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Man missing for 20 years returns home to his family

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Kolhapur: A 60-year-old from Sangli's Dongarsoni village, who went missing nearly 20 years ago, reunited with his family earlier this month.

Tukaram Shinde was undergoing treatment at a Miraj-based hospital for a mental health issue 20 years ago when he left without telling anyone. A complaint was lodged with the police then, but weeks of searching yielded no results.

However, Shinde's wife, Latika, remained hopeful. On Feb 2, her prayers were answered when Shinde returned home. The Karjat-based Shradha Rehabilitation Foundation, founded by Magsaysay award winner Bharat Vatwani, facilitated the reunion. A social worker associated with the NGO had spotted Shinde at an ashram in Nepal and brought him to Mumbai. Shinde received treatment for a month and then recalled the name of his village.

Ajay Ransure, a social worker at the NGO, said, "Our NGO has rehabilitated more than 10,000 destitute people. During our visit to the Manav Seva ashram in Nepal, we found Tukaram Shinde and brought him back to Mumbai for treatment. After a month-long treatment, he then started remembering things and told us about his family and village.



Tukaram Shinde (in black), who was missing for 20 years, chats with his childhood friends at Dongarsoni village of Sangli district

Then we decided to reunite him with his family."

Ransure said the foundation has provided medicines that will last two months. Thereafter, the required medicines will be delivered to Shinde by post. Shinde had been in Nepalese ashram since April 2019, according to the records accessed by Ransure.

Shinde and his wife have one son who lives in another village. Latika has spent the

past 20 years on her own. "I was confident that my husband would return. I don't know why he left us, but we are happy that he is back," said Latika, speaking over the phone.

Shinde's friends and other villagers are also celebrating his return. The gram panchayat felicitated Ransure and his colleague, Manisha Bhardia, and gave them a certificate of appreciation.