TN school to have hostel for transgender kids

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Trichy:

Transgender children are often disowned by their parents and end up on the streets, with no option but to beg or resort to sex work for a living. To help such youngsters get a roof over their heads and an education, a school in Trichy, Tamil Nadu has decided to build a dedicated hostel for them.

Maj Gen NRK Babu (retd), CEO of Swami Sivananda Vidhya Samiti which runs the school, says he was inspired to start such an initiative after meeting Priya, who had been abandoned by her family when she was just 15. Babu, who heard about her plight, helped her find accommodation, and complete her education through the National Institute of Open Schooling. That gave him the idea to help other gender non-conforming youngsters. “About three to five children end up on the streets on a daily basis. It is our social responsibility to give parents another option — instead of disowning their children, they can put them in this hostel until they turn 18,” said Babu.

The foundation stone for the hostel was laid at Sri Sivananda Balalaya CBSE School on Saturday. The hostel, which is being built at a cost of more than Rs 30 lakh, will be able to accommodate 40 children.

“The school will take the responsibility of their psychological, legal and medical counselling till they turn 18. It will mentally prepare them to face the world, and we will also send them to college,” said Babu, adding that a search is on for sponsors who can pay for food and boarding for those who cannot afford it.

Last year, an NHRC study had shown how discrimination of transgenders begins from childhood. “They suffer verbal and corporal abuses at the hands of their parents, siblings and other family members,” the study said, noting that only 2% of transgenders stayed with their parents.

But this hostel might give hope to those who have been rejected by kin. Tamil Nadu, incidentally has always been at the forefront of transgender reform. It was the first state to grant “third gender” status and establish a transgender welfare board in April 2008. As per the 2011 census, there were 4.9 lakh transgenders in India though activists estimate the number to be seven times higher.

Lauding it as a first-of-its-kind initiative in the state, S Shankari, former member, child welfare committee, Trichy, said it will take some more years for society to accept such children. “In the meantime, helping to mainstream these children through such intervention will help prevent them from being victimised,” she added.
**SPONSORS WANTED**

- Hostel will be able to accommodate 40 children
- School will take the responsibility of children’s psychological, legal and medical counselling till they turn 18
- It will also send them to college for higher studies
- Samiti looking for sponsors to take care of food and boarding for those who cannot afford it