

EQUITABLE AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a futuristic concept confined to research laboratories or science fiction. It is rapidly reshaping economies, governance, education, healthcare, and daily life. From voice assistants and recommendation systems to advanced data analytics and autonomous technologies, AI has become a transformative force. As nations compete to lead in AI innovation, the challenge lies not merely in accelerating development but in ensuring that progress is ethical, inclusive, and aligned with human values.

AI development offers immense opportunities. In healthcare, AI-powered diagnostics can detect diseases at early stages, improving survival rates and reducing costs. In agriculture, predictive analytics can guide farmers on crop patterns, weather risks, and resource management. In education, adaptive learning platforms personalize instruction according to students' strengths and weaknesses. Governments can use AI to improve service delivery, reduce corruption, and make data-driven decisions. For developing economies, AI presents a chance to leapfrog traditional stages of industrial growth and build knowledge-based societies.

However, the rapid pace of AI advancement also raises serious concerns. One of the most pressing issues is employment disruption. Automation threatens to replace repetitive and routine jobs, particularly in manufacturing, customer service, and administrative roles. While AI may create new jobs in data science, machine learning, and digital infrastructure, the transition could widen inequality if reskilling efforts are not prioritized. Policymakers must therefore invest heavily in education, vocational training, and digital literacy to ensure that the workforce adapts to emerging demands.

Ethical considerations are equally critical. AI systems rely on vast amounts of data, often collected from users without full awareness or consent. Questions about data privacy, surveillance, and algorithmic bias cannot be ignored. Biased datasets can produce discriminatory outcomes in hiring, lending, law enforcement, and healthcare. Transparency in algorithmic decision-making and robust regulatory frameworks are essential to maintain public trust. AI must remain accountable to democratic principles and human rights.

Another concern is the concentration of AI power within a few large corporations and technologically advanced nations. Such centralization risks creating digital monopolies and deepening global divides. To counter this, open research collaborations, public-sector investments, and international cooperation are necessary. Developing countries must not be mere consumers of AI technologies but active contributors to innovation tailored to their unique socio-economic contexts.

At the same time, AI holds the potential to address some of humanity's most complex challenges. Climate modeling, disaster prediction, smart energy grids, and sustainable urban planning all benefit from intelligent systems capable of processing massive datasets. When aligned with sustainable development goals, AI can accelerate progress in environmental protection and social welfare.

Ultimately, AI development must be guided by a human-centric approach. Technology should augment human capabilities rather than replace human judgment. Ethical guidelines, transparent governance, and inclusive growth strategies must accompany technological breakthroughs. Innovation without responsibility can erode trust; responsibility without innovation can hinder progress.

The future of AI will depend on the choices made today. Governments, industry leaders, researchers, and civil society must collaborate to create an ecosystem where innovation thrives alongside accountability. If developed wisely, AI can become not just a tool of efficiency but a catalyst for equitable growth and global well-being.

India AI Impact Summit 2026: Balancing Innovation, Ethics and Accountability

JAGDISHCHANDER RAINA

The India AI Impact Summit 2026 held in New Delhi (16-20 Feb, 2026) marked a defining moment in the global conversation on Artificial Intelligence. With participation from nearly twenty Heads of State, Corporate Heads & Chief Executives of the Leading Multinationals, Global Policy Makers, Technology Innovators, Researchers, and Industry Leaders, the Summit has elevated India's role from a Fast-Growing Digital Economy to a serious architect of the Global AI Governance Framework.

The essence of the India AI Impact Summit 2026 as depicted in its beautiful logo symbolised by the Ashok Chakra-The Wheel of Dharma, Justice and Righteous Progress aligning technological advancement with civilizational values. Just as the Chakra represents continuous movement guided by moral order, the Summit emphasizes on AI Innovations rooted in ethics and accountability. Guided by the timeless principle of "Sarvjan Sukhaya, Sarvjan Hitaya" - Welfare for all and Happiness for all, with a clear vision that artificial intelligence must serve humanity inclusively, equitably and responsibly. The Summit reaffirmed that India's AI journey is not merely about digital dominance, but for compassionate and sustainable progress of the world. The discussions and dialogues centred on ensuring that artificial intelligence advances in harmony with ethics, that innovation is guided by accountability and the progress remains rooted in the timeless Indian Ethos of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"-the world as one family-offering a timely compass for building inclusive, ethical, and impact-driven AI.

Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday inaugurated the India Impact Expo 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, positioning Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a critical engine for India's development and a strong catalyst for global development and innovation. Addressing researchers, innovators and technology enthusiasts, the Prime Minister said India's expanding AI ecosystem reflects the country's growing technological confidence and its ability to develop solutions that can benefit both domestic



and global communities. He added that India's talent and innovation capacity would play a key role in shaping responsible, inclusive and impactful AI Systems. Anchored in the Principles of People, Planet and Progress (3Ps), it envisions a future where AI advances humanity, fosters inclusive growth and safeguards our shared planet.

"Inaugurated the India AI Impact Expo 2026 at Bharat Mandapam. Being here among innovators, researchers and tech enthusiasts gives a glimpse of extraordinary potential of AI, Indian talent and innovation," Modi said in a post on X. "Together, we will shape solutions not just for India but for the world."

Global Participation and Strategic Focus:

The event has drawn participation from over 20 Heads of State, 60 Ministers, and more than 500 global AI leaders from government, industry, academia, and civil society. Leaders from nations including the UK, France, Finland, and others have attended to discussions and deliberations around AI to collaborate on, innovation, ethics and governance. Notable engagements include interactions between PM Modi and Global Tech CEOs like Sunder Pichai of Google, where discussions focussed on expanding India's youth stepping up international partnerships in technology and innovation.

Domestic Leadership and Multi-Stakeholder Participation: The India AI Impact Summit has witnessed robust participation from India's own leadership eco-system,

reflecting a strong national commitment to responsible and inclusive AI Growth. Union Ministers, Chief Ministers, Senior Bureaucrats, Policy Architects, and representatives from leading Indian Technology Firms, Start-ups, and Research Institutions actively contributed to deliberations. Industry Captains from IT, Fintech, Healthcare, Agriculture, Manufacturing, and Digital Sectors engaged in strategic dialogues with policymakers to align innovation with regulatory frameworks and national priorities.

Several State Governments showcased AI-driven Governance Models in areas such as smart agriculture, public service delivery, education technology, and health care services particularly by the states like Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. The collaborative presence of NITI Aayog Officials, Digital India Mission Leaders, and emerging AI Entrepreneurs underscored a One-Nation approach- where policy, enterprise, academia, and state administrations converged to position India as a global leader in ethical, scalable, and socially responsible Artificial Intelligence. The multi-level participation highlights India's federal dynamism in the era of digital transformation.

On 19 Feb PM Modi chaired a high level meeting with the Heads of State and Government Officials from the countries including France, Netherlands, Switzerland, Greece, UAE and others to explore cooperation in AI, Digital Infrastructure, Trade, Innovation

and Strategic Technology Partnerships. Alongside the Plenary Session of Heads of State PM Modi also hosted a high level roundtable Conclave of leading CEOs from Global Tech Firms and think tanks including Multilateral Groups. These sessions aimed to shape global priorities on AI governance, foster collaboration on responsible AI Development and emphasize AI for inclusive Socio-Economic Progress.

The summit showcased a dynamic and Immersive Knowledge Ecosystem which was thoughtfully crafted to bridge the gap between Expert Panellists and Learners. State-of-the-Art LED Displays, High Resolution Presentations, and Advanced Audio-Visual Systems, Transformed Meeting Halls, Conference Rooms, Amphitheatres, Expo Arenas, Convention Centres, and Plenary Sessions into Vibrant Arenas of Technological Knowledge Exchange. The seamless integration of technology with dialogue enabled real-time interactions, insightful Q&A Sessions, and Participatory Discussions, ensuring that ideas were not merely presented but meaningfully absorbed. This carefully designed interface elevated the summit from a series of speeches to some collaborative platforms for shared learning, innovation, and global thought leadership.

I feel deeply honoured and deeply energised through participation in the India AI Impact Summit 2026 as Director, Mechanised Farmer Producer Company Ltd. from Jammu & Kashmir. The summit offered an extraordinary learning experience, expanding my perspective far beyond technology alone. The engagement spanned critical themes such as the application of AI in agriculture, ESG frameworks, leadership in Corporate Governance, Sustainable Farming Models, and the Transformative Potential of AI for Agri-Start-ups and FPOs. It was inspiring to witness how artificial intelligence can be strategically integrated with agri-enterprises to enhance productivity, transparency, and climate resilience and simultaneously strengthening governance standards and inclusive rural growth.

The summit reinforced my conviction that the future of Indian agriculture lies at the intersection of innovation, responsibility, and collaborative leadership.

The seamless QR code-enabled entry system exemplified the summit's commitment to digital efficiency and smart governance. This technology-driven facilitation allowed participants to move freely across diverse knowledge zones, encouraging multidisciplinary learning and spontaneous engagement. Enabling access to meeting halls, plenary sessions, conference rooms, expo arenas, and networking spaces without any procedural delays. It truly felt like stepping into a living classroom-much like the spirit portrayed in the film Three Idiots-where learning was not confined to a single hall but was available everywhere, to anyone curious enough to explore.

Global participation of Stakeholders comprising of Start-up & Entrepreneurs, Industry Leaders & CEOs, Heads of States & Government Leaders, Ministers & Senior Policy Makers, Regulators & Standard Bodies, International Organisations & Multilateral Agencies, Media & Thought Leaders, Investors & Venture Capitalists, Civil Society Members & NGOs, Youth & Student Innovators and Women Leaders in AI ensured uniting minds across the world to shape AI for good of all.

There were some exclusive sessions, discussions and dialogues for conduct of this Mega-Show as Pre-Summit Events in 2025. Regional AI Impact and Post-Summits are also being organised as follow up of the outcomes and recommendations. The India AI Summit 2026 is likely to yield concrete outcomes from strategic partnerships and investment commitments to roadmaps for responsible AI deployment at scale.

It is a powerful reminder that AI journey is not about only technological strides but about civilisation, values, ethics, responsibility and accountability. For India, hosting this summit marks a crucial moment in positioning itself as a global hub for AI innovation and responsible governance, bridging technological advancement with societal well-being.

(The writer is Director Mechanised Farmer Producer Company Ltd, IICA-Certified Independent Director, Certified Farm Advisor, Ex-Joint Director Agriculture)

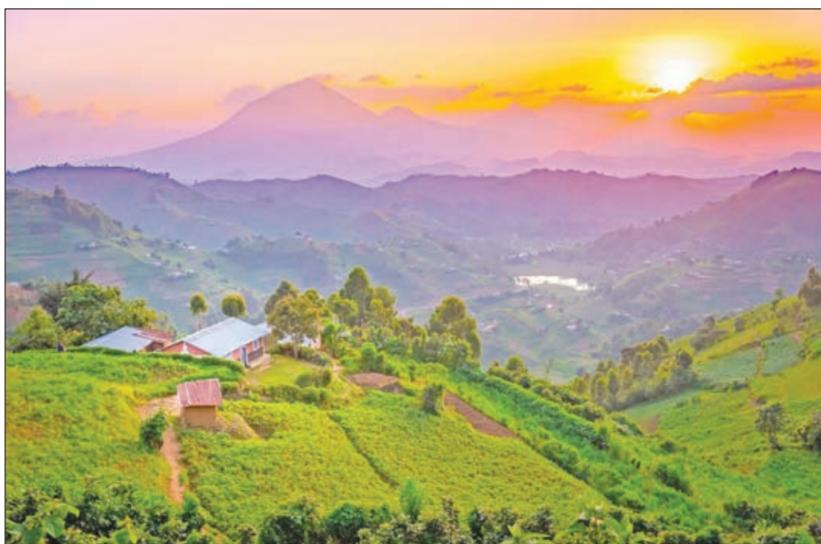
Rural Tourism-An Opportunity for Sustainable Development

DR. BANARSI LAL

India's soul resides in its villages. Indian economy is transforming to knowledge economy from the agrarian one. In spite of industrialization and globalization, India still lives in villages. Tourism is one of the world's largest industries. For developing nations like India, it is one of the prime income generators. Tourism has emerged as one of the world's largest service industries with sizable economic benefits. Rural tourism is a form of tourism that focuses on actively participating in a rural lifestyle. Rural tourism often promotes local agricultural or fishing practices, art, culture, heritage and other aspects of local life. Rural tourism provides a major thrust to domestic tourism which will act as a spring board for growth and expansion of international tourism. Rural tourism promotes the local economy, socio-cultural changes and life style of the people residing around the tourist locations. With the emergence of e-commerce, innovations and technological advancements, demographic changes and the de-regulation of airline industry, the travel and tourism is spontaneously contributing to improve Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and creation of jobs across the world economy. This has led to the improvement of other related industries especially transportation, construction, retail etc. The World Travel and Tourism Council estimates that the travel and tourism sector accounts for 9.9% of global GDP. World tourism is the world's largest employer, generating around 231 million jobs, or nearly one out of every 12 jobs globally. This booming tourism industry is emerging as an important driver of growth and prosperity, employment generation, raises national income and improvement in balance of payments. India's tourism industry is experiencing a strong period of growth in

high spending foreign tourists and coordinated government campaigns to promote 'Incredible India'. Tourism is termed as an instrument for employment generation, poverty eradication and sustainable human development. Promotion of agri-Tourism needs conceptual convergence with rural tourism, eco-tourism, health tourism, adventure tourism and culinary adventure. Present concept of travel and tourism is limited to urban and rich class which constitutes only a small portion of the population. However, the concept of rural tourism takes travel and tourism to the larger population, widening the scope of tourism. Rural tourism is considered as the fastest growing sector in the tourism industry.

Indian economy is basically an underdeveloped economy. At the time of independence, the Indian economy was having almost all characteristics of underdeveloped economy. Underdeveloped economy is an agricultural economy, as around 70 per cent of the country's population gets employment in agriculture. Most of the agricultural workers find only seasonal employment. At that time they try to find employment in local or nearby areas. The growth of new employment opportunities is lesser than population growth. A need has been felt to extend the tourism development in rural areas. Countries like the United States, Costa Rica, Kenya, Canada etc. tap their natural beauties in the form of nature based projects. The local beautiful areas are managed by the local community which helps in the upliftment of socio-economic status of the rural people. India has a great rural tourism potential, due to its unique heritage, culture and natural attractions. Tourism is also a major foreign exchange earner. Rural tourism is a new concept which covers all those aspects of travel whereby people learn each other's ways of life



and thought. Rural tourism refers the tourists' interest in the customs of the indigenous and exotic people. Rural tourism is a different from general tourism which focuses on the local people. In rural tourism, tourists visit the homes of local people to understand their customs, traditions, life style, food habits, their festivals, folk dances, songs, rituals etc. It also involves a study, research and purchase of local products. Rural tourism is very fascinating for the domestic and foreign tourists as villages have their unique styles and splendid natural beauty. The villages could be the centers of attraction for the people of urban areas who live in the congested and polluted cities. Such people want to get away from their daily routine work and enjoy the rural areas during weekends and holidays. Rural tourism is participatory and designed to improve the economic and social well-being of local people. It also points the need for careful planning to project the integrity of sites and minimum harmful impacts. Local community

needs to plan ahead to ensure that rural tourism sustains and benefits local community socio-culturally and economically and is not simply the gaining the money for government or private entrepreneurs. If we want to commercialize the rural tourism, we need to endeavor to satisfy its obligations towards local villagers. Rural tourism certain aspects such as fresh and non-polluting environment, traditions, village handicraft, village folk dance and music, painting and sculpture, history of the region, nature of local work and technology use, architecture, education system, religion, dress, leisure activities etc. can attract tourists.

Tourism is a socio-cultural event for tourists. Through tourism the person gets the opportunity to see different areas of the world and observe different cultures and way of life. Tourists are a major factor of socio-cultural change. Tourism has many advantages. It enhances communication with the people, improves self image of the community, increases employment opportu-

nities, improves educational opportunities, motivates for learning new things etc. Tourism creates new jobs in rural areas, attracts many youths for rural employment and slows down the migration of rural people in the urban areas. New jobs in the rural areas may motivate the rural people for education. Employment opportunities in rural tourism can draw workers from other sectors of economy. Domestic jobs may not only improve the status of the rural people but can also increase the income of rural people. Rural tourism may also revive the local people's interest and pride in their culture, traditions and values. The influence of mass media and hegemonic culture can push the local folk traditions into oblivion. Rural tourism can also provide the opportunities to study the religious and ritualistic services. These aspects of a culture can fascinate the strangers. Religious rituals, festivals and public performances can provide inputs to symbolic qualities of rural tourism.

Tourism is a highly competi-

tion business. Success in tourism can be influenced by the weather, changing consumer taste, economic cycles and government policies. Rural tourism has a great appeal for many rural communities because of anticipated economic benefits such as increased income and employment. There is a greater need for intensive rural tourism planning. Tourism in rural areas can change the rural economy. Rural tourism can earn the money from the urban areas of the country and globally. The importance of rural tourism as contributor to economic growth of rural areas has been accepted in recent years. The flow of money earned by rural tourism will find its way into overall rural economy through the multiplier effect. Rural tourism helps to enhance the national income. Both domestic and international tourism have the equal advantage to enhance the national income as both types of tourism constitute a demand for service and for consumer goods that would otherwise not have been produced. The accommodation construction, increased tourist transport and equipment etc. are the examples of how tourists demand encourages investment. Tourism provides employment many times more than normal manufacturing industries. Many business firms such as restaurants, travel agents, gift shops, transporters etc. earn income from tourism activities. Several other firms such as food and beverages suppliers, photographers, taxi drivers' doctors, dentists etc. also get benefit from tourism related activities. Rural tourism thus can create lot of employment in rural areas. It can also help in increasing the agricultural productivity as it draws manpower from hidden employment or seasonal underemployment. Tourism is an invisible export. It is different from other sectors of industry. The tourism industry can earn a huge

amount of foreign money. Tourism is thus a source of aid from developed countries to the developing and underdeveloped countries. Rural tourism is directly helpful in correcting India's adverse balance of payment position. Through tourism government can gain more economic profits from taxes on things tourists use and buy.

Tourism has now become a major sector influencing all aspects of a nation's life. Government must take proper measures for creating framework for the promotion of rural tourism. Tourism is increasing at a fast rate and is becoming diversified. Increased tourists traffic among the countries calls for new marketing and pricing policies. There is need of proper planning and effective legislation for resource conservation and balanced developmental activities. The technical resources are also required for successful promotion of rural tourism. Rural tourism can be fostered if it is an integral part of a balanced economic and social development programme. It is the primary duty of government for the development of rural tourism but the private sector should also play the equal responsible role. Rural tourism can help our rural areas to become attractive and prosperous. Lastly it can be hoped that with the positive approach of Central Government, State Governments, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and local people participation efforts will be made in promoting rural tourism. Rural tourism may prove the backbone of the Indian economy if the government pays attention towards it. There is need to promote rural tourism to ensure sustainable economic development and positive social change in rural areas through encouragement of rural community participation and mobilization.

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