

10 mentally ill embark on journey of reunion

Six women, four men handed over to Shraddha rehab centre for identifying kin

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[L. RENGANATHAN](#)



UNDER THEIR WING: The mentally ill persons (all seated) under the care of Shanthivanam Trust near Tiruchi.

For the batch of six women and four men the long and arduous journey that could possibly take them back home after a turbulent period of wandering has just commenced with a small step from Trust Shanthivanam near Seethapatti in the district but proximate to Tiruchi.

After a tenure of rehabilitation coupled with solace and understanding, the inmates of Shanthivanam were on Sunday handed over to caretakers from Shraddha Rehabilitation Centre, Karjat, Maharashtra, en route to identifying their kith and kin at their native villages in northern India and reunite with them.

With untold hopes, eyes filled with tears and exuding gloomy surprise the batch of mentally ill wanderers, picked up and rehabilitated by the professionals at Shanthivanam, boarded the train.

While Kailash, Nepali and Girija are from Maharashtra, Kamlesh and Santoshi are from Madhya Pradesh. Nirola hails from Kamrup district of Assam, Sarojini is from Ranchi, Bihar.

Manjula Patil belongs to Bijapur district in Karnataka while Venkatarao has his family in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, and Najma Begum longs to see her family members residing in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh. All of them have one thing in common - they all are wandering mentally ill destitute, having either schizophrenia or other psychiatric disorders.

“There are 10 others from the northern States under our care at Shanthivanam but they have to wait for their turn as we have just initiated the experiment after signing a memorandum of understanding with Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation for Mentally Ill, Borivalli, Mumbai,” says K. Ramakrishnan, executive secretary, Trust Shanthivanam. Two staff from Shraddha came to take the batch of 10 persons to Mumbai and the group is being escorted by two staff belonging to Shanthivanam.

Mr. Ramakrishnan notes that Shraddha will refer standard Tamil speaking mentally ill wanderers rescued in Mumbai and other areas where the voluntary organisation works to Shanthivanam for early treatment and rehabilitation or a possible reunion with their relatives here.

The foundation has been picking up roadside mentally ill destitute, providing them treatment and reuniting them with their relatives for close to a quarter of a century now.

There are 85 inmates under rehabilitation while over 2,000 have been reunited with their families due to the efforts of the Shraddha Foundation and its founder trustee Bharat Vatwani.