Perin & Jehangir Davar Memorial Centres at Shraddha Rehabilitation Centre

An Oasis at Karjat for the Mentally Ill Road-side Destitutes

Parsi are renowned for their charitable disposition. What’s more, their philanthropy is seldom restricted to their own community. Take, for example, the Tata’s, Godrej’s, Jaijhehnatty, Patels or Wadias, the secularity of their giving transcends all barriers of caste, creed or religion. This microscopical community has also proved time and again that one need not necessarily be rich in order to be philanthropic. After all, philanthropy is not just about ‘giving money’, it is about ‘love for humanity’.

Take, for example, the recent act of philanthropy on the part of a simple and relatively unknown Parsi lady, Mrs. Sheru Hosil Mistri (nee Davar). She did not inherit a fortune nor is she privy to vast disposable wealth. And yet, from her own savings, accumulated by thrift, often bordering personal sacrifice, she has helped establish two special units — one in memory of her mother (Perin) and the other in memory of her father (Jehangir) at Shraddha Rehabilitation Centre.

Shraddha is a non-governmental organization (NGO) addressing the issue of the mentally ill roadside destitutes. In India, one can find thousands of mentally ill roadside destitutes. However, there are very few organizations which are dedicated to treating and rehabilitating them. One such organization is ‘Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation’ established by the dynamic and dedicated Dr. Bharat Vatvani.

Inaugurations and opening ceremonies are often dull and ritualistic events which leave people cold and unmoved. However, the inauguration of the Perin Jehangir Davar and the Jehangir Ardeshir Davar Memorial Centres at Vengao village in Karjat, on Sunday, 15th April 2007 was something special and inspiring. This was the dream of late Mrs. Perin Davar who with her loving and devoted daughter Mrs. Sheru Hosil Mistri fulfilled.

These two centres, The Perin Jehangir Davar Memorial Centre for male patients and The Jehangir Ardeshir Davar Memorial Centre for female destitutes, are the fulfillment of the dream of Sheru’s late parents to help the poorest of the poor. This dream, full of passion and the struggle to make it a reality, is best captured in Sheru Mistri’s own words: “My mother had a dream to become a doctor and serve humanity. She had a dream to go into the villages and give free service to the poorest of the poor. But her dream remained unfulfilled. In her times, girls were discouraged from pursuing higher studies out of fear that it would ruin their prospects of marriage. My mother often cried before me, Sheru, will I die unfulfilled? My heart’s greatest desire unfulfilled. Though I knew not how I would do it, I promised her that I will do it for you. You not have lived in vain. It took 19 years of intensive search before stumbling upon Shraddha Foundation. I like to think, now at last, my mother will be happy wherever she is. The Centre will stand as a living testimony that her life’s mission has been fulfilled if not in her own lifetime then at least in her daughter’s.”

Shraddha Rehabilitation Centre has been operational in Karjat since March 2006. It currently houses and treats 50 mentally ill roadside destitutes. With the inauguration of the two new Centres, it hopes to house 110 patients.

The Founder of Shraddha, Dr. Bharat Vatvani, is of the view that mental illness is like any other human illness which can either be cured or controlled through a judicious combination of medicines, love, care and understanding.

There are over 20 social workers who help Dr. Bharat and his wife Dr. Smitha Vatvani at the Karjat centre. Those patients who are not accepted by their families or whose families are not found become permanent inmates and help the others to heal.

According to psychiatric social workers, patients are often members of the poorer and marginalized sections of society. The requirement for each unit is estimated to be around Rs. 60,000/- per month. Donating to this worthy cause would, in essence, be an act of worship. In the words of that great Lebanese philosopher and poet, Khalil Gibran, “Through the hands of such as these (i.e. those who give) God speaks, and from behind their eyes He smiles upon the world.”

Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation is registered as a Public Charitable Trust and donations are deductible (50%) under section 80G and 100% under section 35AC of the Income Tax Act 1961.

1001 Tales of Hope

Sanjaya Dhakane (Before/After)

For further information readers may please contact the Foundation at:
Shraddha Manasarwar, Behind Shantilal Ashram, Opposite Esjay Club, Off New Link Road, Borivali (W), Mumbai 400 122
Tel: (022) 28955020 / 68552628
Email: svatvani@hotmail.com
Website: www.shraddharehabilitationfoundation.org

The task taken in hand is huge. But the first step in the process of journey of a thousand miles has already been taken. The requirement now is for many others to join Sheru and Hosil Mistri as also Dr. Bharat and Smitha Vatvani in their journey. The cost per month for each unit is estimated to be around Rs. 60,000/- per month. Donating to this worthy cause would, in essence, be an act of worship.