

THREAT TO DIGITAL TRUST

In the age of digital transformation, where convenience and connectivity are at their peak, a parallel threat looms large—the growing menace of fake calls and SMS scams. Across India, countless citizens are falling prey to these fraudulent tactics, which not only result in financial loss but also erode trust in digital and telecommunication systems.

Fake calls—often made by fraudsters posing as bank officials, government employees, or customer service agents—have become alarmingly common. Victims are typically asked to share sensitive details such as OTP, CVV, account numbers, or UPI PINs under the guise of updating KYC information or offering loan or insurance benefits. Similarly, phishing SMSes trick users into clicking malicious links that lead to fake websites designed to harvest personal and financial information.

While telecom operators and financial institutions have issued advisories, and government campaigns like 'Cyber Surakshit Bharat' aim to raise awareness, these efforts need to be scaled up and better targeted. Regulatory bodies like TRAI and RBI must work together to implement stricter SIM card issuance policies, and ensure real-time monitoring of SMS gateways and call records to block fraudulent communications before damage is done.

Public awareness remains the strongest line of defense. Schools, colleges, offices, and community centers must be roped into a nationwide cyber hygiene initiative. Citizens must be educated about never sharing OTPs, clicking unknown links, or downloading third-party apps shared via SMS or calls.

Telecom companies should also be mandated to provide AI-driven scam alerts and auto-block known fraudulent numbers. Banks and digital wallets need to integrate in-app warnings and real-time scam detection systems to protect users before a transaction is completed.

The fight against fake calls and SMS scams is not just about protecting money—it is about safeguarding trust in India's growing digital economy. As we race toward becoming a cashless, connected society, we cannot afford to let cybercriminals hold users hostage through fear and deception. A joint effort from the government, private sector, and civil society is needed now—before the damage becomes irreversible.

Role of Artificial Intelligence in Agriculture and Aquaculture

■ VIVEK KOUL

We are living in a digital age where Artificial Intelligence plays a very crucial role. AI is a technology that is transforming every walk of life. AI has become increasingly important in today's world as it has the potential to revolutionize many industries be it healthcare, finance, education or even agriculture. Now coming to the title of this write up, it can be opined that Artificial Intelligence is no longer a distant dream or a luxury of Silicon Valley. It is a necessity for India's agriculture and fish farming sectors, particularly in regions like Jammu and Kashmir where fragile ecosystems, unpredictable weather, and decades of neglect have left farming and aquaculture in a precarious state. If we are serious about ensuring food security, uplifting rural economies, and making these sectors globally competitive, then AI must not remain confined to policy papers and pilot projects. It must become the driving force behind a new wave of transformation—a green and blue revolution rooted in technology, resilience, and justice for those who feed and sustain this nation. Jammu and Kashmir, once a thriving hub for horticulture, saffron, apple orchards, and pristine streams teeming with trout, has witnessed its farmers and fishers struggling against adversities that have only grown sharper in recent years. Climate change has begun to wreak havoc on its fields and waters, with erratic rainfall, extended droughts, and sudden floods destroying crops and fisheries alike. Traditional practices, once reliable, are now inadequate in the face of these new realities. Apple growers, already reeling from falling prices due to gluts and unfair market

practices, often face losses simply because they lack real-time data to guide harvesting and marketing decisions. Trout farmers, proud custodians of a unique cold-water resource, see their ponds devastated by sudden changes in water temperature and oxygen levels—disasters that could be averted with timely warnings powered by AI-driven monitoring systems.

This is where the conversation about Artificial Intelligence cannot remain academic. AI must be deployed as a lifeline. Imagine a Kashmiri apple farmer who, instead of guessing the weather, receives an AI-powered alert predicting a frost event days in advance, allowing him to deploy protective measures and save his orchard. Picture a trout farm in Kokernag equipped with AI sensors that track water quality 24/7, sending instant warnings when oxygen dips or pollutants spike, so the farmer can act before an entire stock perishes. These are not futuristic fantasies - they are technologies already available and deployed in other parts of the world. What is missing is the political will, policy focus, and infrastructural push to bring them to the valleys, orchards, and ponds of Jammu and Kashmir. AI's power lies not just in predicting calamities but in ensuring prosperity. For far too long, farmers and fishers in J&K have been at the mercy of middlemen and volatile markets, forced into distress sales that rob them of fair returns. AI-driven market intelligence tools can analyze consumer trends, forecast demand, and even connect producers directly to buyers, cutting out exploitative intermediaries. If an apple grower in Sopore knew, through AI-enabled insights, that certain urban markets would fetch better rates next week, he could store his

produce strategically instead of dumping it at throwaway prices. If a trout farmer had access to AI-driven analytics about export demand, he could time his harvest to maximize profits rather than succumb to local price crashes.

Yet, the tragedy is that while these solutions exist, the people of Jammu and Kashmir remain largely cut off from them. Limited internet penetration, lack of awareness, and absence of government-backed incentives mean that AI remains a buzzword rather than a weapon for empowerment. Schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana and various horticulture missions talk of modernization, but without embedding AI-driven systems into their core, they risk becoming yet another set of well-intentioned but toothless programs. What the region needs is a targeted AI integration plan—government-subsidized sensors for trout farms, AI-driven mobile applications in Kashmiri and Dogri languages for farmers, and real-time market and weather intelligence delivered through the growing network of rural smartphones. Anything less will amount to tokenism. Critics will argue that AI is expensive, that small farmers cannot afford sophisticated systems, and that such technology is the privilege of corporate agribusinesses. This argument is a convenient excuse for inaction. AI does not need to be a burden; it can be democratized. Subscription-based services, pay-per-use models, and public-private partnerships can make AI tools accessible even to those tilling two kanals of land or managing a single pond. The cost of inaction—crop failures, fish kills, farmer suicides, rural unemployment - is far greater than the cost of deploying AI-driven resilience. Jammu and Kashmir is uniquely posi-

tioned to benefit from this technological leap because its agricultural and aquaculture products - be it apples, walnuts, saffron, or trout - are already premium commodities. With AI ensuring quality, consistency, and traceability, these products can command far better prices in domestic and international markets. Blockchain-integrated AI systems can certify the origin and purity of Kashmiri produce, reassuring global buyers and opening doors to export markets where transparency is non-negotiable. Such interventions would not only uplift individual farmers but could revive entire rural economies, turning J&K into a model of sustainable, technology-driven prosperity. The question, therefore, is not whether AI has a role to play - it is whether policymakers, both in the Union Government and the J&K administration, have the courage and vision to make it happen. Will they treat AI as an urgent investment to secure the livelihoods of lakhs of farmers and fishers, or will it remain yet another headline in development speeches? If India is to achieve food security, double farmers' incomes, and transform J&K into a beacon of stability and prosperity, it cannot rely on slogans or half-measures. It must wield Artificial Intelligence as a transformative tool, not in some distant future, but now. The orchards and ponds of Jammu and Kashmir have waited long enough for justice. It is time for a revolution - not of words, but of wires, sensors and algorithms - that can give its people the power to predict, protect, and prosper. Anything less would not just be a policy failure; it would be a betrayal of those whose toil sustains this nation.

Polygamy in Himachal Pradesh: A deep dive into tradition, taboos, modern significance

■ DR SONIA VERMA

Nestled in the heart of the Himalayas, Himachal Pradesh is renowned for its breathtaking landscapes and vibrant cultural tapestry. Among its unique customs, the practice of polyandry, where a woman marries multiple brothers, has persisted for centuries. While seemingly anachronistic in today's world of monogamy, this tradition holds deep historical roots and continues to shape the social fabric of certain communities in the region. This article delves into the history, tradition, taboos, and significance of polyandry in Himachal Pradesh, examining its place in the modern Indian marriage system.

Historical Roots:

The origins of polyandry in Himachal Pradesh are shrouded in mystery, with various theories attempting to explain its emergence. One prevailing hypothesis connects it to the epic Mahabharata, where Draupadi famously married the five Pandava brothers. This mythological precedent may have lent legitimacy to the practice in certain communities. Another explanation suggests that polyandry arose as a practical solution to the challenges of survival in the harsh Himalayan environment. Limited arable land and scarce resources made it diffi-

cult for individual families to sustain themselves. By marrying multiple brothers to a single wife, families could pool their resources, prevent land fragmentation, and ensure the survival of their lineage. Geographical factors also played a crucial role in the prevalence of polyandry. The remote and isolated regions of Himachal Pradesh, with their difficult terrain and limited connectivity, fostered a sense of cultural insularity. This isolation allowed traditional customs like polyandry to persist relatively unchanged for centuries.

Tradition and Customs:

In Himachal Pradesh, polyandry is typically fraternal, meaning that the husbands are brothers. This practice is most commonly found in the Kinnaur and Spiti regions, where it is often considered a customary form of marriage. The eldest brother usually takes the lead in marital affairs, while the other brothers share responsibilities and privileges. The marriage ceremony in polyandrous communities is often a simple affair, with rituals that vary depending on local customs. The bride is typically welcomed into the family and becomes the wife of all the brothers. Children born into marriage are considered the offspring of all the brothers, and paternity

is often determined socially rather than biologically. One notable aspect of polyandrous unions is the division of labor within the family. The brothers typically share responsibilities related to agriculture, animal husbandry, and household chores. The wife plays a central role in managing the household and raising the children.

Taboos and Social Norms:

While polyandry is an accepted practice in certain communities, it is not without its taboos and social norms. Marital fidelity is expected of the wife, and extramarital affairs are generally frowned upon. The brothers are expected to treat their wife with respect and fairness, and any form of abuse or mistreatment is considered unacceptable. One common taboo associated with polyandry is the discussion of paternity. While the children are considered the offspring of all the brothers, the specific biological father is often not openly discussed. This is done to avoid any potential conflicts or tensions within the family. Another social norm is the expectation that the brothers will maintain a harmonious relationship with each other. Sibling rivalry and jealousy can undermine the stability of the polyandrous union, so it is important for the brothers

to cooperate and support each other.

Significance in Modern Indian Marriage System:

In modern India, where monogamy is the legal norm, the practice of polyandry in Himachal Pradesh stands out as an anomaly. While it may seem incompatible with contemporary values of gender equality and individual autonomy, it is important to understand the social and economic context in which it exists. For some communities in Himachal Pradesh, polyandry continues to be a way of life that is deeply ingrained in their cultural identity. It is seen as a means of preserving their land, resources, and traditions. However, with increasing exposure to the outside world, changing attitudes, and greater access to education and employment opportunities, the practice of polyandry is gradually declining. The Indian legal system does not recognize polyandrous marriages, and such unions are considered invalid under the law. However, the government has generally adopted a non-interventionist approach, respecting the customary practices of indigenous communities as long as they do not violate fundamental human rights.

Challenges and Controversies:

Practice of polyandry is not without its

challenges and controversies. Critics argue that it can be exploitative of women, who may be subjected to the control and dominance of multiple husbands. Concerns have also been raised about the potential for domestic violence, sexual abuse, and psychological distress in polyandrous unions. Another challenge is the issue of inheritance and property rights. In polyandrous families, it can be difficult to determine how property should be divided among the children, as paternity is not always clear. This can lead to disputes and conflicts within the family. Despite these challenges, some proponents of polyandry argue that it can be a viable alternative to monogamy in certain contexts. They claim that it can promote gender equality, economic security, and social harmony. However, these arguments are often met with skepticism and criticism.

The Future of Polyandry in Himachal Pradesh:

The future of polyandry in Himachal Pradesh is uncertain. With increasing modernization, urbanization, and exposure to outside influences, the practice is likely to decline further. Younger generations are increasingly opting for monogamous marriages, and the traditional reasons for practicing polyandry are

becoming less relevant. However, it is unlikely that polyandry will disappear completely. In some remote and isolated communities, it may continue to persist as a cultural practice for generations to come. It is important for policymakers and researchers to understand the complexities of polyandry and to develop culturally sensitive approaches that respect the rights and well-being of all individuals involved.

Conclusion:

Polygamy in Himachal Pradesh represents a fascinating intersection of tradition, culture, and social adaptation. While it may seem out of sync with modern values, it is essential to recognize the historical context and the socio-economic factors that have sustained it for centuries. As Himachal Pradesh continues to evolve, the future of polyandry remains uncertain, but its legacy will undoubtedly continue to shape the region's cultural identity. A nuanced understanding of this practice is crucial for fostering informed discussions and promoting policies that respect the rights and dignity of all members of society.

(The writer is Director/CEO Synergetic Green Warriors Foundation).

Preserving greenery of forests

■ SHIV KUMAR PADHA

There are many quotes emphasizing the importance and protection of the forests like the one given by Prince Charles, "Forests are the world's air-conditioning system, the lungs of the planet and we are on the verge of switching it off." He emphasized upon the world community to provide funds to the rain forest countries need to re-orientate their economies so that the trees are worth more alive than dead. The silencing of the rain forests is a double deforestation, not only of trees, but a deforestation of the mind's music, medicine and knowledge.. The death of the forests is the end of our life. According to the Hindu epics, "Briksh Aropan Hai Kaam Mahan Elk Briksh Das Putre Saman."

In Hindu mythology jungles are very important for the isolation, meditation for carrying out Anusandhan (Research) with the sole objective of world peace and harmony between the human and the wild life. It is why Shri Ram, Pandvas went to jungle before becoming the kings. Mata Sita gave birth to Lava and Kush in the Ashram of Maharishi Balmiki in the forests, Shakuntla gave birth to Bharata in the Kanav Rishi Ashrams in the forests, similarly Mata Kayadu the mother of Saint Parhalad was taken to the forests before Parhalads birth. Forests are the green veil and canopy which covers the surface of the planet and acts like a panacea for the lives living on there. Forests are the large area dominated by trees. They play a vital role in the environment, providing habitat, regulating climate and contributing to the water cycle. The forests are not a grove of trees only but it serves as the greatest source of timber food and recreations.. The bountiful nature is so kind on the living organism on the earth that it renews replenishes and rejuvenates the forests by restoring them with greenery during the rains in general and the rainy season in particular. It is pertinent and viable for the humans on the planet to act as watch dogs to protect its greenery for the sustenance and protection of those living on the planet.

For maintaining a healthy planet, offering numerous benefits like fresh air, water, and bio diversity forest preservation is crucial. Protecting forests from deforestation, promot-



ing sustainable practices and involving local communities are vital steps in ensuring their long term health and productivity. The question why is forest preservation important?

Forests are the lungs of our planet which play a vital role in maintaining ecological balance and supporting life. For sustainable future, impacting climate, biodiversity and human well being the protection and preservation of the green heaven is crucial.

Forests act as massive carbon sinks. They absorb carbon dioxide and mitigating climate change. Forests regulate temperature on earth and help stabilize the global climate.

Forests are home to a vast variety plants and animal species. Protecting forests safeguards this bio diversity and maintains the intricate web of life.

Forests provide essential ecosystem like clean air, water, soil stabilization. They offer recreational opportunities for the human well being.

Bio diversity is the characteristic of the forests which homes variety of live-in all its forms, including plants, animals, and micro organisms. Forests are essential because it supports the functioning of the ecosystem, which in turn provides humans with essential services like clean air water and food.

Forests and wild life resources are also important for carbon sequestration, a process in which carbon dioxide is taken from the atmosphere and stored in plants and soil. Without these resources from the forests the world would have been much different place.

Forests are the best places for the Conservation of wild life essential to maintaining the bio diversity of our planet and ensuring the survival of species.

There are many factors responsible for depletion of the forests and the wild life such as,

Deforestation, which is the biggest factor

as it is the removal of trees and other vegetations make room for the human settlements and habitats, farming and industries.

Illegal hunting has caused a decrease in the animal population while other species have become endangered and extinct.

Over-exploitation of natural resources has led to the destruction of forests and wild life living there.

Pollution from industry and other sources has contaminated the environment causing the death of many animal species

Conservation and preservation of forests and the wild life is an important and essential part of preserving our planet's biodiversity, greenery and health.

Sustainable management of the forests is critical for the long term conservation of forests and the wild life. This can be achieved through replanting trees after logging and limiting the amount of land cleared for development.

Demarcating the protected areas which help to ensure that certain areas are kept away from the human activities allowing the wild life to thrive.

Improving public education and awareness regarding the importance of the forests and the wild life. The governments should create incentives for the care and protection of the forests and the wild life.

Tackling illegal activities like logging which can have major impact on the wild life.

The conservation of forests and wild life is essential for protecting our planet's biodiversity and health. By adapting sustainable practices, establishing protected areas, educating people, creating incentives for conservation, tackling illegal activities we can help protect this valuable ecosystem. The forest departments is provided with an army of the forest guards which should be entrusted with the duty of preserving and protecting the forests from the forest mafia active all over the country. Before concluding I would like to quote few relevant and inspirational slogans like Forests are the green gold which is free, Save a tree save a life. Sow seeds of trees rather than enmity.

Panic-Free Living: Tips and Tricks for Reducing Stress

■ VINOD CHANDRASHEKHAR DIXIT

World Panic Day on 18th June is an initiative aimed at increasing awareness about panic disorders. It serves as a day to provide education on the signs and symptoms, offer resources and support to those affected, and challenge the societal stigma surrounding mental health disorders. It is a day to sit back, relax and try to let some of that stress and panic melt away. People with panic disorder have frequent and unexpected panic attacks. These attacks are characterized by a sudden wave of fear or discomfort or a sense of losing control even when there is no clear danger or trigger. Panic disorder often begins in the late teens or early adulthood. Women are more likely than men to develop panic disorder. Panic disorder sometimes runs in families, but no one knows for sure why some family members have it while others don't. According to researchers several parts of the brain and certain biological processes may play a crucial role in fear and anxiety.

In fact, panic disorder is a mental health issue that may affect up to 2% of the population in certain countries. Women are more likely to succumb to panic than men, and the condition is very treatable, particularly when the person affected is armed with self-care tactics while sticking to a healthful diet. Panic attacks often include physical symptoms that might feel like a heart attack, such as trembling, tingling, or rapid heart rate. Panic attacks can occur at any time. Many people with panic disorder worry about the possibility of having another attack and may significantly change their life to avoid having another attack. Panic attacks can occur as frequently as several times a day or as rarely as a few times a year.

People with panic disorder may have sudden and repeated panic attacks of overwhelming anxiety and fear and have a feeling of being out of control, or a fear of death or impending doom during a panic attack and also an intense worry about when the next panic attack will happen.

Whether simply incorporating a few slow breathing exercises for a few minutes or engaging in an entire hour of full-blown meditation, these types of activities can have a huge impact on mental as well as physical health.

Those who are really struggling with panic as a stress response would be wise to seek help before it gets worse. Calling a counsellor seems like too big of a first step, check in with a trusted friend or family member first to see if they'll help call a counsellor or doctor. It is much important to remember that there is no shame attached to mental health issues, and getting help from a professional is the bravest thing a person can do on the road toward recovery. Let us encourage people to slow down, relax and get the help they might need if they are, indeed, struggling with panic. The best measures, however, are preventative.