What a Magnsaw Awardee Doctor Reunited 7000 Mentally-Ill Patients With Their Families

By Dr. Bhairav Verawat and his wife, Dr. Shrinath, run the Indian Rehabilitation Foundation in Mumbai and Karachi, which aids to rescue and rehabilitates mentally ill patients off the roads, and reunite them with their families.

How do you become a successful doctor?

Dr. Bhairav Verawat

In 1991, Mahadev was brought to the Mahadev Rehabilitation Foundation by an elderly gentleman. He’d been sitting on the road with no clothes, with the puppy staring at his face. His mental illness had reduced him to the point that he was unwilling to lift his head from feeding his mangoes. He was taken to the Foundation, including the feeding garden, and brought to the shelter. The first-ever female doctoring a mother and child that the Foundation came across.

The Foundation is run by self-taught doctor Dr. Bhairav Verawat (52) who has seen many such gut-wrenching stories as it fails to rescue distraught, mutually-agreed parents of the road and reunite them with their families. This, by 1999, he’s managed to a total of 2,651 mentally ill patients, and reunited around 1200 with their families.

Dr. Verawat with a patient at Shrinath

The disease in society is our enemy.

"Find me a father of age 10, and I’ll bring you a whole community," Bhairav Verawat says. The Better India. "I have old people who, like selling posters of movie stars like Shah Rukh Khan or Dino Morea to our classrooms, running a coffee-sipping club, and selling hope doormats," he adds.

He further adds, "While my peer group seemed to be having the time of their lives, my brothers and I had to focus on earning a livelihood while balancing our academic life." He adds, "We had to wake up early, get the bus from our village to the town, walk miles, and then sit in the sun to read our books."

All through school and college, Dr. Verawat studied and studied harder than ever before. Unable to afford tuition, he says he studied for 14 hours a day to clear his degree examinations in the next 10 years, in Udaipur, Texas, during his final year at the University of Texas. Bhairav Verawat, I don’t know what qualities I had, like me, we were up there on the buses and the old in love. He recalls. The bus started in 1997, and Dr. Verawat says their common concern for the underprivileged in what India lacks their attention.

Shortly after marriage, Dr. Verawat and Dr. Shrinath were dining in a restaurant, when they noticed a skinny and shamed young boy sitting on the road. "As parents, we felt something was wrong with him. He was dirty, and there was something wrong with him. We later found out he was a mentally ill boy," says Dr. Shrinath. "We went home that night, and the next day we took him to the hospital and the doctors said he should be in the Shrinath."

Mental illness doesn’t have social barriers

This nursing home had been closed for the first time, and then doctors who visited the patients were so impressed with the boy, he was brought to the newly set up private nursing home along with other patients.

The story of Shrinath is a modern-day example of how mental illness affects society, and how it can be treated. Dr. Verawat, who has been at the forefront of mental health care in India, talks about his experience with the patients he has been trying to treat.

Dr. Verawat says that when he comes to the rehabilitation and rescue of female patients, the Foundation faces a particular challenge. They first realized this in the case of Mahadev. "We rescued him, and he came back to the Foundation for a while. We even managed to get him a job, but then Mahadev was arrested again."

In the country’s urban areas, the number of patients with mental illness is alarmingly high, and the problem is compounded by the lack of proper care and support systems.

In 1993, Dr. Shrinath Verawat received the Ramon Magsaysay Award for his dedicated efforts to provide a new lease of life for the mentally ill or disabled. But the doctor’s work is far from over. "I could have done more if I should have done more," he says, and goes to the Foundation (www.drmagsaysayaward.com) for help. We encourage you to help in this noble cause. We need your help.

"I have done more," says Dr. Bhairav Verawat about winning the award.

The doctor’s interventions and the results of his work have led to new initiatives and the opening of new facilities for the mentally ill. His work has not only helped the patients but also brought hope to their families and communities.

Dr. Verawat’s dreams of a better India

As a child, Dr. Verawat’s dream was to help the mentally ill in India and create a better society. His goal was to create a society where people with mental illness were treated with respect and dignity.

Dr. Verawat believes that everyone has the right to be happy and healthy. He says, "I want to create a society where everyone can live their life to the fullest."

"I want to live in a world where everyone can live their life to the fullest," he says.

In a world where many are suffering from mental illness, Dr. Verawat’s work is a beacon of hope. He is an inspiration to all those who believe in the power of love and compassion.

"I hope to continue my work towards the betterment of the mentally ill and the creation of a better society," he says.