

EDITORIAL

Timely sleep vital for stress-stricken society

In today's fast-changing and demanding world, sleep has increasingly become a neglected aspect of daily life. In Jammu and Kashmir, where social, economic and psychological pressures continue to affect large sections of society, the importance of timely and sound sleep deserves greater attention. As the world observes World Sleep Day, it is an appropriate moment to reflect on how proper sleep can play a crucial role in improving both individual well-being and the overall health of society in the Union Territory. One of the most affected groups is the youth. Many young people in J&K are grappling with uncertainty caused by unemployment, limited job opportunities and the pressure to secure a stable future. This constant stress often leads to anxiety, irregular routines and late-night habits that disrupt natural sleep cycles. Over time, lack of proper sleep not only weakens physical health but also affects mental balance, concentration and decision-making—qualities that are essential for students and job aspirants. However, the issue is not limited to youth alone. Different sections of society face their own challenges that contribute to stress and sleep disturbance. Government employees and professionals often deal with demanding work schedules, traders worry about economic fluctuations, farmers face uncertainties related to climate and markets, while homemakers balance multiple responsibilities within households. These pressures, when combined with excessive use of digital devices and changing lifestyles, gradually erode the habit of timely sleep. The consequences of poor sleep are far-reaching. Medical experts warn that chronic sleep deprivation can lead to a variety of health problems including hypertension, diabetes, heart disease and mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety. It also reduces productivity, weakens immunity and increases irritability, which can negatively influence family relationships and social harmony. In a region like Jammu and Kashmir, where society is striving to move forward through education, economic growth and social stability, maintaining good mental and physical health is essential. Timely sleep must therefore be recognized as a simple yet powerful tool for maintaining balance in life. Establishing regular routines, limiting screen exposure late at night and creating a calm sleep environment can significantly improve sleep quality. Equally important is the need for awareness. Educational institutions, health professionals and community organisations should actively promote healthy sleep habits, particularly among young people who are increasingly vulnerable to stress and digital distractions. Encouraging outdoor activities, exercise and constructive engagement can also help individuals maintain healthier lifestyles and better sleep patterns. As discussions on development, employment and social well-being continue in Jammu and Kashmir, the importance of personal health should not be overlooked. Timely sleep may appear to be a small habit, but it has a profound impact on physical strength, mental resilience and emotional stability. On occasions such as World Sleep Day, the message is clear: a healthier society begins with healthier individuals. For the people of Jammu and Kashmir, especially its youth, prioritizing timely sleep is not merely about rest—it is an investment in a stronger, more balanced and hopeful future.

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When politics had moral role models

BY
RACHITA RAMYA

There are many quotes attributed to Mahatma Gandhi that often require verification—whether it is “An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind,” or the idea that when someone slaps you on the right cheek, you offer the left. Yet perhaps one of the most relevant principles associated with Gandhi today is simpler and more direct: The best politics is right action.

At a moment when the world appears increasingly unstable—conflicts escalating in regions such as the Middle East, threats of military retaliation, and the looming possibility of wider war—the need for moral leadership feels more urgent than ever. When global politics seems driven by power, retaliation, and strategic interests rather than human consequences, the world longs for leaders who remind us that peace is essential for survival and flourishing.

There was a time when figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. served as moral role models for politi-

cal leaders. Their ideas shaped a generation that believed politics could be guided by ethics as much as by ambition. Leaders looked to such figures not for perfection but for principles—lessons about courage, restraint, and justice.

Today, however, we live in an age of relentless scrutiny and “cancel culture”, where historical figures are often judged solely by their flaws. Certainly, no individual is beyond criticism, and honest historical reflection is necessary. Yet in our eagerness to expose mistakes, we sometimes forget the moral frameworks these leaders provided. Their influence once encouraged politicians to measure themselves against ethical standards that seem increasingly absent in contemporary politics.

One Indian politician who embodied many of Gandhi's ideals was Shankar Dayal Singh, who, as a young man, had the rare opportunity to meet Gandhi in 1947, leaving a lasting impression. Though Gandhi would be assassinated within a year, the values he represented—simplicity, moral courage, and service—remained deeply etched in Singh's outlook. In 1971, Singh joined the Congress and was among the youngest

members to serve in the Fifth Lok Sabha. He conducted himself with dignity and integrity, as a dynamic yet idealistic politician untouched by moral and financial corruption, mirroring Gandhi's teachings.

Much like Gandhi, Singh demonstrated defiance towards those in power. However, in Singh's case, it was the Congress leadership under scrutiny. During the Emergency, Singh quietly helped in sheltering political figures such as Krishan Kant despite his own proximity to the leadership, which reflected a moral courage rarely seen in political circles and reaffirmed Gandhi's philosophy: The best politics is right action. With Gandhi acting as his moral compass, Singh gave weight not to ambition and power, but to idealism and the dignity of doing what is right for the general public.

In one of his notable works, *Emergency: Fact and Fiction*, Singh drew a striking contrast between Indira Gandhi and Mahatma Gandhi, arguing that the two figures represented opposing moral visions of India. He wrote that while Mahatma Gandhi sought to uplift and live among the poor, Indira Gandhi's poli-



tics increasingly distanced itself from those ideals. He argued that Mahatma Gandhi wore hand-spun khadi and attempted to dissolve divisions of caste and religion, while Indira Gandhi's politics deepened social and political lines.

The contrast extended symbolically to lifestyle and philosophy: Singh advocated throughout his life for khadi, swadeshi goods, and the promotion of Hindi as a unifying cultural language. Yet his advocacy was rooted not in exclusion but in a broader respect for India's religious and cultural diversity. Despite his contributions as a parliamentarian, writer, and advocate of Gandhian ethics, figures like Shankar Dayal Singh have gradually faded

from public memory. Our age tends to remember scandals and controversies more readily than integrity and service. In an era of social media, where public service is curated and admiration is carefully manufactured, this was an organic affection-free of transaction or calculation, born simply from Singh's lifelong commitment to moral integrity and virtue of character.

Gandhi himself has been the subject of intense criticism in recent years. Yet acknowledging his flaws does not erase the transformative power of his ideas. His philosophy of non-violence and civil resistance shifted the balance of power away from weapons and towards the collective strength of

ordinary people.

Perhaps the deeper question we must ask ourselves today is this: too often, we vote based on narrow calculations, choosing what seems like the “lesser evil” rather than asking larger moral questions. We may ask whether a politician will benefit us personally, but rarely do we ask whether their actions will be just for others, for the environment, or for future generations. The world today could benefit from a return to such idealism. As Gandhi reminded us, the best politics is right action. And right action begins with the choices we make as citizens.

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The Epstein Data and Facts, Files, Frictions

BY
PRAMOD
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The victims in the Epstein Files are brutally rendered into a new form of trafficking—as documents

The sheer volume of information, even when redacted and denied, being sent in the form of The Epstein Files merits examination for the culture of data in which we are trapped in an endless circuit of facts, files and filibusters.

We can unpack several complicated layers to the question of data in the Files.

Making Data

Data, even or especially Big Data (and this is the age of Big Data), is assumed to be transparent, just as information is self-evident and the foundation of truth. We assume, as data culture studies by Lisa Gitelman and theorists of knowledge such as Geoffrey Bowker and others caution us, data's neutrality and objectivity.

But we never pause and ask how is data imagined because, for all practical purposes, data precedes imagination, collection and interpretation. But, as Gitelman and Virginia

Jackson tell us, ‘Data need to be imagined as data to exist and function as such, and the imagination of data entails an interpretive base’. In other words, what counts as data, merits our attention as data, is a first step in classifying (only) some things as data. Gitelman and Jackson point out:

The subject of data is bound to alienate students and scholars in disciplines within the humanities particularly. Few literary critics want to think of the poems or novels they read as “data,” and for good reason.

Data at once hides and reveals ‘things’ and processes. In this current case, social relations, people's peccadilloes, cruel acts, victimisation, and cover-ups, among others. When we assume that the emails, text messages and travel records in The Epstein Files count as data that points to the horrific character of billionnaires, we have bestowed a certain value on these bits and pieces of information in the Files. That is, we link travel records (flight plans, holiday plans, invitations, requests for an invitation) to our consensually (although not always in a majority) arrived at concepts of moral values. These bits of ‘data’ then become objective sources of information which they really are not. Or, this data stands as a given, and used to construct a

model of human behaviour (presidents, CEOs, ex-royalty, businessmen, bureaucrats) and come to certain conclusions about it. If we had different data, of course, we would have a different set of conclusions.

Data Friction, Data Infra

The historian Paul Edwards coined the term ‘data friction’ to speak of the questions that affirm what should count as data, which data are good and which less reliable, or how big data sets we need to come to certain conclusions.

All data in the Files are subject to this data friction, not the least by the government and agencies like the FBI, the media, but also by the high-visibility people like Chomsky, whose names figure in the data. ‘I was misled’, ‘I had no idea’, ‘that was not the reason why I visited Epstein's home’, and other rhetorical strategies of deniability are now commonplace.

The critic Ellen Gruber Garvey reading the volume, *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses*, published by the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1839, notes how the volume combined personal testimony from those who lived in the South, some of them former slaveholders, with advertisements for runaway slaves in local newspapers. Garvey argues that such a

merger of very different forms of ‘data’ used the slaveholders' own words in the advertisements and gave abolitionist discourse a very different spin. The data counts as evidence now in the same way ads in American newspapers exposed the brutality of slavery system. The data is made to speak.

The volume shifted focus from treating these ads as mere anecdotes to one that reinterpreted them as the containers of data about the brutality of slavery. The marks and scars that slaveholders described as a means of identifying individual runaways were then transformed by collection and analysis in the volume as indictments of slavery. The ads were abstracted and aggregated for this purpose.

What is being built up, consciously or otherwise, is a data infrastructure of public and private morality. Data works as aggregates: bits and pieces come together, or are brought together, and that is how they accrue power. The emails, text messages, travel records, photographs, even doodles, are split, conjoined, classified, organised into ‘data’ (data is notoriously both singular and plural), although the actual principles of organisation can be hard to unravel.

The entire rhetorical weight of the Files is built on this aggregation into data infrastructures which, we

are told, points to Epstein's perversions but also his tremendous social capital. The data counts as evidence now in the same way the ads in the newspapers of America counted as evidence for the brutality slavery system. The data is made to speak.

Epistemic Objects

Documents such as the files are epistemic objects, as Lisa Gitelman calls them. They are ‘the recognizable sites and subjects of interpretation across the disciplines and beyond, evidential structures in the long human history of clues’. And she adds

documents are documents merely by dint of their potential to show: they are flagged and filed away for the future, just in case. Both know show and no show depend on an implied self-evidence that is intrinsically rhetorical. More importantly, in the case of the Files, ‘Any object can be a thing, but once it is framed as or entered into evidence — once it is mobilised — it becomes a document, an instance proper to that genre’.

The redaction of the papers (emails, messages) in the Files points to classificatory systems, surveillance and the mobilisation of individual texts. These are meant as much to show and are constituted as documents of a self-evident nature, but they are not: they are mobilised

into and within the context of public morality, misuse of power, social capital, and capital itself in terms of high finance — that is how they become evidence in our purported knowledge of the lives of the rich and famous.

The excess of information about perps on one side in these ‘self-evident’ documents is accompanied by the horrific naming of the minor victims of Epstein's monstrous cohort. In sharp contrast to in camera proceedings, the salaciousness of media coverage of the documents shows the victimhood of the victims, first as objects of the cultic monstrous of the Epstein circle, and then as objects served up as evidence in the documents of the horror. The victims are the made-visible material objects that provide the meaning of the Files as documents in what is an unforgivable media circus of spotlighting the hardest hit. The audience has been Epsteinized. His victims are brutally rendered into a new form of trafficking and circulation. As documents.

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