



# RED LIGHT DESPATCH

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DELHI, KOLKATA, AND FORBESGANJ (BIHAR)

## My Dreams

### “To Become a DanceTeacher”

-Neha, aged 8

**Kolkata:** I am Neha Sheik, 8-year-old. I stay in Sonagachi redlight area with my mother. I started coming to Apne Aap center since last two months. I am very happy to come here, as Keya di teaches us very well and I like to study. In this center I get many books to read.

Earlier, I couldn't read well, but now I can read poems, stories etc. Here when I study with my other friends, I feel free and relaxed, as no one scold me, no one beat me, no one order me to bring tea or other things from the local shop. I feel so comfortable here, that after the class ends, I continue to stay in the center and do drawing.

I go back to room and have lunch. Again I come back to the center as early as possible. For many reasons, I feel safe over here. Then I read story book and we do dance practice with Rumki di.

I love to dance and when our dance teacher comes for the class, I am the first to enter the classroom.

While I am dancing. I do not care much about the steps. I just like to move my hands, feet and body. It is relieving.

I've decided when I grow up, I want to be a dance teacher. And would like to explore different places and do a performances, just like my dance teacher.

## Apne Aap girl clears intermediate exam with distinction

—Juhi Khatoon/ as translated by Seema Kumari

**Bihar:** Some people might call it 'Skating on thin ice'. But I chose to focus on the task in hand, instead of worrying about the future. The rest was history. I, Juhi Khatoon, the student of Sri Arvind Mahila College in Patna, cleared this year's intermediate exams, with II division in the Science stream.

Class XII exam is an important juncture in every student's life. Even I want to get admission in one of the best university and take up science as my speciality.

The primary reason why I have been able to achieve my goal in Class 12th exam results, is because of my clarity in approach. I strongly believes that everyone should decide on a career objective first, and strive hard to achieve it, and very impor-

tantly, making sure not to deviate from it. In spite of everything, a straight line is the shortest distance between two points.

Coming from where I am, passing and scoring good in class 12<sup>th</sup> exam is big achievement. I can say 'practice makes man perfect'. Though this is nothing new, still I wanted to share few points with everyone.

It is very important for you to set a realistic schedule. Set targets that are achievable and try to achieve these targets even if you have to burn the midnight oil. Class XII can be very stressful. However, one must make a timetable and stick to it.

*(Continued on page 6)*

## Dropped out teenager rejoins school

— Balma/ as dictated to Vidhi Jain

**Delhi:** My name is Balma. I am 14-year-old and I from Sapera community. I live in Dharampura and study in class 3rd at Pipalwala Road School with the help of Apne Aap Women Worldwide.

In school they provide us with Rs. 500 per month along with uniform, books and midday meals. Last year, I dropped out of school as I had to take care of my father.

His health was not keeping well, so he kept asking my mother to keep me home and quit schooling, so that I will be free to take care of him. Thus, I spent a lot of time with him back home.

My father was an alcoholic and used

to keep very unwell, he died earlier this year. I was deeply affected by my father's death. I miss him a lot everyday. After my father's death, I, with the help of Apne Aap got enrolled into third standard at my old school again. I walk to school everyday with my friends.

It was difficult for me to concentrate on education because of the conditions at home. I have three elder siblings and none of them got the opportunity to go to school. Thus, the atmosphere wasn't encouraging and I constantly lost hope and felt like giving up my studies.

*(Continued on page 7)*

## “Women’s Rights Group meet UN Women Chief to protest move to legalise pimping and brothel keeping”

*The article was published in the First Post, an online news website.*

Women rights groups from across the country on Tuesday joined hands to oppose tooth and nail any move to 'legalise' prostitution.

The agitating members including victims and survivors of sex trafficking, trade unions, political parties, NGOs of various social movements met with UN Women's Representative for India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives, Rebecca Tavares in the national capital, to put forth their protest.

"We demanded three things from UN Women. The first a sort of unofficial note which the UN Women is claiming was emailed to a whole bunch of NGOs," said Ruchira Gupta, Founder Apne Aap Women Worldwide, an anti-sex trafficking NGO.

The note, issued in October 2013 from the UN Women office in New York supports the "legalisation and decriminalisation" of brothel-keeping, pimping and sex-buying as part of an "overall legitimisation" of the commercial sex industry.

"Since the note was not on official UN Women letterhead, UN Women claims it is an 'unofficial' document. But this note remain an uncontested de facto official position of UN Women," Gupta claimed.

The rights groups shed light on the fact that UNAIDS briefing on legal status of sex work (February 2014) cite the 'unofficial' UN Women note as a proof of agreement on efforts to promote legalisation of pimping, brothel-keeping, the industry of prostitution and decriminalising the entire sex trade.

Gupta after meeting Tavares claimed that "The UN Women representative clearly said the UN mandate is to protect girls and women and work towards their development. The UN will not do anything that will be detrimental to the cause of the welfare and development of women. She (Tavares) said she will take up the issue

with her colleagues at the UN."

A letter addressed to Tavares, signed by representatives of all rights groups, was also submitted, asking for an official stance from UN Women on prostitution in alignment with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 6 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the UN Protocol to end Trafficking in persons.

"Our second demand was that UN Women in the prevention of sex trafficking and prostitution by shifting budgets towards risk groups who are trafficked and prostituted and towards policies and budgetary frame works in the welfare state which will then reach the most marginalised groups of girls and women who are the most trafficked," said Jagmati Sangwan, General Secretary, All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA).



"The third demand is that UN Women talk to UN AIDS which has also launched an AIDS prevention programme where they are asking for legalising pimping and brothel keeping and advertisement of sexual services to ask them to change this policy and make it more gender sensitive and prevent the trafficking of women and girls and also AIDS among them," said Ishita Mukherjee, Director, Calcutta University Women's Resource Centre and member of AIDWA.

These women groups have questioned the government's stand on the issue of prostitution and welfare schemes for victims and children of prostitution.

"The chairperson of the Government's National Women's Commission commented on legalisation of prostitution and women's rights groups have vehemently opposed it. The chairperson said that it was her personal opinion but this government has not cleared its stand on this issue," Sangwan said.

## Diary of a Social Worker

—By S K Fazul

**Kolkata:** My name is Sk. Fazul and I am a Sr. Project Officer at Apne Aap. I have been associated with the organization since 2011.

When I joined Apne Aap as legal project officer and interacted with different underprivileged women and girls especially from Sonagachi, Munshiganj, and Topsia area. Then I found most of the crimes on women don't get reported because of some types of social, political pressure, ignorance and poverty also. Sometimes for non-cooperation from government departments or the police.

**Although we have different legislations to prevent violence against women but no real action is being taken. It is then I realized, that the figure which we find in our government data are much more lower than the actual incidents. Women are still sexually harassed, abused and killed.**

Then, being a Law student, I always believe in facts and figures. So, when the figures of NCRB told us that total 30,9546 incidents of Crime against women reported in the year 2013 which is 11.7% of total IPC crime and surprisingly total conviction rate is only 22.4 % of total incidents. At that time I had no other source to which led me not to believe the figure as stated by our government department. But now no longer believe in it.

**During my field visits in different red-light areas of Kolkata, I never found anyone who was not sexually**

**abused or raped or trafficked but even then, they never lodged any complaint against the accused. This does not mean that those incidents had never happened.** That's why, NCRB data is not sufficient to measure crimes / violence against women and girls.

During my interaction with one of the woman at Sonagachi, I heard that she was sold at Sonagachi by her own father when she was only 16-year-old and was raped five to seven times every day. But she could not lodge any complaint as she was detained by her land lady / brothel owner and was illiterate.

**Later, when she was able to escape from the red light area, she went to her native village and told her mother all about the incidents. To her dismay, her mother could not do anything as she didn't have anything to say, but to cry that she had three more girls and they were fully dependent on the money earned by their father.**

They didn't lodge any complaint to police only because if the incident came to the knowledge of other neighbor and in the locality, then it would be very difficult to find any bridegroom for other girls. This is the reality of the world that we live in.

I gained a lot of experience and knowledge about what really goes on in the red-light areas and about various crimes against the women, which I would have never gained if I had not joined Apne Aap and worked with the extremely marginalized and exploited people especially, with the women and girls of Red light area.

**This was an eye opening experience which has influenced me to work with and for the last girl who has no one to look up to.**

### 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

## My First Day at Apne Aap

— *Atreyeen Madhukalya*

**Delhi:** What does a good decision in disguise of a bad decision look like? It looks like sweat puddles on that revolving cushion chair in an office, with cold water in your hands and wet, plastered hair on your head. It's funny because it was 45 degrees that day and I remember regretting my decision of coming to Delhi for an internship, that too in the month of May-June, which is possibly the worst time you could ask for to work temporarily in Delhi. It is even funnier primarily because I love it here, now.

**I was born and brought up in Assam, one of the North-Eastern states, which a lot of people mistake for an area solely comprising of blindingly dark forest and subtler versions of Amazonian creatures.** I assure you, we do have roads and cars and buses and houses where people reside in and we do not have killer bees and fishes. A simple proof of that would be that I did my schooling from Assam. Right from the beginning of my education until 12th, I was in Assam. I am an Assamese and naturally, I love my language. I love my cuisine. I, then, moved to Bangalore for my Bachelors and currently, I am studying my Bachelors in Mount Carmel College for Women, in my third year in Political Science, Economics and Sociology.

So, in our third year, we are supposed to enrol ourselves in an internship and give the teachers our understanding

of the place we work in. That will be a truckload of information, to be honest. Sort of an industrial interface.

My first day was actually amazing. And this I am not saying due to lack of genuine words. Should I mention that I am the only female intern among all the 6 interns and the only student who is not from a law school?

Me and another intern work under Taw Nana, the media associate of Apne Aap. We were introduced to the rest of the staff by Tinku, the head of this office. Dazed as we were, which might have also been from the heat, we - I, specifically - stared at them while they all introduced themselves. Lost, dazed interns. Then, Gautam and I were called by Nana to her cabin. She assigned us some work. Later, in the afternoon, we went to Oxford Bookstore to attend Feminism Beyond Boundaries event, organised by Apne Aap.

It was beautiful. The talk went pretty well, my attention drunk and not walking on a straight line. We were given cool drinks and hot teas after the talk. I had that and it was about 5:30 pm when I left.

**My first day at Apne Aap went relatively good. So did the days after. As for now, I worked for 3 weeks. But for the future, I hope to work for a longer period.**

**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.



## The girls from the marginalized community receives Adhar Card

— *Soni Khatun / as translated by Kalam*

**Bihar:** My name is Soni Khatun. I was born in a red light area in Forbesganj. I have three brothers. My father died five years ago.

In 2013, I finished my education till class 8<sup>th</sup> in KGBV hostel. **I was confined at home. My movements were restricted and my aunty stopped me from visiting Apne Aap centre too. Also, she didn't permit me to go to school anymore.**

But I was determined to study and didn't want anyone to stop me completing my formal education or getting a higher degree. So one day I ran away from my aunty's house and started living with Apne Aap. I am currently studying in class 10<sup>th</sup> in Purnia. I got a birth certificate in 2014 and I also now have a pass book after staying at KGBV.

I came to know about AADHAR card and wanted one for myself but I was informed that it requires another photo ID proof. I didn't have one. Hence I could not get one made for myself. This saddened me a lot and I reached Tinku Di for the same who told me that whenever I come to the Apne Aap centre next, I would be helped for the same.

Finally when I came to visit the centre, Praveen bhaiya helped me. He gave me an application form to fill which I duly filled after which, Seema Di accompanied me to the AADHAR card office. There they demanded a photo ID card which I did not have at that moment. I had already submitted by school marksheet but they

were not willing to take it. I had to visit three times before they finally accepted my pass book as a valid proof. Then they took the details, and an eye scan and thumb print for records.

I received a receipt of my AADHAR number and within one and a half month, they delivered the real card. It is very difficult for our community to receive help from government authorities, especially adolescent girls.

**Most women in our locality and of our community do not have any identification proofs and this helps the traffickers to claim that they are relatives of the girls.**

Now I feel very elated to have my AADHAR card and want to finally apply for a passport so that I can fly away to achieve my dreams. I am obliged to Apne Aap for all the assistance that they have provided.

**But I was determined to study and didn't want anyone to stop me completing my formal education or getting a higher degree. So one day I ran away from my aunty's house and started living with Apne Aap. I am currently studying in class 10<sup>th</sup> in Purnia.**

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**The World Outside**  
**“Western Classical Music For The First Time”**

— *By Radha Prasad/ as dictated to Rachna Nayak*

**Kolkata:** My name is Radha Prasad. My house is at Nitya Ghosh Street, Munshigunj redlight area. I study in Bamkim Ghosh Memorial Girls High School.

I am 12-year-old and I enjoy listening to music and reading books. I started to come at Apne Aap since I was little. I learn stitching and drawing here. I have many friends here at the centre and I am very happy that I get the opportunities to speak freely and participate in the various events organised by Apne Aap.

Recently, on April 29, 2015 I went to Kala Mandir to watch a Western Musical Concert organized by The Kolkata Classic Club and Swar Sangam. The two musicians (both from United States), Jennifer Heemstra and Brian Thornton gave a duet performance over there. Jennifer is a world- reputed pianist who played Piano and Brian is a celebrated cellist who played Cello.

The programme started at 12:30 pm and went on till 2 pm. I patiently waited to interact with them after the programme. **I managed to get an interactive session with the musicians for 20 minutes.**

The musicians were very happy to interact with me and also to know about Apne Aap and it's activities. After the interaction, I was so happy and requested Jennifer and Brian for a photo session.

**One of the reason behind my happiness, despite of my humble background, I got the opportunity to meet the two musician Jennifer Heemstra and Brian Thornton. How many of us get such opportunity.**

Life is tough. I have been working on my self-improvement. I know how competitive the world has become. I have no idea where I will stand in future. But, one thing is certain with the help of Apne Aap, the battles that I have been fighting daily in my life doesn't seem so tough and the future doesn't look blurry any longer.

I am forever obliged to Apne Aap for giving me hope.

**Life is tough. I have been working on my self-improvement. I know how competitive the world has become. I have no idea where I will stand in future.**

*Continued from page 1*

**Work hard and then you can reap its benefits forever. Besides studying regularly, one should also listen to their teachers and get all their doubts clear. Teachers play a very important role in your success.**

Like I said, class 12th is very important for your career. Hence, I would recommend that you stay away from all possible distractions and stay focused towards your goal. Your commitment to your goal and hard work will never go waste. Cracking Board exams is no rocket science. Once you score well in your class XII, your career will be set. Also try to listen to your teachers when they're telling you something. However, do not take unnecessary stress. **Relax and give yourself breaks from time to time.**

It is a challenge to score well in Class XII exams. Coaching institutes help you till an extent as they give you study material, practice papers, etc. However, how you perform in exams actually depend on your own efforts. Self study, practice and dedication are three keys to achieve success. Even if you haven't performed well in Class XII exams, it is not the end of the world. There is always the next time. The world is full of opportunities for you, you should just be ready to work

hard and stretch your arms to reach for them.

My main focus was to correct my shortcomings and to reinforce what I already knew. And my teachers worked hard and relentlessly, making sure that every possible error was taken into account.

**Personally speaking, the happiness I got from doing my exams in the best possible way was far greater than all the glitter following my result.** If you can proudly say that you have done your best, then you are definitely a winner.

Here I would like to share my favorite quote: “Never calculate the height of a mountain before you climb it. When you reach the top, you will realize how low it was” (Hammarskjold).

**Your commitment to your goal and hard work will never go waste.**

## Rampur red-light area women's group fund-raises to help Nepal earthquake victims

—By *Fatima Nat Dhuniya*

**Bihar:** My name is Fatima. I live in Forbesganj, Bihar. When the earthquake struck in Bihar and rest of the country, we were unaware of its higher intensity in our neighboring country Nepal.

**After the earthquake, we heard that pimps were going to Nepal to look for girls. Our women's group immediately decided we would raise funds for our Nepali sisters.**

We had felt the earthquake and there were some after-shocks in our area but it was nothing compared to what we saw happened across the border. We collected all the women and girls from red-light area and Mela ground and decided to mobilize people from Forbesganj especially women for donation.

**We took out a fund-collection rally with 40 girls and 50 women. First we went to the huts in the red light area. Amana Di was the first woman to give money for victims.** Then we went to all the people from red-light area and the Nat communities from Mela ground. They gave about ten thousand rupees. After that our rally moved to the medicine shops nearby. The shopkeepers gave about two thousand rupees.

Some medicine shop keepers asked about the rally "How will this money will help the Nepali girls and when it will reach to victims". Meena, our Mahila Mandal member said this money will be transferred to the Nepal Govt. soon. Then the rally moved to main road towards Jogbani town bordering Nepal.

It was extremely hot. But we continued. People were watching us, women and girls marching on the road in very hot temperature. We divided the rally in two groups to collect more money for the victims. The Girls

group collected from the small shops and their relatives. The women group collected from the big shops and companies.

One petrol pump owner said Apne Aap has lots of money "Why not just give it to victims?". He blamed Apne Aap for not producing fast results in Red Light area. "women and girls are still being prostituted in Rampur North". The women said, Apne Aap is an organization. It is not alone. **"We have reduced the brothel to two or three, less women are trafficked and few girls are prostituted. Now most of the girls are in school and college"**.

**The women activists also told him he can't see the changes because of the reason that "he is a man"**. They advised him to ask the female members, they will tell him that how we have reduced the number of exploited females and how they feel secure when they pass the red-light road. Most men are buyers.

We continued to ask the petrol pump owner that, "Can't you see the girls from red-light area we have taught, who are now in college in Patna. Women are now confident enough to go and collect money for earthquake victims. We appreciate your concern. Can you give some girls and women a job in your petrol pump?" The petrol pump owner do not have answer for the women's question.

**We raised twelve thousand rupees that day. All of us, Apne Aap's staff, also donated one day's salary.**

*Continued from page 1*

My two elder brothers are the only ones who step out of the house everyday and come back home with bare minimum money every night. **The money my brothers bring home is very minimum, it is not even enough for us to eat food.**

There are days when we don't have food to have our meals, those days we either stay hungry or go to our aunt's home and she gives us some food. Most days we do not even have milk to make our morning tea. It gets little difficult. But, we managed to survive to date.

I feel very nice when I come to Apne Aap centre at the IIC with the other girls. At times, in between our evening tuition and art classes, we go out to Lodi Garden with the sisters working with the organization.

The last time we went to Lodi Garden. I saw lots of big green trees, a lot of colorful flowers. We saw ducks

near a big fountain and many fishes too. We kept walking around the garden, it was very exciting. Now I will attend school soon after the summer break with my friends.

I have to go with my mom and open my own bank account soon. **I want to study further and help my mother, sister and brothers so that we can eat proper food and mummy can take her morning tea without worrying about anything else.**

**There are days when we don't have food to have our meals, those days we either stay hungry or go to our aunt's home. She gives us something to eat. Most days we do not even have milk to make our morning tea. It gets little difficult. But, we managed to survive to date.**

## Poems

### Life

You can bring life to a turn,  
You know only you can  
Where bright light dawns on us  
If you don't give into the cruel hands of time  
Like rest of the over priced shining glittery  
objects of the world

**Name**– Aditi Kharate

**Area:** Kamatipuram, Mumbai

### Mirror

Hush! Little baby, don't say a word,  
Mumma's going to buy you a mockingbird,  
And if that mockingbird don't sing,  
Dadda's going to find you a wedding ring,  
And if that golden ring turns to brass,  
Baby can get herself a looking glass.

**Name**– Mamata Kamble

**Area:** Kamatipuram, Mumbai



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## Red Light Despatch

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