

# Exploring Deepfake: Opportunities, Concerns, and Ethical Considerations in the Era of New Media Technology

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## ABSTRACT

The rapid evolution of information and new media technologies presents a dual narrative of promise and peril for humanity. AI-enabled innovations, notably Deepfake technology, offer appealing prospects for creating engaging content and digitally replicating individuals in multimedia. Yet, these developments also raise significant ethical and societal challenges, including the proliferation of misinformation and the propagation of fake news. The paper advocates for a human-centric approach where the introduction of new technologies promotes human welfare and human society. The paper explains the focus on Deepfake technology within the larger framework of the advancement of daily life using AI. As Deepfake technology is still in its early stage, a discovery approach as a research method is adopted to explore the impact of our daily life in a holistic way. Through the case study, we aim to explore the complex role of Deepfake technology and the consequences for the future.

**Keywords--Artificial Intelligence, Deepfakes, Media Ethics, New Media Technology, Social Media**

## INTRODUCTION

There is no denying that Information and New Media Technology is evolving fast. While on one hand technology is a boon for humanity in many ways; dissemination of information at lightning speed, improving healthcare and increasing efficiency are some such ways. On the other hand, technology is a matter of concern for humanity if it is misused. Artificial Intelligence enabled applications like Deepfake technology have potential to create entertaining contents and 'deepfakes' wherein persons can be artificially replicated in photos and videos [1]. However, these technologies come with serious concerns too such as their misuse and resulting fake news creation. Information ecosystem plays a vital role in catalysing the development of society due to its significant role in shaping and transforming individuals and institutions. Its importance has increased manifold, especially in large, dense and culturally diverse countries like India [2], where new media technologies are fast permeating and becoming integral to everyday life.

Globally, the population has reached 8.08 billion, according to the UN World Population Prospects report. More than two thirds are now online. The latest figures estimate a total of 5.35 billion internet users worldwide [3]. And the average internet user spends around 6 hours and 40 minutes online per day, according to research by GWI [4]. The number of active social media user accounts has exceeded 5 billion, with 62.3 per cent of the global population having at least one account, according to analysis by Kepios [4]. There are now 5.61 billion unique mobile phone users in the world [4], according to latest data. 69.4 per cent of the global population now uses mobile devices, according to the latest data from GSMA Intelligence. That's an increase of 138 million users (+2.5 per cent) since early 2023 [4].

As of the beginning of 2024, India had 751.5 million internet users with a 52.4% internet penetration rate [5]. The Indian customers would have expected a median mobile internet speed of 99.03 Mbps over cellular networks and a median fixed internet speed of 60.45 Mbps over the same period, based on Ookla statistics [6]. India's total active cellular mobile connections were 1.12 billion by early 2024, which is 78.0% of the total population [5]. The mobile connections in India were 78.0% by January 2024, according to GSMA Intelligence. [5].

Moreover, between 2023 and 2024, India registered a 2.1 per cent mobile connections growth of 23 million [5]. By January 2024, India had 462.0 million social media 32.2 per cent of India's population [5]. There were 383.0 million social media users in India above the age of 18 years, which translates to 38.1 per cent of India's population [5]. Broader, 61.5 per cent of the total internet users in India (irrespective of age) used at least one social media platform by January 2024 [5].

The advertising tools of Meta and Google show that, as of early 2024, there were 366.9 million users of Facebook in India, 462.0 million users of YouTube and 362.9 million users of Instagram [5]. In January 2023, 2022 and 2021, respectively, these numbers were 313.0 million, 307.5 million and 247.9 million for Facebook; 266.1 million, 263.4 million and 176.3 million for YouTube; and 198.1 million, 195.8 million and 137.7 million for Instagram. Advertising

tools published by Meta show that, as of January 2024, the country with the highest potential ad reach of Instagram is India, with 471 million users. This potential ad reach grew by 133 million (+58.1 per cent) between January 2023 and January 2024 [5]. Figures published in LinkedIn's advertising resources reveal that LinkedIn had 120.0 million members in India in early 2024 [5]. Data published in X (Twitter)'s advertising resources reveals that X had 26.08 million users in India in early 2024 [5]. Mentioned figures highlight the role and impact of new media technology in society as it serves a vital role in disseminating knowledge, fostering dialogue, and facilitating social change. Its ability to amplify diverse voices, address societal challenges, and promote civic engagement demonstrates its pivotal role in guiding progress, empowerment, and inclusive development. As it is witnessing a massive transformation at all its levels, therefore, it is the need of the hour if any new technology is introduced in society its duty and accountability must be towards the welfare and development of human beings. As a result, this research paper is intended to identify, the potentials, challenges, and Ethical issues of Deepfake technology.

#### *A. Justification of the Study*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) based technology is an integral part of the everyday lives of most people, and this phenomenon seems to be progressing rapidly with advantages and disadvantages. Deepfake technology is one of these aspects that come with many challenges and many uses. This is the reason why qualitative exploratory research was carried out here. The following research has used a approach which is narrative in nature to explore the Deepfake role in the society, & finding out the multiple possibilities & directions to be taken in near future.

#### *I. Defining Deepfake*

Synthetic or doctored media created by AI and deep learning algorithms manipulated and edited to make believably false depictions or impersonations of someone [7]: deepfakes (noun) Fake videos or images created or played out in a believable, but artificial manner; a synthesis that replaces a person's face, voice or body language with someone else's in already existing footage.

#### *A. Understanding Deepfake Technology*

Synthesised media – known as 'deepfakes' – are generated using deep learning algorithms that are now capable of processing huge amounts of visual and audio data. Not only does this enable the customary mimicking and cloning of heavily modifiable materials, but it also more than helps to generate whole clips. Since 2017, the presence of a realistic recording is almost undiscoverable for the human eye. Pornographic videos of film or TV stars with edited bodies and faces, created by AI-generated material, were first uploaded by a Reddit user in 2017. The most recent and frequently mentioned examples of deepfakes are original recordings that have become increasingly popular and diversified over the past two years, appearing on self-promoting and adult websites as well as in the corporate sector.

There are some examples of its use for entertainment and satire, but deepfakes have also been used for misinformation, harassment, revenge porn and other kinds of fraud and coercion. The fact that deepfakes are now widely available means they can be used to manipulate public opinion or undermine trust in the media, or they could be used to reproduce identity documents or enable identity theft and cyberattacks.

#### *B. Types of Deepfakes*

Deepfake imagery is a forgery of face, body, sound, speech, environment or any other personal information, impersonated by machine learning and other systems that imitate and substitute human-generated content. Deepfakes are of five different types, each being used differently and being more or less sophisticated. Here are some commonly used deep fakes:

- **Face-swapping:** One of the most common types of deepfake is face-swapping, where the face of one person is pasted onto another person's in a video or photo, so that the person looks just like the original. This can be used to create realistic videos/photos of a person saying or doing something that they never actually did.
- **Lip-syncing:** In these so-called lip-sync deepfakes, the mouth movement of the person in the video is manipulated to match the audio track of another person (or persons). It looks like the person is saying words they never actually said.
- **Voice cloning.** In voice cloning deepfakes, an AI algorithm is used to mimic a person's voice using just a short sample of audio recordings, and the algorithm can then create fake clips of people saying things they never said.
- **Puppet-mastering:** The body movements of a person captured in a video/photo are altered in order to control their actions in a specific way, to make it appear that they are doing something that they actually didn't.
- **Text-to-video:** text-to-video deepfakes can produce realistic-looking video footage from textual descriptions or scripts, which could be used, for instance, to generate videos of events that never took place (eg, Terrence and his friends dancing around, killing everyone, and then having a nice dinner), or to visualise stories and narratives.
- **Style transfer:** In style-transfer deepfakes, the visual style of one image or video is transferred to another. For instance, the style of a famous painting can be applied to a video clip, creating a strikingly artistic but disconcerting result.

*C. Present Concerns with Deepfakes*

- Spreading Propaganda and fake news: Deepfakes can be used to spread false information and tamper with public opinion, thereby increasing the problem of disinformation and fake news.
- Influencing elections and public opinion: Deepfakes can alter electoral outcomes and public sentiment by peddling inauthentic content about political figures or events.
- Blackmailing and Extortion: Malicious actors can use deepfakes to blackmail or extort you or your organisation, threatening to release the fake content unless you make concessions or pay up.
- Reputational Damage: Celebrities, politicians, activists and journalists can be made to look untrustworthy or otherwise damage their reputations as a result of the creation of deepfakes.
- Non-consensual Pornography: Deepfakes are often created for non-consensual pornography and revenge porn, where the victims' personal information is shared without their consent, violating their privacy and dignity, and leading to significant emotional distress.
- Sacrifice to Trust and Democracy: Deepfakes create fertile ground for mistrust in institutions, news media and democratic procedures, which are essential to a civil society and the rule of law.
- Malicious Exploitation: For example, deepfakes might be used for malicious intentions, like revenge porn and circumventing face-recognition systems.
- Greater scepticism: the rise of deepfakes creates distrust of the media as it becomes more difficult to differentiate real from fake, and truth from fiction.
- Misinformation: A deepfake-produced misinformation can be mistaken for existing information, foster societal rancour and confusion, and perhaps lead to social unrest.
- Cybersecurity: As deepfake technology improves, it might be harder to detect and block cyberattacks (such as those involving manipulated video or audio recordings)

*D. Techniques for detecting Deepfakes*

- Facial Expression and Movement: Look out for different aspects of facial expression, such as a blink occurring at an odd moment in the audio, or other unnatural movements.
- Lip Sync Errors: Pay attention to any variations between the lips' movements and spoken phrases. The audio and video may not always synchronise flawlessly when using deepfake technology.
- Unusual Shadows and Lighting Examine the video's lighting and shadows. Lighting irregularities in deepfake content could indicate manipulation.
- Blurry or misaligned edges: Look around the edges of the face for signs of digital manipulation – are they blurry or misaligned? You might also notice blurring along the hairline or at the jawline.
- Unusual Backgrounds: Deepfakes have the potential to introduce background or surrounding discrepancies. Keep an eye out for oddities, reflections, or patterns.
- Audio Anomalies: Pay attention to any background noise, audio hiccups, or tone shifts that can indicate audio manipulation.
- Use one of the many free deepfake-detection tools: there are a growing number of online tools and software applications that can be used to check for Deepfakes. Anyone can use them to analyse media for signs of manipulation.

**II. Diving into Deepfake: A Brief Overview of Key Stories**

In recent times, many Deepfake stories triggered the alarming situation of widespread misinformation, erosion of trust in media and public figures, and potential threats to national security and individual privacy. During the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, fabricated video messages purportedly from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy emerged on social media platforms in March 2022, allegedly directing Ukrainian citizens to lay down their arms and surrender to the Russian Army [8]. Additionally, another deceptive video depicted the Russian President advocating for peace and harmony [9]. Simultaneously, both stories fuel potential consequences, such as confusion among the public, escalation of tensions, or manipulation of narratives surrounding the conflict. The viability of any media platform depends upon trust and reliability. Audiences will only remain engaged if they perceive the platform as trustworthy and socially accountable. Fortunately, media platforms recognize the importance of this principle. In response to the spreading of both fake videos, Meta and YouTube promptly removed the deceptive content from their platforms. [9].

Further, Australian authorities disclosed that in 2023, over 400 individuals reported losing over 8 million Australian dollars to online trading platform scams [10]. These scams operated by disseminating fabricated news articles and videos showcasing celebrities. In an attempt to deceive people into believing that celebrities and other well-known public figures are profiting greatly from online investment trading platforms, scammers have produced deepfake movies and fake news articles. Another incidence occurred in China where a deepfake video was used in a scam costing a firm more than \$25.6 million. The culprit pretended to be the company's Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and requested a money transfer over a conference call. Workers were tricked into thinking the individual on the conference call was genuine or phoney, while in reality, he was a CFO avatar. As per the employees, they not only looked authentic but also sounded real [11]. It highlights the need for increasing vigilance and awareness among individuals and

organizations to mitigate the risks associated with such scams. Without proactive awareness initiatives, robust technological safeguards, and effective regulatory measures, addressing this emerging threat remains challenging.

In May 2023, Indian wrestlers were protesting against Indian Wrestling Federation Chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, alleging sexual harassment. During the protest, the Indian Police detained the wrestlers, while two versions of the Indian wrestler's photos spread rapidly on X (previously Twitter) [12]. Both images show wrestlers Vinesh and Sangeeta Phogat sitting in a police van with other wrestlers, accompanied by three policemen. Both images were similar, but one showed Phogat's sister appear to be smiling [12]. This event raises questions about media accountability. It not only casts a shadow over the protest and the wrestlers involved, but it also underscores the potential impact of disinformation. The widespread dissemination of these images through mainstream media channels without any sense of accountability amplifies concerns about the accuracy and ethics of news reporting, especially considering their nationwide reach and influence.

Several Indian celebrities have also been targeted by deepfake AI- technology. A viral video on social media has depicted Akshay endorsing a gaming app, but it is a deepfake developed without his consent. Akshay is outraged over the misuse of his name and has taken legal action against the fraudsters [13]. In another deepfake, Indian Cricketer Virat Kohli endorsed a batting app, and fell victim to fraudsters who manipulated an interview tape, replacing his authentic voice with a counterfeit one. This alteration creates the false impression that he endorses an online game of dubious value. Despite Kohli never endorsing such games, the altered video suggests otherwise, misleading viewers into believing he supports an app promising significant investment returns [14]. Another video included deepfakes of actresses Alia Bhatt, Ananya Panday, Suhana Khan, Sara Ali Khan, and Janhvi Kapoor. The Bollywood stars' images are superimposed on the faces of youngsters who are joyfully performing a fruit song [15]. Moreover, India's richest man Mukesh Ambani, the chairman of Reliance Industries, has been seen as an endorser in a deepfake promoting the 'Free Stock Forum' [16]. These deepfake videos can persuade people to believe that celebrities promote a specific product, and thus possibly convince viewers to invest in a risky platform. Ultimately, this suggests a potential danger related to this technology on the way people think and behave in society.

On social media, a deepfake video that appeared to be actress Rashmika Mandanna entering an elevator went viral. [17]. The video footage shows another woman entering the elevator wearing a black suit. The man who allegedly posted the video is said to have used AI to replace the woman's face with that of Mandanna. [18] An allegedly obscene video of the Barabanki Member of Parliament leader Upendra Singh Rawat went viral on social media. Rawat claims the video is a deepfake produced using AI [19]. The video was released just before Rawat filed his nomination for the Member of Parliament seat from Barabanki. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has stressed the need for media education to alert the public of the dangers of deepfake technology. He has urged it to stand up against its misuse and protect the trust of society. Similarly, the Indian external affairs minister S Jaishankar has stressed the national security threat that artificial intelligence (AI) and deepfakes could pose [20]. The multiple types of deepfake and AI technology-based content prove the need to protect the integrity of digital content and to protect the trust in media and digital technology as these innovations begin to affect the credibility and reliability of information in the digital world.

This not only besmirches the individual, but also carries with it relevant issues of ethics and consent as they pertain to privacy. The Indian actor Anil Kapoor has instigated legal action over the unauthorised use of his likeness and voice in Deepfake AI-created GIFs, emojis, ringtones and pornographic content [8]. In the case "*Anil Kapoor v. Simply Life India and Ors.*", the Delhi High Court granted protection to Kapoor's persona and personal attributes, specifically safeguarding them from misuse through AI tools for creating deepfakes [22]. Similarly, in another case, *Amitabh Bachchan v. Rajat Negi and Ors.*, legendary actor Mr. Amitabh Bachchan was granted an ad interim in rem injunction against the unauthorized commercial use of his personality rights, including voice, name, image, and likeness [23]. The mentioned cases illustrate the proactive approach of celebrities in protecting their rights and reputations in the face of emerging technological threats. Both cases reflect the court's acknowledgment of the importance of preserving celebrities' control over their public image and identity.

### III. Legal Advisories for Deepfake in India

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (Meity), Govt. of India issued the following advisory to the significant social media intermediaries to [24]:

- Make sure that due diligence is done and that appropriate measures are taken to spot false information and Deepfakes, especially material that contravenes laws, rules, and/or user agreements.
- Fast action is taken against such cases, properly within the deadlines stated in the IT Regulations for 2021, and Users are made to refrain from hosting such data, content, and deep fakes When reported, remove any such content. thirty-six hours following such reporting and Make careful to act quickly, well inside the deadlines outlined in the IT Regulations 2021, and stop allowing access to the data/content.

Reiterated was the fact that noncompliance with pertinent aspects of the IT Act and Rules will result in the application of Rule 7 of the IT Rules, 2021, which might potentially lead to the organization losing its protection under Section 79(1) of the Information Technology Act, 2000. [8].

Meity, in order to ensure that all intermediaries comply with the current IT regulations, GOI issued another advise to all of them on December 26, 2023. The directive focusses in particular on the growing worries about deepfakes, or misinformation driven by artificial intelligence.[25]. According to the guidance "Users must be made aware of content that is prohibited by the IT Rules in a clear and precise manner, including through the platform's terms of service and user agreements. This is especially true for the materials that are listed under Rule 3(1)(b)." Additionally, users must be given this information clearly when registering for the first time and on a regular basis, especially when attempting to log in and uploading or sharing content.

Additionally, users need to be informed about the numerous criminal penalties found in the IT Act of 2000, the Indian Penal Code (IPC) 1860, and any other laws that may be applicable in the event that Rule 3(1) is broken (b). Furthermore, it must be made abundantly apparent in the terms of service and user agreements that intermediaries and/or platforms are required by applicable Indian laws to report legal infractions to law enforcement agencies. [25]. Additionally, another advisory has been issued to social media intermediaries and artificial intelligence (AI) platforms, urging them to seek permission before introducing AI products and they must obtain explicit government approval for all "under-testing" or "unreliable" artificial intelligence (AI) models before launching them for use in India. [26]. Such advisories mirror a regulatory shift on the part of the government to be proactive in governing online content and technology in order to combat misinformation and maintain public confidence, as well as to hold digital platforms accountable for the content they host.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

As society becomes more reliant on AI, the increased presence of such technologies has led to both opportunities and concerns. Deepfake technology has emerged as the primary area of interest and concern. As this technology is developing, it will be important to critically analyse the potential risks associated with it. Some of the concerns related to Deepfakes include use of Deepfake videos to spread fake news as was seen during the 2020 US elections; or the risk of being blackmailed by the use of such technology to change audio; or the consequences of Deepfake pictures to cause harm to one's reputation; or the potential human rights violations that may happen due to the circulation of Deepfake pictures. The emerging risks have already initiated discussions for increasing the reliability of detection mechanisms and also for finding effective regulatory solutions. Some of the measures taken by various countries or digital platforms include the following: In October 2020, the US Attorney General William Barr issued a legal advisory, which clarified that under federal law social media intermediaries cannot cite the Communications Decency Act (1996) as a shield if they intentionally facilitate the publication of Deepfake content through their services at a scale, and in a manner, likely to affect a federal election.

Last year, the US Attorney General also issued a guidance with regard to federal criminal laws related to Deepfake technology for the first time. The guidance and the legal advisory issued by the US authorities are a demonstration of the intent of the state to hold social media intermediaries accountable and also protect the trust of the voters in elections. Similarly, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), India, earlier this year issued advisory (s) in relation to social media intermediaries and online curated content providers about the risks attached to the sharing of Deepfake images or videos. These advisories issued by MeitY clearly bring into light the duty of social media intermediaries under the extant Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code rules. The advisories also emphasise the need to protect users from any harassment or misuse of synthetic media. Such proactive approach by the governments and platforms demonstrates their intent to keep the threat posed by Deepfakes in check. Developing effective strategies to mitigate Deepfakes risks and ensure authenticity of digital content is critical to preserve trust in media and digital platforms. Stakeholders, including technology developers, policymakers, and the public, will have to work together to effectively deal with the rising challenges of Deepfake technology and mitigate the risks posed by this emerging malicious technology.

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