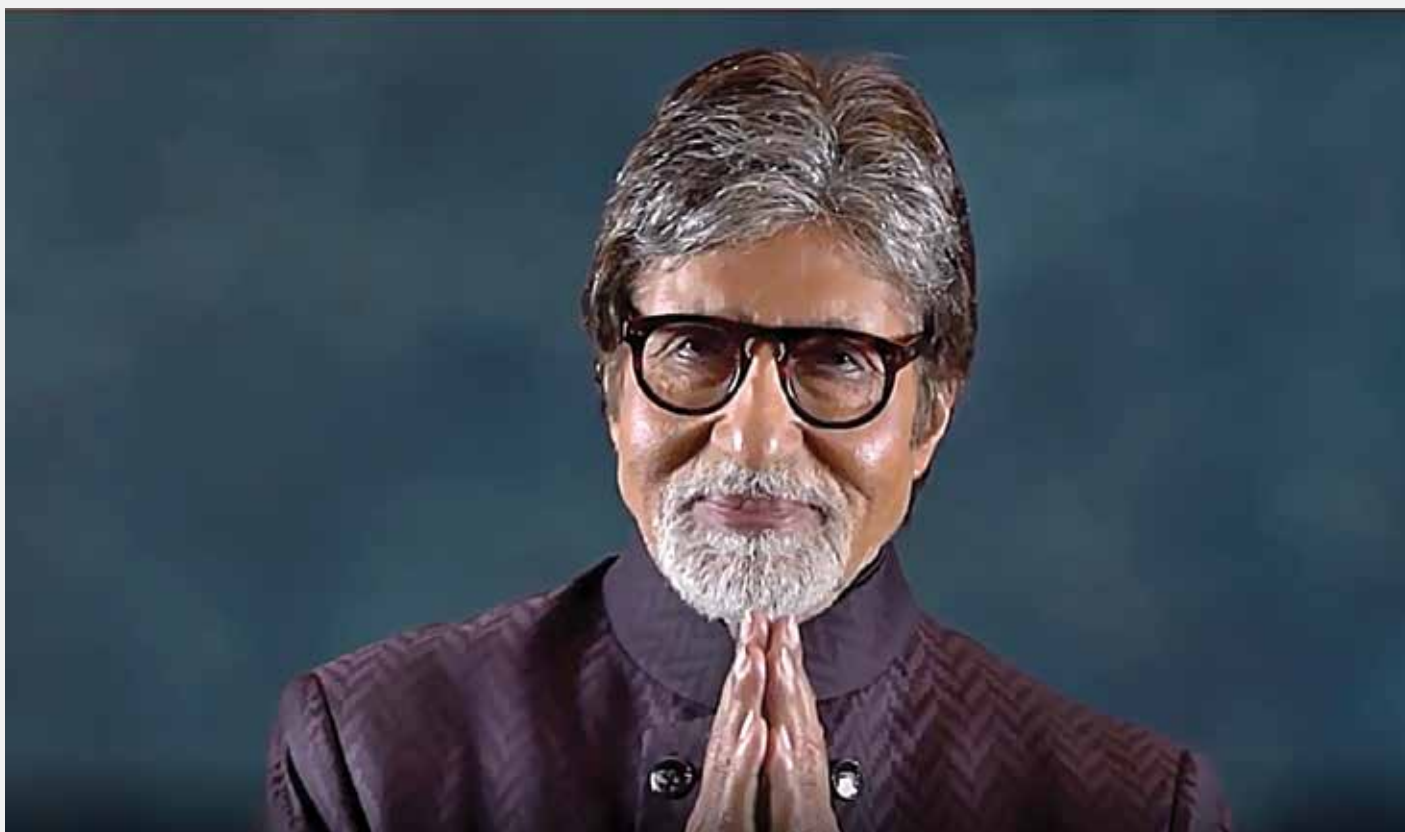


# SPINEWS

THE SPINE FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER



## Mr Amitabh Bachchan talks about The Spine Foundation

"WHEREVER THE ART of medicine is loved, there is also a love of humanity. The faithful man perceives nothing less than an opportunity in difficulties. And faith and courage work together. Such a man faces impossible obstacles at times in order to realise his dream. This is so well manifested at The Spine Foundation."

Can you guess who said these words? On 24th July 2021, Mr Amitabh Bachchan sent out a message on his social media handles that reached out to his followers across the world. He spoke about The Spine Foundation and the work we are doing. In a four-minute speech, he captured the core of our philosophy and explained it as only he can. Mr Bachchan had contacted The Spine Foundation after reading

"HEALTH OF THE  
PEOPLE IS THE HEALTH  
OF THE NATION."

AMITABH BACHCHAN

the last issue of 'Spinews' and offered to spread the word about the foundation. As you know, Mr Bachchan's social handles reach out to millions of people, not just in India but also across the globe. We at the Spine Foundation are honoured and humbled by his kind words. At the end of his message, Mr Bachchan concluded by saying, "Health for the people is the health of the nation. Health for all, must be the fundamental goal of all nations. Let us together work towards, by helping those who have already taken the first vital step. We can, and we must, endeavour to make this possible". If you have missed it you can find it on our Facebook and Instagram pages @thespinefoundation.





## Ambajogai report

ABOUT 500KM EAST of Mumbai is a town known as the 'Pune of Marathwada'. The town was named Ambajogai after goddess Ambabai, whose heritage temple is located here and visited by people from all over Maharashtra. On 21st August 2021, The Spine Foundation had a successful Rural Surgery Camp at the Government Medical College & Hospital in Ambajogai in Maharashtra's Marathwada region, where we performed six spine surgeries and also inaugurated the state-of-art modular Operation Theatre sponsored by The Spine Foundation.



## Investing in online OPDs

AFTER THE SUCCESS of our first online OPD held at Gadchiroli on Christmas Day 2020, the initiative has gained momentum. While this was the result of the travel curbs during pandemic, it has turned out to be a powerful tool for The Spine Foundation to reach out to more people who need our services. A joint initiative of the Spine Foundation, SEARCH and Rehab Team of India, we are now regularly conducting online OPDs at Gadchiroli, Kolhapur and Akola, the dividends of which are being reaped by tribals in this region.

## Back to Gadchiroli

THE SPINE FOUNDATION surgery camp at SEARCH in Gadchiroli held over 31st July - 1st Aug weekend was a big success. The team conducted 12 surgeries, including 5 spine fixations, 2 cervical surgeries, 1 tandem decompression surgery and 3 lumbar surgeries. These are patients with no access to even basic spine care, let alone specialised surgery. Once more, The Spine Foundation brings quality spine care to the poorest, in the remotest part of our country.



## Dharampur, the Cherrapunji of Gujarat



THE SPINE FOUNDATION'S mission is to serve the urban and rural poor scattered across the 3.287 million square kilometres that make up India. For most of these people, making a trip to Mumbai

to access quality spine care is as impossible as a trip to the moon. That is why the Spine Foundation is in the process of setting up Rural Spine Care Centres (RSCC). One such effort is at Dharampur, a small and beautiful town situated east of Valsad on the banks of the Swargavahini River is surrounded by the Western Ghats range on the east, west, and south. The Spine Foundation team conducted its 7th camp at Dharampur, Gujarat on 10th and 11th July 2021. Led by senior spine surgeon Dr Gautam Zaveri along with Dr Tanay Prabhoo and Dr Gajendra Pawal, the team treated 46 patients and conducted three surgeries during this camp held at the Shrimad Rajchandra Hospital. We can reach out to the poor patients who don't have access to spine care thanks to all our donors and patrons.

# Why we need more people like Datta

*By Dr Piyush Gadegone, Rural Spine Fellow, The Spine Foundation.*

OUR VISION OF the peripheral rural outreach program is based on one basic philosophy. For better delivery of spine care, we will include and train local healthcare personnel who are interested in assisting and eventually take over the activities of The Spine Foundation. For any healthcare program to be successful we need strong foot soldiers in the form of healthcare workers who are native to the community and can understand the dialect, problems, sufferings and realities of the community. Even if we parachute the best surgeons and physicians into a rural area, it will be almost impossible to establish rapport and gain the trust of people. This would be jeopardizing the long term goal of the healthcare program. While the doctors are mapping out war games to fight ailments, it is the nurses and healthcare workers who make the conflict bearable with their often-unsung work behind the curtain. What could be a better time to realize this, than the current Covid-19 pandemic!

In our search for ground-level workers in basic spine OPD management, we stumbled upon Dr Dattaram Bhalavi who was working as a medical officer at SEARCH Gadchiroli. Datta, as we fondly call him, comes from humble beginnings from the hinterlands of Amravati District. He truly represents the youth of new aspirational India, who is woke enough to understand his obligation and moral duty to society. He enthusiastically volunteered to be the footsoldier for The Spine Foundation's fieldwork at Gadchiroli.

We invited Datta to Mumbai to join us for a three-month training to learn the ABCs of spine care; from studying the art of seeing spine patients in OPD to diagnosing subtle clinical signs. To make his stay at Mumbai more fruitful he would wash up and assist in complex spine surgeries to understand the fundamental principles of spine surgeries. We participated in interactive lectures about the basics of spine anatomy, neurology testing and clinical presentation of the most common degenerative spine disorders. And identify 'Red and Yellow Flag' patients, to help separate patients coming to the general OPD of SEARCH. Those who needed the opinion of a spine surgeon from those who could be easily treated with basic anti-inflammatory medicines, painkillers and physiotherapy.

Dattaram's helping hands and contribution are a significant addition to improvement in the system and quality of spine care we deliver at Gadchiroli. Earlier we used to conduct a camp once in three months at SEARCH. A few weeks ahead of the camp,



the local healthcare workers through various modes of publicity would announce the arrival of spine specialists for diagnostic camps at SEARCH. On the camp day we would see a crowd numbering hundreds, thronging the gates of Maa Danteshwari Hospital. We could not do justice to such a large number of patients in a single day. People become disillusioned very quickly if they are not treated with respect or given due time in OPD. We had patients who had changed two or three buses, patients who had walked from far to reach the OPD and immobile patients brought in bullock carts. If we were not able to satisfy and meet their expectations of a patient ear and proper clinical examination, it would be grossly wrong at an ethical and moral level. This would also have led to distrust about SEARCH's vision of Arogya Swaraj. 'People's health in people's hands, by empowering individuals and communities to take charge of their own health, and thereby, help them achieve freedom from disease as well as dependence.'

Thankfully with grass-root level healthcare workers like Dr Dattaram, with each passing day, we are inching closer towards our goal of delivering quality spine care for all. Thank you, Datta, "May your tribe grow".



# THE WHY OF SOCIAL SECTOR

WHAT IS THE collective why of the social sector that encompasses all our individual why's? During my many interactions with the young people in the NIRMAN Youth Program that I work with and various other people in the social sector, I see a pattern - most of us have solid reasons for our existence in this sector but very few have actively thought about the overall reason(s) of existence for the entire sector.

In his famous book 'Managing Non-Profit Organizations', Peter Drucker mentions that the primary role of the government sector is to formulate and enact various laws and policies that allow the society to work smoothly. The role of the private sector is to provide a variety of goods and services that people need. He then goes ahead to say that the primary role of the social sector is to create "changed human beings". So for a private actor, when a good is sold (commensurate with expectations) and payment is made, then the job is done. However, the social sector has to delve deeper and look at how to change the way the members of the society think, act, cooperate and come to realize their potential. This makes the social sector's role much exciting and at the same time much more difficult to achieve and assess. The problem here lies at the heart of the very nature of activities and challenges that the social sector is engaged in that are difficult to measure than the 'bottom line'.

Although many people and social organizations have their missions, in the absence of an alignment with a larger guiding framework anything and everything seems permissible, initially even desirable, ultimately leading to unfounded aspirations, scattered actions, persistent confusion and lingering dissatisfaction.

So, for all the trusts, foundations, NGOs, NPOs, social enterprises, charities, movements, etc. the key question is: why the social sector? I propose a six-dimensional overarching framework:

■ Serving the people with essentials for life where markets won't and governments can't operate: Reaching the most vulnerable sections of the society, say marginalized people in rural, tribal regions or urban slums, and providing them critical services is a crucial work of the social sector. Markets won't do that as they are not profitable enough and governments typically find it hard to solve the last mile problem with quality due to

the difficulty of getting capable and committed manpower and creeping losses. This is where the social sector needs to play its role with the approach of 'seva'. Spine Foundation is doing an excellent job at this. The important thing to be kept in mind while engaging in 'Lokseva' is that we are "doing service" and not "providing a service". The latter fits the mental framework of the private sector better. The former is the one expected of the social sector, something that Gandhi would refer to when he would urge to engage in serving the poor (Daridra Narayana) as equivalent to service to God.

■ Empowering people and contributing to human development: Both private and government sectors tend to hold on to power - monetary or bureaucratic power - and concentrate it more and more in their own hands, keeping it away from the common people, who they want to treat as consumers or voters or mere beneficiaries of schemes, without becoming truly autonomous and conscious citizens.

An important role of the social sector is to reduce this imbalance of power, to decentralize and democratize power, and to ensure human development so that people become empowered.

■ Experimenting and innovating various solutions to pressing social problems: Being closer to the community, not being constrained by red tape or the pressures of quarterly profits yield agility and flexibility to social sector organizations. It should be used for developing innovative pilots, creative experiments and personalized solutions to important social challenges. However the rigour of evidence must be established before claiming something as an effective model, else it might be misleading and ultimately hampering the credibility of this sector.

■ Being a whistleblower wherever there is injustice or oppression or corruption: Raising alarm bells and fighting for the rights of people, animals, environment is a crucial role of the social sector.

■ Functioning as a channel of expression for people's desire to contribute to the community:

### The Why of Social Sector

a six-dimensional framework

01

Serving the people

Reaching the most vulnerable sections of the society and providing them critical services where markets won't and governments can't operate

02

Empowering people

To reduce the imbalance of power in the society, to decentralize and democratize it, and to contribute to human development so that people become empowered

03

Experimenting & innovating

Developing innovative pilots, creative experiments and personalized solutions including social, scientific, technological, cultural and environmental for pressing social problems

04

Being a whistle blower

Wherever there is injustice or oppression or corruption, raising alarm bells to lead fighting for the rights of people, animals, environment or on (for) social sector as a group or as individuals

05

Function as channel of expression

Being an organized platform for a large number of people to showcase the desire to contribute to community and build the sense of responsibility towards realizing the speed of the quest of citizens

06

Upholding the values & morals

Being and providing role models of people, institutions or movements that represent the values and morals of the society and ensure the growth of the society of large

By: Amrut Bang

Program Lead - NIRMAN ([www.nirman.org](http://www.nirman.org))

Visiting, Executive Committee - SEARCH ([www.searchforhealth.org](http://www.searchforhealth.org))

Visiting HR, HRD Director

Email: [amrutabang@gmail.com](mailto:amrutabang@gmail.com)

Postal Address: SEARCH, Gadhchiroli, Maharashtra - 442605



Helping others in need is an instinct among people. A vital role of the social sector is to serve as an organized platform for a large number of people to be able to deliver and actualize this desire, whether it's people who work full-time or part-time or volunteer their services or donate money or become supporters of any other kind. By making it easy for people to fulfil their sense of responsibility and contribution to society, social sector institutions serve as vehicles of altruism.

■ Upholding the values and morals through actions and role models that elevate the society: Social sector entities might be involved in a variety of activities (krutee) but one of the most important aspects is the values (vruttee) that those activities promote. That impact is a much larger and long term than the immediate benefits of the activities alone. There are quite a few values and morals that human society and civilization considers important (e.g. courage, sacrifice, benevolence, simplicity, justice, liberty, etc.). Society needs role models of people, organizations and actions that serve as a beacon of these values, restore the community's faith in these values, and elevate the moral height and aspirations of the public at large. This is why we need a Gandhi, a Martin Luther King Jr., Anna Hazare or Greta Thunberg. This also is a great opportunity and responsibility for the actors in the social sector regarding how they decide to live their lives and what sort of message they give through that.

The above six overarching purposes are the raison d'etre for the social sector. They are cause agnostic, broad enough to encompass a variety of initiatives and yet specific enough in the approaches to give us a pointed direction to think about our work and the work of others

in this sector.

The Indian social sector is frequently stretched between state welfare and the market economy. It needs to reassess and solidify its philosophical foundation. The continuous mantra of 'scale' and 'sustainability' that the social sector grapples with these days is also an indication of pressure to become more like the government or the private sector. However, we must question whether that's the core DNA of this sector and should that be our primary aspiration. In a mammoth country like India, any amount of scale achieved is inadequate from the perspective of reaching 1.3 billion. And the government quite visibly keeps on showing the stark limitations of unmanageable scale. So then should achieving scale be

the main motivation of our sector? If at all, we should aim for the scale of impact and not so much the scale of operations and infrastructure. In that light, the sixth dimension of influencing values and morals might be the best bet for the social sector, instead of increasing budgets and multi-centric offices. For the other aspect of sustainability, a business is also sustainable only up to the limit that consumers keep on buying the products at a profitable rate. Today's performance is no guarantee of tomorrow's sustainability. A business has to keep on convincing consumers that it is worth paying money for the products or services. In the case of the social sector, it has to keep on convincing its supporters (and beneficiaries when they pay up part of the cost) that it is worth donating money. So as long as organizations in both sectors can keep income equal or more than the expenditure, they are sustainable. The stamp of (future) unsustainability is not for the social sector alone. Even in the corporate world,

customers can stop buying products, a rival can outperform a company and it can go bust in myriad other ways.

With the society around us changing so rapidly, the social sector does need to reimagine and clarify its goal and investigate the role it would be playing to avoid the feeling of being lost. Instead of becoming more like the government or the private sector, it needs to reflect deeper about its core purpose, its why. That's vital for our continued survival, relevance and success.



**Author Information and Contact Details:**  
Amrut Bang holds degrees in Engineering and Management from India and the USA. After leaving a career in software, he has been working

full-time in the social sector since 2008. He leads the NIRMAN initiative to train the youth as social change makers, and also works as the Joint Director of SEARCH, the nonprofit in the tribal district of Gadchiroli and a collaborator of The Spine Foundation. Amrut is also an RTI activist and has brought about a change in the state government's policy to ensure the availability of doctors in tribal and rural areas. Program Lead - NIRMAN ([www.nirman.org](http://www.nirman.org)). Joint Director - SEARCH ([www.searchforhealth.org](http://www.searchforhealth.org)). Mobile No.: +91-9422501496, Email: [amrutabang@gmail.com](mailto:amrutabang@gmail.com) Postal Address: SEARCH, Gadchiroli, Maharashtra - 442605



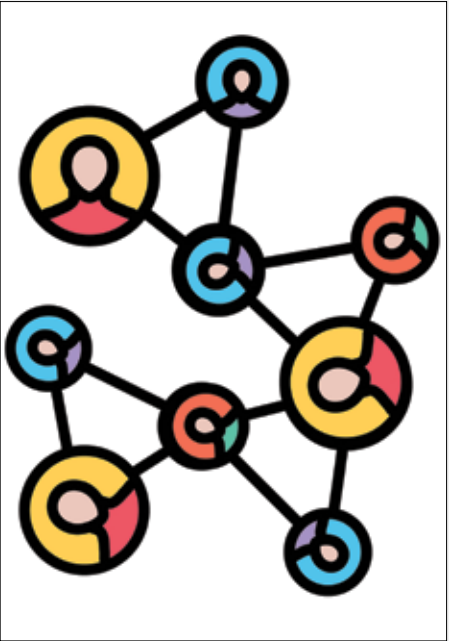
# Giving back to the society

Dr Raghuprasad Varma, Trustee, The Spine Foundation

OVER 2300 YEARS ago, the Greek philosopher and polymath Aristotle said, “What is the essence of life? To serve others and do good”. Being in the medical fraternity makes it easier to contribute to society as good health essentially is a parameter for social well being. Medicine, we know, bridges the gap between science and society, but it’s more than the sum of our knowledge about diseases. Medicine is empathy. Empathy is a gift and this inherent trait that we all possess may be a prerequisite for the goals to be achieved in pursuit of the aim of giving back to the community. The Spine Foundation attempts at doing this by the following principles.

**DECENTRALISE, FOR MORE ACCESS**

In non-communicable diseases like spinal ailments in compromised, or overburdened health care delivery systems the way to provide help will be to strengthen the



grassroots health workers with the power to segregate the locally manageable ailments from the referable ( to the specialist ) cases by the use of “red flags”. Defining modules and protocols and training them in the same may be a significant step ahead. This would sieve off a big group of health seekers in the community, and empower them with preventive mechanisms like exercises, nutrition and lifestyle adjustments in every stratum of society.

**INTERVENE SAFELY AND COST-EFFECTIVELY**



For the rest, who need specialist care, judicious use of investigation and treatment modalities that are accessible and scientifically justifiable will help alleviate the pain and disabilities in many. Whether to intervene in available local facilities or refer to tertiary care is based on the discretion of the health service provider and the specialist in liaison. Practising safe, consistently efficient and cost-effective spine care which is universally applicable may be one of the ways to give back to the community as a spine health care worker.

**DON'T SHUN TECHNOLOGY, BUT ASSIMILATE AND INNOVATE**

Technology may be used to our advantage depending on availability and accessibility. Whether it's by improving communication by online consultation outpatient department even into the far remote inaccessible villages or use of feasible equipment and



modalities to hasten the benefits of treatment in spinal disorders.

**CONNECT, TO DISCONNECT**

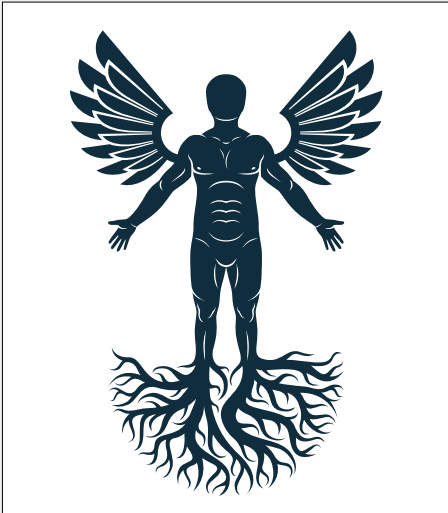
Already existing Government or state-owned facilities which are been under-utilised can be used as portals to extend services to the otherwise underprivileged. Herein, the need for a local, on the ground, oriented, and organised support system, can't be overemphasised. It would help strengthen the pre-existing setups to become self-sufficient in spine care.



**SPREAD YOUR WINGS BY STAYING ROOTED**

The generation next needs to be stimulated and encouraged to the act of giving back to society as part of their training programme. As they grow in their stature and capabilities as a professional, instilling the idea of seeking to help a large part of the community who are underprivileged in their own possible way, is indispensable.

To end, with Mahatma Gandhi's words, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others”.



# The journey from immobility to mobility

While others hesitated, The Spine Foundation took up the challenge.

MRS SUNANDA DESHMUKH is a 40-year woman who lives in a small village in Jalgaon District of Maharashtra. She came to us two weeks after she fell down the stairs in her house. After the fall Sunanda lost power in both her legs, as well as control over her bowel and bladder. She had a complex D12 vertebral fracture with spinal cord compression. She was not able to even move her toes and was completely bedridden. Turning on her side while lying down was also a challenge for her. Before coming to us she was referred to two or three medical centres. However, due to her poor prognosis and risky surgery, they could not treat her. We took this challenge despite knowing all the risks for the larger good of the patient. We operated on her within 24hrs of admission at V.N.Desai Municipal and General Hospital, Santacruz. We fixed her spine and decompressed her spinal cord. Then our rehab team took over. A woman who was unable to turn on her side started sitting up in her bed, the very next day. With the efforts of our surgical and rehab teams, she progressed from sitting to standing with the support of people. After that, from standing with support to standing without support. Then, from standing alone to walking few steps with support. Now she can walk independently with minimal support of braces and can do her daily activities.

Living in a place where specialised medical health is non-existent, Sunanda would have lived her life in bed with pain if not for the intervention of The Spine Foundation. There are millions of other people who need our services. And we are trying our best to make a difference, one patient at a time.







# DR RAJESH NAWALKAR

AMONG THE FINEST Orthopaedic Doctors & Joint Replacement Surgery Doctors in the city Dr Nawalkar is well known for his medical skills. However, few know that he is also an artist. While he uses modern digital technology to give birth to his images, his art remains timeless and classic.

