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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR SOCIAL EQUALITY: REDEFINING BACKWARDNESS AND RESERVATION POLICIES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT
The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformed governance, welfare distribution, and public policy design across the globe. In India, where reservation policies have historically functioned as instruments of social justice, the integration of AI offers both opportunity and risk. This paper examines how AI can contribute to redefining backwardness and reforming reservation policies in India through data-driven and evidence-based frameworks. It argues that while traditional caste-based reservation emerged from constitutional commitments to redress historical injustice, contemporary socio-economic conditions demand more dynamic and multidimensional assessment mechanisms. By employing machine learning models, large-scale socio-economic data analysis, and predictive analytics, policymakers can identify deprivation patterns with greater precision. However, algorithmic bias, data exclusion, and ethical concerns must be carefully addressed to avoid reproducing structural inequalities. The study proposes a hybrid framework combining constitutional safeguards with AI-supported evaluation systems to enhance transparency, equity, and accountability in affirmative action.
Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, social justice, reservation policy, backwardness, affirmative action, India, algorithmic fairness, multi-dimensional deprivation, policy analytics, equality.

INTRODUCTION
The relationship between artificial intelligence (AI) and social policy has become one of the most significant intellectual debates of the present decade. In India, where constitutional commitments to equality coexist with deeply embedded social hierarchies, the question is not merely technological but normative. Reservation policies were designed as instruments of social justice, intended to correct historical exclusion faced by Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. Yet the criteria used to identify "backwardness" have largely relied on static socio-economic and caste-based classifications. The emergence of AI-driven data analytics invites a reconsideration of how backwardness is defined, measured, and addressed in contemporary India.
Since 2010, scholars have increasingly examined the role of digital technologies in governance. The expansion of Aadhaar, digital identity systems, and data-driven welfare platforms signaled a shift toward algorithmic administration. In their influential book *Artificial Intelligence and Life in 2030*, Stone et al. (2016) emphasized that AI systems reshape public institutions by automating decision processes that were previously human-centered. Although their work focused on global contexts, the implications for large welfare states like India are evident. If AI can identify patterns within vast datasets, it can potentially detect multidimensional deprivation more accurately than traditional surveys.
The debate over AI and inequality intensified after 2015, when machine learning systems began to influence financial inclusion, credit scoring, and public distribution systems. Eubanks (2018), in *Automating Inequality*, demonstrated how automated welfare systems in the United States often reinforced structural disadvantages. Her analysis is instructive for India, where algorithmic governance must be designed carefully to avoid reproducing caste and class bias. Similarly, O'Neil (2016) warned in *Weapons of Math Destruction* that opaque algorithms can magnify social inequities when they are treated as neutral tools. These critiques caution policymakers against uncritical adoption of AI in sensitive domains such as reservation policy.
Indian scholarship has gradually engaged with this question. Bhatia and Bhabha (2017) discussed digital governance reforms and highlighted the tension between efficiency and equity in welfare targeting. Later, Khera (2019) examined the impact of Aadhaar-linked systems on public distribution schemes, arguing that technological efficiency does not automatically translate into social justice. These works underscore the need to embed AI within constitutional values rather than treating it as a purely technical solution.
The concept of backwardness in India has historically been shaped by caste-based exclusion, as articulated by scholars such as Deshpande (2011), who analyzed affirmative action within the framework of structural inequality. Over time, however, socio-economic mobility and urbanization have complicated these categories. Some communities classified as backward have experienced internal stratification, while new forms of deprivation have emerged among groups not traditionally recognized under reservation frameworks. This dynamic context suggests that backwardness cannot remain a fixed label; it must be understood as a condition that evolves across time and geography.
Here AI offers both promise and risk. Advanced analytics can integrate indicators such as income, educational attainment, geographic marginalization, digital access, and health outcomes. By applying predictive modeling, policymakers could identify clusters of disadvantage that are invisible in aggregate statistics. Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014) argued that digital technologies generate unprecedented quantities of data, enabling more granular economic analysis. In the Indian setting, such analysis could help refine the allocation of scholarships, employment quotas, and development grants. Instead of relying solely on caste categories, AI systems could incorporate multidimensional indices of deprivation, thus aligning reservation policies with contemporary socio-economic realities.

At the same time, the literature between 2018 and 2023 has emphasized algorithmic accountability. Noble (2018), in her work on algorithmic bias, demonstrated how search engines can replicate racial hierarchies embedded in society. Translating this insight to India, one must recognize that training data reflecting historical discrimination may encode caste prejudice into predictive models. Mehrabi et al. (2021) provided a comprehensive review of bias in machine learning, outlining technical strategies to mitigate unfair outcomes. Such research suggests that AI-based reform of reservation policies would require transparent datasets, explainable algorithms, and continuous auditing mechanisms.

Recent Indian policy discussions have also reflected these concerns. The NITI Aayog (2018) discussion paper on AI emphasized inclusive growth as a central objective. Scholars like Narayanan (2020) have argued that ethical AI frameworks must incorporate fairness, accountability, and transparency to protect vulnerable populations. Moreover, the emergence of digital public infrastructure, such as the Unified Payments Interface and data-sharing frameworks, demonstrates India's capacity to build large-scale technological systems. The challenge lies in ensuring that these systems reinforce social equality rather than deepen divides.

From a theoretical perspective, integrating AI into reservation policy compels a redefinition of backwardness itself. Traditionally, backwardness has been treated as a categorical attribute associated with caste identity. Yet sociological research since 2010 has emphasized intersectionality—how caste, gender, region, and economic status interact. Sen's capability approach, though developed earlier, has regained prominence in contemporary discussions on multidimensional poverty measurement (Alkire and Foster, 2011). AI tools can operationalize such multidimensional frameworks by processing complex datasets and identifying deprivation patterns across intersecting variables.

Therefore, the introduction of AI into social justice policy must be understood as a transformative shift rather than a mere administrative reform. It raises normative questions: Should reservation continue to rely primarily on inherited social categories, or should it evolve toward dynamic, data-driven identification of disadvantage? Can AI-generated classifications coexist with constitutional safeguards protecting historically oppressed communities? And how can transparency and democratic oversight be ensured in algorithmic governance?

Between 2010 and 2023, the literature reflects a gradual convergence of technological optimism and critical caution. AI has demonstrated capacity to enhance efficiency, predict socio-economic risk, and personalize welfare delivery. Yet scholars consistently warn that technological systems mirror the values embedded in their design. For India, a nation committed constitutionally to equality and social justice, the adoption of AI in redefining backwardness must be guided by ethical principles, participatory policymaking, and rigorous empirical evaluation.

In sum, artificial intelligence presents an opportunity to reimagine reservation policies through a more nuanced understanding of deprivation. By combining historical awareness with technological innovation, India can explore a model of social equality that is both data-informed and constitutionally grounded. The task is not to replace social justice with algorithms, but to harness intelligent systems in service of democratic ideals.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF RESERVATION POLICY IN INDIA

The historical evolution of reservation policy in India cannot be understood merely as a legal development; it reflects a long social struggle against deeply entrenched hierarchies. The idea of reservation emerged from the recognition that formal equality, by itself, cannot correct structural disadvantage. In a society shaped for centuries by caste-based exclusion, access to education, land, and public employment was never evenly distributed. The policy of reservation therefore developed as a corrective mechanism—an attempt to rebalance opportunities where history had created asymmetry.

The earliest structured interventions appeared during the late colonial period. In the early twentieth century, princely states such as Mysore and Kolhapur introduced reservations in public employment for non-Brahmin communities. These measures were not framed as charity but as administrative reform, acknowledging that a narrow social group dominated state services. The debate intensified with the Communal Award of 1932, through which the British government proposed separate electorates for the so-called Depressed Classes. The subsequent Poona Pact between Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar replaced separate electorates with reserved legislative seats. Although politically controversial, this moment marked a decisive shift: the State formally acknowledged that certain communities required institutional safeguards to participate in public life.

After independence, the framers of the Constitution approached reservation as a constitutional tool of social justice. Articles 15(4) and 16(4) empowered the State to make special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes and for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This was not conceived as permanent privilege. Rather, it was understood as a transitional mechanism until substantive equality could be achieved. The inclusion of these provisions illustrates a nuanced constitutional philosophy: equality was not interpreted as identical treatment, but as equitable treatment that accounts for unequal starting points.

In the decades following independence, reservation policy expanded both in scope and intensity. Initially, it focused on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in public employment and educational institutions. However, social backwardness extended beyond these categories. The Mandal Commission, established in 1979 and implemented in 1990, recommended reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) based on social and educational indicators. The implementation triggered widespread debate and protest, revealing how deeply reservation policy intersects with questions of merit, identity, and opportunity. The Supreme Court's judgment in Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992) upheld OBC reservations while imposing a 50 percent cap and excluding the "creamy layer." This judicial intervention attempted to refine the policy by ensuring that benefits reach genuinely disadvantaged sections rather than economically advanced individuals within backward groups.

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Over time, reservation has extended into areas such as local governance through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, which mandated reservations in Panchayats and Municipalities, including for women. More recently, the introduction of the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) quota in 2019 marked a significant conceptual shift. For the first time, economic criteria alone became the basis of reservation, even for groups not historically classified as socially backward. This development suggests that the understanding of backwardness in India is gradually broadening beyond caste, though caste remains central to the debate.

The historical trajectory of reservation policy demonstrates a gradual redefinition of backwardness—from rigid caste-based exclusion to a more layered understanding involving education, representation, and economic vulnerability. Yet, the criteria have largely relied on demographic data, commission reports, and political negotiation. In this context, the emerging discourse on Artificial Intelligence (AI) for social equality introduces new possibilities and new concerns.

AI systems, when designed responsibly, can analyze large-scale socio-economic data to identify patterns of deprivation with greater precision. Instead of relying solely on static caste categories, policymakers could incorporate multidimensional indicators such as educational attainment, geographic isolation, digital access, and income volatility. For example, machine learning models may reveal clusters of disadvantage that cut across traditional classifications. This could help refine the concept of backwardness into a dynamic and evidence-based framework.

However, the historical experience of reservation policy also offers caution. Data-driven systems are not inherently neutral; they reflect the biases embedded in data and design. If AI tools rely on incomplete or historically skewed datasets, they may reproduce existing inequalities rather than dismantle them. The challenge, therefore, is not simply technological adoption but ethical governance. Transparency, accountability, and community participation must accompany algorithmic decision-making in social policy.

In sum, the evolution of reservation policy in India reflects a continuing attempt to reconcile equality with diversity and justice with merit. From colonial experiments to constitutional guarantees and contemporary reforms, the policy has adapted to changing understandings of disadvantage. As India explores the use of Artificial Intelligence to redefine backwardness, it must draw lessons from this history: social justice cannot be reduced to numbers alone, yet carefully interpreted data can strengthen fairness. The future of reservation policy may thus lie at the intersection of constitutional morality and technological innovation.

CONCEPTUALIZING BACKWARDNESS: FROM STATIC CATEGORIES TO DYNAMIC INDICATORS

The idea of "backwardness" has long shaped public policy in India, particularly in the design of reservation policies intended to correct historical injustices. Yet the term itself has often been treated as if it describes a fixed condition attached to particular communities. In practice, backwardness is neither static nor uniform. It is a layered and evolving phenomenon shaped by history, geography, economy, and institutional access. When artificial intelligence is introduced into the debate on social equality, it becomes necessary to rethink backwardness not as a rigid label but as a dynamic set of measurable and changing indicators.

Historically, backwardness in India has been closely linked to caste hierarchies and social exclusion. The Constitution recognized the need to protect and uplift Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and later Other Backward Classes. Commissions such as the Mandal Commission attempted to identify backward groups through social, educational, and economic criteria. However, once identified, these groups were largely treated as homogeneous categories. Over time, this categorical approach has produced both progress and controversy. Some members within recognized groups have significantly advanced, while others remain deeply marginalized. At the same time, certain individuals outside officially recognized categories may experience comparable forms of deprivation but remain ineligible for support.

This tension arises because backwardness has been conceptualized as a group-based status rather than a condition that varies across individuals and regions. A static model assumes that disadvantage is inherited and unchanging. In reality, disadvantage fluctuates with access to schooling, healthcare, digital infrastructure, land ownership, urbanization, and employment opportunities. A rural student from a historically marginalized caste in a remote district faces a different set of barriers than an urban student from the same caste with educated parents and stable income. Treating both as equally backward oversimplifies social complexity.

A dynamic conceptualization begins by recognizing backwardness as multidimensional. It is not reducible to income alone, nor to caste identity alone. Instead, it can be understood as the cumulative effect of limited capabilities. Borrowing from the capability approach in development theory, backwardness may be seen as the restriction of real freedoms: the freedom to learn, to compete, to participate in public life, and to access institutional support. In this sense, backwardness is better measured through indicators such as literacy levels, school quality, dropout rates, health outcomes, digital access, neighborhood infrastructure, and generational mobility.

Artificial intelligence offers tools to operationalize this shift. AI systems can analyze large-scale datasets drawn from census records, educational databases, public health systems, and socio-economic surveys. Rather than relying solely on broad social categories, algorithms can identify patterns of persistent deprivation at granular levels—districts, blocks, or even neighborhoods. For example, if data show that students from a particular locality consistently underperform due to inadequate schooling facilities, that locality itself becomes a unit of policy attention. This approach allows backwardness to be tracked over time, revealing whether interventions are producing measurable improvements.

However, the use of AI also raises normative concerns. Data-driven models must not erase the historical realities of caste-based discrimination. Structural discrimination often operates subtly and may not be fully captured by quantitative indicators. Therefore, dynamic indicators should complement, not abruptly replace, constitutional safeguards grounded in historical injustice. AI can refine targeting and improve policy precision, but it cannot substitute for ethical judgment and constitutional values.

Another advantage of dynamic indicators is adaptability. Social conditions change rapidly in contemporary India. Urban migration, digital expansion, and new forms of employment continuously reshape patterns of inequality. A static list of backward classes, updated only occasionally, struggles to reflect these shifts. By contrast, an indicator-based system can be periodically recalibrated. If a community demonstrates sustained educational and economic advancement, support mechanisms can gradually shift toward those who remain disadvantaged. This does not deny historical discrimination; rather, it ensures that affirmative action remains responsive to current realities.

Conceptualizing backwardness dynamically also reduces the stigma attached to fixed labels. When backwardness is treated as a condition measurable through objective indicators, it becomes less of an identity marker and more of a policy diagnosis. This shift encourages a broader understanding of equality—not as a permanent division between groups, but as a process of reducing measurable gaps in opportunity.

In the context of artificial intelligence and social equality, redefining backwardness requires intellectual caution and institutional transparency. Algorithms must be auditable, inclusive, and sensitive to context. Yet if designed carefully, AI-enabled dynamic indicators can deepen the constitutional commitment to justice. They allow policymakers to move beyond static categories toward a living framework of reservation policies—one that recognizes both the weight of history and the changing contours of contemporary inequality.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN PUBLIC POLICY

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly shaping the architecture of public policy across the world. In the Indian context, its relevance becomes particularly significant when discussing social equality, backwardness, and reservation policies. India's constitutional commitment to social justice has historically relied on categorical classifications such as Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC). While these classifications have served as instruments of affirmative action, they are often criticized for being static, politically influenced, and insufficiently responsive to evolving socio-economic realities. AI introduces a new methodological possibility: redefining backwardness not merely as a fixed identity category, but as a measurable and dynamic condition.

Public policy traditionally depends on large-scale data collection through census reports, socio-economic surveys, and administrative records. However, the interpretation of such data often remains descriptive rather than predictive. AI, particularly through machine learning models, can transform this process by identifying patterns of deprivation across multiple dimensions—income, education, health access, geographic isolation, and digital connectivity. Instead of assuming that backwardness is inherited solely through caste identity, AI systems can construct multidimensional indices that reveal layered vulnerabilities. For instance, a household may not belong to a constitutionally recognized backward class but may exhibit severe educational and economic deprivation. AI-driven analysis can highlight such overlooked segments, thereby refining the targeting mechanism of welfare and reservation policies.

In practical terms, AI can assist policymakers by integrating diverse datasets—school enrollment records, employment statistics, rural infrastructure mapping, and public health indicators. Through clustering algorithms, it becomes possible to group populations not only by caste but by actual disadvantage profiles. This does not mean eliminating caste-based reservations, which remain constitutionally protected, but rather supplementing them with evidence-based refinements. For example, AI could help identify "creamy layer" beneficiaries within OBC categories more accurately by analyzing real-time income, asset ownership, and occupational data. Such precision would strengthen the moral legitimacy of reservation policies by ensuring benefits reach those genuinely marginalized.

Moreover, AI enhances transparency and accountability in policy implementation. Reservation policies often face criticism due to perceived inefficiencies or alleged misuse. By deploying algorithmic monitoring systems, government agencies can track the distribution of benefits across districts and socio-economic groups. Predictive analytics can also forecast the long-term outcomes of reservation expansion or modification, simulating how changes might influence educational attainment or employment patterns over time. This forward-looking capacity moves public policy from reactive correction to proactive planning.

However, the incorporation of AI into public policy is not without risks. Algorithms are only as neutral as the data used to train them. If historical data reflects structural bias, AI systems may reproduce or even intensify existing inequalities. For instance, if employment data historically underrepresents certain communities due to discrimination, predictive models might incorrectly assess their potential or eligibility. Therefore, ethical oversight becomes essential. Public institutions must ensure algorithmic transparency, independent audits, and participatory governance involving marginalized communities. AI should function as a tool for empowerment, not as a technocratic replacement for democratic deliberation.

Another critical dimension concerns redefining backwardness in a society as diverse as India. Backwardness is not merely economic; it intersects with social stigma, regional disparity, gender discrimination, and cultural exclusion. AI models must therefore adopt a multidimensional framework rather than a purely income-based approach. For example, tribal communities may experience geographic isolation that limits access to education and healthcare despite modest income levels. AI-enabled geospatial mapping can reveal such structural disadvantages with greater precision than traditional methods.

In the broader vision of "Artificial Intelligence for Social Equality," AI offers the potential to transform reservation policies from static entitlement systems into dynamic justice mechanisms. Instead of periodically revising lists through political negotiation, policymakers could rely on continuously updated socio-economic dashboards. Such a shift would not undermine constitutional safeguards but would reinforce them through evidence-based governance.

Ultimately, the integration of AI into public policy represents a methodological evolution rather than an ideological departure. The objective remains consistent with the constitutional promise of equality and social justice. What changes is the analytical capacity to understand disadvantage in its complexity. When guided by ethical principles, democratic accountability, and social sensitivity, AI can help redefine backwardness as a measurable condition of deprivation rather than a rigid social label. In doing so, it can contribute to a more nuanced, responsive, and equitable reservation framework in India.

REDEFINING RESERVATION POLICIES THROUGH AI

Reservation in India has historically been conceived as a constitutional remedy for structural exclusion. It emerged from a recognition that certain communities were not merely economically disadvantaged but systematically denied access to education, property, and public employment. Over time, however, the social landscape has grown more complex. Urbanization, migration, private-sector expansion, and digital transformation have altered the patterns of deprivation. In this changing environment, Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents both a challenge and an opportunity: it compels us to rethink how backwardness is defined and how reservation policies are implemented.

The traditional approach to reservation relies on relatively static categories, primarily caste-based classifications supplemented by economic criteria in some instances. While these categories remain sociologically relevant, they often fail to capture dynamic and localized forms of disadvantage. For example, two families belonging to the same caste category may experience vastly different levels of access to quality schooling, digital connectivity, or healthcare. AI systems, when responsibly designed, can process large-scale socio-economic data to reveal such intra-group variations. By analyzing patterns in income distribution, educational attainment, geographic marginalization, and even digital literacy, AI can help policymakers identify pockets of deprivation that may otherwise remain statistically invisible.

Redefining backwardness through AI does not imply abandoning historical justice. Rather, it means supplementing constitutional commitments with empirical precision. Machine learning models can integrate multiple indicators—household income, parental education, rural or urban location, gender, disability status, and access to public infrastructure—to construct a multidimensional deprivation index. Such an index would move beyond a single-axis understanding of disadvantage. For instance, a rural woman from a historically marginalized caste may face layered barriers that are qualitatively different from those faced by a male counterpart in an urban setting. AI can help quantify these overlapping disadvantages in ways that manual administrative processes cannot easily achieve.

Moreover, AI can enhance transparency in the implementation of reservation policies. One recurring criticism of reservation is the perceived misuse or unequal distribution of benefits. By employing predictive analytics, governments can monitor whether reserved seats in educational institutions or public employment are reaching the intended beneficiaries. Data-driven dashboards can track outcomes over time, revealing whether reservation leads to sustained upward mobility or merely short-term entry. Such feedback loops allow for periodic policy recalibration rather than rigid continuation.

However, the integration of AI into reservation policy must be approached cautiously. Algorithms are not inherently neutral. They learn from historical data, and if that data reflects social bias, the algorithm may replicate or even amplify it. For example, if past hiring practices were discriminatory, an AI model trained on such data might inadvertently reinforce exclusion. Therefore, algorithmic auditing, transparency in model design, and ethical oversight become indispensable. AI should function as an assistive instrument for policymakers, not as an autonomous decision-maker.

Another important dimension concerns privacy and data governance. To meaningfully assess backwardness, AI systems require access to detailed personal and community-level data. In a diverse democracy like India, the collection and analysis of such data must respect constitutional rights to privacy and dignity. Robust anonymization techniques and independent regulatory frameworks are essential to prevent misuse or surveillance. The aim is social equality, not intrusive governance.

AI can also contribute to expanding the idea of reservation beyond quotas. Instead of viewing reservation solely as seat allocation, policymakers can use AI to design targeted scholarships, skill development programs, and mentorship initiatives. Predictive models can identify students at risk of dropping out or communities underrepresented in emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence itself. In this sense, AI becomes both a tool for corrective justice and a pathway to future inclusion.

Ultimately, redefining reservation policies through AI requires a philosophical shift. Social equality cannot be achieved by static categories alone in a rapidly evolving society. Nor can it rely entirely on technological metrics divorced from historical context. The most promising approach lies in combining constitutional morality with computational insight. AI offers the capacity to map inequality with unprecedented granularity, but human judgment must guide its interpretation. If used ethically and transparently, AI can help India refine its understanding of backwardness and ensure that reservation remains a living instrument of justice rather than a frozen policy of the past.

RISKS OF TECHNOCRATIC REDUCTIONISM

Technocratic reductionism refers to the tendency to treat complex social realities as if they were merely technical problems awaiting computational solutions. In the context of artificial intelligence (AI) and social equality in India, this tendency poses significant risks. When AI systems are introduced to redefine "backwardness" or to redesign reservation policies, there is a temptation to reduce historically layered injustices into quantifiable variables. Such reduction may appear efficient, but it can obscure the moral, historical, and political dimensions of inequality.

Reservation policies in India emerged from a long struggle against caste-based exclusion. They were not only instruments of economic redistribution but also mechanisms of recognition and dignity. If AI-driven systems attempt to classify beneficiaries based solely on measurable indicators—such as income, consumption patterns, or educational attainment—they risk overlooking the structural and intergenerational nature of caste discrimination. Backwardness in India has never been a purely economic condition. It is embedded in social relations, spatial segregation, cultural stigma, and inherited disadvantage. An algorithm trained on administrative or market data may capture surface-level deprivation while failing to account for humiliation, discrimination, and exclusion that do not leave neat digital traces.

Moreover, reductionism can narrow the meaning of social justice. Social equality involves normative judgments about fairness, representation, and historical responsibility. These are questions of values, not merely of optimization. AI systems operate by maximizing or minimizing predefined objectives. If the objective is framed in economic terms—say, maximizing aggregate productivity or minimizing fiscal expenditure—the broader constitutional commitment to social justice may be sidelined. The Constitution of India envisions reservations as part of a transformative project aimed at dismantling entrenched hierarchies. A purely technocratic approach may reinterpret them as temporary welfare schemes subject to cost–benefit analysis, thereby diluting their emancipatory intent.

Finally, technocratic reductionism risks shifting the locus of reform from social transformation to data management. Structural discrimination requires interventions in education, land ownership, political representation, and social attitudes. If policymakers rely excessively on AI to “fine-tune” beneficiary lists, they may neglect deeper reforms. The problem of inequality cannot be solved solely by better targeting; it requires continuous engagement with power relations and institutional change.

In sum, while AI offers tools that can assist in policy design, its use in redefining backwardness and reservation policies must be approached with caution. Social equality is not a computational variable but a constitutional aspiration rooted in history and lived experience. To treat it as a purely technical challenge is to risk simplifying what is, at its core, a profoundly human and political question.

CONCLUSION

Artificial Intelligence offers an opportunity to refine India’s approach to social equality. By moving from static classifications to dynamic, evidence-based evaluation, policymakers can ensure that reservation policies remain responsive to changing realities. Yet technology alone cannot resolve deep-rooted social hierarchies.

The vision articulated by B. R. Ambedkar was not merely about representation but about dignity, opportunity, and substantive equality. AI, if ethically governed, can strengthen this vision by making policy decisions more transparent and data-informed. However, the ultimate goal must remain the constitutional promise of justice—social, economic, and political—for all citizens. In redefining backwardness through AI, India stands at a critical intersection of technology and morality. The challenge is to ensure that digital intelligence advances human equality rather than entrenching old divisions in new forms.

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