

# Meri Kahani – Meri Zubani

## GAUHAR NISHA\*

I am Gauhar Nisha\*. I was born in Bareilly. I was married at the age of 14 but due to persistent dowry demands, I was divorced by my husband. At that juncture, I already had a girl child and I was pregnant for the second time. Atrocities continued even at my brother's place because his family perceived me as a burden. Having no hope in life I decided to commit suicide. While waiting for my death at the railway track, an iron rod fell on my daughter's head and she sustained a head injury. I forgot about committing suicide and rushed to the doctor.

Life on the street being very insecure, I married Sonu, himself homeless, for safety reasons. Living on the streets for the last 10 years, I suffered a lot. For days at a stretch, we would remain hungry. Police used to scold us. Also, it used to be very difficult to take a bath while being open. Last winter, I delivered a boy from my second husband. I would burn the empty disposable plates (dauna) to protect the newly born from the chilling cold. In the dearth of appropriate food, I used to feed a three-month-old baby with halwa. While in place of milk I would give him tea. Moreover, the street is highly unsafe for adolescent girls. To protect my children from being stolen I used to stay awake throughout the night. On top of it, heat, cold, and rain would add to our woes.

Then I got to know about the AAA shelter and I went there along with my children. Very recently, I gave birth to a baby boy and because of a roof over our head, his life is secure. We also get support for food and clothes. Here we feel completely safe. My long cherished hope of living a decent life is slowly coming true.