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# Here's how a Mumbai-based team rescued a mentally ill pregnant woman

Shraddha Rehabilitation Centre rescued the woman from a railway station in Kerala, ensuring her safety and access to healthcare.



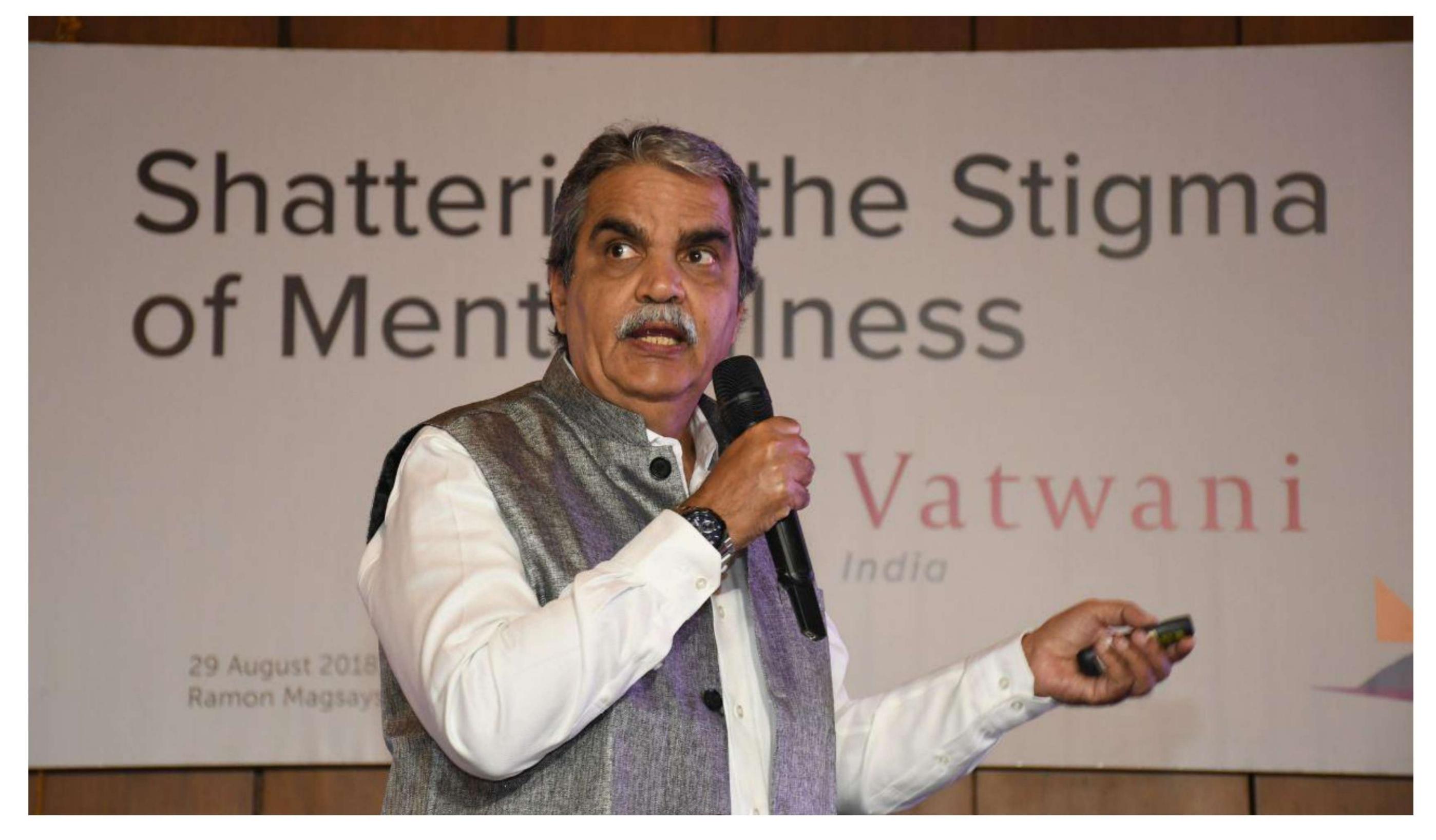
Geeta was rescued from platform no 6 of the Kochuveli Railway Station; Geeta a mother of three hails from Chhattisgarh

A Mumbai-based team from Shraddha Rehabilitation Centre, led by Ramon Magsaysay Award winner Dr Bharat Vatwani, rescued a mentally ill pregnant woman, named Geeta, at Kochuveli railway station in Kerala. They had been on an official Centre visit to meet the State (Kerala) Principal Secretary of Health, and took swift action to get her medically examined before admitting her to a Government-run shelter home before returning to Mumbai on Wednesday.

"We both initially hesitated to help her. We empathised with her situation but didn't know what to do about it. I gathered some courage and asked her, 'Didi, kaha jaana hai?' said Dr Swarali Kondwilkar, associate psychiatrist.

"Her eyes lit up when she heard us speaking in Hindi. She identified herself as Geeta from Rajpur, Choranga, Raigarh district, Chhattisgarh, while we found her wandering on platform no 6 of Kochuveli Railway station. Her speech was incoherent and inconsistent, and she appeared to be pregnant, at least six months along," said Dr Kondwilkar.

our foundation communicated with his local contact, Soumya Rajendran Sudharma, a nurse at a Taluka Hospital in Thiruvananthapuram, discussing the situation. Following Soumya's guidance, Denit sir reached out to the railway protection force at Kochuveli railway station. A constable Kavitha arrived promptly, expressing concern that Geeta might go into labour during the night. Following Soumya's advice, we decided to transport Geeta to Sree Avittam Thirunal Hospital and Government Medical College (SAT), Thiruvananthapuram.



Ramon Magsaysay Award winner Dr Bharat Vatwani, founder of Shraddha Rehabilitation

Soumya, who aids the mentally ill and destitute homeless spoke of her involvement earlier with Asha Bhawan, a shelter home in Thiruvananthapuram, where she cares for 40 North Indian women with psychiatric ailments. Having known Denit sir for years, I knew of his organisation's efforts in rehabilitating and repatriating patients. On March 6, when he contacted me for help, I did everything I could to help him and his team, by making arrangements at SAT Hospital.

#### 108 Ambulance

"The RPF officials from Kochuveli Railway Station arranged for an ambulance and the staff went out of the way to help us through the admission process and further," said Dr Kondwilkar

"While I engaged in conversation with Geeta, Denit Mathew one of the trustees of "The staff at the Government SAT Hospital prioritised our case. They provided comprehensive medical care, including a USG to assess the foetal status, and assisted in organising a private ambulance for Geeta's transfer to the Government Mahila Mandir shelter home. Initially, the shelter home staff hesitated to admit her without a police letter, but a persuasive telephonic call with the Superintendent made a significant difference. Touched and convinced, she accepted the admission," Dr Kondwilkar added.

> "The SAT hospital staff organised an ambulance to transfer Geeta to the nearby government-run Mahila Mandiram shelter home. Despite the initial reluctance of the shelter home staff due to the absence of a police letter, a conversation with Superintendent Jibi Sabu convinced them to admit Geeta," said Dr Kondwilkar.

> Deepa Saijukumar, the caretaker, said, "Our facility serves as a refuge for distressed and destitute women. Currently, we house 36 women, including 10 from outside Kerala—originating from places like Uttar Pradesh and Bhopal. Managing Geeta has posed a challenge; she struggles to sleep at night and persistently requests her release.'

> "Geeta has shared her distressing story of being abandoned by her husband several years ago, leaving her with children and elderly parents. She expresses a desire not to proceed with her pregnancy. Geeta describes being confined in a jungle residence without access to food and water, yet she cannot recall the specific location or how she ended up in Kerala or at the Kochuveli railway station. We plan to take her to SAT hospital soon for a thorough examination," Deepa added.

#### Train back to Mumbai

"From the beginning, I was very sceptical and hopeless that I could do anything for her Geeta, in a foreign land where I don't know anyone. I thought the best I could do was bring her a meal for the night, maybe tell her when is the next train to Chattisgarh, get her a ticket and ask someone to make her sit on that train. But, Denit sir took the lead and I followed, and everything started falling into place with constant obstacles midway, ultimately reaching the goal of keeping her at a safe shelter," said Dr Kondwilkar.

### And the parting words

"In this particular case, I believe that true empathy has been shown not just by the Shraddha Team, but by all involved in the rescue and shelter operation. This has resulted in the sum of the Rescue Gestalt far superseding (to the nth level) its individual parts. This is an example of true empathetic humanity in our society and Kerala sets an example of humanity to the rest of India," Dr Vatwani said.