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Youth Vision Attitude

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OASIS FOR THE DESTITUTE

An NGO rescues people who need mental care from the street, treats them free of cost and reunites them with their families

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A 17-year-old girl from Goa, found in a mentally disturbed state by railway police at Churchgate station last month, is now safe at home in a healthy state. All thanks to the efforts of Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation, an NGO at Karjat, which treats the mentally disturbed people found on the city's streets and railway stations.

The girl was well looked after and a team of psychiatrists ensured that her mental state returned to normalcy so that she could tell them where she lived and could be reunited with her family. But, this is not a one-off case.

Ever since the foundation was set up in 1991, it treated 1,050 people found in a destitute state in the city. They treated and returned these people to their homes, even as they were from other parts of

the country including Delhi, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and other states. The treatment is completely offered to these people free of cost.

Dr Bharat Vatwani, MD (Psychiatry), said, "We realised that there were several poor people in the city who roam the streets and need psychiatric help, but could not afford nor did they have anywhere to go. Many times they have faced traumatic experiences and just need a little care to get back to normal."

He also added that many of the patients treated were either abandoned by their families or had left home on their own.

While the Mumbai police and railway authorities often send mentally disturbed people to the rehab centre, Dr Vatwani and his wife Dr Smitha, spot them and convince them to come for treatment.

Last year, Dr Vatwani spotted a 22-year-old boy at a garbage dump in Borivli. "His clothes were tat-



NOBLE CAUSE: Dr Bharat Vatwani examining patients at Shraddha Rehabilitation, an NGO in Karjat

tered and he was picking up garbage. His hair was dishevelled and he was suffering from schizophrenia," he said. The boy's treatment took one-and-a-half month.

"Once he got a little better we found that the boy was from Kashmir and was the son of an army officer. As his mental state got better, he was able to give us the contact details of his family and at the end of the said duration, the boy's father came to take him back home," the doctor added. The boy has a regular job in Kashmir.

The doctors also run a private clinic at Borivli (W) and charge the regular fees from their patients. A

part of this money goes into running the foundation and they have also received financial help from leading corporate houses.

Currently, there are eight women who have been treated, but their families refuse to accept them back. They have been given shelter at the foundation's ashram and have been provided work at the ashram.

"If you see anyone who needs mental care and attention, please call us at 9923076947," Dr Vatwani informed. The details of the foundation can be found on www.shraddharehabilitationfoundation.org