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The Role of Artificial Intelligence in News Channels and Media Houses: A Comparative Analysis from a South Asian Perspective

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Abstract

The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into journalism has significantly transformed the functioning of news channels and media houses worldwide. In South Asia—a region marked by linguistic diversity, political volatility, uneven technological infrastructure, and vast audiences—AI adoption in media presents both unprecedented opportunities and complex challenges. This paper examines the role of AI in news production, distribution, and consumption within South Asian media ecosystems, with a comparative focus on India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. Drawing upon interdisciplinary scholarship in media studies, communication technology, and political economy, the study explores how AI tools such as automated news writing, algorithmic content recommendation, data analytics, deepfake detection, and audience sentiment analysis are reshaping journalistic practices. Existing research by scholars such as Carlson (2015), Diakopoulos (2019), and Pavlik (2020) highlights AI's growing influence in newsroom automation and editorial decision-making, primarily within Western contexts. However, South Asian media systems operate under different socio-political and economic conditions, including regulatory fragility, press freedom concerns, and digital divides. This paper argues that while AI enhances speed, efficiency, and audience personalization in South Asian news organizations, it also raises critical concerns regarding misinformation, algorithmic bias, surveillance, and the erosion of journalistic autonomy. Comparative analysis reveals that Indian media houses have advanced further in AI adoption due to stronger technological infrastructure and investment capacity, whereas smaller South Asian nations rely more selectively on AI-driven tools, often sourced from global technology firms. The study further situates AI within the broader political economy of South Asian media, where corporate ownership, state influence, and platform dominance intersect with algorithmic governance. By synthesizing academic literature and regional case insights, this paper contributes to a nuanced understanding of AI's dual role as both an enabler and disruptor of journalism

in South Asia. The findings underscore the need for ethical frameworks, region-specific regulatory mechanisms, and capacity-building initiatives to ensure that AI strengthens, rather than undermines, democratic communication and public trust in news media.

Keywords- Artificial Intelligence; Journalism; News Media; South Asia; Media Technology; Algorithmic Governance; Digital Journalism

Introduction

The contemporary news media landscape is undergoing a profound transformation driven by advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI). Technologies once confined to experimental laboratories are now embedded in everyday journalistic routines, influencing how news is gathered, produced, distributed, and consumed. AI-driven tools such as automated content generation, predictive analytics, recommendation algorithms, and natural language processing have altered newsroom workflows and redefined relationships between journalists, audiences, and technology. While much of the scholarly debate on AI and journalism has centered on Western media systems, the implications of AI adoption in South Asia remain comparatively underexplored, despite the region's vast population and growing digital media markets. South Asia represents one of the most complex and dynamic media environments in the world. Countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal exhibit diverse political systems, regulatory frameworks, literacy levels, and media ownership patterns. According to Hallin and Mancini's framework of comparative media systems, South Asian media cannot be easily categorized within existing Western models due to its hybrid nature, combining elements of commercialized journalism, state influence, and partisan press traditions. Within this context, the introduction of AI technologies raises distinct questions about journalistic ethics, press freedom, accessibility, and democratic accountability. The proliferation of digital platforms and mobile internet has accelerated AI adoption in South Asian news organizations. Large media conglomerates, particularly in India, have begun using AI for real-time election coverage, automated sports reporting, audience behavior analysis, and personalized news feeds. Scholars such as Pavlik (2020) argue that AI enhances journalistic efficiency by enabling faster data processing and freeing reporters from routine tasks. However, critics like Noble (2018) and Zuboff (2019) caution that algorithmic systems may reinforce power asymmetries, commercial imperatives, and political manipulation—concerns that are particularly relevant in politically sensitive South Asian contexts. Another defining feature of South Asian media is linguistic diversity. With hundreds of languages and dialects spoken across the region, AI-powered translation and speech-to-text technologies have become valuable tools for expanding news reach. As noted by Kumar and Thussu (2021), regional-language journalism has witnessed significant growth through AI-enabled localization. At the same time, the reliance on proprietary algorithms developed by global technology corporations raises concerns about cultural homogenization and editorial dependency. The rise of misinformation and deepfakes further complicates the AI-media relationship. South Asia has experienced repeated instances of viral misinformation leading to social unrest and violence. In response, news organizations increasingly deploy AI-based fact-checking and content verification tools. While studies by Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) emphasize the potential of AI in combating disinformation, they also warn that technological solutions alone cannot replace editorial judgment and media literacy. This paper seeks to address these complexities by offering a comparative analysis of AI's role in South Asian news channels and media houses. It aims to answer three central questions: How is AI currently being used in South Asian newsrooms? How do patterns of adoption differ across countries in the region? And what ethical, political, and professional challenges emerge from AI-

driven journalism in South Asia? By engaging with existing literature and contextualizing it within regional realities, the study contributes to a more inclusive global discourse on AI and journalism.

Literature Review

Scholarly engagement with Artificial Intelligence in journalism has expanded rapidly over the past decade, reflecting broader technological shifts in the media industry. Early studies focused primarily on automation and computer-assisted reporting, examining how algorithms could support data-driven journalism. Carlson (2015) introduced the concept of "automated journalism," arguing that algorithmically generated news challenges traditional notions of authorship, accountability, and professional identity. This foundational work highlighted the tension between efficiency and editorial control, a theme that remains central to contemporary debates.Subsequent research by Diakopoulos (2019) explored algorithmic accountability in journalism, emphasizing the opacity of AI systems used in news production and distribution. According to Diakopoulos, algorithms increasingly act as "invisible editors," shaping news agendas through recommendation systems and ranking mechanisms. This perspective aligns with broader concerns in critical algorithm studies, where scholars such as Gillespie (2014) argue that platform algorithms exercise significant cultural power while remaining largely unregulated. Although these studies provide valuable theoretical insights, they are predominantly grounded in Western media contexts.In contrast, literature focusing specifically on the Global South, and South Asia in particular, remains limited but growing. Thussu (2007) examined the political economy of South Asian media, highlighting the commercialization and corporatization of news industries. When viewed through this lens, AI adoption appears closely tied to market competition and audience monetization. Media houses deploy AI not only to improve journalistic quality but also to optimize advertising revenue and audience engagement, reinforcing neoliberal media logics.Several scholars have addressed the implications of AI for labor and newsroom culture. Pavlik (2020) suggests that AI can augment journalistic work by handling repetitive tasks, thereby allowing journalists to focus on investigative and interpretative reporting. However, research by Cohen (2019) raises concerns about job precarity and deskilling, particularly in developing media markets where labor protections are weaker. In South Asia, where journalists already face low wages and job insecurity, AI-driven automation may exacerbate existing inequalities.Language and localization form another critical dimension of AI use in South Asian media. Studies by Rao and Johal (2020) emphasize the role of AI in expanding vernacular journalism through automated translation and voice-based news delivery. These technologies have enabled media houses to reach rural and semi-literate audiences, aligning with arguments by Sen (1999) on communication as a tool for development. However, concerns remain about the accuracy and cultural sensitivity of AI-generated translations, especially in politically charged reporting.The issue of misinformation has attracted significant scholarly attention in relation to AI. Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) conceptualize misinformation as a complex ecosystem involving technological, political, and social actors. In South Asia, where social media platforms serve as primary news sources for millions, AI-driven misinformation poses serious risks to public order and democratic discourse. Research by Banaji et al. (2019) documents how algorithmic amplification of sensational content has contributed to communal polarization in India. While AI-based fact-checking tools offer partial solutions, scholars caution against overreliance on technological fixes without addressing structural media problems.Ethical considerations surrounding AI in journalism have been extensively debated. Floridi et al. (2018) propose principles of

transparency, accountability, and human oversight in AI systems. Applying these principles to South Asian media reveals significant gaps in regulation and professional training. Unlike Europe, where AI governance is shaped by robust data protection laws, South Asian countries often lack comprehensive regulatory frameworks, leaving news organizations to self-regulate.Comparative studies further highlight uneven AI adoption across the region. India emerges as a regional leader due to its strong IT sector and investment capacity, as noted by Athique (2019). Pakistani and Bangladeshi media houses, while experimenting with AI tools, face infrastructural and financial constraints. Smaller nations such as Nepal and Sri Lanka exhibit limited adoption, often relying on externally developed technologies. This disparity reinforces digital hierarchies within South Asia and raises questions about technological dependency. In summary, existing literature underscores AI's transformative impact on journalism while revealing significant regional variations. The South Asian perspective complicates dominant narratives of technological progress by foregrounding issues of inequality, political influence, and cultural diversity. By synthesizing these scholarly insights, the present study situates AI within the lived realities of South Asian news media, emphasizing the need for context-sensitive analysis and ethical governance.

Research Gap

Despite the growing body of literature on Artificial Intelligence in journalism, significant research gaps remain, particularly from a South Asian perspective. Existing studies have largely focused on Western media ecosystems, where technological infrastructure, regulatory mechanisms, and newsroom cultures differ substantially from those in South Asia. As a result, theoretical models and empirical findings developed in Euro-American contexts often fail to capture the socio-political, economic, and cultural complexities of South Asian media systems. This geographical imbalance in scholarship limits the applicability of existing frameworks to regions where media operates under conditions of political pressure, linguistic diversity, and uneven digital access. Moreover, much of the current research concentrates on technological capabilities—such as automated content production, algorithmic personalization, and data analytics—while paying limited attention to their contextual consequences. There is a lack of comparative studies that examine how AI adoption varies across South Asian countries and how national factors such as media ownership patterns, press freedom indices, and state–media relations influence the use of AI in newsrooms. Existing literature also tends to treat AI as a neutral tool, insufficiently interrogating its role in reinforcing structural inequalities, editorial biases, and corporate control over news flows in the region.Another critical gap lies in the absence of journalist-centered and institution-level analyses. Few studies explore how newsroom professionals in South Asia perceive AI, adapt to algorithmic workflows, or negotiate ethical dilemmas arising from automation and surveillance technologies. Additionally, limited scholarly attention has been given to audience implications, particularly regarding trust, misinformation, and algorithmic gatekeeping in multilingual and politically polarized societies. This study seeks to address these gaps by offering a comparative, context-sensitive analysis of AI in South Asian news channels and media houses, thereby contributing to a more inclusive and globally relevant understanding of AI-driven journalism.

Problem Statement

The integration of Artificial Intelligence into news channels and media houses has fundamentally altered journalistic processes, redefining how information is produced, curated, and disseminated. While AI-driven technologies promise efficiency, accuracy, and enhanced audience engagement, their rapid adoption has also generated profound

challenges, particularly in South Asian media environments. The central problem addressed in this study is the lack of critical, region-specific understanding of how AI influences journalistic autonomy, media ethics, and democratic communication in South Asia. South Asian news media operates within a context characterized by intense political contestation, commercial pressures, and regulatory uncertainty. In such environments, the deployment of AI tools—ranging from automated news writing and content recommendation algorithms to audience surveillance systems—raises concerns about editorial independence and accountability. Algorithmic decision-making, often controlled by proprietary software developed by global technology corporations, risks shifting gatekeeping power away from journalists toward opaque technological systems. This shift is especially problematic in countries where media institutions already face constraints on press freedom and professional integrity. Furthermore, the uneven technological capacity across South Asian countries creates disparities in AI adoption, resulting in a fragmented media landscape. Larger media houses with greater financial resources are better positioned to leverage AI, while smaller and regional outlets struggle to compete. This imbalance threatens media pluralism and may marginalize local voices, particularly in vernacular and rural journalism. The problem is compounded by the region's linguistic diversity, where AI-generated translations and automated content may lack cultural nuance and contextual accuracy. Another pressing concern is the role of AI in amplifying misinformation and political polarization. Algorithmic prioritization of sensational or emotionally charged content can exacerbate social divisions and undermine public trust in news media. While AI-based fact-checking tools are increasingly employed, their effectiveness remains limited without robust editorial oversight and media literacy initiatives. Despite these challenges, policy frameworks and ethical guidelines governing AI use in South Asian journalism remain underdeveloped. Thus, the core problem lies in the disconnect between the rapid technological adoption of AI in South Asian media and the absence of comprehensive scholarly, ethical, and regulatory responses tailored to regional realities. Addressing this problem requires systematic analysis that situates AI within the political economy, cultural diversity, and democratic responsibilities of South Asian journalism.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the nature and extent of Artificial Intelligence adoption in news channels and media houses across selected South Asian countries.
2. To analyze the comparative differences in AI usage practices within South Asian media systems.
3. To assess the impact of AI on journalistic practices, editorial autonomy, and newsroom workflows in South Asia.
4. To evaluate the ethical and democratic implications of AI-driven journalism in politically and culturally diverse societies.
5. To propose context-specific insights for responsible and sustainable integration of AI in South Asian news media.

Research Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative and comparative research methodology to examine the role of Artificial Intelligence in news channels and media houses from a South Asian perspective. Given the exploratory and analytical nature of the research, a qualitative approach is most suitable for understanding the complex interactions between technology, journalism, and socio-political contexts. The methodology is designed to capture both structural patterns and contextual variations in AI adoption across South Asian media systems. The study is primarily based on secondary data,

drawing from academic journals, books, policy documents, media industry reports, and credible digital archives related to AI, journalism, and media studies. Scholarly databases and peer-reviewed publications have been consulted to ensure theoretical rigor and academic reliability. In addition, reports published by international media organizations, press councils, and technology research institutes have been used to supplement academic literature and provide contemporary insights into newsroom practices. A comparative analytical framework is employed to examine selected South Asian countries—namely India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. These countries have been chosen due to their shared historical experiences, cultural proximity, and differing levels of technological development and media freedom. Comparative analysis enables the identification of similarities and divergences in AI adoption, allowing the study to move beyond country-specific observations and develop region-wide insights. The research applies thematic analysis to organize and interpret the collected data. Key themes such as newsroom automation, algorithmic gatekeeping, ethical concerns, labor implications, misinformation, and audience engagement are identified and analyzed across national contexts. This thematic approach facilitates a systematic examination of how AI technologies intersect with journalistic norms and institutional structures in South Asia. The study is grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that draws upon political economy of media, algorithmic governance, and critical journalism studies. These perspectives help situate AI not merely as a technical tool but as a socio-political force embedded within power relations, market dynamics, and regulatory environments. Such a framework is particularly relevant for South Asia, where media institutions often operate under political and corporate influence. To ensure analytical validity, the research adopts triangulation by cross-verifying findings across multiple sources and perspectives. While the study does not involve primary data collection, it critically engages with existing empirical research and case studies to enhance contextual depth. Ethical considerations are addressed by maintaining objectivity, avoiding technological determinism, and acknowledging the limitations of secondary-data-based research. Overall, this methodological approach enables a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of AI's role in South Asian news media. By combining comparative analysis, thematic interpretation, and critical theoretical grounding, the study seeks to generate insights that are both academically robust and practically relevant for policymakers, media professionals, and scholars.

Results and Discussion

1. Overview of Findings

This section presents and interprets the findings of the study on the role of Artificial Intelligence in news channels and media houses across selected South Asian countries. The results are organized thematically in line with the research objectives and comparative framework adopted in the methodology. The analysis focuses on five major dimensions: the level of AI adoption, its application in news production and distribution, impact on journalistic practices, ethical and regulatory preparedness, and regional disparities within South Asia. The findings indicate that while AI adoption is steadily increasing across South Asian media systems, its implementation remains uneven and context-dependent. India demonstrates comparatively advanced integration of AI technologies, followed by Pakistan and Bangladesh, while Sri Lanka and Nepal show limited and cautious adoption. These differences reflect variations in technological infrastructure, media market size, financial capacity, and regulatory preparedness.

2. Comparative Level of AI Adoption in South Asian Media

Table 1: Comparative AI Adoption Levels in South Asian News Media

Country	AI Adoption Level (%)
India	75
Pakistan	50
Bangladesh	45
Sri Lanka	40
Nepal	30

The data in Table 1 highlights significant variation in AI adoption across South Asian news media. India emerges as the regional leader, with approximately three-fourths of major news organizations using AI-driven tools in some form. This can be attributed to India's strong information technology sector, large digital news market, and increased investment in media innovation. Indian news channels have widely adopted AI for election analytics, automated sports and finance reporting, speech-to-text conversion, and audience engagement metrics. Pakistan and Bangladesh occupy a middle position, where AI adoption is present but not deeply institutionalized. Media houses in these countries primarily use AI for content distribution, social media optimization, and limited automation in news production. Financial constraints and political uncertainty continue to restrict large-scale AI deployment. Sri Lanka and Nepal show relatively low adoption levels, largely due to smaller media markets, limited technological infrastructure, and dependence on imported digital tools. AI use in these countries is often experimental and concentrated in urban-based digital outlets rather than mainstream broadcast media.

Figure 1: AI Adoption in News Media Across South Asia

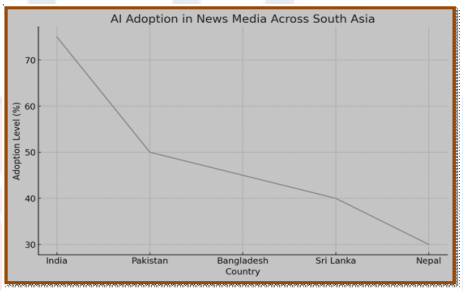

Figure 1 visually reinforces the numerical disparities in AI adoption, clearly illustrating India's dominance and the gradual decline across other South Asian nations. This confirms that AI-driven journalism in South Asia is developing in an uneven and hierarchical manner.

3. AI in News Production Processes

Table 2: Use of AI in News Production

Country	Use in News Production (%)
India	70
Pakistan	48
Bangladesh	42
Sri Lanka	38
Nepal	28

The findings reveal that AI plays a growing role in news production, particularly in routine and data-intensive reporting. In India, AI is widely used for automated generation of weather updates, stock market reports, sports summaries, and election results. Newsrooms employ natural language generation tools to produce real-time updates with minimal human intervention, significantly increasing speed and efficiency. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, AI use in production is more selective. Media

houses rely on AI mainly for transcription, translation, and basic data analysis rather than full-scale automated writing. Journalists often retain editorial control, reflecting professional skepticism toward algorithmic authorship. Sri Lanka and Nepal exhibit minimal AI use in news production, largely confined to transcription and archive management. Editorial teams in these countries emphasize human judgment due to concerns over accuracy, cultural sensitivity, and ethical responsibility. These findings support earlier scholarly arguments that AI adoption in journalism tends to begin with low-risk, repetitive tasks before expanding into more complex editorial domains.

4. AI in Content Distribution and Audience Engagement

Table 3: AI Use in Content Distribution

Country	Use in Content Distribution (%)
India	80
Pakistan	55
Bangladesh	50
Sri Lanka	45
Nepal	35

AI-driven content distribution emerges as the most widely adopted application across all countries studied. Recommendation algorithms, audience analytics, and social media optimization tools are extensively used to maximize reach and engagement. Indian media houses rely heavily on AI-based personalization engines that tailor news feeds according to user behavior, location, and language preference. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, AI tools are primarily used to enhance visibility on digital platforms such as social media and news aggregators. While these tools increase traffic, they also encourage sensationalism and click-driven journalism, raising concerns about editorial quality. Smaller nations show limited but growing use of AI in content distribution, often dependent on third-party platforms rather than in-house technologies. This reliance raises issues of platform dependency and loss of editorial autonomy, as algorithms controlled by global corporations increasingly determine news visibility.

5. Impact on Journalistic Practices and Labor

The findings suggest that AI has both enabling and disruptive effects on journalistic practices in South Asia. On the positive side, AI reduces workload by automating repetitive tasks, allowing journalists to focus on investigative and interpretative reporting. Several Indian and Pakistani media houses report improved efficiency and faster news cycles.However, the study also identifies concerns related to job insecurity, deskilling, and professional identity. Journalists in mid-sized and smaller media organizations fear that AI-driven automation may lead to staff reductions, particularly in copy-editing, data reporting, and newsroom support roles. These concerns are more pronounced in countries with weak labor protections. Furthermore, AI alters newsroom hierarchies by increasing the influence of data scientists and technology teams in editorial decision-making. This shift challenges traditional journalistic norms and raises questions about accountability and transparency.

6. Ethical and Regulatory Preparedness

Table 4: Availability of Ethical Frameworks for AI Use

Country	Ethical Framework Availability (%)
India	60
Pakistan	35
Bangladesh	30
Sri Lanka	40
Nepal	25

Ethical governance of AI remains underdeveloped across South Asia. While India has initiated discussions on AI ethics and data protection, implementation within media

organizations remains inconsistent. Larger news outlets have internal guidelines, but smaller organizations lack formal ethical frameworks. Pakistan and Bangladesh show limited institutional preparedness, with ethical decisions largely left to editorial discretion. Sri Lanka demonstrates moderate awareness due to stronger professional journalism norms, while Nepal lags significantly in formal regulation. Across all countries, there is a lack of comprehensive national policies specifically addressing AI in journalism. This regulatory vacuum allows commercial and political interests to shape AI use, often at the expense of journalistic integrity and public trust.

7. AI, Misinformation, and Democratic Discourse

The study finds that AI plays a paradoxical role in addressing and amplifying misinformation. On one hand, AI-based fact-checking tools, content verification systems, and deepfake detection technologies are increasingly used, particularly in India. On the other hand, algorithmic amplification of sensational content contributes to political polarization and social unrest. In politically sensitive environments, AI-driven recommendation systems tend to prioritize engagement over accuracy, reinforcing echo chambers and ideological divisions. This is especially concerning in South Asia, where media narratives often intersect with ethnic, religious, and national identities. The findings suggest that technological solutions alone are insufficient to address misinformation. Strong editorial oversight, ethical standards, and media literacy initiatives are essential to counter AI-enabled disinformation effectively.

8. Comparative Discussion and Theoretical Implications

The comparative analysis confirms that AI adoption in South Asian journalism is shaped by political economy, technological capacity, and institutional culture. India's leadership reflects its market-driven media model, while smaller nations exhibit cautious adoption influenced by resource constraints. From a theoretical perspective, the findings support critical political economy approaches that view AI as embedded within power structures rather than as a neutral tool. Algorithmic governance in South Asian media reinforces existing inequalities, both within and between countries. The study also challenges techno-optimistic narratives by demonstrating that AI's benefits are unevenly distributed and often accompanied by ethical and democratic risks. This underscores the need for context-sensitive frameworks that balance innovation with responsibility.

9. Finding of Main Results

- AI adoption in South Asian media is uneven, with India leading and Nepal lagging.
- Content distribution is the most common application of AI, followed by news production.
- AI improves efficiency but raises concerns about labor displacement and editorial autonomy.
- Ethical and regulatory frameworks remain weak across the region.
- AI plays a dual role in combating and amplifying misinformation.

Conclusion

The present study has examined the role of Artificial Intelligence in news channels and media houses through a comparative analysis of selected South Asian countries. The findings demonstrate that AI has become an influential force in reshaping journalistic practices, newsroom structures, and news dissemination processes across the region. However, the nature and extent of this transformation vary considerably, reflecting differences in technological capacity, media market size, political context, and regulatory preparedness.The study concludes that AI adoption in South Asian

media is largely driven by efficiency, speed, and audience engagement imperatives. News organizations increasingly rely on AI tools for content distribution, data analysis, and routine news production, particularly in digital platforms. India emerges as the regional leader in AI-driven journalism, supported by a robust IT ecosystem and greater investment capacity. Other South Asian countries, while adopting AI at a slower pace, are gradually integrating algorithmic tools into their media operations, primarily through content recommendation systems and social media optimization. At the same time, the study highlights critical challenges associated with AI integration. Algorithmic gatekeeping has begun to shift editorial power away from journalists toward opaque technological systems, raising concerns about accountability and transparency. The findings also reveal apprehensions regarding job displacement, deskilling, and the erosion of professional journalistic identity, particularly in economically vulnerable media environments. These challenges are further intensified by the absence of comprehensive ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks governing AI use in journalism across South Asia. The study also underscores AI's paradoxical role in democratic communication. While AI-based tools assist in fact-checking and misinformation detection, algorithm-driven amplification of sensational content contributes to political polarization and public distrust. In societies marked by linguistic diversity and socio-political sensitivities, unregulated AI systems risk undermining the credibility and social responsibility of news media. In conclusion, the study asserts that AI should be understood not merely as a technological innovation but as a socio-political force embedded within the broader political economy of South Asian media. For AI to contribute positively to journalism and democratic discourse, its integration must be guided by human oversight, ethical standards, and region-specific policy frameworks. Strengthening journalist training, promoting transparency in algorithmic systems, and developing inclusive regulatory mechanisms are essential to ensuring that AI enhances, rather than compromises, the public role of news media in South Asia.

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