FAR FROM THE MADDING STREETS

A psychiatrist couple in Bombay restores the dignity and sanity of destitute schizophrenics

A former patient of Dr Bharat Vatwani, the psychiatrist, says he helped her son, who was mentally ill. Her son has now recovered and is leading a normal life. The psychiatrist, who is married to a professor at a medical college, says he has helped many such patients.

He believes that Vatwani became a schizophrenic because of the ignorance of his family and lack of proper medical treatment. After getting Vijay's postal address, Dr Bharat contacted his father, an ex-illness parish superintendent, and asked him to take his son home. Initially, he was reluctant because he believed Vijay would continue giving problems. But we reassured him that his son was all right. When he came, he was very happy to see the improvement in Vijay, says Dr Sminda Vatwani, Dr Bharat's wife. A gold medalist in psychiatry, Dr Sminda was a lecturer in Cooper Hospital before she married Dr Bharat.

Psychiatry still has a stigma attached to it. Very few private hospitals and nursing homes admit such patients. Nurses are afraid of the patients. The poor and smiles say it all. Dr Bharat with a patient (top), a recovered Vijay with his father (below)

The Vatwani usually approach a potential patient with a warm smile. This is accompanied by a friendly gesture like putting an arm around the person's shoulders and offering him or her a cup of tea. If the offer is accepted, he or she is brought to Shirda.

The Hog and smile say it all. Dr Bharat with a patient (top), a recovered Vijay with his father (below)

The Vatwani usually approach a potential patient with a warm smile which is accompanied by a friendly gesture like putting an arm around the person's shoulders and offering him or her a cup of tea. If the offer is accepted, he or she is brought to Shirda.