



## Artificial Intelligence and Ethics

**For Prelims:** Application of AI, Machine Learning, Related Government Schemes, International Agreements

**For Mains:** Rules and Regulations for AI, Effect of AI on other Sectors and Society, Challenges and Initiatives for AI

### Why in News?

[UNESCO's Global Agreement on the Ethics of AI](#) can guide governments and companies alike.

### What is Artificial Intelligence?

- It describes the **action of machines accomplishing tasks** that have historically required human intelligence.
- It **includes technologies** like machine learning, pattern recognition, big data, neural networks, self-algorithms etc.
- The **origin of the concept can be traced back to Greek mythology**, although it is only during modern history when stored program electronic computers were developed.
  - **Example:** Millions of algorithms and codes are there around humans to understand their commands and perform human-like tasks. **Facebook's list of suggested friends** for its users, **a pop-up page**, suggesting about an upcoming sale of the favourite brand of shoes and clothes, that comes on screen while browsing the internet, are the work of artificial intelligence.
- AI involves complex things such as **feeding a particular data into the machine** and making it react as per different situations. It is basically about **creating self-learning patterns** where the machine can give answers to the never answered questions like a human would ever do.
- India has made great strides in the development of responsible and ethical AI governance, starting with [NITI Aayog's #AIForAll](#) campaign to the many corporate strategies that have been adopted to ensure that AI is developed with common, humanistic values at its core.

### What are the Ethical Concerns related to Artificial Intelligence?

- **Risk of Unemployment:** The hierarchy of labour is concerned primarily with automation. Robotics and AI companies are building intelligent machines that perform tasks typically carried out by low-income workers: self-service kiosks to replace cashiers, fruit-picking robots to replace field workers, etc.
  - Moreover, the day is not far when many desk jobs will also be edged out by AI, such as accountants, financial traders, and middle managers.
- **Exacerbating Inequalities:** Using artificial intelligence, **a company can drastically cut down on relying on the human workforce**, and this means that revenues will go to fewer people.
  - Consequently, individuals who have ownership in AI-driven companies will make all the money. Also, AI could compound digital exclusion.
  - Further, **investment is likely to shift to countries** where AI-related work is already

established, widening gaps among and within countries.

- **Tech Addiction:** Technological addiction is the **new frontier of human dependency**. AI has already become effective at directing human attention and triggering certain actions.
  - When used right, this **could evolve into an opportunity to nudge society towards more beneficial behavior**.
  - However, in the wrong hands, it could prove detrimental.
- **Discriminating Robots:** We shouldn't forget that AI systems are **created by humans, who can be biased and judgemental**.
  - It can lead to **AI facial recognition** and surveillance technology to discriminate against people of color and minorities.
- **Data Privacy Concerns:** AI also **presents serious data privacy concerns**. The algorithm's never-ending quest for data has led to our digital footprints being harvested and sold without our knowledge or informed consent.
  - The **case of Cambridge Analytica**, in which such algorithms and big data were **used to alter voting decisions**, should serve as a potent warning of the individual and societal concerns resulting from current AI business models.
- **AI Turning against Humans:** What if artificial intelligence itself turned against humans?
  - Imagine an AI system that is asked to eradicate cancer in the world. After a lot of computing, it spits out a formula that does, in fact, bring about the end of cancer - by killing everyone on the planet.

## What are the Global Standards for Artificial Intelligence Ethics?

- In 2021, the **Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence** was adopted by UNESCO's General Conference at its 41<sup>st</sup> session.
  - It aims to fundamentally shift the balance of power between people, and the businesses and governments developing AI.
- **UNESCO** members have agreed to **use affirmative action** to make sure that women and minority groups are fairly represented on AI design teams.
- The recommendation also underscores the importance of the proper management of data, privacy and access to information.
- It calls on member states to ensure that appropriate safeguards are devised for the processing of sensitive data and effective accountability and redress mechanisms are provided.
- The Recommendation takes a strong stance that
  - AI systems **should not be used for social scoring or mass surveillance purposes**
  - Attention **must be paid to the psychological and cognitive impact** that these systems can have on children.
  - Member states **should invest and promote not only digital, media and information literacy skills**, but also socio-emotional and AI ethics skills.
- UNESCO is also in the process of developing tools to help assess the readiness in the implementation of the recommendations.

## Way Forward

- Given the global reach of AI, such a **“whole of society” approach must rest on a “whole of world” approach**.
- The **UN Secretary-General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation** is a good starting point. It lays out the need for multi-stakeholder efforts on global cooperation so AI is used in a manner that is “trustworthy, human rights-based, safe and sustainable, and promotes peace”.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q.** “The emergence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Digital Revolution) has initiated e-Governance as an integral part of government”. Discuss. **(2020)**

**Source: TH**

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