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Sonal Minj: From Tea Garden Village to the Hospitality Industry

Sonal Minj grew up in a modest family of three; her father worked long hours as a tea garden labourer, and her mother managed the home. Despite their limited means, Sonal carried a big dream in her heart: to work in the hotel industry, meet new people, and serve guests far beyond her small village.

But dreams often come with barriers. For Sonal, it was money. Professional hospitality courses were expensive, and her family could barely afford her schooling. Eventually, she had to give up her higher education, setting aside her ambitions, at least for a while.



That changed when she met Sudipta Aich, a team member from Pratham Education Foundation, who told her about the organization's Vocational Training Centre for Youth (Community Batch). The program offered free training and even placement support in the hotel industry, exactly what Sonal had been searching for. Encouraged, Sonal visited the centre and enrolled in the Food & Beverage Service Associate course. From day one, she stood out for her commitment and discipline. She soaked up every lesson, practised with diligence, and quickly became one of the most promising trainees in her batch.



After completing her training, Sonal's efforts bore fruit. She secured a placement at Mrugavani Resort and Spa, Hyderabad, as a Guest Service Associate in the Food & Beverage Department, earning ₹10,000 a month. It was more than just a job; it was the realization of a dream that once felt out of reach.

Today, Sonal is living independently in Hyderabad, supporting herself and contributing to her family back home. Her father proudly says his daughter has become self-reliant, and her mother, with tears of joy, calls it their "biggest reward."

During an Ashirwad Championing visit, a celebration of successful trainees, the Pratham team visited Sonal's home. Her mother shared her emotions with heartfelt honesty: "We couldn't give her everything," she said softly, "but we always gave her our blessings and support. Today, she stands on her own feet. That is our biggest reward."

Sonal's story is a powerful reminder of what can happen when opportunity meets determination, inspiring other young women in her village to dream just as boldly.