

FALL OF A GOD!

Even legends fall in their weaker moments, or why else would A R Rehman pretend to be a victim of "power shift" in the film industry and not get work. Rehman is God of Music for majority of Indians. His music broke conventions and records and a young musician became a household name. Maa tujhe salaam gives goose bump each time it is played on radio or TV. The audiences didn't care what his religion was as long as he gave exquisite and soulful music. His remark to the BBC in a recent interview that his religion was coming in the way of his getting work in the Indian film industry was a shocker, for common people have idolized Rehman and loved his music. As they say change is the only constant in the world, he too must accept this that there are new players and talented people coming up in the industry. Like he did in his younger days, are bringing in new energies and genre of music to the delight of the audience. To call such people "those who were not talented as in the business" raises a question at the integrity of Rehman. One becomes great not only by showing off extraordinary talent but also through his temperament and the ability to give respect and acknowledge others. Rehman has come up with an explanation bordering on clarifying his remarks, but the damage is done. The damage is not only to Rehman's reputation but also to the trust that audiences had in time. Was he trying to use the cheap trick of "victim card". The very idea is cringe, for nobody wants the God of Music to fall so low. Artistic talent is manifestation of Godliness; it has nothing to do with religion of the maker of the listener, especially in India or why would the majority population of this country still love Mohammad Rafi's Mann tadpat ode to Lord Krishna!

Realigning your life with nature's clock through Ayurveda

Swati Semwal |
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"Hey Anubhav, you look exhausted. What happened?" asked Kavya. "Slept at 4 a.m., so I'm running on almost no sleep," he replied. "What kept you up so late?" she pressed. "Just binge-watching my favourite series," he admitted. Conversations like this have become so commonplace that they barely surprise us. Yet, behind this casual admission lies a startling reality: billions of dollars are being invested globally to make exactly this behaviour the new normal.

In a 2017 interview, Reed Hastings, the co-founder of Netflix, casually identified his company's biggest competitor. It wasn't Amazon, HBO, or cable television.

"When you watch a show from Netflix and you get addicted to it, you stay up late at night," Hastings said. "We're competing with sleep." Yes, you read it right! They are actively competing with sleep and they are winning.

The Commodification of Wakefulness This blunt admission underscores a modern crisis: sleep, a biological necessity, is now treated as a market obstacle. In an economy driven by digital engagement, natural rest is losing the battle to productivity and pixels.

Rapid technological growth has reshaped our daily routines. Smartphones, 24/7 notifications, and late-night online activity disrupt natural sleep cycles. Research indicates that shift work, irregular eating patterns, and sedentary lifestyles significantly contribute to widespread sleep disturbances. Furthermore, stimulants like caffeine, combined with exposure to artificial blue light, suppress melatonin - the hormone essential for initiating sleep.

For many, the day ends not with natural fatigue but with one last scroll or one last auto-played episode. What was once instinctive has become a luxury. The consequences are severe.

According to the National Institutes of Health, sleep disorders affect approximately 14.71 per cent of the U.S. population, and the prevalence is likely comparable for India as well. The impact goes beyond feeling tired, as research shows that inadequate sleep impairs physical health and degrades higher-order functions such as moral judgment, which is our ability to make ethical decisions and control impulses.

Bridging the Gap: A Consciousness-Centred View

To fight a modern problem created by algorithms, perhaps we need to look at an "operating system" that existed long before computers: the internal biological rhythm.

While modern science offers treatments ranging from medication to behavioural therapies, India's knowledge systems offer a consciousness-centred perspective that have shown results for millennia and remain relevant even today. Charaka, one of the pioneers of the Indian medical tradition, identifies food, sleep, and brahmacharya (sensory discipline and higher awareness) as the three pillars of life. Both Yoga and Ayurveda define sleep not merely as the body shutting down, but as a specific state of the mind.

The Yoga Darshana (Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, 1.10) defines sleep as: Abhava pratyayalambana vrttirnidra, translating to "that modification of the mind which is based on the absence of any content." In simple terms, deep sleep is a state where the mind is devoid of thoughts, images, or sensory dis-

tractions stark contrast to the content-heavy state of watching TV, which is popularly termed as "rest".

Ayurveda, in alignment with modern research, emphasises sleep as a vital energy source. The Caraka Samhita (Sutrasthanam 21.11) notes: Nidrayattam sukham duhkhham pustih karayam balabalam | vrsata klibata jnnamajnanam jivitam na ca || Through this statement, Charaka explains that sleep is the foundation for opposite states of being: "Joy and sorrow, nourishment and malnutrition, strength and weakness, potency and sterility, knowledge and ignorance." Signifying that the quality of your sleep dictates the quality of your awake life.

The Biology of Balance: The Three Doshas

To understand how to sleep better, one must understand the Ayurvedic concept of Do? as the three vital bio-energies that govern the body. Vata (Air and Space) is responsible for movement (breathing, circulation, racing thoughts). When balanced, it brings creativity; when imbalanced, it leads to anxiety and insomnia. Pitta (Fire and Water) governs metabolism and intellect. Balanced Pitta promotes clarity; imbalance leads to irritability, burnout, and sleep disturbance through excess dreams. Kapha (Earth and Water) provides structure and stability.

Balanced Kapha creates calmness; imbalance leads to sluggishness and heaviness that makes it difficult to wake up or maintain a wakeful state. Every individual has a unique combination of these, which shapes one's prakrti, influencing physiological tendencies, psychological patterns, and natural sleep behaviours.

The Ayurvedic Clock: Syncing

with Nature

Ayurveda describes a daily circadian rhythm where each do? dominates specific intervals of the 24-hour cycle. Aligning your habits with this rhythm is the secret to restorative sleep.

The Ayurvedic day is governed by a rhythmic cycle of three bio-energies, beginning with the Kapha period from 6:00 am to 10:00 am. This window is characterised by a stabilising heaviness and natural sluggishness; to counter this, experts recommend engaging in physical activity and consuming a light breakfast to awaken the system. As the sun climbs higher, the Pitta period takes over from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, marking the peak of metabolic and cognitive efficiency. This is the optimal time for both your most demanding professional tasks and your heaviest meal of the day, as the body's "digestive fire" is at its strongest.

As the day transitions into the Vata period between 2:00 pm and 6:00 pm, the energy shifts toward communication and creative flow. This is also a critical digestive threshold; consuming your final meal during this window ensures a smoother transition into the night. When evening arrives, the Kapha cycle returns from 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm, naturally inviting the body to slow down. This period should be dedicated to reducing sensory stimulation and dimming the lights to prepare the mind for rest.

The most vital phase, however, occurs during the night Pitta window from 10:00 pm to 2:00 am, which serves as the body's internal "repair mode." Reserved for physiological detoxification and cellular healing, being asleep during these hours is considered non-negotiable for true rejuvenation. If you remain awake past 10:00 pm, the

"fire" of Pitta is diverted from physical repair and instead fuels a "second wind" of mental alertness. This false sense of productivity not only makes it harder to fall asleep later but actively disrupts the body's essential healing processes.

When this natural cycle is ignored, the body pays a physical price. Many who stay awake or have interrupted sleep during the late-night Pitta window report a distinct burning sensation in the chest. This occurs because the Pitta dosha—the energy of fire and transformation—becomes exaggerated when the essential processes of digestion and detoxification are stalled by wakefulness, leading to acute symptoms like heartburn and acidity.

The cycle concludes with the early morning Vata period from 2:00 am to 6:00 am, a time defined by stillness and a unique psychological lightness. These hours are highly conducive to introspection and mental clarity. It is no coincidence that ancient spiritual traditions across India identify this window as the Brahma Muhurta—the most potent and sacred time for meditation, as the mind is naturally free from the heavy "content" of the day.

Returning to Rhythm

Individuals who sleep in accordance with these natural rhythms—typically sleeping around 9:00 p.m. and waking between 3–5 AM—report greater vitality and stable moods. Conversely, those who ignore this clock often face chronic fatigue and irritability.

This alignment is not merely an ancient recommendation but is also reflected in the universally accepted principle captured in the adage: "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise."

AQI: ECONOMIC GROWTH AT WHAT COST?

kajleen kaur

India has been one of the fastest-growing economies and is also on its way to becoming a \$5 trillion economy, behind which lie strong macroeconomic parameters like high consumption, investment, industrial growth, construction and infrastructure development. Ironically, these promising economic development indicators are detrimental to the environment and a source of pollution. Several Indian states, including Delhi, reported alarming AQI levels, which also caught the world's attention, in the latter half of 2025, raising alarm bells for urgent government action. Danish badminton player Anders Antonsen, World No 3, recently revealed that he withdrew from the ongoing India Open Super 750 due to 'extreme' Delhi pollution for the third year. This poses a critical question to our journey to Viksit Bharat@2047, where promising GDP numbers neglect the quality of life.

The road transport ministry's January report states that 70 per cent of 41 crore vehicles do not comply with norms, including PUC and fitness. The government boasts of the recent GST cut on vehicles to encourage consumption, but a deeper analysis of it scares us with further choking roads and added pollution. India, being a developing economy,

needs to reach its potential in all sectors, with high production complemented by higher consumption. With limited resources, efforts are always concentrated on maximising production, and other qualitative aspects, such as the impact on the environment, are consciously or unconsciously ignored. If the qualitative aspects are given priority, production and thereby economic growth would suffer, and it becomes a vicious cycle to break. Economic growth thus carries negative externalities and involves trade-offs, hampering the environment, public health, deteriorating living conditions, and hindering long-term sustainable development.

Macroeconomic models place growth as a function of human capital, which also includes labour productivity. A poor environment, while it affects public health, also bears economic costs as it lowers labour productivity and efficiency. Increased healthcare expenditure is a further burden on households and the government, leading to economic loss.

Any pollution control measures require environmental regulations, cleaner technologies and emission standards, which raise the cost of production for industries. If these costs are passed on to the consumers, it discourages demand, the driving force behind growth. In agri-

culture, alternatives to practices like stubble burning, such as machinery for crop residue management, are not affordable to small farmers without adequate support.

One of the most important yardsticks of development is infrastructure, but it is also one of the main causes of pollution. Rapid construction of roads, highways, bridges, airports, railways, dams, industries and urban housing often occurs without adequate environmental safeguards. If environmental regulations are imposed, it delays the projects, escalates project costs, discourages investment and slows economic growth.

Tourism, another significant source of income for the country, has become a concern in recent years due to overexposure. This has led to disruptions in natural ecosystems, the generation of unlimited waste, and traffic congestion, further exacerbating the already severe pollution problem. Environmental degradation raises climate-related disasters such as floods and droughts, causing massive economic damage.

Undoubtedly, given the present stage of the Indian economy, it is difficult to manage growth and sustain other environmental quality parameters. But that does not give us an excuse to overlook the latter; we need smart and inclusive solutions to reduce pollution without severe

economic disruption.

A phased and flexible implementation of environmental regulations to adopt cleaner technologies gives industries time to adapt, avoiding economic shocks. Fiscal incentives to encourage a shift to green technologies and renewable resources in the form of tax incentives, subsidies, and concessional interest rates on loans can help economise the costs for industries. Urban planning with public-private partnerships, strengthening of public transport, a shift to electric vehicles, and waste management are unavoidable necessities now, which may raise the cost presently, but would serve as a sustainable investment for long-term development.

Conclusion

India stands at a decisive crossroads where economic ambition must align with environmental responsibility. Growth that erodes public health, productivity and living conditions cannot be sustained indefinitely. The challenge is not to choose between development and the environment, but to redesign growth itself through cleaner technologies, smarter urban planning and phased regulations. Only by internalising environmental costs can India ensure that its journey to Viksit Bharat@2047 delivers prosperity with dignity and a liveable future.

Indian Scholars Decode Dutch Records to Rewrite Kerala's Colonial Past

Faizal Khan

from the period written in the old Dutch language.

"Four students from Kerala came to the Netherlands for studies. They learned old Dutch and were in an internship at the National Archives of the Netherlands. They had a very intensive course," says Jos Gommans, the Dutch historian behind the Cosmos Malabaricus project, named after Hortus Malabaricus, a botanical treatise of the Malabar coastal region by the 17th century Dutch Governor Hendrik van Rheede.

Neglected history

"The Dutch archive on Asia, especially on Kerala, is extremely rich, but it has been neglected for a very long time," explains Gommans, a Professor of Colonial and Global History at Leiden University in the Netherlands, who is a prominent speaker at the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF), beginning

on January 15. The India-Dutch academic collaboration, which received the nod of the Ministry of External Affairs, is the result of a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Kerala Council for Historical Research and the 1575-founded Leiden University and the Hague-based National Archives of the Netherlands three years ago.

Among the many discoveries made by the Indian students is how the Mukku community, a fisher people's community in Kerala, was protected by the Dutch rulers. But the highlight of the studies is the story of a much-neglected Dutch translator who collected stories about Kerala's myths and history.

"So far, nobody has looked at this person, Van Meeckeren, a Dutch company employee and a diplomat who was one of the translators who served in Ker-

ala for several decades and had a finger in every dish, almost," says Gommans, the author of several books on the cultural and intellectual exchanges between Europe and India. "Meeckeren's father was a Dutchman and probably his mother was from Kerala," he adds.

Meeckeren was very much aware of what's going on. He also had this historical interest. So it was a really, very important figure that nobody knows about. He wrote a survey of Kerala history, and all that in the early 18th century. So I think he's really the kind of somebody we discovered in the archives, I have to say," adds Gommans, who has written extensively on Dutch colonial history, including the co-edited Exploring the Dutch Empire and co-authored The Dutch Overseas Empire, 1600-1800. Gommans' latest book, Sun,

Emperor and Pope: Neoplatonic Solar Worship in Mughal India and Barberini Rome, will be released at JLF. "Meeckeren's records are a massive source of history," says Gommans, who headed several programmes at Leiden University in the past two-and-a-half decades to equip over 150 students from Asia and South Africa with the skills to work with Dutch colonial archives, fostering a deeper integration of these sources into the regional histories of Asia and Africa.

Micro-level records

The Dutch, who defeated the ruling Portuguese in 1658, dominated the Malabar region before they were in turn defeated by the British. The Dutch empire in Asia, which was headquartered in Jakarta, Indonesia, spanned a vast geography, from Basra in Iraq to Deshima in Japan. Observant

administrators of the Dutch East India Company kept daily records of economy, trade, judiciary and even places of worship up to the village-level.

While some Dutch records exist within India, most of the manuscripts of Dutch administrators were taken to the Netherlands, which are now housed in the National Archives in the Hague. "The Dutch records of Malabar are 100 metres long," says Gommans about the digitised manuscripts that contain little-known aspects of Malabar's history.

Micro-level records

The Dutch had a very deep interest in knowing what's going on, whether in a temple, who is the patron in what temple, what kind of political rivalry is going on in the patronage of a temple. So that all that information is in the Dutch archive," says Gommans, whose published works in-

clude two monographs on early modern South Asian history--The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire, 1710-1780 and Mughal Warfare: Indian Frontiers and High Roads to Empire.

"I think there is a real gap, let's say, for the Dutch period," explains Gommans. "That's because the archive is in Dutch language and not many people know the Dutch language. So we have a period that is fairly well covered in the Portuguese period. Then we go into the 19th century, the early modern period, in which all these flourishing regional communities simply continue to exist, but we don't know what happened," he adds.

"The Dutch were really very much involved in various courts in Kerala. So they wrote very detailed reports about what was going on at these courts. The English period is

better covered because of the access that people have to the English archive, because of the language and all these gazettes.

The Dutch really have a huge gap. So, I think to go from the Portuguese to the English, that is the challenge, and therefore, you need the Dutch period materials," says Gommans.

The Indian students, who joined Leiden University for a Master's programme in Colonial and Global History and learning medieval Dutch, will complete their studies next week. "I think the project is over," says Gommans. "We don't have any funding anymore. We were already quite lucky with getting funding. It's partly funded by the Dutch government and partly by the Kerala government," he adds.

The writer is a senior journalist with a focus on contemporary history, culture, and the arts; views are personal