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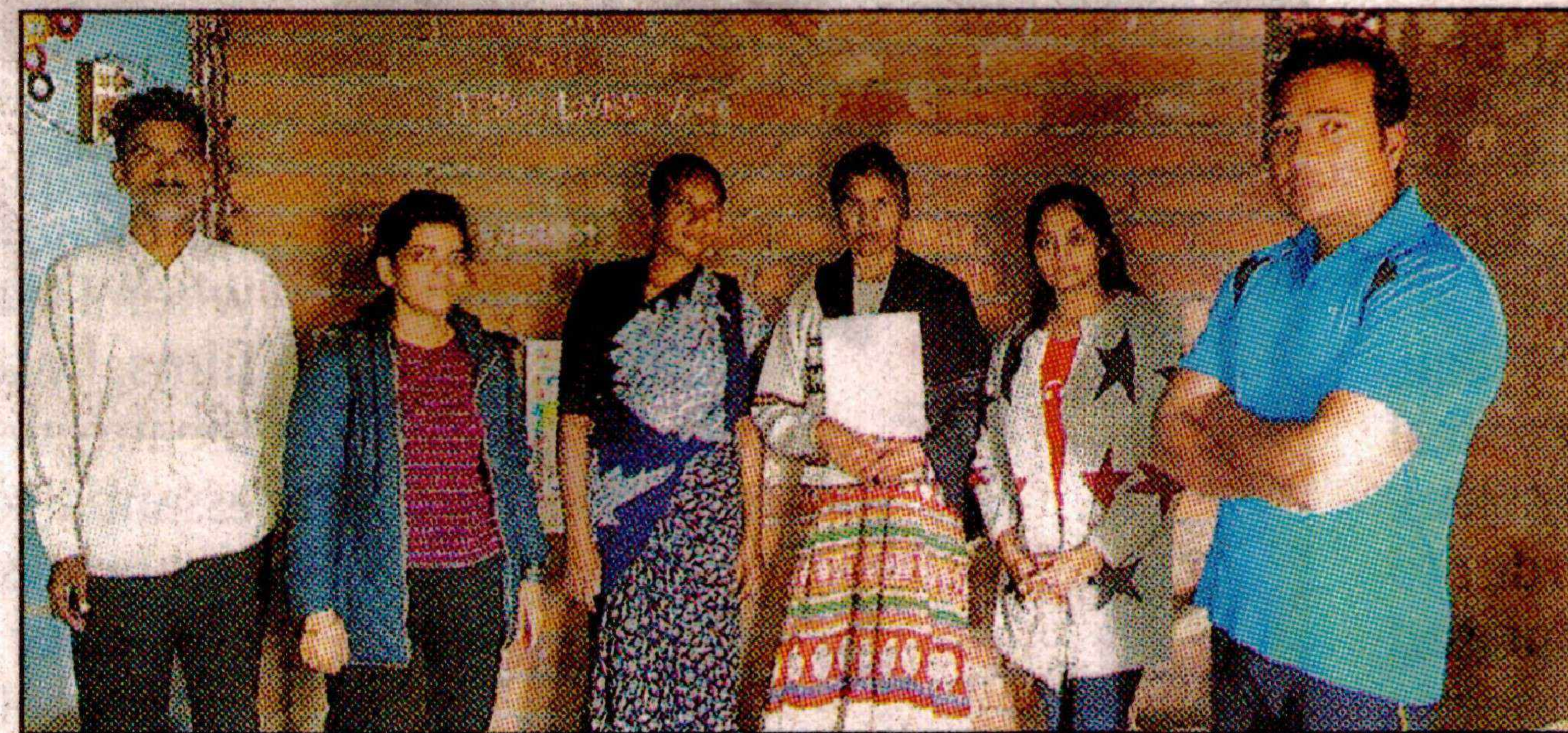# Over 25 years after she went missing, SRF reunites 55-yr-old with her family

AMANDEEP
PUNE, DECEMBER 27

RANI SHAMRAO Wankhede, a resident of Nagpur who had gone missing from home over 25 years ago, was reunited with her family with the help of Karjat-based Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation (SRF), on December 25. The 55-year-old is the mother of three — two daughters and a son.

The joy of Christmas doubled for the Catholic family, which had lost all hope. Both of Rani's daughters got married in the time she had been separated from her family.

"We were very young when our mother left. Everyone told us that she must have died. All of us were surprised and happy when she returned," said Saroj Siddartha

Rani Shamrao Wankhede (fourth from left) with her relatives and SRF volunteers.

Gajbiye, Rani's daughter.

In October 2018, a severely ill Rani was found on a road in Himachal Pradesh by Dr Sadhana Thakur, chairperson of HP Red Cross Society. She was then admitted to Himachal Hospital for Mental Health and Rehabilitation (HHMHR), Shimla, where her treatment was started. It was in May 2019 that members of SRF went to HHMHR for an assessment. Post this, she was transferred to SRF in Karjat, where her treatment continued under Dr Bharat Vatwani, a psychiatrist and founder trustee of SRF, who was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 2018. After Rani started communicating properly, she gave information about her family and her address.

"The reason why all of us at SRF continue our work is because of the immense satisfaction we get out of it. Rehabilitating people, who are wandering on the roads, is something we need to do as a society, so that these people can get their rights and be respected," said Dr Vatwani.

SRF has done extensive work in rehabilitating mentally ill patients who have lost their homes, lives and families. The foundation, to date, has rehabilitated over 8,000 such patients. SRF provides free shelter, food and psychiatric treatment to these people. Alongside that, the organisation also carries out mental health awareness programmes.