

## **Report on Book Discussion on "AI NATION: Bharat's Path to AI Power"**

### **Event Overview**

**Date:** March 24, 2026

**Venue:** Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi

**Organizers:** The Indian Futures in association with Dr. Ambedkar International Centre

**Hosts:** Introduction by Dr. Manish Dabhade (Founder, The Indian Futures & Associate Professor, JNU); Welcome address by Shri Akash Patil (Director, Dr. Ambedkar International Centre)

### **Executive Summary**

The discussion centered on the geopolitical, economic, and societal restructuring driven by Artificial Intelligence. The overarching consensus positioned AI not merely as a technological tool, but as the new axis of global power. The dialogue highlighted the critical tension between technological subservience—where traditional labor loses leverage and cognitive abilities are outsourced to machines—and the necessary assertion of digital sovereignty. For India, leveraging its unique demographic scale, data abundance, and institutional adaptability is paramount to avoiding strategic chokepoints and emerging as a dominant architect in the global AI landscape.

### **Key Speaker Insights**

**Dr. Ajay Kumar** (Author; Chairman, UPSC & former Defence Secretary, GoI)

**The Labor-Capital Asymmetry:** While technology continues to drive productivity and prosperity, it inherently strips leverage away from traditional labor forces, creating a significant speed mismatch in economic adaptation.

**Cognitive Abundance vs. Human Capability:** The rise of AI will create an abundance of cognitive resources, yet this paradoxically poses the risk of humans losing the ability to solve normal, everyday problems.

**Concentration of Power:** The global economy faces a skewed future where a select few nations will accumulate and concentrate immense technological power.

**Information Integrity:** The rapid proliferation of synthetic content, particularly deepfakes, will present severe challenges to societal truth and stability.

**Prof. Abhay Karandikar** (Secretary, Dept of Science & Technology, GoI)

**The AI-Science Nexus:** Future scientific discoveries will be heavily dependent on those who can successfully concentrate and harness the gains of AI.

From Generative to Agentic AI: The transition from generative models to agentic and physical AI is happening rapidly. This shift holds the potential for profound disruption to human cognition and raises the possibility of physical conflict with AI systems.

India's Strategic Advantage: India possesses a unique abundance of data, human capital, scale, and diversity. The imperative is to transition from merely using AI to actively building it.

Policy Optimism: The book serves as a vital blueprint, offering optimism for policymakers to convert this once-in-a-generation technological leap into a national advantage.

**Ms. Debjani Ghosh** (Chief Architect, Frontier Tech Hub, NITI Aayog)

The New Axis of Power: AI is now the primary driver of global influence, economic architecture, and the broader geopolitical order.

The Imperative of Sovereignty: Maintaining national sovereignty over technology is a critical component to avoiding strategic chokepoints in the future.

Scale and Diffusion: India's true advantage lies in its scale for technological diffusion, with the UPI infrastructure serving as the ultimate poster child for this capability.

Whole-of-Government Approach: AI is a general-purpose technology that cannot be managed in isolated silos. Overcoming institutional challenges requires a unified, whole-of-government strategy to leverage India's demand structure and diversity.

**Shri Shashi Shekhar Vempati** (Co-Founder, AI4India & former CEO, Prasar Bharati)

The Panini Moment of AI: We are witnessing a foundational shift in technological grammar. To navigate this, students must acquire deep domain knowledge rather than just superficial tech skills.

The Value of Synthesis: As AI makes consistent leaps, the human ability to connect the dots and apply entrepreneurial thinking will become the most critical asset.

The Future of IT Services: While the cost of building software is decreasing, the underlying complexity is rising. This will not exterminate the need for human capital but will rather birth a completely new class of complex IT services.

## **Conclusion**

The launch and discussion of AI NATION: Bharat's Path to AI Power underscored a pivotal moment in India's technological and geopolitical trajectory. The consensus among

the distinguished panel was clear: Artificial Intelligence is no longer just a sector of the economy; it is the foundational infrastructure of future global power.

While the speakers frankly acknowledged the profound risks of this transition—ranging from the erosion of traditional labor leverage and human cognitive autonomy to the threat of synthetic media and concentrated power—the overarching message was one of strategic optimism. India stands at a unique vantage point, armed with unparalleled scale, massive data reserves, and a proven track record of digital public infrastructure (like UPI).

To convert this "once-in-a-generation" opportunity into a sustainable advantage, the panel emphasized that India must fiercely guard its digital sovereignty to avoid global chokepoints. Moving forward, the nation's success will depend on an urgent paradigm shift: transitioning from being mere consumers of AI to becoming primary architects of it. This requires dismantling institutional silos, adopting a whole-of-government approach, and nurturing a new class of human capital equipped with deep domain knowledge to navigate the incoming wave of agentic and physical AI. Ultimately, India's path to AI power lies not just in adopting the technology, but in actively shaping its global rules.



