legalise and increase profits that already rival those from the global arms and drug trade.

What will diminish and end this injustice? Exposing its reality: the lack of alternatives for those who are prostituted; the addiction and inability to empathise among those who create the demand, and the disastrous results wherever the selling or renting of human beings for sexual purposes has been legalised and normalised.

In Australia and the Netherlands where prostitution has been legalised, for instance, trafficking and the harms that come with it have only increased. In Victoria, Australia, it not only allowed legal brothels to proliferate, but illegal brothels increased by 300 per cent in a year. A hospitable

environment for sex tourists and other buyers drove up demand local women and girls had too many alternatives to becoming the supply, they had to be trafficked from Southeast Asia.

The same is true of Amsterdam where trafficked East European and North African girls outnumber Dutch citizens in brothels. The mayor of Amsterdam reports that the red-light district has become a centre for illegal immigration and money laundering. In Germany and in an area near Las Vegas where prostitution has been legalised, government agencies tried to make applicants for unemployment benefits show they had attempted to find 'work' in the so-called 'hospitality industry' of prostitution in order to become eligible for such benefits. This was only defeated by massive organising by women's movements.

In the few countries that have legalised prostitution—with the idea that it would reduce harm to prostituted women, as is now being argued by some in India—rates of assault and rape against the prostituted have not dropped. There is also no corroborated evidence that legalisation increases the use of condoms or women's power to demand such use. On the contrary, an official emphasis on condoms has often made it possible for brothels to demand more money for unprotected sex, while also causing them to conceal the number of prostituted women and children who have lost their lives to AIDS. In Calcutta, a group of women who had asked for the unionisation of prostitution to guarantee workers' rights admitted to facing violence when they're alone with the client. "They paid for it, we cannot

stop it." A doctor working for this group said he left after having to stitch up the vagina of a fifteen-year-old Nepali girl—for the third time.

But there is some good news. It comes from countries where traffickers have been pursued, and prostituted women and children have been given services and alternatives. Sweden has gone after traffickers and pimps, confiscated their illegal assets, and made them compensate for damages while also decriminalising and offering services to prostituted women and children. By imposing penalties on those who create the demand and providing 'John schools' that address their addiction to dominance, they diminish the problem itself.

The result has been a significant decrease in sex trafficking and the commodification of sex. In '99, it was estimated that 1,25,000 Swedish men bought about 2,500 prostituted women one or more times per year, before the law came into force. By '02, this figure had fallen to no more than 1,500 women. The only truly effective way to curb trafficking is to see it for what it is, an outrage to human rights; one that can diminish, just as labour slavery and colonialism have come to do. Prostitution has not existed in all societies: it is a function of the inequality of women and the equation of masculinity with domination. All men in the present are not dependent on prostitution.

Commodification of human beings creates a separate class of people whose bodies can be rented or sold—the very opposite of the universal protection of human dignity enshrined in the body of the Indian constitution.

## I Did Not Know That I Had Sparked a Revolution

*By Mohammed Kalam*

**Forbesgunj, Bihar:** I have been associated with Apne Aap since 2004 with an aim to end sex trafficking. In 2003, before I was a permanent employee of Apne Aap, I took the initiative of starting an Apne Aap Community Centre in the Uttari Rampur Red Light Area. I gave the community members all the information I could about Apne Aap. In this way I tried to involve as many people as I could and get them interested in Apne Aap and all they endeavoured to achieve in the future. In August 2005, Apne Aap started its remedial classes at a mosque near the Red Light Area. I didn't know at that time that I had started a spark for a revolution against a social evil, which had been practiced for generations. When I recollect the memories of the events that occurred after that, I get goose bumps.

We started a school and some of the villagers, from the Muslim community tried to discourage me. They said it was unfair to allow foreigners to come into the community as they believe they would try to convert them to Christianity. They tried to demoralise me by telling me that the work I was doing would not help anyone. I just ignored their words, assuring them that the children came to study and that was all. One day after school, I was called by

some of the religious leaders who warned me to stop the school. They told me that I was doing wrong by introducing Christianity to the community and that they wouldn't allow me to do so.

They even believed that our organization's symbol, containing a cross, meant Christianity. I tried to convince them that it is not a symbol of Christianity but a scientific symbol for the female, but they were not ready to accept it.

### Column Diary of a Social Worker

This angered me and I asked them if there were any kids from their locality studying at the school and they answered "no". I requested them to let the children of the Red Light Area study so that they could change their lives and live like the kids of other localities. I finished by telling them to let me do my work. They left after hearing my words.

In 2006, I participated in a rescue operation with Apne Aap in Katihar and rescued a girl from the Red Light Area. This incident created tension in all the Red Light Areas of Forbesganj, Purnea, Katihar and Saharsa. The staff of Apne Aap started getting threatening calls from the traffickers. *(Continued on page 5)*

## I Am Working In a Private Company and Getting Rs 3000 a Month

*By Ruby Khatoon*

**Khidderpore, Kolkata:** Now, my age is 19 years. My mother, Momtaj Begam is a prostitute. She was born and brought up in a very poor family in Borisal of Bangladesh. She used to earn her livelihood working in the neighbour's house. One day, she met with her elder brother in the hopes of getting a good job to lead a gentle life. By the name of a lucrative good job, he sold her in the Khidderpore area. I have one brother also. I was admitted to Bankim Ghosh Memorial High School when I was about 8 years old. But after a few months, our Headmistress found out that my mother is a prostitute. One day she called me to meet with her and did not allow me to attend classes because of my background. Even my class mates insulted me each and everyday. I was treated very badly in school just because my mother is a prostitute. After that I did not go in school anymore. One day, I was roaming around the streets of Munshiganj, I met Chaitali Aunty (Smt. Chaitali Daspal). I was around 12 years then. She asked my name, father's name, mother's name and their pro-

fession and so on. I became embarrassed because, I thought she would also not talk to me anymore once she found out that my mother is a prostitute. I was scared to tell her anything more about my family. She met with my mother and brought me in the nearby office of Apne Aap Women Worldwide and started informal classes everyday and learned about drawing, dancing, drama and handicrafts. I was so surprised. In this kind of school everyone knew where I was from. They knew I lived in the red light area, they knew my mother is a prostitute. They still did not treat me badly. They did not laugh at me or make fun. All of the aunties were very nice to me. After six months Chaitali Aunty brought me to get admission to my old school. But the Headmaster refused me admission again because of my mother's profession. I started my new life holding the hand of Chaitali Aunty and as well as Apne Aap. Now, I am working in a private company and getting Rs. 3,000 per month. I don't forget the help of Apne Aap in my life. I don't know what my future would have been had Apne Aap not helped me.

By Kalpana Kumari

**Forebesgunj, Bihar:** I am 14 years old. I study in 8<sup>th</sup> standard and stay in the residential school of KGBV. My family didn't want me to drop out of school but there were a lot of financial constraints at home so my father decided to send me to KGBV. The fact that KGBV is a hostel made me very apprehensive and my first sight of it increased my doubts. There was a big gate, with two watchmen and they didn't allow my father in. I imagined how strict the teachers would be and thought they would beat me if I made mistakes. I insisted that I could stay at home and do household work rather than stay at the school but my father believed this was the best decision for me. Initially, I found it very difficult, mainly due to the routine which I never had at home. At school I have to get up early, brush my teeth, take a shower, and wash my hands before eating. Gradually, I felt myself learning to develop discipline. When I went back home for my first vacation I realised that the routine was instilled in me.

I was in 7<sup>th</sup> standard when I became aware that I was weak in my studies but with some determination I have improved. Every month my grades have got better and it makes me feel so good. My favourite part of school is learning karate. It is helping me pursue my dream of becoming a police officer and gives me the confidence to stand up for myself. We have Kishori Mandal activities at KGBV which are all artistic and intellectual. I am part of a group, full of friends of all different backgrounds. We are all from different places and have different characters but ultimately the same identity as KGBV girls. My goal is to carry on improving my grades and learning karate in order to become a police officer.

## **I Will Do the Things My Mother Could I Did Not Know That I Had Sparked A Not Revolution**

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( Continued from page 1) :

If my mother ever fell sick, she would be taken to good doctors. If my mother would have been educated our neighbours would have respected her and would talk to us nicely rather than fight with us and abuse us. If she was educated, she could read and write, she could file complaints to the police in cases of emergency and the police officer would not scold her and send her back home. If my mother were educated, the ration dealer would not fool her by saying that her name is not on the list. If my mother was educated she would have been respected by the principal and teachers of my school, she would have been given a chair to sit and told about my progress at school. Life would have been beautiful and easy if my mother was educated. All of this is a dream but I can make it a reality for myself. I have an opportunity to live a different life and do the things my mother could not.

We were threatened with violence, even death. These tensions continued and one evening as I was returning home, following my classes at the centre, some traffickers attacked me and I was stabbed. I was crying for help and luckily my niece was passing so came to help. She was also hurt while fighting with the traffickers. By the time the police came, the traffickers had run away. The police took me and my niece to hospital. When KGBV started, we tried to bring the girls from the Red Light Area to the residential school. However, no one was willing to send their daughters as they were still annoyed by the Katihar rescue operation. We tried to convince them that if a mother wants her daughter to be rescued from prostitution and if she approaches an organization, the organization will definitely do everything to help her and they've not done anything wrong. After frequent and continuous motivation they decided to send their girls but as some of the people from other communities never wanted the school they began misguiding them. Due to this problem, many of the parents took their girls back from the school. Apne Aap filed a case against them and tried to bring them back. We succeeded partially but still have not met our goal. There are miles to go for it. Even now when I recall those memories, lots of questions start coming up in my mind and I am still searching for the answers...

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## If Educated People Want to Buy Sex, What Does That Mean for Others

(Continued from page 2)

I have noticed that although the majority of people in my community, of my generation, are illiterate yet they still run the household. The reason I am mentioning this is because I believe that education is meant to bring intellect and moral responsibility to people and sadly, it's not happening. Many of the so-called educated, civilized people come to the Red Light Area (RLA) to buy sex and they consider girls and women material goods rather than human beings. If this is the case with educated people then what does that mean for others?

My grandson studies a subject at school called

Moral Science and I hope that most schools in this country have these lessons available. I hope that people study it and actually follow what is taught but, it seems to me that they forget all the lessons as they grow up and then directly or indirectly get involved in immoral activities such as sex trafficking/purchasing. With education comes wisdom and understanding and those are the real benefits of it. If these teachings are being followed and promoted then that will make these celebrations for International Literacy Day truly significant.

## I Relocated From Sonagachi To Kidderpore To Join Apne Aap (Continued from page 1)

My husband was from Bihar. He was a driver and a drunkard, gambler who hardly cared for me. We had three girl children one after another. Each time my husband yelled that they weren't his children. He denied fatherhood. One day I was beaten a lot which pushed me to return to my father's place with my children. My family already had heavy burdens of responsibility and my children and I were additional burdens. I was looking for livelihood desperately. A lady from our area offered me a job in Kolkata. I went to Kolkata in search of a job with a friend of my distant relative. I was asked to wait for two days in a shabby and dark house. I was supplied with breakfast and two meals each day but I was not permitted to go out of the house. After two days when the man didn't return, I inquired with the lady who brought me food. She told me that the guy whom I came here with had sold me. She also told that my family was informed that I got a job and wouldn't be coming home for six months as per the job agreement. I had to accept prostitution as I had no other way out. I started working as 'adhiya'. I used to send money to my family from my earnings by money order. I worked there for around one year. During that year, I met Sahana Dasgupta, a Social Worker

who used to visit Sonagachi, & Sovabazar Areas. I shared my story and looked to her for support. She told me that the organization with whom she worked with is located in Khidderpore, so, I relocated to Munshiganj adjacent to Khidderpore with the hope that I could engage myself with a livelihood other than prostitution. My two younger daughters are with my mother and the youngest one stays with me. At present my earning is Rs.10000 per month to maintain my family expenses. Sahana Di suggested I become a member of Apne Aap Women Worldwide. I joined the Income Generation Program of paper bag making in Apne Aap Women Worldwide from 18-Oct-2011 with the hope that I could come out of prostitution one day and live the life of pride & dignity. I have two expectations from Apne Aap Women Worldwide I hope Apne Aap can facilitate my two elder daughters to get enrolled in a good school & hostel so that I can keep them out of this environment. I also dream of a respectful life. Someday, I wish I could get out of prostitution and find other sources to earn bread, clothing & shelter with dignity. I will give up my present profession if Apne Aap Worldwide facilitates me to choose an alternate safe and dignified livelihood.

## Announcements:

**Cool Men Don't Buy Sex** Apne Aap's Advocacy Campaign to highlight the demand aspect of sex trafficking. The campaign was launched in September in Pune, India. COOL MEN DON'T BUY SEX will enlist MEN AND WOMEN to put pressure on the Indian Government for the enactment of the proposed Section 5C of the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act (ITPA). This amendment would shift criminalization from women and girls in prostitution to the men who buy sex and the pimps who profit from the violent exploitation of women. Apne Aap has already sent a letter to the President of India to book a time with her on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January 2012, to present 10,000 signed petitions to amend the existing anti trafficking law. Join the campaign by signing the petition online: <http://www.change.org/petitions/protect-girls-and-women-from-sex-trafficking>

## Now I Can Read the Bus Number on the Road *(Continued from page 1)*

I feared boarding the bus because I couldn't read the numbers. I needed to ask the people passing by on the roads. I was embarrassed because I was interrupting them. The children and youth passing by sometimes passed remarks such as 'ANPAR' (illiterate). A few of us who had savings bank accounts felt shy while handling account activities like money deposits and cash withdrawals because we had to depend on either bank employee(s) or kind hearted people to fill out forms or understand other banking information. All of us were aware of the necessity of reading and writing as all of us were suffering and ashamed of ourselves (as we needed to depend on others) but couldn't find a way out. Apne Aap had brought a ray of hope to us with the proposal of learning. Now I can read the bus number on roads. I can count my balance while buying grocery items. Apart from these I got a huge applause and respect from the bank when I wrote my name in the withdrawal form of bank. Now I can put my signature though it is not sufficient. I want to learn more. The women in my neighbourhood seek my support to spell their name, write and ask for other advice. This year we started our classes in the form of Mahila Mandal. All women gather in my house with Chaitalidi. I am very happy and convey my thanks to Apne Aap Women Worldwide for these rejuvenating classes.

## I Learnt We Are All the Same People

*(Continued from page 2)*

The girls said that our self-esteem can be affected by how people talk to us, by whether we get into fights and by how our friends treat us. There was another activity that was especially effective with this group because hearing compliments and giving compliments is a rare occurrence. The girls formed two circles, one inside the other, and each had a piece of paper. The circles rotated in opposite directions and I asked them to stop randomly and form pairs with the closest girl in the other circle. They swapped their pieces of paper and wrote one complement about their partner, no matter how big or small. I spoke to the girls also about society and culture. In open mike session the weren't very confident speaking about themselves, but I think it was good for the girls to hear them open up.

I am hoping for the girls to realize that there is no such thing as the right relationship match everyone has different people that are important to them. Only by looking at your relationships honestly can you realize which people to turn to when you are in need. I didn't quite convey the level of critical thinking I

wanted, but this exercise was a very good learning experience for me in communication. I had a very intensive session on health and diseases with the girls in Bihar. We first played a game of tag to understand the immune response. We played various games to understand the human body and diseases. We ended with a conversation about different diseases the girls had heard of and tried to explain them in the context of the mechanisms we had learned. We I asked girls to shout out anything they knew about sex and reproduction. A lot of girls described sex as "shararik sambandh", which translates to physical relations. We explained sex using diagrams and repeated the same exercise with misconceptions. While I was working with the girls on all these issues, they thought that I was teaching them a lot of things. What they did not realise that in turn I was learning so much from them. I learnt that we are all the same people. We all have dreams and aspirations, we want to be cared and loved and we all want to be happy. I wish these girls get every happiness in the world.

## Interview

*Minu, Survivor in an interview about her experience with Apne Aap*

**Q:** First tell me, in the past when you were in prostitution, were you afraid of anything?

**Minu:** I was afraid of being tortured. I was afraid to think what would be happen to me when I become old. I did not have a permanent shelter nor did I have much savings to spend the rest of my life.

**Q:** When did you overcome this fear?

**Minu:** Apne Aap gave me a scope of employment. They gave me a job. Then I did not need to prostitute myself. I left prostitution. My husband is also getting a chance to work in Apne Aap. It makes us financially stronger. Now I have a home. I can spend my life in a respectable way. Now I'm not afraid

of anything.

**Q:** Can you remember any specific dialogue with Ruchira or a particular action of Apne Aap that helped you to overcome your fear?

**Minu:** Any specific dialogue or action.... I can't remember. But after joining Apne Aap, I was made to undergo several different meetings & trainings. Specially, the training regarding legal matter has made me more knowledgeable.

**Q:** So the legal training helped you to overcome your fear?

**Minu:** The training gave me a lot of information that made me confident enough to overcome my fear.

**Q:** How do you feel now?

**Minu:** I feel more confident and much stronger now. Now, I tell the other women how these trainings will also help them. I always share my experiences with them.

**Q:** So now do you feel confident to

perform other acts of courage? Like for instance, going and getting voter ID cards? Or facing any drunk neighbours/ or disturbing pimps?

**Minu:** Yes I do. With the guidance of my didis (senior staffs of Apne Aap) are showing me the way, I can do anything. Because I believe, just like Apne Aap has helped me earn money in a dignified way, similarly they will surely the other women do the same.

**Q:** So now do you feel more powerful?

**Minu:** Yes, of course.

**Q:** What does power mean to you?

**Minu:** My power is my experience. Now I know how to communicate with others, where to go if suddenly I face some problem. My confidence & experiences give me the power to overcome any problem.

## I Used to Long for the Day I Could Return to KGBV

*By Kajali Khatoon*

**Uttari Rampur, Bihar:** I am 13 years old and my house is in Uttari Rampur. I was a student at KGBV for some time but when I was in 3<sup>rd</sup> standard my mother stopped sending me to school. I became unhappy because I enjoyed learning.

Things have changed recently because my mother has joined a SEG (Self Empowerment Group) started by Apne Aap and I have returned to KGBV. I used to long for the day when I could return to KGBV. I was very upset when I would see my KGBV. It made me feel undervalued because I was not studying. Now, at KGBV, I feel like my life has changed, like a dream come true. I know my dreams don't end here but I can see that I am on the path to achieving them. I feel safe and secure at KGBV. I am living somewhere respectable rather than at a place where men and women pass our house and abuse us. Friends; Soni, Farida, Nisha and Karishma come home for their holidays. Their

house is near mine and they would share stories of fun from KGBV. People used to think we were bad people and I began to believe them. The difference between home and KGBV is obvious. Now, many men and women come and talk to us, they tell us to study hard but at home I had never heard such words of encouragement. Instead, people used abusive words and fought with one another. In KGBV, there are lots of restrictions and disciplinary rules. For example, we have to get up early every morning, brush our teeth and have a bath before breakfast and then we begin school. We can't eat food without washing our hands even if we are hungry, we can't play whenever we want; there is a fixed time to watch television, to play and to study. All this is so unlike my life at home where we don't have a fixed time for anything. It was hard at first, I felt uncomfortable and found it challenging to adjust but, I was able to adapt. Now, I am determined to study well, work hard and eventually become a teacher.



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## Red Light Despatch

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