



RED LIGHT DESPATCH

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DELHI, KOLKATA, MUMBAI AND FORBESGANJ (BIHAR)

My Dream

To become an IPS Officer
—Sushma Jha, aged 14

Kolkata: My name is Sushma Jha, aged 14 years. I am a student of class VIII at Lajpat Balika Vidhayalaya. I am a resident of Munshigunj. I live with my parents and siblings. We are a family of six. I love to dance, listen to music, and write poems about nature in Hindi. English is my favorite subject.

I joined Apne Aap center in 2007 as a student as it was near to my house. I learnt a lot there. I learnt computers, stitching, dancing, drama, boxing and drawing along with our day to day study subjects. I participated in various workshops, programs and rallies conducted by Apne Aap. I obtained a great amount of experience by getting involved in several educational workshops. In 2014, I made a short film called “Savdhan Kolkata” along with my friends after getting trained in Videography by Aseem Asha at Apne Aap.

I want to become an IPS Officer. I know that to become an IPS Officer one has to work really hard and also be physically fit. I will give my 100% efforts and work diligently towards fulfilling my dream. I have already planned how to go about doing so. Kiran Bedi is my role model and my inspiration. I want to free the world of terrorism and bring in positive changes in the society. I will work towards making our future great. I also want to make my parents proud.

De-notified children participates in ‘Peace Walk’ campaign

— By Lucky/ as dictated to Khushboo Mishra

Delhi: My Name is Lucky. I live in Sapera Basti of Dharampura (Najafgarh) with my family. I study in 4th class and belong to Sapera caste. I hear stories from my family that at the time of my birth, they were not able to arrange food, and milk was a luxury. I have one younger brother and sister. Currently, my father goes to work in Gurgaon and somehow family’s situation has started improving.

In our caste, the only source of income is entertainment by using snakes, monkeys and drum playing at weddings. These sources do not provide enough for the families to live by. They are not educated, so find it difficult to get any job. There are many children from Sapera community, who have not enrolled to any

schools yet and start to learn playing drums at very early age. Instead of toys, children here play with snakes and monkeys.

My parents had enrolled me and my siblings to school on regular basis. They do not allow us to miss our school. My father narrates how being a male, he couldn’t provide for the family, as he was uneducated. So, he and my mother assert the importance of education and securing a well paid job in future.

Before the D-day, my school teacher told me that we were going to participate in a ‘Peace March’. I was curious, as I had never participated in any campaign march earlier.

(Continued on page 6)

Eviction of nomadic tribes leads to discontinuation of children’s education

— Poonam Kumari/ as dictated to Naresh

Bihar: My name is Poonam Kumari and I am 17- year- old. I belong to Banjara community. We are nomadic. Our settlement was located on Bathana’s government land near the National Highway and the railway station for the past 6 years.

Apne Aap Women Worldwide had started working with us since August 2015. The activists had provided us with notebooks, books and clothes. We are also receiving education by the staff members of the organisation. It is a wonderful experience and there have been a number of visible positive changes in my community.

Generally, parents keep their children in the tent under the supervision of relatives. Before Apne Aap’s inter-

vention children from my community would normally practice begging but after this healthy intervention the children started learning Hindi, Maths and English. They also participated in other activities like painting, rallying, legal training so on and so forth.

We could see how the children were extremely interested in all these activities. For the last three months we are facing a lot of problems.

The National Highway authority forced us to vacate the government land for widening of roads.

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Op-Ed— Ruchira Gupta's article "Colonial prejudices against tribes in India refuse to go" published in Hindustan Times

Ruchira Gupta is editor of Antyajaa: Indian Journal of Women and Social Change, professor at New York University, and founder of Indian anti-sex trafficking organisation Apne Aap Women Worldwide. This opinion piece was published in Hindustan Times

Prejudice sometimes is more deeply embedded in our consciousness than historical fact. Recently a member of the Bawariya community in UP was accused of rape. Kiran Bedi, lieutenant governor of Puducherry and a former IPS officer, promptly tweeted: "Ex-criminal tribes are known to be very cruel. They are hardcore professionals in committing crimes. Rarely caught and/or convicted ..."

The Bawariyas are a nomadic group that specialised in making fishing nets. They sell their fine nets, fish and birds to different parts of northern India. In 1871, the British colonisers passed the Criminal Tribes Act, labelling them, along with 198 other nomadic and forest groups, "criminal". A stroke of the pen turned 14 million people into criminals in their own land.

Their crime: They were experts in manufacturing and trading.

The British gave contracts for the merchandising of these and other products such as tobacco, betel nut, salt, leather hides, dyes, and essential spices and condiments to British officers and companies. Indians who continued to manufacture, transport and ply the very trades that they had been doing for centuries were considered "rebels" and listed as criminals.

The Act stipulated that members of the communities "notified" under the law not just register with the police, but live in "settlements" where they laboured as slaves. Under the purview of the Act, the colonial police were given sweeping powers to arrest, harass, extort and even kill the people that belonged to these tribes. In fact, as part of the police syllabus, every police officer in colonial India was taught to know who the "criminal tribes" were. In a subjugated land, the notified tribals became the most watched people. Not only were they routinely arrested but their women sexually abused to "keep them under control".

Children were branded "criminal" at birth. Fourteen million people were not allowed to build pucca houses, ride horses, wear shoes, go to school or hospitals, celebrate festivals, own land or cattle, and make or sell anything on their own. Independence meant undoing unjust laws, one of which was the Criminal Tribes Act. In 1952, Jawaharlal Nehru as prime minister "de-notified" this unjust law. He said: "The monstrous provisions of the Criminal Tribes Act constitute a negation of civil

liberty. No tribe [can] be classed as criminal as such and the whole principle [is] out of consonance with all civilised principles."

The Act was replaced by the Habitual Offenders Act, meant to empower the "de-notified" groups with education and livelihoods instead of criminal punishment.

Unfortunately, the Act allowed the list of the original criminal tribes to be retained in the new Indian Police syllabus. The idea was the identification of such groups for gentler punishments and special access to social and economic empowerment programmes launched by the Indian government.

Instead, like the colonial police before them, the Indian police use the lists to arrest and harass members of these tribes. DNTs (de-notified tribes) men and women are closely watched, picked up by the police on any pretext, accused and convicted without thorough investigation. Due to the continued criminalisation and consequent discrimination, members of the community are branded "thieves, pimps, prostitutes," and still not admitted to schools, given jobs or sold land in "respectable" areas. They live on the margins, eking out an existence from livelihoods that are inherently exploitative. Most of them do not have any citizenship documents and are much too scared of the government authorities to even line up for them.

The National Human Rights Commission has recommended the repeal of the Habitual Offenders Act, 1952. In March 2007, the UN's Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) noted that "the so-called de-notified and nomadic people which are listed for their alleged 'criminal tendencies' under the former Criminal Tribes Act (1871), continue to be stigmatised under the Habitual Offenders..." and asked India to repeal the Habitual Offenders Act and rehabilitate the de-notified and nomadic tribes.

There are 313 nomadic tribes and 198 de-notified tribes of India. Most of them still live below the poverty line. The late writer-activist Mahasweta Devi, a Magsaysay awardee, spent a lifetime bombarding the government with complaint letters and published a profusion of articles documenting their suffering at the hands of the police, landlords, politicians, and officials.

She died four days before Bedi's tweet. Bedi's own Magsaysay Award citation read that she tried to "break down adversarial relations between the police and the community.... seeks to replace the hard hand of punishment with the healing hand of rehabilitation".

Bedi has since apologised for her tweet. Her next step could be to read the history of the de-notified tribes and of outdated colonial laws.

Diary of a Social Worker

—*Laboni Basu*

Kolkata: I am Laboni Basu. I joined Apne Aap in Feb, 2016. My professional background is from a corporate sector. Besides social work, I also work as a guest faculty in different management colleges in Kolkata. My area of teaching is HR and marketing management. Coming from an altogether different background, now associating with a welfare organisation is helping me to discover myself more.

I supervise Sonagachi project. I take classes for community children and assist in updating asset holders' database. Everyday, I meet many Apne Aap beneficiaries in Sonagachi Centre. They share their life struggles and other problems with me. I try my best to provide suggestions and referral services to them. It has been an inspiring experience for me.

I met with Dona Hughes, a professor of women studies department at Rhode Island University. She is working in the field of anti- trafficking activities. She visited Sonagachi brothels with Apne Aap's staff. Here, we met with many women in prostitution who have been entrapped in the four walls of these brothels for many years. From what we see, it is a plethora of tears, pains where the girls and women are trapped.

I also met with star cast of film "Love Sonia" directed by Tabrej Noorani. This film is on anti-trafficking issue. That unit came to Kolkata and visited Sonagachi and Munshiganj Center with Apne Aap's assistance. Under supervision of Sahana di and me, they had collected various facts and information about prostituted girls and women living in the redlight areas. They expressed their heartiest gratitude to ApneAap.

The source of sex trafficking is based on the fact of supply-demand factor. Purchasing sex is a criminal offence, where a trafficker maximises his profit by selling innocents and vulnerable to the buyers.

According to report of Asian philanthropy forum (Feb. 28,2014), in India many sex-trafficking victims are adolescents. The reason cited by them is the buyer feels that transit of contracting sexually transmitted infections/ HIV if they have sex with children and adolescent girls. These creates a huge demand for children and girls of trafficking.

A large number of rural, poor, uneducated, innocent women and girls become victims of sex trafficking. They are trapped by traffickers by false promise of jobs, fake marriages, or promise of love. Sometimes the victims of domestic violence, widows from poor families also fall prey to the traffickers.

As per the data of NCRB (National Crime Record Bureau), such cases highlight the ever growing problem of human trafficking in India. **The rate of registered human trafficking cases has increased by day 38.3% over five years, from 2,848 in 2009 to 3,940 in 2013. On the other hand, the result of conviction rate has declined by 45%, from 1,279 in 2009 to 702 in 2013.**

Apne Aap, as an organisation has been delivering successful activities to protest against such inhumane practices.

We have been admitting girls in reputed schools and colleges from rural vulnerable zones. And these girls are setting a shining example of hope from the dark world. I supervise sanitary napkin production unit too. Many girls from poor background get opportunities to learn some skills and earn their living at the same time.

I manage Apne Aap's different cultural programs. I also conduct monthly meeting with community mothers of Munshiganj-- A place for quality interaction, discussions on several issues from health, hygiene to education, women empowerment, legal awareness, need assessment for various kind of vocational training and development programme.

My journey with Apne Aap has helped me discovering myself in a new world of love, devotion, and affection for life. I feel very proud to be a part of such organisation like Apne Aap.

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My First Day at Apne Aap

— *Viswanathan Priyeshwari*

Delhi: My name is V. Priyeshwarya, a student of fifth year B.A. LLB, from Lloyd Law College, Greater Noida. I was born in Chennai and brought up in Delhi, as my family is settled here.

When it was my turn to look for an internship, I chose to be associated with Apne Aap women worldwide, as I knew it offers a wide variety of experiences. I wanted an all-round experience that would help me to accomplish my career goals.

On the first day, I was given an orientation about the organisation's work. I was introduced to everyone at the office. **The work environment was very professional, however at the same time very homely. The first day was only the beginning of a beautiful internship experience. Along with me there were seven more interns from different countries.**

The first task allotted to me was to summarise the comprehensive judgement pronounced by the High Court of Patna in response to PIL (Public interest litigation) filed by Apne Aap women worldwide in 2014. Along with this, I was also working on updating stakeholders database, editing articles, generating reports, documentation, organising women into self empowered groups and in generating awareness about the work that Apne Aap team does towards ending sex-trafficking through campaigns and rallies.

I also got an opportunity to visit the community, located in Najafgarh, where I learnt so much about the freed/ de-notified communities. The de-notified communities named Singhi, Sapera and Perna lived in very close vicinity. The ones belonging from Sapera are found mostly in North India. Most of them are into entertainment business. For instance, playing drums during weddings, providing horses in the traditional Indian wedding, selling medicines made out of herbs, and performing snake charming.

Perna community is a nomadic tribe. During the British era, most of them were restricted to move from one place to another, which led to inter-generational prostitution, due to lack of education and livelihood opportunities. The male members forced the women in prostitution after their marriages.

Lastly, Singhi community, who earn their daily bread by rag picking, ear cleaning and selling toys in the traffic signals. It has been going on since generations.

I had the opportunity to reach out to the women and children from marginalised background and contribute my time and effort for their rehabilitation.

Also, I attended the press conference on 'Child Labour (Amendment and Prohibition) Act, 2016' which was recently passed in the Parliament. Our team campaigned against the bill, which later became an Act. We signed up the petition in order to bring a change in the respective bill and spread the awareness of this amendments to as many people as we could.

With addition to this, I accompanied Apne Aap team for a conference on 'Dalit Women' where a beautiful speech had been delivered about the problems that are faced by dalit women, their situations, attacks, violence, caste discrimination against them. I also attended an Asia workshop on Child labour in domestic work and gender based violence.

In great esteem and with in depth gratitude I would like to thank Apne Aap team who literally helped me out round the clock in the successful completion of my project work. I feel fortunate to get such an encouraging guide who continuously counselled and helped me to accomplish my internship well in time.

I would continue supporting the cause and give in whatever help I can provide in future.

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

Apne Aap facilitated self-defense training in govt school

— *Suhana/ as dictated to Khushboo Mishra and Shashibala*

Delhi: My name is Suhana. I study in 4th standard at nearby MCD Primary School. I live in Dharampura and belong to Perna caste. I live with my sister and my parents.

My relatives often say that there is no need to study as one day I will get married and follow what other women of my community have been doing for generations.

In our community married women decorate themselves and go out in the evenings and generally come back early in the morning. Many times I request my mother not to go as I feel unsafe but in return she replies, “How will we eat if I stay at home and not go out?” Other days, my father takes her out in evenings or she goes with other women of our caste.

Though I and my sister go to school every day, we hardly make friends. At school when others discuss about their parents, I lie. I tell them that my mother is very caring and she reads me stories every night.

Recently, at school I was informed that we will be having self-defense training. I was confused as I had no idea what it meant. All student of 4th and 5th standard were instructed to gather in the playground. Once we reached the ground we saw Apne Aap activists accompanied by two girls, holding small punching bags. We were told that they were volunteers from America.

We were briefed about the importance of self-defense training and why it is being conducted; its merits and demerits, how we can use it, so on and so forth. The

name of one of the trainers was Pooja.

While teaching, she started showing us various techniques. In the beginning, she instructed us to rotate our wrists clockwise and anti-clockwise. We did it 10 times with her guidance. Next, she taught us how to tightly hold the hand if somebody tries to touch us on the streets. We followed all the instructions carefully and if somebody was unable to follow it, Pooja didi taught that person again.

We all learnt and enjoyed the class. We were also taught how to punch by keeping our shoulders straight and focussing on the position of our legs. After teaching few techniques, Apne Aap activist told us about good and bad touch which was extremely useful to us. Bad touch includes touching neck, chest, thighs, lips etc.

Following a two-hour session, we went back to our respective classes and. I shared this beautiful experience with my sister, my mother and other community members.

Our teacher told us to remember all the things that were taught at the self defense class as it would be very beneficial for all in the future.

If anybody misbehaves with us, we could use those techniques to defend ourselves. She also told us to inform our teachers, parents or guardians in case anybody touches us badly. It was a nice and informative session.

Join our campaign to [#QuitChildLabour](#). Sign the petition to revoke laws that enable [#intergenerational](#) prostitution <http://ow.ly/z2zH303xsS1>

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



Trafficked woman gets training in making sanitary napkins as livelihood opportunities

—Rani Khatoon/ as dictated to Rachna Nayak

Kolkata: I am Rani Khatoon. I am 35- year- old. I am originally from Bangladesh. I had a lovely family. A family comprising of my mother, my father, four sisters and two brothers. I was the eldest daughter. My father was a poor farmer. We have no land of our own. He used to work on other's land.

We faced a lot of difficulties to maintain our family. There was an uncle (no blood relation), who knew everything about our family's situation. **He approached me with a job opportunity in India. He told me that in India there is an opportunity to work as a domestic help and earn sufficient money.**

He also added that I would be provided food, clothing and accommodation. He told me that he would send a good amount of money to my family. I was convinced by his proposal and ready to go with him. But my luck was not with me and I was tricked into it and trapped by him.

I found myself in a Red Light Area, Munshiganj. I was too helpless because my knowledge was too limited at that time and I had no idea where to go and whom to approach. I continuously refused to entertain clients but no one was there to hear my cries.

I was tortured mentally and physically each and every day, no one was there to help me. I had to ac-

cept this dark world. My life went on like this. One day I heard about an NGO named Apne Aap Women Worldwide from a few people belonging to my area who were working there.

They told me about the vocational training provided by Apne Aap. I was extremely pleased and wanted to join the organization. I went there one day for general observation and found my true calling. I decided to join the IGP sanitary napkin production unit.

I decided to take up training there and thus my journey with Apne Aap began. I participated in their training program held on July, 2016 at Shastitala Office from 12 PM to 1.30 PM. **I learned many things from that training program. After my training, I formally joined Apne Aap. I can now make perfect napkins. I get paid according to the number of sanitary napkins I can make.**

I make a dignified living now a days and I thank Apne Aap centre from the bottom of my heart. I am truly grateful to them for making my life a better one.

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On the day of walk, I reached to school and was playing with my friends in classroom. Our teacher came and asked us to get ready, as we were suppose to reach the venue, from where the March was being launched. I, along with other students of my school and teachers reached Sapera basti.

We waited for few minutes and other school students joined us too. I met with Apne Aap activists. Then I saw Bindiya aunty who works in the community. I had learnt a lot from Apne Aap activists. They had helped my family members in getting linked with government documents lie caste certificate, ration card, voter id card etc.

Within few minutes of gathering, there were so many people at community. **Many placards and banners were despatched among the children. Few placards carried messages like "I am a girl and I want to be a doctor", "girls and boys are equal", "I want peace, no war", "world peace" etc. My mother and grandmother with other ladies of community also joined us for Peace Walk.**

We started marching towards MCD Primary school, through main roads. It was a peaceful march carrying placards, no slogans. **At every corner, people from balconies, terrace, main doors of houses were looking us. Even shopkeepers, customers at shop and people on two-wheeler and four-wheelers were giving us attention. All the students were in our school uniforms with teachers. My mother was very happy to see me participate marching peacefully.**

Once we reached to MCD Primary school, we stopped at the gate for 10 minutes and raised few slogans there. Then we entered the school campus and sat on the carpeted floor. Everyone received refreshments and relaxed for sometime as it was very hot on that day.

Sometime later, Ruchira aunty with one friend from America reached to the school. Apne Aap team interacted with all participants of Peace Walk . They told us to study well, not to discriminate between girls, and boys. Both should be given equal rights and more.

I enjoyed this Peace Walk very much. It was full of knowledge and fun.

The World Outside

— *Madhumala Kumari/ as dictated to Praveen Kumar*

Bihar: My name is Madhumala Kumari. I am in first year of BA degree. I completed my schooling from Kasurba Gandhi Balika Aavashiya Vidyalaya (KGBV), Simraha. It is managed by Apne Aap Women Worldwide, an organization working towards ending sex trafficking.

I am from a poor economical background. Our family comes under Schedule Caste (SC). We live in a village close to Forbesganj. **After making lots of attempt in other places, I finally got enrolled in Forbesganj College, which is eight kilometers away from my village. I have a cycle and use it for my transportation to college and coaching classes. It is not easy. Most of my time is spent in commuting up and down. I barely get time to study at home.**

In June this year, I was offered a chance by Apne Aap to get admission in St. Xavier College in Kolkata. I went there along with Apne Aap activist. Unfortunately, I couldn't get admission, as the College did not have the available options of subject, which I had chosen during my Intermediate.

This, however, did not deter me from observing the beauty of Kolkata. We stayed there for a month, the places and people are culturally so different from ours. And I was glad visiting the birth place of some of the greatest people in India. I also participated in a workshop and met few well known artists. I felt privileged to learn from them.

All of this was like a dream to me. It was so different from my small village in Forbesganj. It helped me gain

skills and broadened my knowledge—learnt arts and crafts, tried painting, and helped educating younger children.

The second time I had visited Kolkata it was for my visa interview. This time I traveled alone. Boarded the bus at night and reached Patna in dawn. From Patna, I traveled to Kolkata via train. Initially, I was scared, but slowly I overcame my fear. I congratulated myself for being brave.

After the struggle, when I reached Kolkata office, I was informed that my visa interview was cancelled. I was dejected. I had no option, but to return to Bihar. I left for Patna the same day, as I was planning to get admission in Shri Arvind Mahila College. Even this was another dead end. The college authority was asking for a migration certificate. Whereas, I don't have one. I was left so heartbroken. I thought even if I couldn't make it through St. Xavier in Kolkata, I would get admission here. I wanted a quality education, where I can at least see my dream coming true. **The College admission and hostel fee was too expensive too. It was beyond what my family could afford. Apne Aap was willing to help me with Rs 25,000 annually. They have many other girls studying in colleges to support too. And my requirement was quite high.**

Now I can request if someone is willing to finance my education in Patna University. I would be forever grateful. I can never thank enough to Apne Aap for what they have done for me and I look forward to their support throughout my life.

Continued from page 1

Thus, we had to move to another place, which was again temporary as incessant rains kept hampering our day to day lives.

Presently we are moving from one place to another and this is causing a lot of problems to us. We requested the authorities a lot as we have been staying there for over six years now but all our efforts and requests went in vain. Some families have moved to Simraha, some to Kasba and some to other government lands.

But as most of the government lands are occupied it has gotten even more crowded for most of us. Some families have taken shelter under tin sheds built by Zila Parishad and marketing authority of Forbesganj.

We are losing our access to education and our opportunity to be a part of the mainstream. Again. I don't know what our future beholds, but we all believe that one day things will change for the good, we will have our voices heard and we will get our rights.

Most of the displaced children are again back to begging. **It is also highly unsafe for our girls these days. The government's action has broken our dreams and not many from our community are conscious enough to realise the seriousness of the issue.**

They say it's normal and unavoidable. We are harassed not just by the government but also by the village head, police and also local goons. The government does not realize the kind of difficulties we face every day. We have lost a great opportunity to have better lives. We have also lost access to medical care. **I know people move for better but we are moving for the worst. I am giving you an example "Agar kisi paudhe ko bar bar ukhar kar ek jagah se dusari jagah lagaya jay to wo paudha sukh jata hai (When the process of uprooting and replanting a plant continues.... eventually the plant loses it's vigour and dies)".** This is also applicable in the case of our lives. Feeling helpless. What can I do to change the situation? Help us.

Poems

I am a good girl

I am a good girl, with good friends
I have a little heart and a small bag
I wake up in morning and take care of my
hygiene.
I never forget to complete my home work
I love mom and my dad
I love painting and animals
I keep my copies and books clean
I am a good girl.

Name– Jinnat Khatoon

Age: 11 years

Area: Bihar

I love my school

I love my school and my friends,
Teachers love me and my friends,
We dress up in clean uniform and shoes,
We keep our School campus clean,
We take care of flowering tree,
I love my school.

Name– Geeta Kumari

Age– 13 years

Area: Bihar



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