

INDIA'S SOFT POWER

Long before India was selling Pinakas and Brahmos to the world, it's culture, traditions and ancient wisdom has been recognized an intangible contributions to the development of civilization and humankind. However, times have changed and today, India along with its growing economy and firepower including the production of arms and missiles, etc is an established soft power giant. Often referred to as "Chai and Yoga", the soft image has got further magnified due to social media. The International Yoga Day which commemorates the ancient wellness form developed by sages and documented so well in scriptures, is one major Indian thing. Yoga's rising popularity ever since June 21 is earmarked as IYD, has not only enhanced the image of India, it has also create jobs and opportunities for the youth. Today all over the world cities, government, organizations help morning Yoga camps in almost all major cities, towns, deserts, and top of the snow-clad peaks. The beauty of Yoga is that it's not an elitist wellness regiment, it's available to all. On the June 21, 2026, Indian enthusiasts participated in numbers in public display of Yog asnas. Often leaders too joined them.. Given the popularity of Yoga, India has to devise some mechanism whereby its essence is not diluted.

PAHALGAM ATTACK

The National Investigation Agency has revealed the lacunae in the system which led to the Pahalgam terrorist attack. The latest FIR filed in the court on this makes several revelations about the security lapses. The main point that emerged from charge sheet is that the arms for the terrorists to carry out killings were supplied by Pakistan through drone payloads dropped in the most unlikely places on the LOC. The charge sheet explains that the security agencies over dependence on technical surveillance and not human intelligence had cost us dear. This surely needs to be looked into.

The care economy: India's invisible growth engine

Anuradha P S | Divyashree

In all cities and towns in India, an unseen economy operates behind the markets and formal workplaces: the economy of care. Nearly three times more than men's 97 minutes (NSSO), women spend 299 minutes per day on unpaid care work. This encompasses paid domestic work, elder care, childcare, and unpaid domestic labour within households, which helps millions of households to operate. However, despite contributing 15-17 per cent of India's GDP, care work is undervalued, unmeasured and poorly supported, with implications for gender equality, labour markets and social policy. Care is infrastructural labour, as it allows for paid work in various sectors. Women spend 16.9 per cent of their day in unpaid domestic work, and 2.6 per cent of their day in caregiving; men spend much less. However, this facilitating function tends not to be reflected in GDP or employment. The outcome is continuing policy neglect: investment that enhances care systems is viewed as a secondary objective of economic policy and not a priority.

The invisible care burden is most pronounced among the 'sandwich generation' of working people, particularly married people aged 35-54, who are caring for their children and ageing parents while also working.

The sandwich generation is plagued by higher healthcare and education costs, an ever-increasing need for loans and credit cards, inflation, and the desire for a better life. There will almost certainly be nearly three times the number of people in the 'sandwich generation' looking after 1.9 billion elderly family members worldwide by 2050. In India, women undertake most informal care work. Female participation in the labour force in India is 37 per cent, compared with the world average of 47.8 per cent. The growth of a strong care economy has the potential to drive FLPR to global levels, generating up to \$770 billion in GDP gains by 2025 (McKinsey). Approximately 4.2 million domestic workers are employed as caregivers, with no training or protection, many of whom are



women from marginalised castes and migrant backgrounds. Such labourers do not have labour rights, social security or decent working conditions.

Economic and social costs
The absence of care has tangible impacts. Women's unpaid caring duties have negative effects on women's labour force participation, mobility and wages. The sandwich generation is just one example of this crisis: 76 per cent of them worry about becoming financially dependent on their children, while 71 per cent admit to fearing loneliness, even though 55 per cent feel secure about future family support. The added out-of-pocket costs for families who purchase private services or choose not to work are greater when they do not have reliable care options. Thirty-eight per cent of the sandwich generation are confident they will have enough saved to cover more than 10 years of retirement. When employees face multiple care crises, there are indirect costs to employers, including absenteeism and unproductive overtime. At the macro level, when care is not recognised, it limits human capital development and the effective use of the workforce.

Marketising care isn't the only answer
The market for care in India has been growing in recent years, with the introduction of day-care centres, private elder care homes, and app-based domestic worker platforms. Markets can increase access and generate paid employment, but can, if left unchecked, exacerbate inequality. Platformisation may perpetuate low wages and informal working conditions; privatised care is less of an option for some. In the absence of regulation, the market can

cement fragile forms of employment and diversify responsibility for quality and safety.

Western lessons for India

Western countries provide contrasting models that India can learn from and adapt to its context. Along with generous parental leave, parents in Sweden also receive subsidised childcare, which places them among the top countries in the OECD in terms of childcare benefits. Funded training programmes to skill and certify care workers, ensure quality and career progression, have been introduced in Canada. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in Australia sees care as an economic growth driver, with it forming part of national economic planning. In terms of public spending, OECD countries average 0.75 per cent of GDP on childcare, whereas the US invests only 0.33 per cent, which is less than half the average. Iceland is the highest-spending OECD country on childcare, spending five times more than the US.

These models suggest that investment in public funding for care brings higher employment and greater workforce participation, and results in decent employment, while funding only by the private sector leads to greater inequalities and reproduces low-wage informal employment.

Policy levers that work

Public investment, regulation and cultural change are needed to recognise and support care. Key policy levers:

Public provisioning: Increase affordable, high-quality childcare and after-school care and develop community-based elder-care services. Public centres alleviate private costs and create formal jobs.

Labour protections: Formalise protections and social security for domestic workers and care workers, such as minimum wages, contracts, access to pensions and health insurance.

Expanding paid family leave and flexible working options: Extend paid parental

leave for both parents; create leave options for caregivers; and do not penalise career advancement for flexible working hours or telework.

Time-use measurement: Periodically gather time-use data, quantify and make unpaid care visible in policy discussions and budget decisions.

Fiscal prioritisation: Set aside funding lines for care workforce development and care services; consider care as infrastructure.

Incorporate targeted programmes for middle-aged adults who are juggling care responsibilities for both parents and children.

Examples from Indian states
Community health workers, public anganwadis and school-based programmes have helped to alleviate household burdens. Pune and Bengaluru have introduced public day-care facilities and elder-care helplines as examples of how local governments can open up new space.

Reframing care as investment

The key change required is one of concept: shifting the perspective from care being a personal responsibility or duty to care being public infrastructure and an economic input. Government and employer investment in care services and consideration of care workers leads to higher labour force participation, better child and elder outcomes, and enhanced resilience in times of crisis, such as a pandemic or a climate shock. A strong care economy can help India achieve its goal of increasing FLPR from 37 per cent to 47.8 per cent, thereby generating \$770 billion in GDP benefits.

A policy imperative for India

In India, the issue of care policy is imperative given demographic and labour market changes. The population is becoming older, while more educated women and increasing urbanisation will increase demand for organised care.

Without policy intervention, this imbalance in the burden of care will persist, slowing women's economic progress and maintaining the informal workforce. Care is the backbone of the economy. It's not about charity; it's about good public policy to make it visible and investable.

REDISCOVERING HOPE, PURPOSE AND LIFE

Boddapati Chandrasekhar

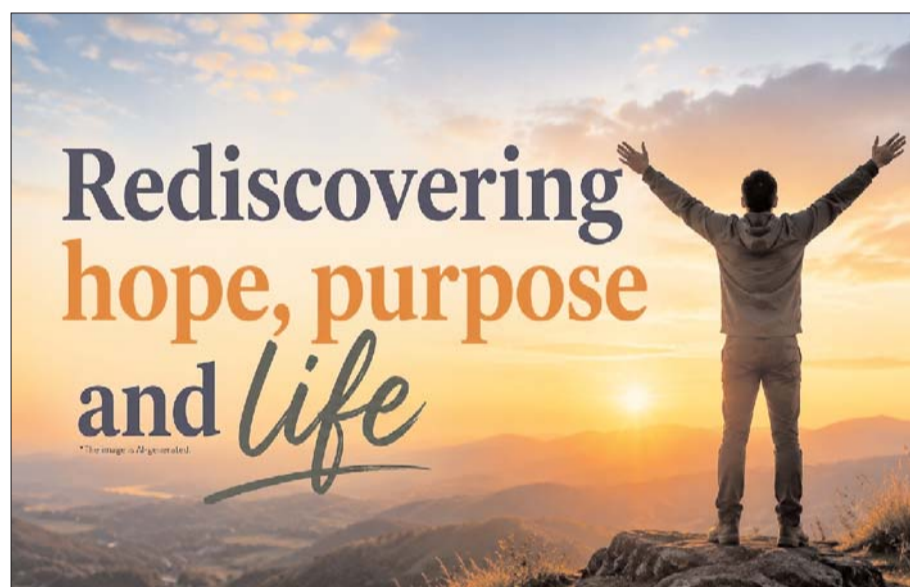
Life is not meant for dying. It is meant for living and letting others live," a writer once said. Very thought-provoking words these are! They contain a profound philosophy about the very purpose of human existence on this earth.

Life is not a burden imposed upon man, nor is it a meaningless journey moving helplessly towards death. It is a rare gift meant to be lived meaningfully, wholeheartedly and with a sense of awareness. To live life "to its absolute fullness" naturally leads us to the understanding that life itself is a celebration.

Here, celebration does not merely mean pleasure, amusement or uninterrupted happiness. It means accepting life in all its hues and rhythms. It means participating wholeheartedly in the flow of existence.

A person who lives meaningfully learns to cherish relationships. He values human bonds, understands emotions and discovers beauty even in ordinary moments. He learns from suffering, delights in small joys and gradually acquires emotional balance. That is where a person's true courage, wisdom and intellect lie.

Life is a blend of joys and sorrows. Light and darkness follow one another. The dazzling light gradually fades into darkness, and even pitch darkness, in the course of



time, must yield to penetrating light. Neither is permanent. This is the eternal law of nature.

Human beings gladly welcome happiness and revel in it. But when sorrow strikes, many lose their peace of mind. Unable to bear pain and disappointment, they become emotionally unstable and begin to view death as an escape.

At such critical moments, the wisdom gained through experience, the values nurtured from childhood, the strength im-

parted by education and even ordinary common sense seem to disappear. Man completely loses his sense of judgement.

"Man is a wonderful creation. In all of living creation, he is the most supreme, powerful and resourceful," said Shakespeare.

Indeed, among all living beings, man alone is blessed with an extraordinary power of thought. From the days of the primitive caveman to the modern technological age, humanity has undergone as-

tonishing evolution and unimaginable transformation. Through his ever-sharpening intellect, man has achieved remarkable progress in knowledge, science, civilisation and technology.

Yet, a disturbing question remains.

When sorrows surround him, why does man fail to display the same maturity and mental strength? Why does such a brilliant mind lose its resilience in moments of distress? Does he forget that troubles are temporary? Does he fail to realise that no night lasts forever?

This beautiful life must be lived until its very end.

We must protect our families, nurture our relationships and keep our loved ones safe and flourishing.

Only then can we truly taste the sweet nectar of life. We must preserve our great civilisation, artistic brilliance and precious literature, passing them on to future generations. The humane qualities within man must multiply. He must grow into a person of wisdom, compassion and discernment.

If such a transformation takes place, could there be any heaven greater than this very earth?

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Dropping the 'Indo': What America's Pacific Pivot means for India

Kripa Nautiyal

When the United States Department of Defence quietly announced the reversion of its largest combatant command from U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) back to U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM), on the eve of the multilateral G7 summit, it framed the change as administrative housekeeping - a tribute to the command's heritage dating to 1947. Few in Washington's diplomatic circles bought that explanation. Fewer still in New Delhi.

The deletion of a single prefix - "Indo" - unravels nearly a decade of carefully constructed strategic signalling. When the Trump administration inserted that word in 2018, it was a deliberate geopolitical act, stitching together two oceans into one theatre and formally positioning India as a central pillar of American grand strategy. The Biden and early Trump years built upon that architecture. The 2026 reversion dismantles it. This is not bureaucratic tidying. It is a recalibration of American priorities - and India must read it as such.

From a grand strategic vision, the focus has been reduced to a tactical level. The "Indo-Pacific" concept was born

of ambition. It was designed to dissolve the artificial boundary between East and South Asia, draw India into a unified strategic matrix, and signal to Beijing that the entire arc from the Persian Gulf to the Pacific was under coordinated American attention. It was, at its core, an exercise in expansive geopolitical engineering.

That era is over. The contemporary security environment has forced Washington into hard choices. With finite military resources stretched across Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia simultaneously, the Pentagon can no longer sustain the pretence of uniform strategic engagement across such an enormous canvas. By reverting to Pacific Command, Washington is making a pointed admission: the acute military challenge from China is concentrated not across the vast Indian Ocean, but in the tight geography of the Western Pacific - the Taiwan Strait, the South China Sea, the First Island Chain.

This is a shift from geographic breadth to operational precision. American command structures, logistics chains, and deployment doctrines are being optimised for one scenario above all others - a high-intensity conflict with China in the Pacific, fought

alongside formal treaty allies Japan and the Philippines. The Indian Ocean, and by extension India, falls outside that primary frame.

There seems to be bilateral friction beneath the surface. However, Pentagon officials have been swift to reassure New Delhi that the command's geographic boundaries and force allocations remain technically unchanged. These assurances deserve scrutiny. The timing and manner of the announcement - dropped on the eve of key multilateral engagements of the G7 - suggest that Washington is comfortable sending an uncomfortable message.

The India-U.S. relationship has been drifting into more transactional territory for some time. India's refusal to condemn Russia's actions in Ukraine, its continued economic engagement with sanctioned states, and persistent disputes over trade and tariffs have quietly cooled what was once described as the "defining partnership of the 21st century." The rebrand does not cause this friction - but it mirrors it. When Washington decides to excise "Indo" from its most consequential military command without prior bilateral consultation, it signals that New Delhi's symbolic centrality to American strategy has limits.

Nowhere is the structural consequence of this shift more visible than in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. The Quad - comprising the U.S., India, Japan, and Australia - was positioned as the premier framework for maintaining a "free and open Indo-Pacific." That framing now looks increasingly hollow.

The Quad's core vulnerability has always been its internal contradictions. Japan and Australia are formal U.S. treaty allies with high military interoperability and shared threat perceptions. India is neither. New Delhi has consistently and correctly resisted transforming the Quad into a hard military alliance or an "Asian NATO." India's security calculus remains predominantly land-based - shaped by volatile borders with both Pakistan and China - while its Quad partners view the challenge through a maritime, expeditionary lens.

Washington has drawn its own conclusions. The rapid maturation of AUKUS - the trilateral submarine and technology-sharing pact between the U.S., UK, and Australia - and the deepening institutionalization of the U.S.-Japan-South Korea trilateral alliance reveal where American strategic investment is actually flowing. These are tight, legally binding, technologically

integrated arrangements built for hard deterrence. The Quad, by comparison, has gradually pivoted toward softer functional cooperation: vaccine delivery, climate technology, and infrastructure financing. Useful, but strategically peripheral. The security architecture of the Quad has been quietly hollowed out, and the USPACOM reversion makes that hollowing official. For New Delhi, the retirement of the Indo-Pacific command title is a moment of strategic clarification - uncomfortable, but ultimately useful. Three implications stand out.

The most direct operational signal from Washington is that the U.S. expects India to serve as the primary, self-sufficient security provider across the Indian Ocean Region. American forces are anchoring westward in the Pacific. The maritime corridors stretching from the Bab-el-Mandeb to the Malacca Strait - critical for global energy flows and Indian trade - will increasingly be India's responsibility to secure. This demands urgent acceleration of naval modernisation, expanded maritime domain awareness, and a credible net-security-provider posture across the arc of littoral states in India's neighbourhood. India's long-standing doctrine of strategic autonomy - often

criticised in Washington as fence-sitting - looks considerably wiser in hindsight. If the United States can unilaterally reshape its strategic geographic definitions based on shifting domestic priorities, then India's insistence on keeping its options diversified is entirely justified. A country that had subordinated its foreign policy to the Indo-Pacific framework would now find itself structurally exposed. New Delhi's investments in relationships with the Global South, its engagement with middle powers, and its refusal to be locked into exclusive alignments are not liabilities - they are insurance.

The most sobering implication concerns India's northern borders. The notion that India's maritime partnership with the West could generate effective leverage against Chinese pressure along the Line of Actual Control was always somewhat illusory. The USPACOM reversion strips away what remained of that illusion. Washington's hyper-focus on the Pacific theatre means that India's multi-front friction with Beijing - on land, in the Himalayas, and increasingly in the Indian Ocean through China's expanding naval presence - must be managed through India's own diplomatic and military tools.