

What Sanatan Means to Me? A Profound Journey into Eternal Wisdom (Part-1)

By Uday Kumar Varma

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The ongoing discourse surrounding Sanatan, marred by contentious and caustic statements, is profoundly disconcerting, yet it only reveals the toxicity of current debate. For many adherents of the Hindu religion, their understanding of it remains vague and fleeting. For most, simply remembering God suffices to fulfil their religious obligations. Anything beyond this seems like an unnecessary extra mile, seldom taken.

This controversy has prompted me, a practicing Hindu, and perhaps many others like me, to contemplate what Sanatan may truly mean to us. Previously, I had never delved into the origin or essence of Sanatan, but the recent discourse has kindled a desire to comprehend it more deeply.

During my school years, I was captivated by a poem, not initially for its content but for its title: 'The Blind Man and The Elephant' by English poet John Godfrey Saxe. The opening lines of the poem, which drew me in, read:

"It was six men of Indostan, to learning much inclined,
who went to see the elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
that each by observation, might satisfy his mind."

In many ways, the ongoing discourse on Sanatan mirrors the characters in Saxe's poem. Within these discussions, we encounter wisdom and ignorance, passion, and composure, but often the vastness and profundity of the subject itself get overshadowed. From the sublime to the seemingly absurd, these discussions expose the limitations of comprehending a tradition as diverse as Hinduism, which is more like an ever-flowing river than a static body of beliefs. As we navigate these tumultuous waters of dialogue, we discover a profound river of spiritual inquiry beneath the surface, where profound insights and banalities coexist.

The origins of the term 'Sanatan' are shrouded in the mists of history, with various interpretations linking it to the resurgence of Hindu philosophy, thanks to figures like Adi Shankaracharya, or even the reformist efforts of Dayanand Saraswati. For many, however, Sanatan remains synonymous with Hinduism, despite its internal divisions and sub-divisions.

Yet, understanding Hinduism is an immense challenge, not only due to its ancient origins but also its ever-evolving nature. It has embraced a multitude of philosophies, making it impossible to encompass all its facets. Hinduism is a religion where the whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts, and even a minor facet holds profound wisdom compared to many more recent belief systems.

The Timeless Odyssey of Sanatan Dharma - Shrutis, Smritis, Purans, and Itihas:

This ancient, ever-evolving way of life reveals itself through the religious texts, offering perspectives so vast that they often seem to describe entirely different phenomena.

These are broadly categorised into two parts: Shrutis and Smritis. Shrutis are the most ancient and include the Vedas (Samhita), Brahman, Aranyak, and Brahmasutra, with the Upanishads embedded in the Aranyak. Throughout history, Shrutis were considered authentic and were frequently cited in religious discourses.

Smritis, on the other hand, are more recent and encompass Puranas, Smritis, and Itihas (such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata). Many of these texts were written even after the advent of Muslims, and Smritis, including Manusmriti, were never considered authentic. They began to be quoted more in recent times due to a perfunctory understanding and in absence of their evolutionary context.

For a comprehensive understanding of Sanatan, one has to delve into the Vedas, Upanishads, and other texts in chronological order. Only then can one grasp the evolution of Sanatan Dharma. It stands apart from other religions, as it is not based on a single prophet or visionary. Hundreds of sages have contributed to its evolution, and the Bhagavad Gita serves as the distilled essence of Vedanta and Upanishads, encapsulating its profound wisdom and philosophy. As Sri Aurobindo has said, 'That which we call the Hindu religion is really the Eternal religion because it embraces all others.'

Sanatan Dharma is like an eternal river, tranquil and endless, transcending the constraints of time and space. It flows through the cycles of birth, death, and rebirth, accumulating countless tributaries over millennia, some pure and others tainted. It's deeply rooted in the concept of reincarnation, distinguishing it from monotheistic religions. While those faiths emphasise a singular journey guided by divine revelations, Sanatan Dharma values the harmonious balance between worldly obligations and spiritual pursuits.

Key Beliefs and Tenets

Among the many tenets of Sanatan Dharma, some of the most fundamental include:

Dharma: It serves as the ethical and moral compass that guides one's conduct and responsibilities, emphasising the importance of righteous living.

Karma and Reincarnation: Actions (karma) yield consequences, which may not manifest immediately but in subsequent lives. Reincarnation signifies a belief in the ceaseless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth until spiritual liberation (moksha) is attained.

Purusharthas: The Four Pursuits of Life: These include Dharma (ethical and moral duties), Artha (material well-being and prosperity), Kama (pursuit of desires, including love and pleasure), and Moksha (ultimate pursuit of spiritual liberation and union with the divine).

The Trimurti: Sanatan Dharma acknowledges a trinity of deities representing the cosmic forces of creation (Brahma), preservation (Vishnu), and destruction (Shiva). These deities symbolise the eternal cycle of existence.

Yoga and Meditation: Intrinsic to Sanatan Dharma, these practices serve as gateways to self-realisation, inner tranquillity, and communion with the divine.

Ahimsa (Non-Violence): A core principle, it extends beyond physical harm to encompass non-violence in thought, speech, and action.

Nishkaam Karma: This principle, found in the Bhagavad Gita, venerates action without attachment to outcomes, emphasising the right to act while relinquishing claims on the results.

The Defining Facets

Gleaned and sifted from sacred texts, the following principles emerge as the major defining facets. Though by no means exhaustive, they are notably representative.

1. All events have a cause. Causes are neutral, we qualify them as good or bad; and all actions have a consequence. Consequences can be positive and negative. The causes and consequences create a network. The absence of linearity makes life difficult to predict. Multiple causes and consequences also explain the prevailing diversity.

2. Diversity gives rise to hierarchy which gives rise to inequality. As the temptation to be unique and feel special is irresistible, hierarchy becomes a willing choice. But when burdened and harmed by hierarchy, it becomes a problem for some. Then we seek to dismantle it in the name of justice and equality

3. Victim, villain, and hero is a construct determined by our ego. If we are beneficiaries of hierarchy, we are heroes, deserving candidates of our fortune. If we are not, we are victims, and the beneficiary is the villain.

4. Our ego is a function of our insecurities. It makes us feel we matter, that nature should treat us differently from other organisms. It makes us feel we can change the world, alone.

5. As we go about changing the world, solving problems, we create new problems, as it is impossible to factor in every influencer.

6. No matter what we do, there are never any guarantees in life.

7. History existed before us and will continue after us.

8. Nothing is permanent. Things come together to fall apart.

9. Individuals change, not communities.

10. Possessive pronouns (mine, yours, his, hers, ours) are human inventions, as is the idea of debt and fair trade.

11. Justice presupposes the end of history, when account books are balanced. This never happens in rebirth cultures.

12. Rebirth is a code to explain diversity in the world, and uncertainty of life.

13. Karma makes you accept the moment and make a choice, but without certainty of outcome.

14. Good times follow bad times. Sometimes you are on top of the wheel, sometimes you get crushed. It never ends.

Many of these tenets are extraordinarily powerful and efficient coping mechanisms in life. Rebirth and the law of Karma offer a very convincing reason to continue living despite adversities and miseries and yet pursue a path of dharma. This unique aspect is so brilliant in conception and so compelling in confronting life that adherence to this religion ensures an eternal wellspring of hope and a brighter future.

The sustained resonance, acceptance, and universality of Sanatan Dharma owe much to this exceptional philosophic explanation to deal with human birth.

To be continued in next issue

Mission Atmanirbhar Bharat's Contribution to Defense Preparedness (Part -2)

By Mr. Kashinath Deodhar

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Touted as a “game changer” technology, “Smart Missile” stands for SMART as an acronym for “Supersonic Missile Assisted Release of Torpedo”. By developing this technology, India has played an important role in making it a strong country. If the enemy target is in the form of a submarine inside the sea but at a long distance, torpedoes alone are not enough to destroy it because it will take a lot of time and energy to travel far and by then the enemy can destroy it, but from a distant ship or from the shore at two or three times the speed of sound (Supersonic velocity). If an aerial torpedo is fired safely from an air and very close to the enemy target, close to the submarine, if the torpedo is isolated and slowed down, the shield is thrown into the water and then it is activated automatically, but the enemy will not be able to do anything. Destroying enemy targets, destroying enemy submarines by exploding them with torpedoes has become possible has become a weapon of destruction to vanquish a powerful enemy like China, so the "smart" missile is a game changer, i.e., by developing technology capable of playing its game on the enemy itself, our rule over deep and distant seas. It is possible to keep Swadeshi i.e., increased our strength by developing all types of missiles/technology.

India now has the shortest to longest range Agni missile. In this series, India has started its journey towards superpower by launching ICBM - Inter Continental Ballistic Missile, Agni-5. Agni-5 has a minimum range of 5500 km and a maximum range of 8000 km and has successfully completed all its tests and has been inducted into service with the armed forces. Also, preparations are underway for "Agni-6" with a range of 8 to 10 thousand km, of course the technology is there, only scaling up and testing is required. The large missiles have conventional warheads (bombs) but also nuclear warheads (nuclear bombs) are planned to be used. That means India has the system/capability to drop nuclear bombs at such a long distance.

23 August 2023, India's name had been written in gold letters. It is the achievement of Chandrayaan-3's safe and soft landing on the surface of the Moon near the South Pole. The illustrious history of space operations, during which the United States and Russia pioneered the technology to successfully launch human space missions, At that time, India had just gained independence and established ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation), an organization working in this field on 15 August 1969, and very little work had been done. There were no facilities. There was not even a motorable road. In those days, parts of rockets were carried on the Kerala coast from bicycle carriers and rockets were assembled under coconut trees. The vision of Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, the strong support of Dr. Homi Bhabha, and the initial financial support from the Tata Group led to the start of space exploration. Dr. Vikram Sarabhai was firm about this work and at a time when there were no facilities to work in this field, Dr. Vikram Sarabhai decided that we will do so much work in the field of space that there will be no one in the world ahead of us (The India will be Second to “None”) with such confidence. It was and the objectives were grand that it was to be used for the national development and to solve the real problems of the common people.

Many sets of scientists stood with him and put hard work for satellite development, launcher development and infrastructure along with flight bases and huge wealth India has accumulated in space. Earth observation, spying satellites, messaging, weather station, solar system and outer space research, etc., as well as navigation of aircraft, ships, railways, vehicles.

A satellite or series of satellites in low-earth orbit for the operation of various missions such as traffic control, regulation, control and guidance systems by means of vehicles, scientific experiments, observations of space planets and stars, the work of unravelling mysteries, as well as television, telephone, traveling audio-visual systems, are located in geostationary earth orbit. To protect all such space assets, DRDO has developed an Anti-satellite Missile and on 27 March 2019, one of its operating satellites, Micro Sat-R, was accurately engaged, shot down and smashed into pieces. India has become the fourth country in the world to develop its own technology and we have also acquired "power" in space. This task was so difficult that an anti-satellite missile launched from Balasore, the Dr Kalam Missile Test Center on Earth, intercepted the Microsat-R satellite in just 168 seconds, orbiting at a distance of 300 km. DRDO showed the world the invention of its high-tech technology by successfully capturing a satellite moving at a speed of ten kilometers (10km/s) in a second and successfully distinguishing a small satellite at a distance of three hundred km with its missile.

In this way, India was placed in the ranks of superpowers by equipping the missile system that protects land, water, sky and space. All our three-armed forces are doing the job of ensuring security, land defense is mainly done by land forces, sea and coast defense is done by navy and our skies are done by air force, we have developed weapons for that too. Indigenous technology has been developed and we are becoming self-sufficient in this sector. Not only this, now have we started exporting weapons to some extent. "Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan" has also made a great contribution in the field of self-reliant India defense as the Modi government has given it a lot of encouragement and financial support from 2014.

The goal of making the weapons modern and sophisticated to be war proof was achieved by developing indigenous technology. Now most of all types of weapons, we are manufacturing in our own country. Armed forces have also placed their trust in indigenously manufactured weapons based on indigenous technology and inducted into Indian military service.

A very recent example in this regard is the decision taken by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) under the chairmanship of the defence minister on 22 December 2022 to approve 24 proposals worth Rs.84324 crores out of which 21 proposals worth Rs.81127 crores are for indigenization by the Indian industrial sector, will buy with justice. These figures are so promising and appealing that my forty years of work at DRDO seem to be contented.

In 1982, I was appointed to the development group of the "Indian Gun System" at DRDO-ARDE, a reputedly successful and very important Ordnance Research and Development Organization in Pune under the Defense Research and Development Organisation. Got an opportunity to work in a field that was very new and developed my own abilities. I was fortunate enough to design and development of an indigenous gun of 155 mm diameter. But in just three years we imported 410 foreign guns "155 mm Bofors FH-77" and stopped our work completely as indigenous guns were no longer needed. Twenty-five years later when what next for Bofors? When this question came to the army, it woke up and asked the DRDO. During the Congress government, one had to work in "firefighting mode" all the time. The new Modi government, however, stood firmly behind DRDO, which is why it has developed indigenously advanced and up-to-date technology for various weapons. For this purpose, Indian industry was also mandated to produce ordnance on a large scale, so that indigenous weapons entered the service of our armed forces. Our indigenous tank "Arjun" is manufactured by HVF- Heavy Vehicle Factory at Avadi, Chennai. A work order of Rs 7523 crore for additional 118 new tanks was recently given and in the last six years 118 out of 141 Arjuna tanks have been transferred to the actual army. At that time, the Prime Minister said that the tanks built in the southern tip of India are going to protect the northern borders and this is a great example of Indian unity.

Honourable Prime Minister Narendra ji Modi's actions show confidence in the capabilities of our country-made tanks. Modi ji has been celebrating every Diwali with the soldiers of our country at the border and boosting the morale of our armed forces.

They are working to raise their spirits. Doubling confidence in indigenous arms by celebrating a Diwali with the "Arjun" tank unit on the border in the desert region of Jaisalmer, experienced what the Hon. Prime Minister is doing.

310 guns that will retire the Bofors will enter service with an order worth Rs 3356 crore for our indigenous gun ATAGS (Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System). It is also heartening that the Indian industry has recently received an export order worth \$155.5 million for the same gun. This is a picture of a changing India. That is, when I started work, India, which was the largest importer of arms in the world forty years ago, has now become self-sufficient and is able to export arms. This is the strength of self-reliance.

Pinak Agni is also an important indigenous technology in "Rocket Artillery" and an important indigenous weapon system. One of its features is that a battery can fire 72 rounds total of 7.2 tons of High Explosives on an enemy military station/base or location at a range of 38 km in just 44 seconds, destroying the enemy in an area of approximately 800m x 1000m. The research work for increasing its distance from 38 km to 60 km is in final stage. Pinak Multi Barrel Rocket Launcher System (MBRLS – Multi Barrel Rocket Launcher System) is considered as the main weapon system at present. The government has decided to make 25 regiments of this and they have an important contribution in keeping the border safe. At present 12 Agni regiments are functioning on the border and a work order worth Rs 11000 crore has been given to make the remaining channels operational till 2026.

The effect of self-reliant India is that many small parts and sub-systems are used for manufacturing through MSMEs. But due to writing limitations I can restricted to only mention of large systems.

Indigenization of many small and large warships is also important for the Indian Navy. E.g., 23000 crores indigenously built aircraft carrier Bharaat (INS) Vikrant with 76% indigenous component, carrying capacity of 40 aircraft and armed 1700 naval personnel (women and men) for defence. It was started during Atalji's time but in between ten years its work was in cold storage and the real impetus was given by the Modi government and it was inaugurated on 3rd September 2022 and now all the tests have been successful and Bharaat (INS) Vikrant is in the service of the Navy. Also, Bharaat Arihant (INS Arihant) an indigenously built and indigenous technology based nuclear powered submarine has been successful and the construction work for six Arihant class submarines is on a very advanced track with a provision of Rs 88,790 crore.

"LCA Tejas", an indigenous light weight fighter aircraft, has completed all the IOC - Initial Operational Clearance and FOC - Final Operational Clearance tests to meet the needs of the Indian Air Force. Two of its squadrons are operational and the Hindustan Aeronautical Ltd. Company has been given the task of manufacturing 83 Tejas fighter and training aircraft and a solid provision of Rs 48000 crore has also been made. In 2014, HAL had the capacity to manufacture only one or two aircraft per year. HAL is now developing its facilities and systems with a target of producing fifty aircraft a year. Having crossed the stage of 8 then 12 per year, it currently has the capacity to manufacture 24 aircraft in a year and the government has offered strong financial support. America has also expressed its desire for the purchase of Tejas aircraft after seeing the actual aerial demonstrations and capabilities. It would not be surprising to see these aircraft being actually exported to allied countries in a few years.

A contract worth Rs 3887 crore has been awarded to HAL for the production of combat helicopter "Prachand" for the Air Force, which unit costs approximately Rs 260 crore but is very useful for defense, patrolling in border areas considering its combat capability, lethality, penetration. " Prachand " (Gigantic) helicopters are coming into service in large numbers. Numerous types of weapons such as torpedoes, drop bombs, anti-tank munitions systems, hand grenades, personal weapons, and multi-munitions are being manufactured and supplied to the army.

Such systems, tools, plants war equipment necessary for war like radar, telescope, laser, etc., by developing indigenous technology and 'swadeshi' manufactured equipment also make these forces self-reliant and capable.

The most important thing is that India is a nuclear armed country and atomic bomb, and hydrogen bomb increases India's strength. Now we are experiencing that India is a superpower and the same horse race of Bharat will continue. There is no doubt that the new Baharat will make such progress in the next twenty-five years that there will be no enemy and Baharat will become the world master again as Vishwaguru.

Israeli Intelligence Failure – Or a Deep-Rooted Conspiracy? (Part – 1)

By ‘Sardar’ Sanjay Matkar

Author is an audacious adventurer, an avid student of history and global politics. He has authored ‘Showdown at Dabiq – Islamic State Vs. Armies of Rome in the 21st century’.

On Saturday 07th October 2023, the terrorist group Hamas based out of the Gaza strip caught the State of Israel by complete surprise, breaking through an electronically powered physical fence that is supposed to have cost over a billion US dollars in its creation, to safeguard the security of Israel. The fence was breached at multiple sites and the entire concept of its existence crashed, along-with the credibility of the Israeli intelligence services.

Three issues are glaring prominent in this attack. The 1st is the speed, training and focus of the Hamas terrorists when they broke through the fence, invaded Israeli territories, captured and transported hostages back to Gaza while indiscriminately killing civilians. The 2nd issue is the lack of an immediate response by the Israeli Defense Forces. It took the IDF over six hours to enter this battlefield, stripping away the much-publicized fantasy of the IDF being a professionally trained and highly skilled, mobile fighting force. The 3rd issue was the global reputation of the Israeli intelligence services. “Mossad”, the civilian–military intelligence and anti-terrorist strike force; the “Military Intelligence Directorate” which is supposed to inform the Israeli government and IDF with intelligence warnings and alerts on a daily basis; the "Shin bet", the organization charged with maintaining internal security, including in the Israeli-occupied territories; the “Combat Intelligence Collection Corps” which is the newest of the IDF GOC Army Headquarters' five corps, created in April 2000 and tasked with collecting combat intelligence; and “Lekem” (Lishka le-Kishrei Mada) which is tasked to collect scientific and technical intelligence abroad from both open and covert sources, and was supposed to have been disbanded in 1986, but never confirmed to have been so.

All five of these intelligence services seem to have failed their primary purpose of keeping their government informed of the activities of their immediate enemy, the State of Palestine and its armed factions Hamas (specifically it's Qassam brigades), Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Palestinian Liberation Front, as-Sa'iqa, Fatah al-Intifada, Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine; etc.

Hamas, which started the current attack on Israel, was created in 1987 as an off shoot of the Muslim Brotherhood's political movement. The Muslim Brotherhood identifies itself as a Sunni Islamist organization that was founded in Egypt in 1928, by Hassan al-Banna, and Islamic scholar and schoolteacher. Hamas has been financed regularly by Iran and Qatar, two countries which are seemingly at odds with each other the former being Shi'a and the latter being Sunni. Yet, both have funded Hamas and other terrorist organizations due to their common hatred against Israel.

Iran has had a complex relationship with Israel. This relationship has changed from military and economic close cooperation before the Iranian revolution of 1979, to complete hostility, with Iran supporting Hamas and the Islamic Jihad for Palestine in Gaza, and the Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Before the 1979 revolution, when most Arab countries in Middle East were in opposition to the existence of Israel, the then Shah of Iran supported Israeli settlers in what was considered as Palestine territories. The Shah of Iran, Reza Pahlavi recognized Israel as a sovereign state in 1950. Economic, political and military cooperation between these two countries expanded rapidly while tensions between Israel and the Arab countries escalated in the 1960s and 1970s.

Before the Shah of Iran was deposed in 1979, Israel had undertaken a multi-billion-dollar project to sell advanced, surface-to-surface missiles to Iran. This project, code named 'Flower', was one of the six oil-for-arms contract signed in Tehran in April 1977 by Shah Reza Pahlavi and Shimon Peres, the then Defense Minister of Israel. The Flower project involved the production of missiles with warheads weighing 750 Kgs and a tactical range of 480 kms. This joint missile program envisaged shipping the missiles from Israel to Iran, in the form of components for assembly and testing. Operation Flower was just one of the many joint military projects between the two countries. According to de-classified documents available in the USA's Library of Congress, other projects included advanced radar systems, converting aircraft for maritime surveillance purposes, and enhancing the missiles program to enable their launch from submarines.

Even after 1979, when the Shah of Iran was deposed by the Islamic Revolution, the Iran-Israel military cooperation continued discreetly with Israel supplying arms, ammunition and military aid to Iran during its 10-year war against Saddam Hussain's Iraq, in the 1980s. Various sources has estimated that, with the tactic approval of the USA, Iran was provided military aid of approximately US\$ 2 billion in that period. The clandestine cooperation did not stop there. During the Iran-Contra affair, Israel played a crucial role as a facilitator of arms shipments from USA to Iran in 1985 and 1986.

To be continued in next issue

China-Nepal Ties 'Nose-Dive' Over Encroachment, Espionage & Economy; \$64B BRI Fails to Impress

By NC Bipindra

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Nepal Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Naryan Kaji Shrestha recently visited China to attend the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. There was a meeting before the hectic BRI Forum summit to address various core issues raised by Nepal time and again.

Further, discussions with Chinese officials were also planned during the forum. However, these meetings were cut short due to Shrestha's hospitalization following an unfortunate cardiac arrest.

During his meetings before hospitalization, Shrestha stressed the need to make economic diplomacy effective. In his bilateral meeting with Wang Xiaohong, Chinese Minister of Public Security and member of the Chinese Communist Party Secretariat, Shrestha emphasized the need for cross-border security collaboration enhancement to maintain law and order.

Trade relations with China have been rocky since the pandemic, which has been a primary focus of China-Nepal deliberations since. Pertinently, in March, Nepal Prime Minister Prachanda insisted China give Nepal's tradable products access to Beijing's duty-free and quota-free market.

Shrestha, in his five-day official visit to China in June, had stressed the need for China to help open more border and transit points, including the seasonal trade points, to facilitate two-way freight and passenger movements and support the livelihood of border inhabitants.

Moreover, he requested Beijing's support for Kathmandu in economic development initiatives. As the second largest trading partner of Kathmandu after New Delhi and the largest source of Foreign Direct Investment, Beijing has boosted its proactive engagements with Nepal, as it did with India's other South Asian neighbors.

Pain Points On The Border

Beijing is primarily focused on infrastructural projects since the launch of the BRI. However, Beijing's aggressive economic monopolistic ambitions created more trouble for its landlocked Himalayan neighbor.

Nepal shares two border points with China and has seen an increasing presence of Chinese nationals in Nepal, a rapid increase since 2014-15 as Chinese-funded projects seemingly grew.

The lack of Nepalese monitoring of its northern border due to its treacherous terrain and sparse population has been exploited by China to its advantage, resulting in increasing Chinese encroachment and border violations.

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India is Proud of: Dr Sadanand Raut and Dr Pallavi Raut



Unsung heroes Dr Sadanand Raut and his wife Pallavi Raut of Narayangaon have saved the lives of at least 6,000 snakebite victims in rural Maharashtra.

Last August, Pune's Ramprakash Kharge woke up with a strange pain in his leg. When he looked at the site of pain, he found it swollen. The 64-year-old farmer wondered if he had slipped in the field to lead to this. Not paying much mind to it, he went to work.

Soon after, he observed that the skin around the bite discoloured. "It turned bluish and blackish and people suspected it could be due to a snakebite," said his son Kiran tells.

They rushed to Vighnagar Nursing Clinic in Narayangaon where the farmer was kept under observation for three days. "My father was on ventilation. The doctor suspected that he might be bitten by a Russell's viper – one of the most venomous snakes. We were so scared as this was the first such case in our family," he says.

"We feared that the venom might have spread to the kidneys and heart. The doctor had performed a surgery to remove the toxins. Each moment was difficult for us. But the surgery was successful and my father was safe," he adds with a sigh of relief.

Dr Sadanand says that they get at least 200 snakebite cases every year.

But this doctor couple has driven 'Mission Zero Snakebite Death' in Narayangaon.

Kiran says, “That day, the couple saved my father’s life. Like us, people in the stretch of about 150 km rely on his treatment. He is a saviour for such patients.” Born in Umbraj village in Pune, Dr Sadanand Raut graduated in general medicine in 1992. The physician started practicing in the nearby village of Narayangaon, a tribal dominated hilly town.

With a motive to serve the community in the town, the couple started their own practice in the same year. But they got their life’s purpose when a young girl was brought to their hospital. “One day, a worker on my friend’s farm called and informed me that his daughter was bitten by a cobra. She had severe pain at the site and had difficulty in breathing. I told him to immediately bring the child to the hospital. Unfortunately, she died on the way. She was just eight,”

Disturbed by the incident, Dr Sadanand decided that from thereon, he would not let any person in the village die of snakebite.

In India, around 90 percent of snakebites are caused by the ‘big four’ — Common krait, Indian cobra, Russell’s viper, and the Saw Scaled Viper.

After digging into the root causes, he found that people in the region cultivate crops like soybean, groundnuts, and sugarcane throughout the year, which makes them prone to snake encounters often.

Soon after, Dr Sadanand started equipping his hospital with lifesaving equipment like cardiac monitors, ventilators, and oxygen cylinders, so that he could save lives at the local level. Over the past 28 years, his efforts have turned into a mission that aims at achieving zero snakebite deaths in the region.

Dr Sadanand says that they get at least 200 snakebite cases every year. Monsoons are hectic when at least 12 patients are rushed to the medical facility in a day. Without any trained medical staff support, the couple works round the clock. The couple conducts awareness programs in villages, schools, colleges, forest departments, and medical colleges.

Dr Sadanand informs that with intensive care management and administering antivenom doses, lives can be saved. “We have also been providing free treatment at sub-divisional government hospital Manchar for the last 25 years and regularly training medical officers there,” he says.

As part of this mission, the couple also conducts awareness programs in villages, schools, colleges, forest departments, and medical colleges. Recently, they organised awareness programmes in Kolhapur, Satara, and Pune districts and claim to have trained 10,000 students and 2,000 teachers in tribal schools to help them identify venomous and nonvenomous snakes, and the dos and don’ts in snakebite cases.

Last year, Dr Sadanand said that they trained 1,500 ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers in the Pune district in handling snakebite cases.

For his work, Dr Sadanand was awarded the Arogya Ratna Award by the Government of Maharashtra last year.

Talking about the impact of his work, he says, “After we started the mission, there had been no mortality at the hospital level. Also, we gained the trust of the people over the years, they do not go too far off cities or to faith healers anymore.”

Snake bite victims (who are saved) and their relatives have all the praise for this doctor couple.

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