

Artificial Intelligence and the Transformation of Political Communication in India: Opportunities, Challenges and Democratic Implications

Dr. Narayan Madhukar Rajurwar

Associate professor,

M. S. Kakade College Someshwarnagar

Tal Baramati Dist., Pune

narayanrajurwar@gmail.com

Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI, is changing the framework of political communication in India. Political messages that once were the product of a lot of organisational resources, money and media resources can be generated, translated, personalised, visualised and distributed at an unprecedented speed now. This change is the possibility for multilingual communication, accessibility, voter education, policy explanation and more effective public communication. Yet synthetic media, deepfakes, automated persuasion, algorithmic amplification, impersonation, privacy threats and a lack of confidence in genuine audiovisual evidence are challenges for democracy at the same time. In this paper, we analyse the evolution of political communication theory, democratic deliberation, public administration and responsible AI governance in a way that is based on the intersection of political communication theory, democratic deliberation, public administration and responsible AI governance. It is based on official evidence from the Election Commission of India (ECI), National Statistical Office (NSO) and Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). NSO's 2025 Comprehensive Modular Survey: Telecom reported that the use of internet among 15-29 year olds in rural India was 92.7 percent and 95.7 percent in urban India. TRAI reported that there were 969.10 million internet users at the end of March 2025, up from 954.40 million a year earlier. During the 2024 general elections, the ECI issued advice on responsible social-media usage and warned political parties to avoid AI-enabled deepfakes and misinformation. In January 2025 it also instructed parties to prominently label AI-generated or synthetic campaign content on their websites.

The paper also develops a new "AI Political Communication Integrity Cycle" that links creation, disclosure, distribution, verification, correction and accountability. The paper argues that democratic governance should not advocate for open and free technology adoption or complete technological suppression. Rather, it must be a values-based communication environment, in which innovation would be accompanied by provenance, transparency, human oversight, media literacy and institutional accountability. The paper ends with an empirical research framework and policy recommendations for electoral institutions, political parties, public administrators, media organisations, technology platforms and universities.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, political communication, generative AI, deepfakes, elections, democracy, misinformation, public administration, digital governance, India.

1. Introduction

Political communication is the core of democratic government because citizens of India cannot fully take part in politics without access to information, arguments, competing claims and explanations of public policy. Political communication in India has traditionally happened through political meetings, newspapers, radio, television, posters, party workers and interpersonal networks. Digital platforms are already changing this dynamic in that digital platforms have already changed the way people communicate instantly, cheaply and networked. AI has added to that in the form of AI-mediated political communication: communication can now be generated or modified by machines, translated into multiple languages, tailored to different audiences, transformed into text, audio and video, and rapidly and consistently produced at scale. So the main difference between AI-mediated political communications is not simply speed. It is scale, personalization, synthetic production and automated distribution.

A single political message can be tailored to different communities; a written policy position can be turned into a video script; a candidate's public speech can be transcribed, translated and repurposed; and synthetic images or voices can be created in place of traditional production processes. These capabilities may reduce communication barriers, but they also lower the cost of deception. India can be an excellent place to study the transformation since political communication is happening across a diversity of linguistic, geographic and socio-economic landscapes. In the 2025 NSO telecom survey, 92.7 percent of rural and 95.7 percent of urban people aged 15 to 29 had used the internet during the last three months. TRAI reported 969.10 million internet subscribers at the end of March 2025. These indicators form the basis for a large digital communication infrastructure but they do not by themselves determine how citizens receive or understand political information. AI-related electoral communication became a political issue in 2024 when the general election was held. The ECI advised the political parties and their representatives to use social media responsibly and warned them to avoid deepfakes, misinformation and impersonation. It also required parties to take down fake content within three hours of the notice.

In January 2025, the ECI also advised political parties and campaigners to prominently label AI-generated or synthetic content so voters could recognise it. These actions represent a shift from general regulation of digital communication to explicit attention to synthetic political media. The research problem therefore goes beyond whether AI is good or bad. The academic question is: how does AI alter the relationship between political actors, media institutions, platforms, citizens and the state? And what institutional safeguards are necessary to maintain democratic agency?

2. Objectives of the Study

- To look at the ways in which AI is transforming political communication in India.
- To analyze the opportunities in the world of generative AI created by political parties, electoral institutions, media and public administration.
- To understand the democratic risks of deepfakes, misinformation, impersonation, automated persuasion and algorithmic amplification.
- To explore the emerging regulatory and institutional responses to AI-mediated political communication.
- To create a framework for responsible AI-mediated political communication.
- To propose an empirical approach to the study of citizens' perception of AI-generated political content.
- To suggest governance models that balance innovation, freedom of expression, electoral integrity, transparency and accountability.

3. Research Questions

- How does AI impact the production, personalisation and distribution of political messages in India?
- What opportunities does AI create for multilingual, accessible and citizen-oriented political communication?
- How do synthetic media and AI-enabled misinformation affect the information environment of elections?
- How does disclosure of AI-generated content improve citizens' ability to evaluate political information?
- How can democratic institutions respond to manipulation using AI without curtailing legitimate political expression?

4. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

4.1 Political communication as a Democratic Infrastructure.

Political communication is more than just campaign coverage of issues. It serves several democratic functions: agenda setting, political socialisation, policy understanding, representation, accountability and public deliberation. The quality of political communication determines whether citizens can discern policy arguments from propaganda and evidence from assertion. AI thus affects democratic institutions in a way in which citizens make decisions in the information environment.

4.2 Mediatization and platformisation.

The political communication environment is becoming more platform-based today. Political actors are not only interacting with institutions like parties and newspapers but they interact with platforms whose algorithms influence visibility, recommendation and circulation. AI intensifies platformisation, as generative systems can produce large numbers of content and recommendation systems can make recommendations and distribute content in response to behavioral signals. The result is a political communication system where production and distribution of content is becoming more and more computational.

4.3 Deliberative Democracy.

From a deliberative-democratic perspective, political communication should empower citizens to find reasons, challenge claims and revise their decisions. AI can help with deliberation as it increases accessibility, translation, summarisation and access to public information. But it can also stifle deliberation when synthetic content makes authenticity difficult to establish, when automated persuasion targets citizens without transparency or when information environments become highly fragmented.

4.4 Public Administration and Responsible AI.

For public administration, this is not just an issue for elections. Government departments increasingly use digital systems to communicate schemes, services, public-health messages and emergency information. AI can translate official information and offer citizen-facing help. But administrative communication has a special responsibility of accuracy, non-discrimination and accountability. A public authority cannot take an opaque automated system as a substitute for institutional responsibility.

4.5 Political agency and human oversight.

The normative principle we offer here is "human-centred political agency". AI can help in political communication; however, citizens should be able to identify the source of that, understand the nature of synthetic modification and contest political claims. Political parties and public institutions should be responsible for AI-assisted communication rather than falling back on software providers or algorithms.

5. Empirical Context: India's Digital Communication Environment

Indicator	Official evidence	Implication for political communication
Internet subscribers, Mar. 2024	954.40 million	Large national digital communication base
Internet subscribers, Mar. 2025	969.10 million	Further expansion of connectivity
15–29 internet use, rural, 2025	92.7%	High youth digital reach beyond cities
15–29 internet use, urban, 2025	95.7%	Very high urban youth reach
AI/synthetic campaign disclosure	ECI advisory, Jan. 2025	AI provenance is now an electoral-governance issue
Deepfake/misinformation directions	ECI, May 2024	Platforms and parties face explicit integrity expectations

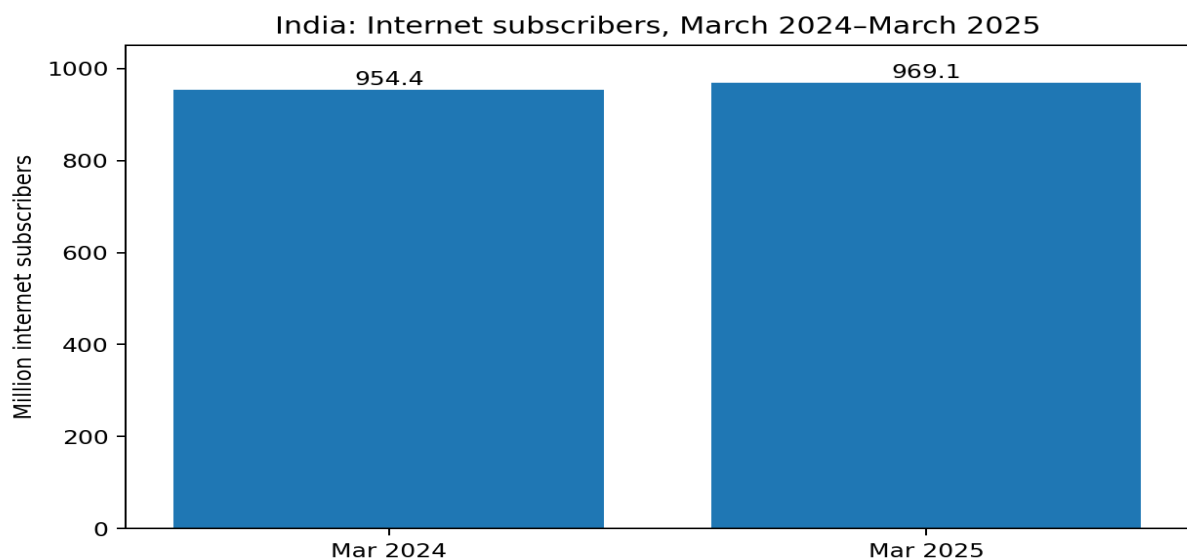


Figure 1. Internet subscribers in India, March 2024–March 2025. Source: TRAI Annual Report/Year-end telecom data.

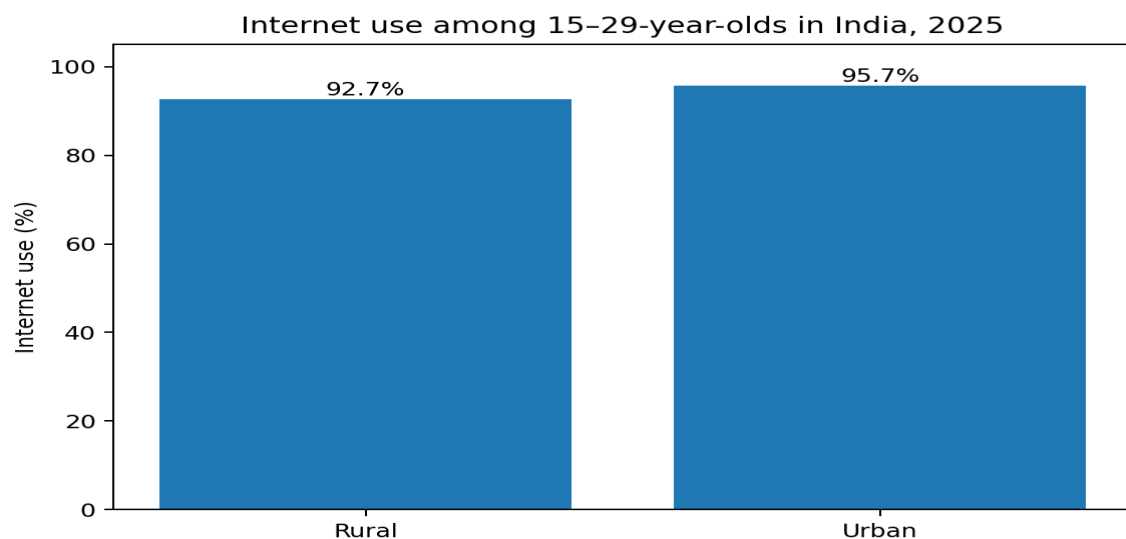


Figure 2. Internet use among persons aged 15–29, rural and urban India, 2025. Source: NSO, Comprehensive Modular Survey: Telecom, 2025.

Figure 3. AI-mediated political communication chain



Figure 3. AI-mediated political communication chain proposed in this study.

6. Opportunities Created by Artificial Intelligence

6.1 Multilingual and inclusive communication.

India's linguistic diversity presents a huge opportunity for AI-assisted translation and speech technologies. Political parties and public institutions can communicate policies, electoral procedures and public services in different languages more quickly. Text-to-speech and speech-to-text tools would be able to reach communities with different communication needs. The democratic legitimacy of these technologies is not in replacing human communication but rather in overcoming language and accessibility barriers.

6.2 Voter Education and Public Information.

AI can assist electoral institutions by giving simple language explanations, multilingual voter information and question-answer tools. The ECI itself has highlighted the potential for AI and digital tools to make voter information and voting instructions available in multiple languages and to make it easier for people to access. That's an important distinction: AI for explaining an official procedure is very different from AI for mimicking a political leader.

6.3 Policy communication and citizen engagement.

Government departments can use AI-powered tools to simplify complex policy documents, generate common questions and direct citizens to the relevant services. In public administration, that can reduce communication costs and improve responsiveness. But automated answers should be checked with a human, especially if mistakes can impact rights, benefits or access to public services.

7. Challenges and Democratic Risks

7.1 Deepfakes and the crisis of authenticity.

Deepfakes are particularly difficult because audiovisual evidence has always been persuasive. A false video or voice recording might depict a political leader saying something that never happened. The impression can persist even if the lie is later corrected. And so this is not just fake information, it is a loss of faith in authentic information. If citizens come to believe that any inconvenient recording is fake, there may be less doubt that the real evidence is right.

7.2 Scale and speed of misinformation.

Generative AI lowers the cost to produce content. A small political communication team can produce a number of different versions of messages, images, translations or scripts at a scale that a large media company would have to work with. This creates a tension between creation and verification: making a false statement may take seconds and establishing the truth might require documentation, expert scrutiny and coordination with others.

7.3 Algorithmic amplification.

AI-generated content becomes politically significant as well when paired with recommendation and distribution systems. Platforms can determine how much content is available to users. So the democratic issue is not simply synthetic content but the interaction of content creation and computational amplification. Too much emotional or polarising content can attract attention irrespective of its truth value to create incentives that can distort public discussion.

8. India's Institutional Response

India's electoral institutions have started to respond to AI-related political communication. In May 2024, the ECI told political parties and their representatives to use social media responsibly and ethically and warned against AI-based deepfakes, misinformation and impersonation and to remove fake content within three hours of being flagged to the party. In January 2025, the ECI advised parties, candidates and star campaigners to put prominent signage for AI-generated or synthetic campaign content—images, videos, audio and other materially altered content. These are important because they make disclosure and responsibility part of electoral communication. They also illustrate a governance that is based in part on existing legal and electoral environments and not on AI as a completely new legal universe. The ECI has cited the Representation of the People Acts, the Model Code of Conduct and information technology rules when dealing with misinformation and impersonation. The institutional challenge is to ensure that these mechanisms remain clear, timely, technologically informed and in line with constitutional freedoms. The current AI-and-elections training programme of the ECI is also significant from a public-administration perspective. The curriculum explains how efficiency, voter engagement and service delivery are the potential benefits of AI and also includes misinformation, deepfakes, cybersecurity, bias, privacy, transparency, human oversight and human rights. This is a mature governance principle: AI readiness needs technical capacity and democratic safeguards.

9. Discussion

AI is changing political discourse on three levels at once. It changes who can produce persuasive content, and how quickly at the production level. At the distribution level, it interacts with the platforms that determine visibility and audience segmentation. At the reception level, it changes the citizen's problem from simply reading a political claim to also judging if the communication itself is authentic. This third change is most important for democratic trust. The Indian context also shows why governance cannot be dependent on one institution. The ECI can regulate electoral conduct, but it cannot solve every problem of platform design, media literacy, cyber security, data governance and political communication on its own. The political parties control many campaign messages; platforms control technical distribution systems; journalists and fact-checkers provide verification; universities can give them digital literacy; and citizens make final judgments.

Then the appropriate model is to distribute responsibility with clear accountability. Public administration is important for democracy because the democratic institutions need to transmit the most powerful information very soon during elections and crises and to implement policy. AI can help in improving administration but we need to maintain the "human accountability behind automated communication." If an AI-generated public message has a material error, then citizens want to know which institution is responsible for fixing it. Efficiency without accountability is not enough for democratic administration. The central analytical insight is that AI should not be thought of as inherently democratic or anti-democratic. Its political effects depend on institutional architecture, incentives, transparency, citizen capacities and how it is deployed. The same translation technology can open up access to public information or microtarget political information. The same synthetic media can support creative political education or impersonate a candidate. Thus governance must regulate practices and risks rather than viewing AI as a single, homogenous object.

10. Policy Recommendations

- Create clear disclosure norms for materially AI-generated or synthetically altered political communication.
- Develop rapid verification and correction protocols for electoral institutions, platforms, media and independent fact-checking organisations.

- Improve digital and AI literacy in voter education programmes, especially in colleges and first-time voters.
- Require meaningful human oversight for AI systems used by public authorities in citizen-facing political or electoral communication.
- Ensure official audiovisual communications are proven to be authentic.
- Create transparent rules for political microtargeting and political advertising data practices, consistent with applicable law.

11. Limitations of the Study

The empirical basis of this paper is conceptual and evidence based and is not a survey of the original data. The connectivity numbers in the official information are indicative of the size of the digital world in India but do not capture how the individual citizens use AI for political ends. The ECI's recommendations of responses to this question are not proof that a particular type of AI misuse was possible but rather just the responses of institutions. AI technologies are evolving quickly and findings from one election cycle may not remain constant. Future research should use longitudinal data, transparent sampling, and reproducible content analysis techniques.

12. Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence is changing political communication in India from a process that is still mainly based on the production and distribution of the human, to a more computational process of generation, translation, personalisation, amplification and verification. The prospect is great: multilingual voter education, accessibility, faster public communication, policy explanation, citizen assistance and efficient administrative communication. The risks are just as serious: deepfakes, misinformation, impersonation, opaque targeting, privacy violations, algorithmic bias and a broader crisis of trust in audiovisual evidence. The democratic response shouldn't be technological optimism or technological pessimism. It should be institutional preparedness. The proposed AI Political Communication Integrity Cycle— creation, disclosure, distribution, verification, correction, accountability and learning— is one way to conceptualise that preparedness. The general idea of the AI is simple: the use of AI does not remove human responsibility. All political parties, public authorities, platforms, media organisations and researchers must be accountable for the communication systems that they build and use. AI is therefore not only a new communication technology in Political Science and Public Administration. It is also a challenge to the institutional architecture in which citizens are confronted with political reality. The future of democratic communication will not only depend on how AI can be more effective, but also if institutions become more transparent, citizens are digitally literate and accountability mechanisms are strong enough that technological capability is subordinate to democratic agency, constitutional values and informed citizenship.

References

1. Election Commission of India. (2024). ECI directs responsible and ethical use of social media platforms by political parties and their representatives. General Elections 2024 Press Note, 6 May 2024.
2. Election Commission of India. (2025). Advisory to political parties and leaders regarding labelling of AI-generated/synthetic content in campaigning. 15 January 2025.
3. Election Commission of India. (2024). General Elections 2024: Official election materials, press notes and statistical resources.
4. Election Commission of India. (2026). Artificial Intelligence, Elections and Democratic Governance: Course materials. IIIDEM.
5. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, National Statistical Office. (2025). Comprehensive Modular Survey: Telecom, 2025 (NSS 80th Round), January–March 2025.

6. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India. (2025). The Indian Telecom Services Performance Indicators / Year End Review 2024–25.
7. UNESCO. (2021). Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
8. OECD. (2019). Recommendation of the Council on Artificial Intelligence. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
9. Habermas, J. (1989). The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. MIT Press.
10. Castells, M. (2009). Communication Power. Oxford University Press.
11. Chadwick, A. (2017). The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
12. Vaccari, C., & Chadwick, A. (2020). Deepfakes and disinformation: Exploring the impact of synthetic political video on deception, uncertainty, and trust in news. *Social Media + Society*, 6(1).