



“We must be willing to get rid of the life we’ve planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us.”



—Joseph Campbell

Undermining excellence

Higher education is the backbone of any progressive society. Universities are not merely institutions that grant degrees. They are centres where ideas are shaped, research is nurtured and the future leadership of a region is prepared. When such institutions begin to struggle with basic academic resources, it becomes a matter of serious concern. The situation unfolding across universities in Jammu and Kashmir is therefore alarming. Official data reveals that nearly 40 percent of sanctioned teaching posts in the region’s universities remain vacant. Across nine public universities and two central universities, more than 3300 teaching positions are sanctioned. Yet only around 1900 teachers are currently in place. This leaves a wide gap that inevitably affects the quality of education being delivered to thousands of students. The numbers from individual universities paint an even more worrying picture. The University of Jammu is functioning with barely over half of its sanctioned faculty. The University of Kashmir too is facing a shortage of more than one third of its teaching strength. Agricultural universities such as SKUAST-Jammu are grappling with vacancy levels exceeding 40 percent. In some institutions the situation is even more severe. Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University in Rajouri has more than 60 percent of its teaching posts vacant. The Islamic University of Science and Technology has nearly two thirds of its positions unfilled. Such figures indicate that certain universities are operating with barely half of the faculty they are meant to have. This shortage comes at a time when student enrolment remains significant. Universities across Jammu and Kashmir together serve more than 69000 students. Each teacher is therefore forced to handle heavier workloads. Departments struggle to run courses smoothly. Research and academic mentorship often take a back seat when faculty members are overwhelmed with routine teaching responsibilities. The consequences of such a situation are far reaching. A university cannot maintain academic excellence without adequate teachers. Quality teaching requires time for preparation, research guidance and meaningful interaction with students. When faculty numbers fall short, education risks becoming mechanical and limited. For a region like Jammu and Kashmir the stakes are even higher. Higher education has the power to transform societies by opening pathways for employment, innovation and intellectual growth. Universities play a vital role in shaping aspirations of young people and preparing them to compete in a rapidly changing world. Over the past few years there has been much emphasis on improving the higher education landscape across India. National policies have stressed research, innovation and global competitiveness. These goals are important and necessary. But they cannot be achieved without strengthening the foundations of the academic system. The persistent faculty shortage in Jammu and Kashmir universities highlights a gap between ambition and reality. If nearly half the teaching positions remain vacant, the region risks falling behind in the race for academic excellence. Students who deserve the best learning environment may instead find themselves coping with limited resources and overstretched teachers. Addressing this challenge must become an immediate priority. Recruitment processes need to be accelerated and streamlined. The youth of Jammu and Kashmir carry immense potential. Their universities must reflect that promise.

Trump Should Go Voices from India

DR D K GIRI

The American President Donald John Trump is the leader of the most powerful economy and military of the world. The common refrain has been that, “Britain is the oldest democracy, India the biggest and USA is the greatest”. As the 45th President of United States (2017-2021), Trump was acceptable and to some adorable. At the end of his term, Trump, having lost the re-election, nudged his supporters to storm the White House; which raised the eyebrows of many on his democratic spirit and inclinations. On the second term, as he assumed office as the 47th President on January 2025, Trump became a different person, unrecognisable compared to his first term, and intolerable for many.

To confess, until today, I have been a sympathetic supporter of Trump. My perspective was premised on the understanding that Trump may not be articulate in public, not media-savvy, often putting his foot in his mouth, but his actions were directed towards creating prosperity (making money) and building peace in the world. He himself claims that he was instrumental in ending seven wars in his second term. He made a promise to end the Ukraine war soon after he assumed his second term and he unsuccessfully tried. Ironically, he plunged his country into a war against Iran without concretely planning its conclusion.

Trump claimed to finish the Iran war in a few weeks but is still dragging on. In his latest 19-minute address to the nation, he has again claimed to end it soon even without a deal with Iran. But he has also used undiplomatic and harsh words about Iranians. He said, “We will hit them hard and push it back to the stone-age”. This is incomprehensible from the President of United States because, according to him one of the war-objectives was to secure regime change. It is not a war against Iranians. If that is so why such hostile statements against the whole country? In fact, this is my point of departure from Donald Trump’s personality and politics.

The world knows Donald Trump’s to be impetuous and capricious but his abusive language is not acceptable. Once he said that Russia and India are two dead economies. His Vice-President went to a European security conference and called names of European leaders and riled their leadership style. Trump’s utterances about NATO leaders have left the world’s most powerful military alliance on the brink. Now, Trump and his Foreign Secretary Mark Rubio are talking about their continuation in NATO. That is an unfortunate development for NATO.

The context of rethinking American’s NATO membership is the refusal of NATO members to militarily support Trump in Iran war. Trump did not think he would need additional support to subdue Iran. He thought Israel and US could finish the job sooner than later. As Trump increasingly get stuck in the conflict, and in his desperation to free-up Strait of Hormuz, he asked NATO allies to give a hand. Exasperated by Trump’s remarks on European leadership, double talk on Ukrainian war, untenable demand to acquire Greenland, have alienated the NATO allies who are quickly building-up their own defence capability rather depending on USA any longer.

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and non-cooperation from abroad. First, the domestic opposition: criticism against Trump is building up on several fronts. The “No Kings” movement, a coalition of progressive and anti-authoritarian organisations has

are critical of Trump’s leadership style and policies arguing that they are alienating voters and harming the party’s prospects in the 2026 mid-terms. Trump’s approval ratings have fallen with a recent poll showing 38 per

United States. Pakistan went out of his radar. Trump asserted that Pakistan double crossed United States having taken billions of dollars in aid. All that aligned with India’s national interest. Prime Minister Modi had openly de-

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Trump’s foreign policy decisions including his handling of the Iran situation, have raised concerns about his impulsiveness and potential for escalation. In fact, some Republicans

cent support, the lowest this year. There have been sporadic attempts to impeach President Trump.

Internationally, Trump is losing support. Many leaders would like to be aligned with United States but not Trump and they are waiting out his second term. India is one such country. Relations between New Delhi and Washington have been growing steadily for the last two decades. The defence partnership has been deepening. But Trump’s disruptive trade policies namely the whimsical imposition of tariff has put off Indians if not the government. Interestingly, the American courts have overruled Trump’s tariffs. He is continuing with his tariff offensive by invoking Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974. This provision allows the President to impose temporary import surcharges (up to 15 per cent for 150 days) to address “large and serious” balance-of-payments deficits. In his obsession for tariff, he dug-out an Act passed almost five decades before.

In his first term, Trump stood solidly by India taking on China by declaring it has an expansionist and aggressive power. He also treated China as the main (strategic) rival of

declared his support for Trump in his election for the second term in an event called Howdy Modi, a community mega event held on September 22, 2019 at the NRG stadium in Houston, Texas, United States. Indians across the country performed puja (worship), an Indian practice for God’s favour, for the victory of Donald Trump in November 2024.

Sadly for Indians, Donald Trump, for reasons known only to him, is propping-up Pakistan, a terror hub. He has even pushed Pakistan to be the interlocutor in Iran war earlier Pakistan was included in the peace committee for Palestine. One fails to understand Trump’s strategy in pushing Pakistan which is neither acceptable to Iran nor Israel. He calls Modi as one of his close friends yet puts India on the defensive, at least vis-à-vis Pakistan. If Trump is happy for his ego to be massaged by Pakistan, so be it. Islamabad acknowledged Trump’s so-called mediation in Operation Sindoor and even suggested Trump for Noble Peace Prize. Trump is unlikely to change so in the interest of United States and world peace, he should go.—INF

A Law for Parents, A Lesson for Society

LALIT GARGG

In Indian culture, parents have always been regarded as equivalent to gods — “Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava.” This is not merely a scriptural line but the very soul of our social structure. Therefore, it is extremely shameful for any civilized society if parents, who gave birth and devoted their lives to raising their children, have to face neglect, humiliation, and financial insecurity in the evening of their lives, and are forced to seek legal and administrative support to receive maintenance from their own children. Unfortunately, this is becoming a harsh reality of our times. Old age itself is a major challenge. With advancing age, physical strength declines, illnesses increase, and sources of income almost disappear. Whatever little savings people accumulate by the time of retirement are often spent on children’s education, marriages, and building houses. Government employees may still receive pensions, but those associated with the private sector or small businesses often face greater difficulties. In such circumstances, if children do not take care of their parents, it is not merely a family failure but can be considered a social crime.

Keeping these circumstances in mind, the “Telangana Employees Accountability and Parents

Support Monitoring Bill 2026,” passed by the Telangana Assembly, has emerged as an important and historic initiative. The objective of this bill is to ensure that if children fail to take care of their parents, a fixed amount will be deducted from their salaries and given to the parents. This law will apply not only to government employees but also to private sector employees, Members of Parliament, MLAs, and local body representatives. Thus, this law is not merely a legal provision but an attempt to give legal form to social responsibility. Although India already has the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, the new Telangana bill is considered more comprehensive, sensitive, and effective. It provides that if children fail to take care of their parents, then upon complaint, fifteen percent of the salary or ten thousand rupees (whichever is lower) will be deducted and deposited into the parents’ account. The complaint will be resolved within sixty days by the District Collector, and a Senior Citizens Commission will also be formed for this purpose. Another important aspect of this law is that not only biological parents but step-parents can also file complaints.

This law is also significant because the Indian family system is rapidly changing. Joint families have broken down into nuclear families, and now even the concept of single-person families is emerging. Career competition, economic pressures, ur-

ban lifestyle, consumerism, and the growing sense of individual freedom have weakened the traditional family structure. In many cases, parents are sent to old-age homes, and even if they are kept at home, they often face neglect, disrespect, and mental suffering. Sometimes even their medicines, food, and care are neglected. In such a situation, an important question arises — can the service of parents be ensured only through values or is there also a need for law? Ideally, values alone should be sufficient. Indian history and tradition provide many inspiring examples of devotion to parents. The example of Shriavan Kumar is considered an ideal symbol of a devoted son in Indian culture, who carried his blind parents on his shoulders on a pilgrimage. Similarly, Lord Rama accepted exile to honor his father’s promise. These are not merely religious stories but moral ideals of Indian society.

In history, personalities like Chhatrapati Shivaji, Mahatma Gandhi, and Swami Vivekananda also demonstrated deep respect and devotion towards their parents. This clearly shows that respect and service towards parents have always been the core spirit of Indian culture. However, as values weaken today, society is compelled to take the support of law. But it would not be appropriate to view this issue from only one side. It is also true that sometimes parents impose excessive discipline, control, and expectations on their children. They

want their children to live strictly according to their wishes and not make independent decisions regarding marriage, career, or lifestyle. Sometimes parents interfere excessively in their children’s personal lives, which creates tension within the family. In such situations, distance increases between parents and children, and the family environment becomes stressful.

Therefore, the solution to this problem is not only law but also balance, dialogue, and mutual understanding within the family. Children should understand that their parents devoted their entire lives to them, and therefore serving and respecting them in old age is their moral duty. At the same time, parents must also understand that times have changed and the new generation has a different lifestyle and mindset; therefore, they must learn to understand their children and give them independence. In reality, a family is an institution that runs on love, sacrifice, respect, and dialogue — not merely on authority and discipline. Where there is only authority, there will be conflict; where there is only sacrifice, there will be imbalance; but where there is love and balance, the family will be strong.

The Telangana law is an important initiative, but it is not the final solution. Law can compel children to maintain their parents, but it cannot create love, respect, and sensitivity. For that, society needs moral education, family values, and social

awareness. Schools, social organizations, and religious institutions should teach respect and care for parents and elders. Today, we talk about a “New India” and a “Developed India,” but economic development alone is not sufficient. If the elderly in society remain insecure, neglected, and humiliated, development will remain incomplete. True development is that in which every section of society — children, youth, women, and the elderly — can live a secure and dignified life.

Therefore, it is necessary to work on three levels: First, the government and laws should ensure the economic and social security of the elderly. Second, values of respect and service towards parents should be developed in society. Third, balanced and dialogue-based relationships should be established between parents and children within families. If these three levels become strong, not only will the lives of the elderly become secure and dignified, but the family institution will also become stronger and human values will remain alive in society. It can certainly be said that parents are not just a part of the family — they are the roots of the family. If the roots are weak, the tree will also be weak. Therefore, respect and protection of the elderly is not merely a family or legal issue, but a test of the morality and civilization of society. A society that does not respect its elders can never become truly great.