



# The Hitavada

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## HAPPY REUNION

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“RITU...”

An emotion-filled voice hit his ears. The middle-aged man turned towards the voice. He saw a woman with her eyes welling up, and the young man Rohit (name changed) by her side. For a few seconds, he just stared at them blankly. The young man stepped forward and hugged him tightly.

Pointing at the lady, Rohit asked, “Baba, you know who she is?” The middle-aged man, Ritu (name changed), replied calmly, “(My) wife!”

The lady, Ritu's wife Meena (name changed), stepped ahead and touched Ritu's feet.

## ‘Reality-challenged’ man meets family after 8 years

Shraddha Rehab brings back schizophrenia patient - once a cheerful shopkeeper -- who suddenly lost his cool one day and left home

Then, this family of three sat down for a long and leisurely conversation. After all, Meena and Rohit were meeting Ritu after eight long years!

Meena and Rohit had spent sleepless nights in the eight years since Ritu left his home from a village in Giridih district of Jharkhand. Each time they thought of Ritu, which was several times in a day, they just hoped that Ritu was alright wherever he was, and prayed for him. When they found Ritu at Ashok Van near Nagpur on Sunday, they were choked with emotions -- joy, curiosity, anxiety, excitement. Ritesh (Ritu) was still silent, while Meena and Rohit could not stop chat-



Ritesh Kumar with his son and wife on a video call with a relative after the reuniting with his family after eight years.

ting. Rohit even made a video call to his daughter and introduced her to her grandfather. **Contd on page 2**



Dr Bharat Vatwani with his team and Nagpur's psychiatrists at Ashok Van in Nagpur. Dr Vatwani has started this sub-centre of Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation at Ashok Van with the help of Dr Prakash Amte, where city psychiatrists willingly render their services. (Pics by Vikas Vaidya)

## ‘Reality-challenged’ man meets family after 8 years

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It was indeed a happy reunion.

However, this reunion did not come easy.

Before leaving his home in a fit of rage, Ritesh was a very happy person running a small grocery shop. “He was a cheerful and enthusiastic man,” recalled his neighbour and friend Rajkumar (name changed), who works at Nagpur. Rajkumar also met Ritesh after eight years, and could not believe the change that had taken place in his friend.

Everything was smooth in the life of Ritesh and his family. But, something happened eight years ago, and Ritesh's normal behaviour changed. He acted suspicious, started shouting, got irritated every now and then. And, one fine morning, he just left home in anger. His family felt that he would come back, but he didn't.

Finally, they lodged a complaint with the local police and kept waiting. He was the only bread-earner in the family. It was difficult for the family to make both ends meet when he was lost in the vast world outside the village. Gradually, Rohit grew up and got a job at Delhi. All this while, the hopeful mother-son continued the search for their family head.

Meanwhile, the story of Ritesh was getting a bizarre twist. He must have wandered many places, before he landed up at Ooty. He was admitted to a hospital where the doctors found that he

### Reality challenged: What does it mean?

REALITY challenged people are those who face challenge in interpreting reality unlike common people do. They have their private world in which they interpret the things occurring around them. We can't call them mentally challenged. Suppose a patient is suffering from schizophrenia, he lives in his own world. He can't interpret things happening around him like any common or mentally sound person does.

was suffering from a mental ailment. They contacted Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation at Karjat in Maharashtra, run by Ramon Magsaysay awardee Dr Bharat Vatwani. The Foundation's team took Ritesh to Karjat, where doctors diagnosed him with Schizophrenia and started treating him accordingly.

A team of social workers started searching for the native place of Ritesh in a bid to trace his family.

It was difficult for everyone around to understand the language he spoke. Also, he was not opening up in conversations. Samar Basak, a social worker with Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation, spoke to Ritesh who did not utter a word. Finally, Samar took him out in the open air. This idea clicked as when Samar asked him about his hometown, Ritesh said, “Asansol (West Bengal), and Deoghar (Jharkhand)”.

“Since I am from West Bengal, I could understand that the language he was speaking in had no connection with Bengal. So, I thought he might be from Jharkhand. I had a police officer friend in Jharkhand with whose help I found

out that a missing complaint was lodged about eight years ago. Fortunately, Rohit helped us a lot. We informed him that we had found his father and that he was with us,” Basak told ‘The Hitavada’.

Nagpur came into picture as the place of reunion of Ritesh with his family as Dr Bharat Vatwani, with the help of ‘Padma Shri’ and Ramon Magsaysay awardee Dr Prakash Amte, has started Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation's sub-centre at Ashok Van. Dr Amte has made available a huge place in Ashok Van. Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation brought 38 patients with mental ailments from Karjat to Ashok Van. Ritesh was one of them. Luckily, on the day of the inauguration of the sub-centre in Ashok Van, Ritesh was reunited with his wife and son.

The family members of Ritesh Kumar stayed with him for some time. Though he was composed, during video call to his relatives back at his native place, Ritesh suddenly shouted twice, for no specific reason or at no one in particular. Obviously, the family members were worried.

Dr Swarali Kondwilkar, a treating doctor with Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation, offered an explanation. “It will take some more time for Ritesh to show more improvement. Normally, such patients show improvement within a month. The trend of periodic unexplained shouting may continue for some more time. The family will have to handle him in a proper way and understand him better. Rohit has agreed to stay at the village with his father, for one full month. Gradually, things will improve,” she told ‘The Hitavada’.

“Villagers handle such patients in a better way than the people in cities do. They show patience and passion both. Also, they have more attachment to people of their own village,” added Dr Denit Mathew, who works with Shraddha Foundation that has rehabilitated 10,000 such patients.

Meena and Rohit said that they could not explain their joy when they got a call from Shraddha Foundation. “In all these years, we were clueless about Ritesh. But, I was optimistic that I would meet him some day. We will take every care of him,” said Meena.

Of course, welcoming back a ‘reality-challenged’ Ritesh in the family may not be an easy task. But, no one understands a man better than his family. The happy reunion provided a hope to everyone at Ashok Van sub-centre.

The mission to find the missing dear ones continues...