



# GAURI SAWANT

**Born:** 1970s, in Pune, India

**Organisation:** Sakhi Char Chowghi Trust

Gauri Sawant was born and raised in Pune, losing her mother at a young age. She left home at the age of 17 to pursue her transition, and to avoid disappointing her father.

***"I had no idea where I would go or what I would do, but I knew I had to get away. The reason - I wanted to live as a woman."***  
*(Femina, October 2021)*

She lived on the streets of Mumbai after leaving home, and was given shoes and a sari while on a beach, and realised this was who she wanted to be.

Sawant would end up founding the NGO Sakhi Char Chowgi Trust, which promotes safe sex and provides counselling for transgender people, and becoming a trans activist, despite not originally seeking transition; just knowing that she wanted to wear women's clothing.

In 2008, she adopted a girl whose biological mother was a sex worker who died of AIDS, and now she cares for eight other young children.

In 2014, she became the first transgender person to file a petition in the Supreme Court of India for the rights of trans people to adopt,

and she was a petitioner in the National Legal Services Authority case in which the Supreme Court recognised hijra (a neither male nor female person) as a third gender.

In 2017, Sawant went viral for appearing in a Vicks commercial with her daughter, Gayatri, telling the story of her adoption and upbringing. Now a young adult, Gayatri is involved in running a shelter for transgender youth.

***"Defining 'freedom' for me is tough, because I know I have paid a heavy price for it, and I am still paying it in many ways. I lost my own people, I tried to find acceptance with strangers, people used and cheated me, I was abused. Then, one day, I realised I couldn't even cry anymore, since I did not have a shoulder to do that on. And, yet, I do not regret it, because I did it for myself."*** *(Femina, October 2021)*

## Image Credit

facebook.com/tggaurisawant (September 2017)

<https://www.facebook.com/tggaurisawant/photos/a.650518138347584/1560561827343206>