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"ALONE, Isolated and Lonely", a collection of poems by Dr. Bharat Vatwani of Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation was released by Gulzar at Crossword, recently. Tom Alter read a few poems from the book on this occasion. "This collection of poems has been inspired and dedicated to the common man on the street who is isolated and lonely, shunned and deprived of his basic human rights," says Dr. Bharat Vatwani.

Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation for the mentally afflicted, at Dahisar, has been working feverishly since its inception in February '97. For the psychiatrist-couple Dr. Bharat Vatwani and Dr. Smitha Vatwani, it has been a mission to look out for

had started this institution, a news item about it appeared in Pune. At that time, I received tremendous response and support from people sending me donations for the institution, congratulatory notes and good wishes, asking me to continue with this work. But recently, when an item appeared about Shraddha in one of the leading newspapers, there were no congratulatory notes or money but lots of telephone calls from people, asking me to keep their mentally ill relatives at Shraddha forever. No, they were not bothered about what happened to the patients once they came to me but just wanted to get rid of them. Such was the mindset of people who changed over the years and if this doesn't shake Mumbai up, I don't know what will."

Caring for the destitute

the mentally destitute people roaming on the streets, bring them to this institute, treat them and finally send them back to their families after tracing their addresses — all without a charge.

The mentally ill suffer from a major mental illness called schizophrenia wherein the patient breaks away from reality. "There are ample examples of victims of schizophrenia who are completely cured. On an average, it takes about two months for patients to recuperate but care is essential," explains Dr. Bharat.

"The genesis of writing these poems was pain. I experienced it for the first time at the age of twelve when my father expired. In a few years time, my profession made me more sensitive to the plight of the mentally ill around us. There is so much pain involved with each patient that I treat because of his case history and his suffering. It pains me to see the hundreds of mentally destitute on the streets who I cannot treat because of various limitations of money, space and time. To say that after treating so many of them for all these years I myself haven't undergone psychiatric treatment would be a lie," admits Dr. Bharat.

As Dr. Bharat reminisces, "When I

Dr. Bharat Vatwani has been writing poetry for a long time now, but it was recently that he decided to compile them into a book. "Poetry was what I turned to when I felt lonely and the need to pour out my feelings. But I must add that it has been the constant support of my wife, friends and patients that has helped me come out of difficult situations," he states. The proceeds from the sale of this book will be utilized as a direct donation towards Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation for the maintenance and psychiatric upkeep of the mentally ill destitutes.

And this poem sums up his feelings :

*If life could be founded on hope,
and wisdom on mere understanding,*

Then the horizons would be mine,

the rainbows notwithstanding.

But I had nothing,

Just this pen, paper and a few words,

and my feelings for you, from the beginning of time.

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