

## TRUMP'S TRUMPETTING

US President Donald Trump's unsolicited remarks about other country's leaders has pushed diplomatic etiquette and public decency a few notches down. Everyone around him is embarrassed. He gets into fits and makes remarks about leaders – at times charitable, the other time derogatory. He has made laudatory comments about one leaders one day and most insulting remarks against the same the next day. After Operation Sindoor, he unnecessarily pushed himself into the India-Pakistan tension claiming that Prime Minister Modi spoke to him and sought his intervention to ask Pakistan to agree to a ceasefire. This was a total lie and fabricated. It's another matter that the same Trump said Pakistan had begged him to stop India from bombarding their air bases, the other day. The fact is that the DGMO of Pakistan had called up his Indian peer to convey his request for a ceasefire. India had no problem in agreeing to it as it had already achieved its target in Operation Sindoor. However, later PM Modi questioned Trump's version in their telephonic talk and the latter said India has never asked for a ceasefire.

This time, Trump has tried his trick with a wrong person – Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. He told a reporter during press conference that at the G-7 meet in France, Meloni begged him to allow her to take a picture with him and thanked him for this kindness. The fact is there was footage of Meloni speaking sharply to Trump on the sidelines of the Conference. The Italian Prime Minister gave it back to Trump. She appeared on social media and told the world Trump was making up the story. One wonders if Trump ever feels embarrassed or he leaves it to the officials around him. Trump even tried this one-upmanship with the Japanese Premier Sanae Takaichi when he told a reporter at a press conference that Japanese Prime Minister was impressed with him and praised him profusely. Trump is becoming an embarrassment for the US.

## The empire forgets, Iran remembers

Bhopinder Singh

FIFA's 20th-ranked team, ie, Iran, is not amongst the frontrunners to win the 2026 Football World Cup. Yet it is amongst the most talked-about teams participating. Much like the nation in the midst of its war with the United States of America and Israel, it is built around a solid control framework, with a highly defensive ability to counterpunch and transition through its battle-hardened players. It can spring surprises when least expected.

Perhaps the most symbolically poignant image to come out of the tournament was the sight of Iranian footballers wearing "#168" lapel pins, a silent homage to the memory of 168 schoolgirls killed in the deadly missile airstrike by the United States of America on a school in Iran. It was a continuation of an effort to memorialise the conscience and wounds imagined by a hurt (but not defeated) people. Weeks earlier, Iranian footballers had movingly held up pink and purple school backpacks while their national anthem played in a warm-up game in Turkey. Even Team Melli's (Iranian National Football Team) anthem is a telling ode to perseverance, pride and fighting spirit, with the evocative lyrics "until the last breath".

In Shi'a sensibility, symbolism and remembrance of suffering are fundamental because they keep alive the memory of Karbala and the moral struggle against injustice, wherein Karbala becomes the universal metaphor, as every age has its Husayn and its oppressors (in this case, the United States of America). The emotional power of grief, martyrdom and historical memory gives Shiite religious culture much of its distinctive character and resilience. Therefore, the emergence of a popular phrase, "Angels of Minab", serves to internalise and institutionalise the tragic loss in national character and



conscience. But such profound religious-cultural nuance is not expected to cut ice with an insensitive ignoramus like the President of the United States of America, Donald Trump. In the deep recesses of Iranian-Shiite belief systems, never (ever) forgetting and preserving memory is viewed as a way of giving enduring meaning to loss.

When two conflicting nations contest, each carries a book of grievances where the first page is never the same. Very selectively and conveniently, the American imagination of the tensions starts with the Iranian Revolution in 1979 in order to begin where innocence is easiest to claim.

For the Iranian psyche, the US's unwarranted meddling in its internal affairs started much earlier, in 1953, when a CIA-inspired coup deposed a popular nationalist, Mohammad Mosaddeq. For proud Iranians, the wound was not just the American interference but the deep-

rooted sense that it was never fully acknowledged, let alone atoned for. History moved on; Iranian memory of humiliation and hurt did not.

There are countless instances of Americans dishonouring the Iranian nation, and yet those never feature in the Western narrative. From supporting the Shah's dictatorial excesses, to supporting Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq War (despite the known usage of chemical weapons), shooting down Flight 655 that killed 290 innocent civilians, perpetuating debilitating sanctions, reneging unilaterally on the Iran Nuclear Deal despite Iran meeting all provisions of the agreement, to killing the likes of General Qasim Soleimani, who was at the forefront of taking on ISIS – these remain unhealed scars that haunt the Iranian psyche, especially the fact that Americans act as if these incidents never happened. Little wonder that while the average ignorant American wonders why Iranians distrust

them so much, the average Iranian wonders why Americans are surprised at the lack of trust at all. Empires remember the wound; others remember the hand that struck first.

The role of hurt and suffering is integral to Shiite identity. They unfailingly remember the suffering endured by Ali ibn Abi Talib, Fatimah, Hasan ibn Ali, Husayn ibn Ali, the family of the Holy Prophet after Karbala, etc. In many ways, these footballers seek to immortalise the sacred memory of 168 little lives by identifying emotionally with their worldly absence as part of their "martyrological" worldview.

For the overwhelming Shia majority in Iran, memory (Dhikr) is a moral duty – the lesson of Karbala is: "never forget what happened when people looked away". That is exactly the message these Iranian footballers bring to television screens as they beseech the fleeting humanity in most, who would rather "forget the past and move on", as is the wont of modern times. However, for the Iranian Milli, the players may wear the jersey. The 168 little schoolgirls wear the memory. Together, they walk onto the pitch and shame a boorish Empire.

Following the much-banded peace talks, a semblance of normalcy may return before trust returns. Nations can sign peace treaties, but in a civilisational land like Iran, memories are respected, nurtured and carried for generations. The world at large may see the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and the resumption of flight routes when the war finally ends and the guns fall silent, but historical wounds will fester and endure until they are acknowledged. History is equally instructive that a small-spirited and uncouth leader like Donald Trump will never admit the wrong and injury inflicted upon Iranian pride. Thankfully, the Iranian football team is seemingly cut from a better cloth, and they will never forget.

## THE SILENT BURDEN OF MODERN EDUCATORS

Sakshi Sethi

A teacher walks into the classroom with much more than just textbooks and lesson plans. With academic duties come expectations from various sources: parents, students, school administrators, coordinators, policymakers and society at large. Every stakeholder has unique desires, but they all view the teacher as the individual accountable for achieving outcomes. The contemporary educator has emerged as the focal point of an increasingly intricate educational environment. Although society frequently acknowledges the value of education, it often fails to recognise the significant pressure on those responsible for providing it.

Parents expect personalised attention and care for their children. School administrators look for academic excellence, discipline, innovation and measurable outcomes. Coordinators focus on curriculum implementation, assessment schedules and regulatory compliance, while authorities expect schools to follow prescribed guidelines and policies. Society, in turn, places the responsibility on teachers to nurture responsible and value-driven citizens. Amid all these expectations, learners themselves seek an education that is engaging, personalised, comfortable and meaningful. Amidst all these expectations



is a teacher striving to balance various demands while staying effective, motivated and emotionally present.

Discussions about education often focus on students, infrastructure, technology and curriculum reforms. Yet one vital question remains unanswered: Who is looking after the teachers? A teacher's work does not end with the final school bell. Lesson planning, assessments, reports, meetings and parent communication continue long after classroom hours.

While technology was meant to simplify teaching, it has often added to the workload, leaving less time for meaningful teaching and student interaction.

The situation becomes even more complex because every stakeholder in the school system operates under pressure. School heads answer to managements, governing bodies, regulatory authorities and parents. Coordinators and department heads are expected to ensure curriculum delivery, maintain academic stan-

dards, monitor assessments, support teachers, address parent concerns and translate institutional policies into classroom practice. Yet educational leadership cannot be limited to monitoring deadlines, reports and performance data. Effective leaders are not merely supervisors; they are facilitators, mentors and advocates for their teachers.

The strongest schools are not only those with impressive infrastructure or high examination results, but those where leaders understand that teacher well-being directly affects student learning. Teachers who feel trusted, supported and valued are more likely to teach with confidence, creativity and commitment.

Society expects teachers to build resilience, inspire creativity and shape future leaders, yet often overlooks their own well-being. Burdened by growing administrative demands, many educators receive limited support for their professional and emotional growth.

A school's success should be measured not only by results, but also by teacher satisfaction, retention and workplace well-being. The future of education depends on recognising a simple truth: teachers are not machines designed to absorb unlimited pressure. If students are to flourish, we must first support those who stand at the front of the classroom.

## Empowering widows to rebuild their lives with dignity and independence

Rajinder Paul Loomba

I was only 11-year-old when my father Jagiri Lal Loomba died of tuberculosis, leaving my mother, Shrimati Pushpa Wati Loomba, widowed with seven children. My mother became a widow at the early age of 37. Despite the immense challenges my mother faced, she ensured that all her children received a good education. Her strength and resilience inspired me to lifelong determination to ensure that widows are treated with dignity and given opportunities for economic independence and social inclusion. Forty three-year later, in 1997 I founded The Loomba Foundation, with the mission of supporting widows and educating their children in memory of my late mother, who was my inspiration. In 1999, the then Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, launched our project to educate children of poor widows in India. To date the Loomba Foundation has educated over 10,000 children of poor widows in all the 30 states of India. Each beneficiary was given a monthly scholarship of ₹500 for a period of five years. This amount included school uniform, lunches, healthcare and sustenance amount for the mother. Over the years, the Foundation has de-

veloped pioneering programmes focused on education, empowerment and advocacy. More than 10,000 children of poor widows have received educational scholarships, helping to break cycles of poverty and social exclusion. The Foundation has also empowered over 20,000 widows through vocational training programmes in areas including tailoring, food processing, healthcare, hospitality and computer education.

These initiatives have enabled widows to become financially independent and rebuild their lives with dignity. I believe that widowhood should never condemn a woman to poverty, isolation or humiliation. The Foundation's work has extended across India and internationally, with activities in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America. In recognition of its global impact, The Loomba Foundation was granted Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Widows are treated badly in South Asia, Africa and other parts of the world. In some cases, they have to deal with murder, rape, prostitution, forced marriage, property theft, eviction and social isolation. There are an estimated 285 million widows worldwide and of these 100 million live in poverty and 81 million



have been abused physically, psychologically and even sexually.

Perhaps our most historic achievement has been the establishment of International Widows Day. The campaign began in 2005 when the Foundation formally launched International Widows Day at the House of Lords in London. The aim was simple but ambitious – to bring global attention to the plight of widows and mobilise governments, international organisations and civil society to act.

That followed a tireless five-year international campaign. International events were held across several countries to raise awareness of what he described as the "invisible suffering" of widows. The campaign gathered support from influ-

ential global personalities, including former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Cherie Blair, Hillary Clinton, Yoko Ono and leaders from several nations.

The breakthrough came on December 22, 2010, when the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted 23 June as United Nations International Widows Day. The first official UN-recognised observance took place on June 23, 2011, at UN Headquarters in New York. This landmark achievement ensured that widows' rights and welfare would no longer remain invisible on the global agenda. Today, International Widows Day is observed annually around the world, highlighting the social, economic and human rights challenges faced by widows and their dependents.

As a member of the House of Lords, I have continued to champion widows' rights at every opportunity. My advocacy has helped redefine widowhood not simply as a social issue, but as a major human rights and development concern. Through research publications, interna-

tional conferences and grassroots programmes,

over 20,000 widows in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa, Malawi, Guatemala and Chile have so far benefited from the Loomba Foundation empowerment programmes, breaking the cycle of deprivation and transforming their prospects.

In India, the Loomba Foundation, in partnership with the US India Friendship Alliance, a charitable arm of the US India Strategic Partnership Forum, started a 'Prosperity for Widows Project' to empower 5,000 marginalised widows in the state of Uttar Pradesh on January 1, 2023.

Loomba Foundation's Varanasi project to empower 5,000 widows was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2016. That project not only helped the widows but it also supported 50,000 of their children and family members. Each widow has received training in tailoring for two months. Once the training was completed, the Foundation gave each beneficiary a sewing machine so that they could start their own business or work in a factory to earn money, become self-reliant and be able to educate their children and sup-

port their family members.

Modi, who represents Varanasi in the Lok Sabha, had said: "I met Lord Loomba about a year ago in Delhi and he mentioned that his foundation would like to support 5,000 widows in Varanasi. I commend their work and feel happy that both of them are present at this event here today". The "World Widows Report" presented to him; was the most authoritative and comprehensive country-wise data source on the plight of widows. The Report revealed that the number of widows in the world has gone up by 9 per cent since 2010. There are over 258 million widows and their 585 million children worldwide. Later,

I appealed to the Prime Minister that "since there are over 46 million widows and over 100 million children in India who need support from all of us as individuals, policy makers and corporates alike, the Government should establish a 'National Commission for Widows' to help them."

Unless the Government comes forward to help widows, India will never be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, which have been signed by all the governments, including India, at the 69th General Assembly of the United Nations in New York in September 2015.