By RAMONA RANIERI

HELLO MAMA, hello papa. I'm very much like this and happy ... No, my name is Robinson. Barbour Runoword Awa is my artificial name. My wife and family live in Scotland Yard. Robinson was picked up by Smith and Bhaba Varwani, the husband-wife team of psychiatrists from Shatabda Rehabilitation Foundation, outside Jelangur Art Gallery last week.

It is reported that Robinson has been with them. His parents have not been able to confirm the reports. Robinson remains silent and does not answer phone calls. His phone is turned off. He was last seen near the railway station in Jelangur.

In the meantime, the Varwani's are determined to look at one another fruitfully. At least as their private practice — and means of supporting themselves — grows, the number increased. Today, they have about eight destinations to 12 private patients in their nursing home at a time.

But while the private patients may not be a welcome change, they come at earlier stages in their diseases — destinations must stay at least two months. So, to look after them, they separator the two types of patients. Shatabda has embarked on a new, smaller system.

“We have located about 400 in Jelangur, and the next 400 will be a blessing. We would like to open a nursing home for children,” says Bharti. This would be cheaper in the long run as they would get kitchen facilities which they don’t have here, and would also be able to get up rehabilitation workshops.

Earlier, they supplied the patients with fruits and vegetables from their own garden. Now, the patients are transported from the art world. “We have got all support from the artists, and the fruits are filled with gratitude. Once the artists are back, they will gather from the heart. One source which slowed in heart was the corporate world. I’ve been touching on doors for months,” says Bharti. “But I don’t know if we are getting the PA soon.”

And yet a simple letter to Satji Kumaran in Paris resulted in an acquisition of three paintings, instead of just the required one. Paris, also based in Paris, has sent in a week.

There are big names in Indian art, and the Varwani’s had no prior acquaintance with them. But they feel for the cause. For the corporate sector’s silence, though, the psychiatrist in Bharti comes out. “I’m sure that they have not cared. People in the business add few factors to that. Says one industrialist ruefully, “I get about 25 to 30 replies apiece at my desk everyday. I can’t reply to all of them, so pick those who have addressed me personally.”

The cases which most out are charities which send a standardized unsigned letter all over.

Delilah De Ranvezi Shipping says that often, one person in a company is involved with a particular charity. As a result, all efforts are directed towards it, making it difficult for a new concern to break through.

But there is some help for Shatabda. The chairman of East West Airlines has given his blessings, so has Shatabda’s T P Kesharwani, owner of the Abaduraya stores.

Car’s Harish Sekhawat says, “Because in this art, and a good cause, I’ve written to Shatabda to say that I’d like to be involved.”

Of course, Shatabda did have one foot in the art world’s door through one of their from roadside patients. Hernut Tahane was a lecturer and gold medallist from the J J School of Arts. He was brought off the road after a mental breakdown.

His mission, who watched him wander the streets only to collapse in front of his water meter, took him to Shatabda. Today, Tahane is well and back on the art school’s faculty. He now helps Shatabda with their scheme, visiting artists, collecting their works, writing to them.

Like Tahane, many mentally ill people who wander the city’s streets are intelligent and artistic. Often, they come from good homes. It is their disease which usually prompts them to leave. Yet, it is relatives who fail to realise the dangers of mental illness early enough. In our culture, mental illness is not taken seriously,” says Latha.

“And factors like Hindu films, where madness is seen as a laughing matter, hardly help.”

adds his husband, “People do not have the time for us. For some lunar eclipse to care, and when that doesn’t work, bring him in to some museum the morning.” It is also common in India for the mentally ill to be married off, and then expected to have children, in some families belief that these are cures.

In as much as the mentally ill people that Shatabda pick are schizophreneic, Smriti added, by voices that speak to them, they become recruiting unable to jump the gap between reality and make-believe.

Robinson, who had to be sent to a mental hospital building ‘be bahu khudhi’ have, we picked her up,” says Bharti. Then there’s a lady from the Ladies Club of Bhopal who just walked in with a donation. Or another local lady who sent a cheque for Rs 1500. “A lot of people like to donate in kind, but we have to refuse them,” says Bharti.

Smriti explains, “You see, if you give sugar, or rice, you might feel that