



## **Purushi**

“I was born here in Bangalore only and I studied only till 5<sup>th</sup> grade. I had issues at home financially and hence I had to start working back then. I used to work in bookbinding company, and I used to sell flowers in the evening as part-time. I had no idea about who I was but all I knew was that I was attracted to guys.”

“As I grew up and became 18, I met a few people from the trans community while I was still selling flowers. We were often meeting near Malleswaram grounds and I had not come out to the world as to who I was. Once we went to the office where I met a lot of trans people there. That is when I realized that I was not alone. People who are like me have a community and they help each other out. That is when the real me couldn't stop and I felt like I had to come out. All I wanted was to wear a saree, pierce my nose and my ears. There was this space in our office, people like me used to be ourselves there, be our real selves and come back. Once we were back home, we had this mask on for ourselves, “acting” like how a guy is supposed to.”

### **My first crush**

“I had this crush on a guy, he was living just opposite my house. I had no clue what the so-called love and attraction was. All I knew was that I liked him, and he liked me. He also sold flowers and so was I. We both went to the market together in a cycle. He

used to make me sit in the front and took me to the market where we bought flowers and sold it on the roads. As time passed on, I really fell for him. He still doesn't know that. He is married and he has 2 kids now. Once he got to know I was begging and into sex work, he stopped talking to me. I never could tell him how I felt about him."

"That office where I was working, the founder of Aravani had come there for a translation job. That is when I met these people. Since then, I stopped begging and being a sex worker. Recently an engineer stopped his vehicle, turned to me and asked me 'I see you on FB and Instagram doing painting and all, are you an artist?' I smiled and told him 'Yes, I am an artist'. I am Purushi from the Aravani Art Project."



## **Prarthana**

“I was born in Chikkajala, a small area in Bengaluru itself. I was born a guy but once I started growing up I started feeling the difference in my behavior. I don’t know if I can call it being ashamed or I was just shy, I could not openly tell how I felt about myself. It was just the naïve feeling that my parents would hit me or mock me for who I was so, I never told anyone about my who I was back then.”

“The first person who got to know about this was a guy who wanted to be like me but maybe others couldn’t recognize him because he had a beard and all. I remember, him and I meeting near our area and go on walks, talk about our life, crushes, stories of romance, etc. He is now no more, I lost him 6 months back, since there Purushi has been my closest friend”

“I never went home for 3 years only because of being afraid of not being accepted but now in the last 4 years, I live with my parents and if anyone in the neighborhood even makes a fuss about who I am, my mum is the first one to fight them. My life is normal and so it should be and all I wanted was this. I joined Aravani art project 2 years ago, I have made art in Vyallikaval, Chennai, rural areas of south India and I love doing this. I am Prarthana from the Aravani Art Project.”



## **Jyothi**

“My ajja and ajji’s house was in a village and that was where I did my schooling. I was 6 years or so and we were naïve and not learned. Without my knowledge, I was told I “walked” like a girl and when I came to my teenage, my friends use to call me cute and rub my cheek. It was different, it was something new.”

## **Teenage life**

“We were 5 siblings and we had one sister. She was married off early in her age and hence, apart from my mum and aunt there was no one to do the house chores. I gradually picked it up, I liked doing those chores. I used to purposely go out and wash clothes so that people notice the real me but often I used to be called out by the neighbors saying “Why are you doing a woman’s job, go do farming?” I would think, my family only don’t care about it, why are they? Such incidents kept happening, but my aunt and mum used to be happy that I learned all this. All I wanted was that. I finished my 10<sup>th</sup> grade, came to Bangalore and started working at this hotel called Megha Darshini hotel, near Chikpete. I used to be at the counter giving out tokens, worked as a waiter in the same hotel.”

“I have met many men who have just used me in the name of being together. The first time I had it was at a restroom in Majestic, this guy who worked at the STD booth, asked me if I wanted to have it with him. It was new to me, I was young, I didn’t know how to react. We had it and even before I could get dressed and come outside, he was gone. Though that hotel where I worked was just the next road, I had no idea

how to get there. I asked directions and someone on the street helped me reach there.”

“From being a sex worker or begging on an everyday basis, to working in an art project. We have all grown. “We” being, people from our community, society, and how people look at us at their first glance. We are being invited to work at good organizations, we are doing art, we are painting walls of a lot of streets in India. I am Jyothi from the Aravani Art Project.”