

Bangladeshi woman awaits return to country years after being trafficked to India

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[Bangladesh](#)



In December 2022, a Government Railway Police team in India discovered a young woman on a long-distance train at Borivali.

She appeared bedraggled and undernourished, wearing an oversized green kurta, and exhibited signs of mental illness. The woman, identified as a Bangladeshi national, had allegedly been illegally trafficked into India three years earlier, reports The Indian Express.

The team contacted Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation, a centre for mentally ill destitute individuals in Karjat near Mumbai, which diagnosed her with postpartum psychosis — a rare but severe mental condition affecting new mothers.

Today, the 22-year-old woman has almost fully recovered and is currently working as a support worker at the Karjat rehabilitation centre.

She is eager to leave her past behind and return home to her five-year-old daughter. "I miss my daughter very much and want to go back to her soon. I promise to never leave her again," she told The Indian Express.

The rehabilitation centre has reached out to the Bangladesh High Commission to facilitate her repatriation and is now waiting for the authorities to process her request. An official at the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Mumbai confirmed that the relevant documents had been forwarded to Bangladesh. "We are waiting for their repatriation order," the official said.

According to her doctor at the Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation, the young woman had gone through a divorce in Bangladesh and was being treated for postpartum psychosis but eventually stopped taking her medication and wandered off. "Sensing a false threat to her life, she must have run away from her home," the doctor explained.

The woman has only vague recollections of her time in India. From what doctors and support staff at the centre could gather from her inconsistent narrations — which they attributed to post-traumatic stress disorder — she traveled from West Bengal to Delhi and eventually reached Maharashtra during her three years in India.

However, she distinctly remembers the man who promised to help her cross the border and get the medical assistance she needed. "When we were crossing the border, all of us hid under a fence. We would cross over one by one as soon as an armed guard went to the other side," she recalled.

She was allegedly first taken to West Bengal, where she was confined in a room with other women and brutally assaulted. "The man would brutally assault me with his shoes," she said in fluent Hindi, breaking down at the memory. She claimed she was forced into prostitution, first in Kolkata and then in Delhi, but eventually escaped to a relative's house in Pune, where she also experienced sexual assault.

For several months after her arrival at the Karjat rehabilitation centre, she experienced nightmares and anxiety attacks, waking up in a cold sweat at night, her caregivers reported. She also had trust issues. "These are classic symptoms of the trauma inflicted on her. We do not have any substantial evidence to confirm her claims, but we chose not to dig further into her past as we feared it could lead to a relapse and affect her mental health," the doctor said.

Her memories of crossing into India are vivid, but her recollections of life in Bangladesh are hazy. She told her caregivers that her house was near two landmarks — Ichamati College and Ichamati River, both in Bangladesh's Jessore district, which borders India and is a hotspot for human trafficking. The foundation contacted an NGO, Rights Jessore, which helped locate her family.

Her father, a cycle rickshaw driver, expressed joy at the news that his daughter had been found. "Around a year ago, a policeman came to our house and inquired whether my daughter stayed here. I then submitted all the documents to the home ministry in Bangladesh. I hope they speed up the process so I can see my daughter soon," he said.

The 22-year-old is eagerly awaiting her return to Bangladesh. When asked what she would miss most about India, she became emotional. "I will miss the hills and the lake I used to visit here," she said.