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A transsexual turns RJ

As a radio jockey, she takes up issues relating to her community members

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IN A SOCIETY that detests transsexuals and treats them as social outcasts, Priyanka, 25, a transsexual, leads a respectable life, as a radio jockey, even as she attempts to uplift members of her community.

As RJ at 90.4 Radio Active, a community radio station, an initiative of JGI (Jain Group of Institutions), Priyanka hosts a programme titled 'Yaaru Ivaru' (who is this person?) every Thursday between 12.30 pm and 1 pm. "I am thoroughly enjoying my work," says the radio host, who invites guests from the transsexual community and interviews them.

The show sees Priyanka engaging her community members in discussions as well as addressing their problems, including livelihood, housing, education, their experience while begging etc.

Society is known to taunt the community members when they go begging. She also conducts audio dramas that are performed by transsexuals.

WORKSHOPS FOR RJS

Priyanka hosts other radio shows that deal with day-to-day issues, including the inconvenience caused to the public by the Metro Rail works, price rise, etc, a task she has been performing for the last four months. She also holds workshops for aspiring radio jockeys.

She earns a salary of Rs 6,000 a month, which gives her a sense of joy and security that her past had failed to provide. Priyanka owes it all to Samara, a community basic organisation, and Sangama, a non-govern-



Priyanka's show has audio dramas that are performed by transsexuals

mental organisation, with whom she had been working for the past 12 months. While participating in HIV awareness programmes, including rallies in support of transsexual rights, Akkaiamma, the head of the NGO, suggested that Priyanka take up the

job of an RJ at a social project taken up by JGI. She grabbed this opportunity with both hands and since then, there has been no looking back for her.

Recalling her past, Priyanka said she was born as Raju, who preferred skirts over shirts and cooking over

cricket. "As I was mocked for my feminine qualities at school, I told my mother I was going to a temple, but ran away from home," she said.

Priyanka said with the help of a friend, she underwent a sex-change operation in Mumbai. "Thus began a new life for me," she said. Like thousands of other transsexuals, she too led a life of drudgery, as a sex worker, and begged for living.



Even as she overcame her struggles with grit and determination, the love for parents made her call home once. Little did she realise her parents would welcome her back with open arms. After reuniting with her parents four years ago, her bonding with them and her little sister has become more strong.

FAMILY LIFE

Priyanka is married to Krishna, who lives in Mysore with his first wife and child, with whom she shares a great rapport. Priyanka was even asked to name her step child, who was eventually christened Pritam. Krishna, who married her three years ago, comes down to the city often to meet her. "He takes me out for movies," she smiles.

On completing her education (she is ninth standard pass), she says, "I find it tough to continue with my studies. JGI has offered me a chance to complete it, but I have some financial issues, due to which studies have to take the backseat for some time."