> **Happiness radiates like the fragrance from a flower and draws all good things towards you.**
> -Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

EDITORIAL

MENACE OF FAKE IDENTITIES

In an era dominated by digital communication and online interactions, the proliferation of fake identities has emerged as a pressing concern for individuals, organizations, and society at large. The concept of a fake identity is not new; pseudonyms and pen names have existed for centuries. However, the scale, anonymity, and potential for harm in today's interconnected world have transformed it into a serious social, legal, and ethical issue.

Fake identities manifest in multiple forms: social media profiles, email accounts, fraudulent documents, and even deepfake technology that can convincingly mimic real individuals. While some use such identities for harmless entertainment or creative expression, the consequences of malicious use can be devastating. Cybercriminals frequently exploit fake identities to commit fraud, phishing, and identity theft, causing financial and emotional harm to unsuspecting victims. Political propaganda, misinformation campaigns, and online harassment have also been amplified by the use of false personas, undermining public trust and distorting democratic discourse.

One of the most insidious aspects of fake identities is the erosion of accountability. When individuals hide behind fabricated names and profiles, social norms and legal boundaries lose their deterrent effect. Cyberbullying, harassment, and hate speech flourish under the cloak of anonymity. Similarly, businesses and institutions face reputational and operational risks as fake identities are used to manipulate reviews, infiltrate systems, or siphon sensitive information. The digital landscape, while offering immense opportunities, has inadvertently become fertile ground for deception.

Addressing this challenge requires a multi-pronged approach. Technological solutions, such as AI-powered verification systems, biometric authentication, and advanced fraud detection algorithms, can help identify and curb fake identities. At the same time, robust legal frameworks and stricter penalties for identity-related crimes are essential to deter misuse. Equally important is public awareness: individuals must be educated about the risks of sharing personal information online and the tactics used by perpetrators of identity fraud.

Ultimately, the fight against fake identities is not just a technological or legal battle-it is a societal one. Digital literacy, ethical conduct, and personal responsibility are critical in creating an online environment where trust, transparency, and accountability prevail. Platforms must balance user privacy with mechanisms to verify authenticity, while users must exercise vigilance without succumbing to paranoia. The menace of fake identities serves as a stark reminder that the digital world, though convenient and empowering, is fraught with vulnerabilities. As society continues to embrace digital communication, it must also evolve its ethical, legal, and technological frameworks to ensure that authenticity and integrity remain at the core of online interactions. Only then can the promise of the digital age be fully realized without falling prey to the perils of deception.

Empowering Rural Youth:Way for Sustainable Development

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Rural youths represent a significant portion of the population in many developing nations.India is a young country and rural youths constitute about 41 per cent of total population of India.Youths are the building blocks of the country. They are considered as the greatest asset of any nation as they decide the future of the nation. They are full of innovative ideas and enthusiasm. Their importance should be acknowledged and their commendable contribution should be appreciated. The youths fill the country with energy and zeal and boost the country in many ways.Development of any nation depends on the development of its youths. Youths are more creative, energetic and innovative. It is highly important for any nation to encourage and support the young generation. Rural youths have indomitable energy and enthusiasm for the rural change. Migration of rural youths in urban areas in search of employment has risen fastly. This has resulted a decline in workforce in the agricultural sector in rural areas. The advent of free market has been able to generate employment opportunities in the private sector which requires highly skilled workers. A majority of rural youth may not meet the criteria of private sector for a variety of reasons, like lack of advance technical expertise, inadequate trainings etc. The globalization process has brought certain changes whose implications for the rural society and the rural youths need to be thoroughly understood.

As per the United Nations, youth is defined as a person in 15-24 years of age group whereas the census of India treats people in the age group of 15-29 years as youths. According to Baizerman (1991), in the third world countries youth have not been able to play a vital role in the developmental process and has remained a marginalized group. The participation of the rural Indian youth can be more impressive if more attention is paid on them. Mass media does not pay more attention on rural youths. Due to their proximity to institutions like universities, colleges, institutions of mass communication, political centres and by virtue of being an integral part of modernisation process like developing a rational outlook, adopting different sub-cultures and promoting cosmopolitanism, the urban youth continuously remains in the limelight. Rural areas are slow in their socio-economic development, slow pace of modernisation, industrialization, overpowering presence of powerful but retrogressive social institutions, inequitable distribution of land and most significantly and underutilisation of human resources. The stereotype of rural youth is gullible, conservative and he himself tries to fastly change but cannot escape from the adverse impact of the aforementioned problems.

Skills play a significant role in optimum utilization of human resources.Skilled worksforce is considered as the asset and a prerequisite for sustainable economic development.Upskilling rural youths is not just about enhancing employability- it's about fostering a generation that can contribute to the economic ,social and environmental sustainability of their communities.The latest information should be reached to the rural youths of the remote areas. There has been a sustained campaign by the market forces to increase their rural marketing operations as three-fourths of the consumers live in rural areas and more than half of the national income is generated in rural areas. It has been observed that mostly television is the forte of the market forces and continuously promote consumerism which stimulates unrealistic desires in the rural youths. The political processes at the village level are intertwined with the operational aspects of the existing social hierarchy.

Present era is an era of information. Communication network has combined the world into a cyber-frame.The transaction in all the sectors is now being carried through computers. The rural youths in this field are left behind their urban brethren. The urban youths have access to computer education while the exposure of youth to computers in rural areas is still limited. The 1990s witness a rapid expansion of television networks. The cable and satellite television made a mark in India and television emerged as the most effective medium of entertainment. It plays a key role in dissemination of information and entertainment even in the far-flung areas. In some of the rural areas still the rural youths miss the opportunity to view the informative programmes. Even in some of the downtrodden rural areas still the youths lack the information through print media. The latest information should be reached to the rural youths of these remote areas. Now-a-days social media is playing a major role in dissemination of information in the rural areas.With the reports predicting about 50 per cent of the population residing in urban areas by 2047,it becomes an alarming threat towards the agarian crisis with the increase in migration and shift to non-farming jobs for better opportunities.Creating decent income and employment opportunities is essential to reduce poverty ,improve food security and provide a future for rural youths.

It has been observed that increasing population,overexploitation of biological resources, construction activities and changing consumption has led to the loss of biodiversity. For all this rural population cannot be held responsible for excessive consumption as it is the youth of urban areas whose consumption levels reached new heights leading to enormous pressure on the natural resources. The industries release untreated effluents contaminating the water reserves which will expose the nearby rural population to waterborne diseases. The toxic wastes of the industries are dumped in the waste lands on the outskirts of the urban areas or nearby villages which poses a serious impediment to the wasteland development projects. Watershed development is a major agricultural activity. It is the youth of village who take the responsibility in the success of watershed projets like construction of cheek dams and water tanks. The educated rural youths can prevail on the rest of population to take steps to preserve ground water resources. Joint forest management is another dimension of environment protection. The youth in the villages can be mobilised to take care of illegal felling of trees and make social forestry programme successful.Rural youths require specialised trainings to attract them towards agri-entrepreneurship.Many organisations are making efforts to upskill the rural youths.

In rural areas gender discrimination is very high. Less literacy rate and traditional thinking of the people are the major reasons for the inferior status to the rural women. It has been observed that a large number of women representatives are chosen in the Panchayats.Despite their success the rightful ascendancy of women is questioned by the male dominated society and the position of rural female still remains secondary in various aspects of life. Rural female youths in many eases have to marry below the stipulated age because of family pressure and obsolete norms of the community. The higher death rate of the rural female youths indicates the lack of availability of proper medical facilities during pregnancy and delivery, poor diet and lack of care of their family members towards their health. Early motherhood combined with lack of proper education and inadequate physical and mental maturity compound the problems of women. There is need to motivate the rural female youth to take part in her decision making. With the implementation of employment generating schemes, efforts should also be made to sensitise the rural youths on various social issues. The mass media, whose influence on society is quite significant, should be prevailed upon to increase the focus on developmental issues and social concerns. In order to avoid the rural migration government should encourage the rural based industries. More employment should be generated in the rural areas during the off season of the year. Development in rural areas can stop the rural migration and may reduce the pressure on the urban areas.Vocational education and training institutes can play significant role in promoting entrepreneurial values among the rural youths.An integrated approach needs to be adopted to upgrade the skills among the rural youths so that the entrepreneurship can be generated in the rural areas.

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Confronting road safety challenges and traffic disorder in Jammu & Kashmir

■ MOHAMMAD HANIEF

Jammu and Kashmir is grappling with a deepening road safety crisis, where rising accident figures and worsening traffic congestion have become daily challenges for citizens across the Union Territory. With rapidly expanding cities, a surge in private vehicle ownership, and increasing pressure on limited road infrastructure, commuting has grown more chaotic and unsafe. As the region moves forward with its developmental ambitions, ensuring safer roads and smoother mobility has become one of its most urgent public priorities.

The Union Territory's distinctive topography, though breathtaking, presents inherent transportation challenges. Winding mountain roads, steep elevations, sharp curves, and unpredictable weather make driving a complex and often dangerous undertaking. Heavy snow in winter, fog during colder months, and landslides in monsoon seasons regularly disrupt road connectivity. Yet, natural conditions tell only part of the story. The rise in road accidents-many of which are avoidable-indicates that systemic issues related to infrastructure, enforcement, and driver behaviour continue to intensify the underlying risks on J&K's roads.
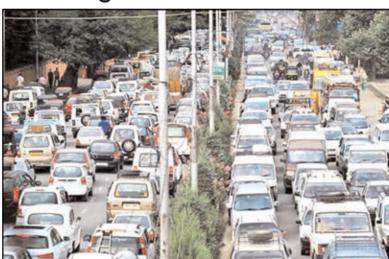
In the past decade, urban expansion in Srinagar and Jammu has significantly increased the demand for mobility. Both cities have grown into busy commercial, administrative, and educational hubs, attracting thousands of daily commuters. However, the supporting infrastructure has not expanded proportionately. Narrow roads, incomplete expansion projects, and insufficient traffic planning have made daily movement slow and cumbersome. Peak-hour congestion at key intersections in LalChowk, PanthaChowk, Bemina, Rambagh, BikramChowk, Jewel Chowk, Janipur and Gandhi Nagar has become almost routine, often bringing traffic to a standstill.

One of the major contributors to this congestion is the rapid rise in vehicle ownership. With public transport systems still limited in capacity and comfort, residents increasingly rely on private cars and two-wheelers. This shift has dramatically increased the number of vehicles on the road, overwhelming the infrastructure meant for a much smaller population. In many neighbourhoods, multiple family members own personal vehicles-an understandable decision, yet one with significant implications for collective mobility.

Encroachment of road space further compounds the problem. In several markets and commercial streets, footpaths and road shoulders are occupied by street vendors, unauthorized stalls, and parked vehicles. This reduces the usable road width, forcing traffic into a cramped space and resulting in slow movement and frequent minor collisions. The absence of designated parking facilities across both cities drives motorists to occupy any available roadside space, including areas meant for pedestrians and emergency movement.

Alongside infrastructural pressures, behavioural factors continue to pose a grave threat to road safety. Rash driving, lane indiscipline, overspeeding, and disregard for traffic rules have become common. Motorcyclists riding without helmets, drivers ignoring seatbelts, and motorists using mobile phones while

driving reflect a concerning indifference to safety. Public transport vehicles, especially minibuses and shared taxis, often stop abruptly in the middle of roads to pick up or drop off passengers, disrupting the flow of traffic and creating dangerous situations for other road users.

The condition of roads in peripheral areas adds another dimension to the crisis. Many rural and mountainous roads lack proper surfacing, signage, reflective markers, and adequate lighting. Potholes, uneven patches, and narrow carriageways increase the likelihood of accidents, especially at night or during bad weather. The Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, a lifeline for trade and travel, is particularly vulnerable to landslides, rockfalls, and frequent blockages. During harsh weather, travellers often find themselves stranded for hours, highlighting the urgent need for modern engineering interventions and continuous maintenance.

The toll of these challenges is significant. Behind every accident is a personal tragedy-families losing loved ones, breadwinners rendered disabled, and survivors suffering long-term physical and emotional trauma. Beyond the human cost, the economic impact is substantial. Traffic jams waste thousands of productive hours each year, consume vast quantities of fuel, delay transportation of goods, and increase overall costs for businesses and households. For a region dependent on tourism, horticulture, and trade, such delays and disruptions carry broader developmental implications.

Recognizing the seriousness of the situation, the government and local authorities have introduced several measures aimed at improving road safety and easing congestion. Advanced traffic management systems, such as intelligent traffic lights, CCTV surveillance, and digital monitoring of violations, have been installed in key areas to streamline movement and regulate behaviour. The enforcement of the Motor Vehicles Act has been strengthened, with stricter penalties for overspeeding, drunk driving, and violation of safety norms. These steps have led to an increase in challan issuance, signalling a more assertive approach toward curbing dangerous driving habits.

Infrastructure development is also underway, with new flyovers, widened roads, and bypass routes being constructed to ease pressure on congested city centres. Projects such as the JehangirChowk-Rambagh corridor, Bemina bypass improvements, and expansions along the Jammu-Akhnoor road are part of a larger attempt to build long-term solutions. The introduction of electric buses in Srinagar and Jammu represents a step toward modernizing public transport and reducing reliance on older, less efficient minibuses. Such initiatives not only support smoother mobility but also address environmental concerns.

However, despite these interventions, several gaps remain. Enforcement often fluctuates, with periods of strict regulation followed by stretches of leniency, reducing the long-term impact of policies. Infrastructure projects face delays due to administrative, financial, or technical challenges, leaving critical stretches of road incomplete for years. Public transport, while improving, still lacks the scale, reliability, and comfort needed to become a primary alternative for daily commuting. Coordination among agencies-traffic police, municipal authorities, road development departments, and planning bodies-remains inconsistent, leading to fragmented responses to complex challenges.

A sustainable solution requires an integrated approach. Strengthening public transport systems, expanding parking infrastructure, redesigning road layouts, and ensuring consistent maintenance are essential steps. Regular road safety education in schools, awareness campaigns in communities, and involvement of civil society organizations can foster responsible driving habits. Long-term urban mobility planning, including dedicated bus lanes, pedestrian-friendly pathways, better signage, and emergency response mechanisms, can significantly reduce accidents and improve overall traffic movement.

Equally important is the role of citizens. Responsible driving, adherence to traffic rules, disciplined parking, and patience during congestion all contribute to safer roads. Road safety cannot rely solely on the government; it requires a collective commitment from every road user. When individuals prioritize safety-whether by wearing helmets, obeying speed limits, or respecting pedestrian rights-they play a direct role in preventing accidents and saving lives.

As Jammu and Kashmir continues its journey toward modernization and expanded infrastructure, addressing road safety and traffic management must remain at the forefront of planning and policy. A region known for its natural beauty and warm hospitality deserves roads that are safe, efficient, and accessible to all. By combining strong governance, responsible citizens, and long-term planning, J&K can move toward a future where mobility is not a daily struggle but a smooth and secure experience for everyone.

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Be in harmony with Nature

■ NASEEB KUMAR BHAGAT

Nature has vast stock of resources if we talk in terms of water, air, sunlight, minerals, biodiversity etc. to meet our needs but not our greed. It's our prime duty to protect nature and natural resources so that they can be sustained for future generation also. Our ancestors were wise enough who always take care of resources for their effective management and conservation. They always cautious towards resource and wisely use them without any wastage and keep water resources clean be it wells, springs, ponds or ghats. Likewise, they always prefer local species for plantation as they knows the significance and their associated benefits. In some culture such as Kashmiri pandits for them plantations was a ceremonial event on birth and marriage oceasion. In Hindu mythology cutting of fruit laden trees as sin and don't disturb the plants after sunset because its nesting and resting place for birds after dusk. They were well acquainted with environmental ethies as they incorporate it into every ritual and oceasion for welfare of nature. Our forefathers offer first fruit of every plant or crop yield to the Almighty God/deity for prosperity and wellness of family members, domestic animals and agricultural production. Many trees were considered sacred such as Peepal, Bargad, Tulsi, Banana, Plaash, Chandan, Ber, mango etc. the leaves or twigs used in rituals. Many animals such as Monkeys, elephants, snakes, fish etc. worshipped as incarnation of God and Goddess.

If we talk about life of people 200 years back the life style of people was quite ecofriendly and closely interwoven with nature. Needs were limited which easily gets fulfilled from nearby environment. Mats, baskets, buckets made from locally available plants including Sehtoot, Typha, Dhaman, etc. they have very low carbon footprints as compare to present generation.The artistic work such as making baskets, mats, Buckets plates and cups from plant more advanced and now these days plastics and polythene replacing all those items. I still remember the days of my childhood in village there were variety of crops and mixed cropping culture was quite common, in wheat crop the mustards cultivated in rows or sometimes scattered which was quite rare. Similarly Barseem a multicut-fodder or locally called Shattalla the fields margins decorated with flaxseed and sparsely with mustard or rye. In kandi area the fencing material in the form of hedges of Adusa, Saintha, Garney etc. were common which have edible fruits and medicinal values also. There is large decline in our food crops as 4-5 hybrid varieties has replaced thousands of our traditional varieties of food crops. Crops such as Jowar bajra Ragi as seldom grown by farmers. The use of agrochemicals in the form of fertilizers, pesticides, weedicides changed the soil quality and chemical composition adversely and also the biota of soil. These chemicals are responsible for soil and water pollution also. The extent of these agro-chemicals is so much magnifying that entered into the body of man also through food chain. The only way to counter it is use of eco-friendly alternatives to these chemicals in the form of manure, compost and agronomic practices such as legume crops, crop rotations to boost fertility of fields without using chemical fertilizers. Birds, butterflies, dragon flies, moths are integral part of agrarian ecosystem, but the species number of many of them are decreasing due to pollution or change in the life style of Man.

Himalayan ecology is the highly sensitive and fragile ecology. All the stakeholders should get involved in threadbare discussion in the initial stage of any major proposed project in this area be it construction of roads, mining or Hydroelectric power project. Expansion of agriculture land at the cost of forest land should not be allowed at any cost. Over exploitation of forest resources and overgrazing of grassland or pastures beyond carrying capacity should be stopped.

No doubt technology made life comfortable largely by the invention of new sophisticated gadgets and items but their usage and application need to be executed by us. We need to use them only if required and be wise enough while selecting them whether they are useful from environmental point of view also. many products have certain labels to define their environmental impacts these are eco-labels. consumers must be aware about various such labels so that they can purchase only those products which are eco-friendly or have least impact on environment and energy efficient also. Nature is supreme, nature is vast and nature has balancing power. This is the right time to think about nature and work to restoration of damage already done otherwise nature has balancing power in its own catastrophic way.

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