

What Sanatan Means to Me? A Profound Journey into Eternal Wisdom (Part-3)

By Uday Kumar Varma

Author is a former Secretary, Information and Broadcasting, GOI

The Caste System: A Historical Anachronism

For those who scrutinise Sanatan Dharma, and even for those well-versed in its intricacies, the vexing issue of caste serves as both an indictment and a source of profound anguish. It stands as an unsettling and ignominious incongruity amidst the tranquil sea of profound wisdom that this ancient philosophy otherwise represents.

The term 'caste' itself appears to be a misnomer, a mere English translation of 'varna,' a system of social hierarchy originally designed to regulate the division of labour within society. Birth was never intended to be the determining factor. The precise point at which it became associated with birth remains shrouded in the mists of history. In the Vedas and Upanishads, the foundational scriptures of Sanatan Dharma, there is no clear linkage between the texts and the caste system. The varna system, as it existed during that era, was remarkably flexible, dependent on an individual's inclination toward a particular path. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna elucidates this idea, stating:

"चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया श्रुष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः (4:13) - I have created four Varnas on the basis of Gunas and Karmas, (not birth.)"

One cannot help but ponder the extent to which critics or proponents of the so-called 'caste system' have delved into a serious study of the Upanishads and the subsequent smritis before pronouncing their judgment and declaring their erudition.

Manu and His Controversial Code

The 'caste system,' therefore, appears to be a Western conceptualisation and, at best, a partial explanation for this social structure. It seems to have originated as an attempt to systematically and efficiently organise society but, over time, degenerated into a pernicious practice. The often-cited Manusmriti, attributed to Manu and believed to formalise this concept, is a relatively recent development following the Vedas and Upanishads. Its historical origins do not align with those of the Vedas, Samhita's, Upanishads or Vedanta. The debate surrounding its true purpose, whether a means to regulate social functions or a crafty instrument to perpetuate Brahmin hegemony entrenched in society, continues to be passionately contested.

As it rages, one intriguing aspect of this ongoing toxic debate is that few participants have thoroughly read or understood Manusmriti, the fountainhead of this practice. The context of its origin, on one hand, and its manifested form and practice, on the other, may differ significantly.

An Unfortunate Devolution

Over time, the caste system transformed into a rigid practice based on birth, an undeniable fact that has stymied social mobility between varnas. The justifications may vary, but even proponents of the caste system acknowledge the harm it has wrought upon Hindu society.

Sanatan, as practiced in modern times, differs significantly from its Vedic origins. Rituals, which had a limited role in religious life during that period, have now assumed a central place. Mundak Upanishad, for instance, strongly critiques rituals like Yagna and Havana, comparing those who seek heaven through rituals to blind men led by other blind men. Vedic and Vedantic Sanatan emphasised the spiritual aspects of religion, focusing on overcoming one's inner negativities. Today, however, rituals dominate Hindu worship. While Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Raja Ram Mohan Roy made efforts to rectify these aberrations, they persist.

It remains a reality that most of the Hindu society does not adhere to the dictates of scriptures. The caste structure has, undoubtedly, hardened over time, possibly before the era of Lord Buddha. Many smritis, including Manusmriti, were composed much later. Despite persuasive arguments attempting to explain this aberration, it is an aberration that must be eradicated.

Nevertheless, aberrations exist in every religion and society. Jesus Christ preached love even for sinners, yet anti-Semitism among Christians led to the death of millions of innocent Jews. Islam, in its relatively brief history, offers even more distressing examples.

How Modern India Grapples with It?

In contemporary India, how does the caste system function in practice? Urban areas, arguably, witness little overt manifestation of this system; if it exists, it is greatly attenuated. Rural India, on the other hand, still significantly embodies it, though its influence diminishes by the day. Education and economic development are gradually dismantling this pernicious system. By objective assessment, the caste system in India is on a decline.

Paradoxically, certain section of politicians both decry the caste system as a malady on par with malaria and dengue and simultaneously exploit it as a means to amass and consolidate political power. Ironically, the same caste system, for them becomes a convenient tool for increasing and retaining political power. The entire exercise of caste census, ostensibly for social justice and equity, is being pursued with remarkable enthusiasm. This apparent contradiction, vividly on display raises profound questions regarding the role of the caste system in Indian politics and society. One must ponder whether these politicians would even have a place in the political landscape were it not for the enduring paradoxical nature of the caste system. What underpins this apparent contradiction, and who among us will summon the courage to confront it?

This enigma invites deep contemplation and introspection, compelling society to question its own evolution.

The Remedy: Education and Prosperity

The antidote to the caste system is education and affluence. As India becomes more prosperous and progressive, the caste system will gradually fade, first from its physical manifestations and eventually from the minds of the people.

If it persists, it will be in a good measure, due to those self-centred politicians who, for their narrow political gains, keep it alive while hypocritically denouncing it from the rooftops.

And The Future

There is no defence or justification for this degraded version of Varna system regardless of the context of its historical origin. This aberration must go; and go it will. Sanatan Dharma, with its ancient origins and profound philosophical foundations, continues to thrive as a dynamic and evolving way of life.

Its principles of dharma, karma, and moksha continue to influence the lives of millions. Yet, addressing social inequalities, promoting inclusivity, and navigating the complexities of a changing world require constant reflection and adaptation. The resurgence of Sanatan Dharma in contemporary India attests to its enduring appeal and its profound impact on the nation's cultural and spiritual landscape. A source of wisdom built and enriched over millennia by individuals of remarkable insight and foresight, its evolution should not be hindered; its essence should be understood, assimilated, and shared.

To relevance of Rigvedic spirit "आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः।" (Let noble ideas come to us from all sides) was never so strong and compelling, as it is today, as we shape a resurgent Bharat.

Indo-US Cooperation on Stryker Combat Vehicle

By Lt Gen N B Singh, PVSM, AVSM, VSM

Author is a former DGEME, DGIS and Member Armed Forces Tribunal. He writes on technology related operational subjects, space and green energy initiatives.

Background

In yet another example of the growing Indo US cooperation in diverse sectors, US and India agreed to jointly manufacture the Stryker Infantry Carrier vehicle in India. Designed as an interim armoured vehicle for rapid deployment in a variety of operational scenarios it was intended to fill the capability gap between heavier infantry combat vehicles like Bradley and the lighter Humvees.

A no of variants has been developed. These are the ICV, reconnaissance vehicle, mobile gun system, mortar carrier, fire support vehicle, engineer squad vehicle, command post, NBC recce, medical evacuation and ATGM vehicle. Based on capability gap assessment carried out during operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, several engineering change programmes have been initiated to enhance mission effectiveness and survivability of the platform. Stryker is also being modified into a short-range air defence variant in response to a capability gap identified in the Ukraine war against Russian UAVs. Also in experimental stages are the assault bridge, maintenance and recovery, directed energy and tracked Stryker vehicles. The eight-wheeler weighs 20 tons and can sustain speeds of 60 mph. Its performance metrics enabled forces to move rapidly as a cohesive combined arms combat team in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The immediate reactions have been varied with some welcoming it as a consolidation of the Indo US defence collaboration initiative. Others decried it as a big setback for the local efforts by Tatas and Mahindra develop 8x8 wheeled armoured personnel carrier like the Kestrel. However, as these efforts are limited to the basic platform and a lot of challenges still remain in transforming it into a versatile weapon system.

Characteristics

A look at the specs of the Stryker vehicle indicates that the platform may not be the right fit for the kind of deployments needed in our context at the LAC or the LC/IB. The war in Ukraine has demonstrated that performance claimed by OEMs is seldom met specially when systems get fielded in different operational environments, specially related to terrain and technology. Images of US-supplied Stryker combat vehicle in action in Ukraine have emerged in media. One video that appeared shows a Russian Lancet loitering munition targeting a Stryker, although the damage sustained is unclear. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation has claimed destruction of four Strykers since these appeared on the southeastern frontline near Zaporizhia sometime back.

The Stryker's hull is constructed from high hardness rolled homogenous steel which offers a basic level of protection against 14.5 mm rounds on the frontal arc. It has all-around protection against 7.62 mm ball ammunition. With bolt-on ceramic armour all-around protection against 14.5 mm armour-piercing ammunition and artillery fragments from 155 mm rounds is feasible. This level of protection may not be adequate against heavier PLA platforms that are deployed at LAC as well as explosively formed penetrators. In addition, with a power to ratio of 15.8 KW per tonne the vehicle is underpowered for operations both in HAA and deserts.

It therefore makes sense that the Army inducts these with suitable mobility upgrades and survivability suites so as to achieve an operational overreach against its adversaries. The PLA has reportedly deployed the ZBL 08 at LAC. Detailed performance comparison between the Stryker and the Chinese ZBL 08, is important. Evaluating factors such as mobility, armor protection, firepower and adaptability to varied terrains becomes essential for a comprehensive understanding of their relative effectiveness. Technologically, the Strykers should be a few notches ahead of ZBL08 in terms of firepower, network centricity and survivability. However, its effectiveness against new threats specially EFP and GPS enabled munitions needs to be validated as more numbers get deployed in East Europe.

Impact on Indigenous Programmes

The apprehension that the deal could detrimentally impact ongoing attempts to develop an indigenous wheeled APC are justified. Any large-scale acquisition of Strykers could effectively stymie indigenous development of a wheeled platform for several decades. A pragmatic approach would be to acquire adequate numbers of Strykers to address critical capability gaps for the present and press on with the design and development of an indigenous platform. The Stryker deal should be used as an opportunity to stabilise the availability of indigenous sub systems and foundational technologies for rolling out a purely indigenous system. The Tata and Mahindra platforms are yet to be loaded with armaments, survivability, situational awareness and other systems needed for an effective, integrated equipment capability primarily because proven Indian sub-systems are not available. The Stryker on the other hand comes as a fully integrated, versatile platform which has been tested in combat. It makes sense to acquire the system to not only plug operational capabilities gaps in the interim but also using the know how acquired to propel development of an indigenous wheeled combat vehicle. The depth and range of TOT has to be identified to facilitate development of such a bespoke platform.

Costing

A meticulous cost analysis of the Stryker manufacturing in India, including factors such as technology transfer, infrastructure development, and MRO requirements, is imperative. Comparisons with the existing infantry combat vehicle BMP-2 costs will provide valuable insights into the economic feasibility and sustainability of the Stryker program. If we apply the inflation rate to the 2012 cost of \$4.9 million, the adjusted cost would be approximately 6 million USD. Keep in mind that this is a rough estimate, and actual costs may vary based on specific contract terms, upgrades and modifications, and other factors. Acquisition and support costs alone could preclude large scale acquisition of Strykers and hence the focus on design and development of an indigenous platform that is less complex, affordable and customised for employment at the LAC has to be retained.

Conclusion

The strategic collaboration on Stryker combat vehicles marks a pivotal juncture in the Indo-US defense partnership. It needs to be remembered that weapons designed abroad for a specific operational employment may not be militarily effective in the Indian sub-continent.

Thus, a careful consideration of operational limitations, adaptation based on lessons from combat deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan and a cost-effective approach to manufacturing and life cycle support are imperative to ensure its successful integration into the existing fleet. An upgraded Stryker incorporating a gun missile weapon package, an altitude compensated mobility system--- hybrid engine, survivability suites and situational awareness systems can provide the desired operational overreach against the prime adversary. Such a comprehensive approach will not only enhance the nation's defence capabilities but also foster a robust and self-reliant defence industrial base.

15 years after 26/11: A Tragedy That Could Have Been Averted

By Vappala Balachandran

Author is a former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat, was a member of the two-man High Level Committee appointed by the Maharashtra Government to probe police handling of the 26/11 attacks.

In the history of terrorism, the Mumbai 26/11 terror attacks were as innovative as the 9/11 attacks on the US. While passenger airplanes were used for the first time as weapons of destruction during 9/11, the Mumbai attacks saw an unprecedented feature of live operational control of terrorist acts from foreign soil.

Also significant during 26/11 was the terrorist handlers' capability in utilising the target country's free electronic media for further killing and live feedback. Competitive Indian visual media covering the Mumbai attacks beamed minute-to-minute details to the domestic audience which served as a barometer of the damage inflicted on the Indian psyche and resultant panic, the two vital aims of any terrorist group. It enabled the Pakistani handlers to calibrate attacks using the cell phones of ground-level terrorists.

Simultaneous attacks on targets totally confused an unprepared Mumbai police and public, much like the September 2001 attacks on Americans. The elaborate subterfuge which the handlers had planned in setting up their communications through Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) by utilising foreign cell phone numbers was yet another new feature.

This was perhaps the first time in major urban terrorism history that terrorists had engaged police teams in live combat at five locations. There was no live battle during 9/11. It was not there in the Madrid Railway bombing (March 11, 2004) which killed 191 or in London 7/7 (July 7, 2005) attacks, resulting in 52 deaths. In fact, the Mumbai 26/11 attacks became a template for the November 2015 Paris attacks with live combat on six targets, which killed 130.

Like the 9/11 attacks, the Mumbai attacks also spurred panic, especially in the US. that was because the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) had prepared a Coastal Protection Scheme in April 2008 after recognising the presence of 17 million small boats around the US coastline and the fear that some of them could be used by al-Qaeda to commit terrorist acts. Thus when 26/11 took place, it was seen as a dress rehearsal for a similar attack on the US as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) was closely aligned with al-Qaeda.

Well before India initiated any inquiry on the major terrorist attack on our soil, the US Senate Homeland Security Committee had held a hearing on the Mumbai 26/11 attack on January 9, 2009, to discuss how similar tactics would affect US security. One of the first persons to depose before the Committee was the then New York Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly who underlined the key features of 26/11. He said that the US counter terrorist agencies would need to rework their methodology on how panic could be curbed even in a free media ambience,

how to disrupt terrorists' communication network without adversely affecting the free milieu and how to re-deploy forces in the US since the 26/11 attacks had taken over 60 hours to terminate, a situation US had never experienced in urban areas. Stephen Tankel, a well-known expert on the LeT, said in 2018, that the Mumbai operation "began as a relatively small operation involving only one target and a few terrorists but expanded considerably during summer 2008". One of the reasons why it mounted the 26/11 attack was "enhancing its Jehadi credibility".

Whatever might have been the reason, it only resulted in humiliating India and its stature as a growing power. Edward N Luttwak, senior security specialist at the Center for Strategic & International Studies, wrote a scathing piece on December 5, 2008, in The Los Angeles Times ridiculing our police, intelligence organisations and paramilitary groups. The US think tank Rand highlighted the astonishing failures of our defence forces through their occasional paper 'The lessons of Mumbai', as the army columns came after five hours while the naval commandos (Marcos) came still later. It was only at 0850 hours the next day that the elite National Security Guards arrived.

The 26/11 High Level Committee, of which I was a member along with Chairman, the late Ram Pradhan, had expressed shock that the highest Home Department official and her deputy, a police officer, had given in writing on February 9, 2009, that they did not receive any prior alert from the central government. Surprisingly, the Director General of Police (DGP) and Commissioner of Police (CP) had given us copies of 26 alerts from August 2006 to September 2008, most of them addressed by designation to the same Home Department official.

The least the Home Department could have done to prevent 26/11 was to summon a joint meeting of the police, Navy, and Coast Guards for effective coastal protection in view of their statutory responsibility under Section 4 of the amended Bombay Police Act, where the "superintendence of the police force" is with the State Home Department. In our report, we observed that this official "must ultimately take responsibility for all work relating to the department".

When we examined the 26 secret alerts, we found that there was adequate prior information available with stakeholders except the exact date. Of these, six were on the possibility of "sea borne attacks", 12 on the likelihood of simultaneous assaults on multiple targets and three on the likely "fedayeen" offensives.

We made nearly 27 recommendations on intelligence processing and communication as well as speedier intervention by creating smaller units at strategic locations. Another recommendation was to study "Open-Source Intelligence" (OSI) which, if dovetailed with secret intelligence, would have enabled the establishment of an effective preventive architecture.

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Pakistan's Economic Crisis: How China's Vicious 'Debt Trap' Under \$25 Billion CPEC Loan Has Ruined Its Economy

By NC Bipindra

Author is a 30-year veteran in journalism specializing in strategic affairs, geopolitics, aerospace, defense, and diplomacy. He has written extensively for the Times of India, New Indian Express, Press Trust of India, and Bloomberg News. He can be reached [ncbipindra \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:ncbipindra@gmail.com)

Pakistan is a country of economic ruin. It is awaiting a monumental financial default without long overdue structural reforms sought by global creditors such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, along with bilateral partners.

Given the country's poor credit ratings, high debt sustainability risks, and overall weak macroeconomic situation, these bilateral and multilateral creditors have explicitly preconditioned their financial credit lines to the reforms, arguing the money given to Pakistan evaporates through the corruption vaults to create any turn around in the country.

The primary reason behind Pakistan's economic woes is its staggering debt levels, which, as of 2023, amount to nearly US\$125 billion owed to external creditors, with approximately one-third to China.

This has refocused attention on the much-talked "Debt Trap Diplomacy" that Beijing has been accused of implementing across Asia and Africa in its pursuit of 'neo-colonial ambitions.'

As per experts, with growing financial clout, Beijing has been flexing its economic muscle and burdening the socioeconomically vulnerable countries with large populations and ever-rising infrastructure-financing gap by lending billions of dollars.

Under this policy, it was speculated that China encouraged the poorer countries' dependency as its lending practices were by nature predatory because of their opaque terms and conditions that led to debt accumulation.

Brahma Chellaney, the Indian strategic thinker who wrote about "Debt Trap Diplomacy" in 2017, contended that through the strategic use of debt, Beijing compelled debtor nations to make concessions, including the acquisition of vital assets and natural resources, thereby extending the influence of China's military. This has been evidenced by Beijing's takeover of Hambantota port in Sri Lanka for a lease of 99 years, apart from infrastructural assets across African countries.

China's BRI For Vulnerable Nations

It has been revealed that China has used its much-touted transcontinental Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to bring vulnerable countries for its neo-colonial pursuits. Chinese money often comes preconditioned with unwritten clauses for the borrower countries for using "Chinese companies...Chinese engineers, Chinese workers, and Chinese equipment."

The US-based AidData Lab, in its report examining 13,000 projects under the BRI, primarily for infrastructure development such as the construction of roads, highways, bridges, and hydropower dams, valued at US\$843 billion across 165 countries, said it has resulted in several lower and middle-income states accumulating nearly US\$385 billion in 'hidden debts.'

As New York Times's Keith Bradsher emphasized, "Dozens of countries are struggling to pay their debts, as a slowing economy and rising interest rates push many nations to the brink."

The story also rings true for Pakistan, as the country became the largest debtor state to China, with over one-third of external debts owed to Beijing. With its misplaced regional policy pursuits under the military's direct or indirect control through its seven decades of existence, Pakistan encountered abysmal socio-economic infrastructure.

It presented a near-perfect template to Chinese luring, which promised upgrading and raising basic infrastructure through the BRI. As Pakistan joined the BRI in 2013, China's predatory lending assumed exponential proportions, with the most strategic component of the project, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), launched with the initial planned expenditure of US\$45 billion that has topped US\$62 billion over the years.

Pakistan's Near-Perfect Debt Trap

The project cost of the Pakistan component of the CPEC itself has been reported to be over US\$25 billion, implying Islamabad owed this much financial capital to Chinese creditors upfront, thereby making it the most significant contributor to Pakistan's external debt accumulation.

While the majority of Chinese financial assistance to Pakistan has been through 'infrastructure and energy investments,' what has been conspicuous about it is its nature.

In contrast to the primarily held notions and carefully manufactured popular perceptions, Beijing's investments in Pakistan constituted loans rather than grants, as was propagated by successive Pakistani governments backed by the military establishment.

What has made it more concerning are the flat commercial rates at which these loans were availed by Pakistan, over 5 percent, and in most cases at over 7 percent, way higher than the other international financial lenders such as the IMF, which lends at 2 percent.

These considerably higher interest rates have thrown Pakistan into a debt spiral, making it difficult for Islamabad to follow its debt servicing. Interestingly, the viciousness of Pakistan's debt accumulation has reached such levels that the country's debt servicing has even failed to repay the same interest rates as its principal borrowings.



China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Plan. (File Image)

Of the US\$40 billion it has accumulated in the Chinese debts, the interest component, even if calculated at a conservative 5 percent rate, in Pakistan's debt servicing alone would amount to US\$2 billion.

For instance, as per the State Bank of Pakistan, the country's total external debt servicing obligations for the Fiscal Year 2023 amount to US\$20.81 billion (PKR 792 lakh crore), which includes a colossal interest component of US\$4.42 billion (PKR12.46 lakh crore).

Given the poor credit ratings and its failure to comply with the conditions of international lenders, such as the micro-cum-macro economic reforms, including improving its tax collection regime, it has essentially been forced to rely on China to stay afloat and maintain critical sovereign wealth reserves to ensure short term sustainability.

This means Pakistan is forced to take new Chinese loans to repay the old ones at the interest rates dictated by Beijing, primarily commercial lending rates. For instance, on November 8, it was revealed that Pakistan was negotiating a loan of US\$600 million from the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) and the Bank of China.

This trend has continued since 2017 when Pakistan started taking rescue loans from Beijing to meet its debt repayment requirements on the loans it availed as “grants” under the CPEC for developmental purposes.

It is unarguably manifested that Pakistan’s precarious economic situation, with a potential financial default, remains attested to its overwhelming debt levels, primarily to Chinese lenders.

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India is Proud of: Deep Narayan Nayak

This Hero Turned Mud Walls into Blackboards & Streets into Schools for 10,000 Children



Deep Narayan Nayak from West Bengal has converted walls of homes to blackboards and teaches three generations. He wants to break the cycle of poverty and his Raster Master model has impacted over 10,000 students.

Deep Narayan Nayak (37) grew up with limited means in a big family in Nandigaon village in Jamuria, Asansol, West Bengal. From the first day of school till the last, he never wore a new uniform or studied from a new book. Deep and his four older sisters managed with hand-me-downs and worn-out uniforms, which their mother would somehow patch up for them.

As a boy, Deep managed to finish his education, earning a BSc in botany. Later, he had to stop studying but pursued teacher training and became a primary school teacher.

Deep began by assisting two children in his school, providing them with new books, slates, and other essentials. This small act grew into a huge movement to educate underprivileged children and break the cycle of poverty. Starting in Jamuria district, it expanded to seven more districts in West Bengal, Jharkhand, and even Bangladesh, impacting over 10,000 students.

Called ‘Raster Master’ (teacher of the streets), Deep educates not just children, but also their parents and grandparents.

After finishing his degree, Deep became a primary teacher in 2010. On his first day at school, he felt a strange sense of déjà vu, something he didn’t expect or desire.

“I saw children who came from backgrounds like mine — three to four siblings, no proper jobs for parents, and borrowing old books. These children were going through the same pain and struggle I did while growing up. I didn’t want to see another child face the same hassles as me to get a good education,” he adds.

He started buying new books and slates for two children at his school. The number slowly increased as other children also wanted these shiny books. Most of these children didn't know what a new book or slate even looked like. While the 'Raster Master' tried to buy it for as many children as he could with his own money, he knew that it wasn't something he could continue doing in the long run.

So, he came up with a unique model that would be the first step to what would soon transform into a movement.

Deep started turning the walls of children's homes into blackboards, by painting them. This way, when children returned from school with homework, parents began learning too. He calls it the 3G model — teaching three generations in reverse. The child, often the first learner in the family, teaches parents and grandparents.

He started by converting the mud walls of the houses in the village into classroom walls, where he teaches. By painting small portions of the walls black, he created several blackboards open for learning right at the doorsteps of these children.

While parents were reluctant about sending their children to these classes, he started asking the children to teach their parents. Now, many mothers, fathers and grandparents have learnt enough to write a sentence or their own name. He says this method increases bonding, provides basic education to people regardless of age, and helps the older generation realise the importance of education.

Surojit, a student of Deep's for over seven years, mentions that all the kids eagerly await Deep's visits to their Bankura village. Surojit, now 20 and studying engineering, credits Deep for his significant support. His father does odd jobs, and Surojit will be the first engineer from their village. "We all wait for the Master's arrival, especially the younger kids. He also gets food for us, which the children, who otherwise eat mid-day meals, enjoy very much," he says.

Shalini from Sukhbazar in Howrah is the first from her village to go to Delhi to study. She was sure that she wanted to pursue a degree in psychology and worked towards it. While most girls in her school got married during school or after Class 12, Shalini took Deep's help to convince her parents to pursue her education.

Starting in Jamuria, Deep's initiative gradually expanded to other districts in West Bengal and Jharkhand. He now has a team that trains other teachers as they have students from age 5-50.

The 'Raster Master' education model is almost a zero-investment system with great returns. The teacher says that it costs Rs 100 to convert a street into a classroom. It helps bridge the digital divide for students who can't afford phones, don't have internet and have patchy electricity.

Each child is taught five languages — Bengali, English, Hindi, Urdu and Ol Chiki — through the 5L (language) model. They can read, speak and write in all the languages.

Deep himself is on the streets from 8 am to 8 pm to teach the children. He continues his government teacher job and takes classes before and after school.

He even pays for needy students from his pocket, exhausting all his savings and salary for the cause.

What a dedicated person he is!

Write to us at:

bulletin@finsindia.org

**OFFICE :4, Belle View, Lakhamsi Nappu
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