

Artificial Intelligence and the Transformation of Everyday Social Life: A Generational Reading from Tripura, Northeast India

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Abstract

This article examines how artificial-intelligence-enabled digital technologies are reshaping everyday social life across the human lifecycle in Tripura, Northeast India. Drawing on Jan van Dijk's access-skills-usage model and Massimo Ragnedda's concept of a third digital divide, it situates AI-mediated change within documentary and conceptual analysis, supplemented by informal observation and family interviews. The discussion is organised generationally, showing that children, youth, working adults, and the elderly each negotiate access, competence, and outcome differently. The analysis suggests that children increasingly favour algorithmically curated games and reels over outdoor play, with some exposure to inappropriate content and reduced peer sociability, while empirical technoference research suggests that device-mediated distraction is similarly weakening face-to-face engagement within couples and families relative to traditional norms. The article concludes that Tripura's hill-valley geography, tribal diversity, and multilingual character demand locally grounded, rather than purely national, digital-divide scholarship and further primary research.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Digital Divide; Everyday Life; Northeast India; Tripura; Generational Technology Use

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence no longer arrives in everyday life as a discrete, named event. It arrives quietly, embedded inside the ordinary architecture of the smartphone: in the recommendation engine that decides which video plays next, in the voice assistant that transcribes a spoken word into a searchable query, in the translation layer that renders a government notice from English into a regional tongue, in the algorithmic filter that decides which face gets automatically tagged in a family photograph. It is precisely this embeddedness—AI's tendency to disappear into infrastructure rather than announce itself as a technology—that makes its social consequences difficult to see and easy to under-theorise, especially in regions that rarely feature in the metropolitan imagination of the “digital India” story.

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Tripura offers an unusually instructive vantage point from which to examine this quiet transformation. It is a small, land-locked state bordered on three sides by Bangladesh, home to a demographic profile in which a Bengali-speaking majority coexists with nineteen recognised tribal communities—including the Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Molsom, Noatia, and others—each with its own linguistic and cultural inheritance. It is also, along with the rest of Northeast India, a region whose digital infrastructure has historically lagged behind the national average, a fact well documented in recent policy literature on internet connectivity in the region. The Northeast, accounting for roughly 3.7 percent of India’s population, has been shown to account for less than 2 percent of the country’s total broadband subscriber base, a gap attributed to hilly terrain, low population density, and slower state-level rollout of fibre and 4G infrastructure (Internet Connectivity in Northeast India, 2025). Within this regional pattern, Tripura’s mobile internet subscriber base has itself been reported as smaller than that of Assam and Manipur, even as it remains ahead of some of its neighbours (Digital Horizons, 2025). It is against this uneven infrastructural backdrop—not a uniform national plain—that AI-mediated tools are being adopted, resisted, adapted, and reinterpreted by different generations of Tripura’s population.

This article’s guiding premise is that the social meaning of AI cannot be read off from the technology itself; it has to be read off from the way the technology is taken up—unevenly, selectively, and generationally—inside particular social worlds. A schoolchild in Agartala using an AI-powered learning application, a young graduate in Khowai navigating a gig-economy app whose task allocation is algorithmically managed, a middle-aged shopkeeper in Udaipur relying on a voice-based digital payment assistant, and a grandmother in a Tripuri village who has never held a smartphone are not experiencing “the same” technological revolution refracted at different intensities. They are experiencing structurally different relationships to a common technological infrastructure, shaped by literacy, language, income, geography, and the accumulated social capital of digital familiarity. The task of this article is to give an analytical account of that differentiation rather than a celebratory or catastrophist commentary on “AI in society” as an undifferentiated abstraction.

Two further clarifications are necessary at the outset. First, in speaking of “artificial intelligence” we do not restrict ourselves to the narrow, technically demanding sense of the term favoured in computer science; we follow the broader usage common in social-scientific literature, in which AI denotes the family of data-driven, adaptive, and increasingly autonomous systems—recommendation algorithms, natural-language processing tools, machine-translation engines, predictive analytics, and generative systems—that now mediate large portions of digital life (Floridi, 2014, pp. 14–38; Zuboff, 2019, pp. 8–13). Second, the article does not claim to offer a fieldwork-based ethnography of Tripura; its method, elaborated in Section 4, is conceptual and documentary. It draws on the existing corpus of peer-reviewed research on digital exclusion in Northeast India and among India’s elderly, read through the lens of established digital-divide theory, in order to construct an analytically rigorous, properly cited account of a phenomenon for which large-scale, Tripura-specific primary data does not yet exist in the published literature. This is, we suggest, itself a finding worth stating plainly: the empirical record on AI’s social life in Northeast India remains thin, and this thinness is not incidental but symptomatic of the very peripheralisation the article discusses.

The remainder of the article proceeds as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant theoretical and empirical literature, moving from general theories of networked and algorithmic society to the specific literature on digital exclusion in Northeast India and among the elderly in India. Section 3 sets out the conceptual framework and documentary method used to organise the analysis. Section 4 offers the discussion and findings proper, organised generationally—childhood, youth, working adulthood, and old age—before turning to cross-cutting themes of language, gender, and community life. Section 5 concludes by drawing out the implications of a generationally differentiated, infrastructurally grounded reading of AI’s social consequences for policy and for future research.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Theorising AI and the Reconfiguration of Everyday Life

The sociological literature on networked technology offers a useful point of departure, even where it predates the recent wave of generative AI. Manuel Castells’s account of the “network society” described how information technologies restructure social relations around flows rather than fixed places, producing new hierarchies between those who are “switched on” to global networks and those who remain relatively disconnected (Castells, 2010, pp. 24–31). What AI adds to this picture is a further layer of mediation: it is not merely that people are connected through networks, but that algorithms increasingly decide what flows through those networks reach a given individual, and in what order. Luciano Floridi’s notion of the “infosphere” captures this shift precisely, arguing that human beings increasingly inhabit an environment saturated by information processes in which the boundary between online and offline, and between human and artificial agency, becomes progressively less meaningful (Floridi, 2014, pp. 40–50). Shoshana Zuboff pushes this analysis further still, arguing that the business model underlying much consumer AI is best described as “surveillance capitalism”: behavioural data is extracted from everyday interactions and converted into predictive products that are sold back into markets, with the person who generates the data typically excluded from any share of its value (Zuboff, 2019, pp. 8–13, 63–97). Read together, these accounts suggest that AI’s transformation of everyday life is not simply a matter of convenience or efficiency; it is a restructuring of who has interpretive and economic power over the data trails that ordinary social life now generates.

A second, more psychologically inflected strand of scholarship examines what these technologies do to attention, relationships, and the interior life of the individual. Sherry Turkle’s widely cited study of networked sociability argues that constant connectivity produces a paradoxical loneliness: people are “alone together,” substituting the predictability of managed digital contact for the harder, more demanding work of face-to-face relationship (Turkle, 2011, pp. 1–19). Nicholas Carr’s account of internet-mediated reading similarly argues that habituation to rapid, algorithmically fragmented information changes not merely what people read but how they read, favouring skimming and distraction over the “deep reading” associated with sustained literary and expository attention (Carr, 2010, pp. 5–10, 115–143). These arguments were developed primarily with reference to Euro-American, urban, digitally saturated contexts, and it would be a mistake to import them wholesale into the Tripura context without qualification; nonetheless, they usefully identify a set of hypotheses—about attention,

loneliness, and the erosion of sustained reading—that a regionally grounded study can test against a different infrastructural and cultural setting rather than simply assume.

2.2 The Digital Divide as an Analytical Frame

If the preceding literature theorises what AI does once it is adopted, the digital-divide literature asks a prior question: who gets to adopt it, on what terms, and with what competence. Jan van Dijk's influential model distinguishes at least three layers of inequality: a motivational and material “access divide” concerning whether a device and connection are available at all; a “skills divide” concerning the operational, informational, and strategic competence needed to use digital tools effectively; and a “usage divide” concerning what people actually do with access once they have it (van Dijk, 2020, pp. 34–49). This layered model is analytically important because it resists the temptation to treat “connectivity” as a proxy for meaningful inclusion: a household with a functioning 4G connection but no member literate in the dominant script of an application, or no confidence in navigating an unfamiliar interface, remains substantively excluded even while appearing statistically “connected.” Massimo Ragnedda extends this model with the concept of a “third digital divide,” located not in access or skill but in the tangible offline outcomes—educational, economic, and social—that differential digital participation produces, drawing on a broadly Weberian framework of social stratification to argue that digital inequality both reflects and reproduces pre-existing status and class hierarchies rather than creating an entirely new axis of disadvantage (Ragnedda, 2017, pp. 3–22, 88–104).

This layered understanding of the divide is directly relevant to any discussion of AI specifically, because AI systems typically demand more, not less, of the user than earlier digital tools. A basic feature phone requires only that a user dial a number; a smartphone application mediated by a recommendation algorithm, a chatbot, or a voice-recognition system requires a working knowledge of how the system infers intent, what data it collects, and how its outputs should be interpreted or distrusted. Where earlier digital-divide research worried primarily about access to devices and connectivity, AI-specific critical work now increasingly worries about a further, higher-order divide: the ability to understand, question, and exercise agency over automated decision systems whose logic is opaque even to relatively skilled users. This concern underlies UNESCO's own policy framework for AI in education, which explicitly warns that AI's integration into learning environments risks widening existing educational inequalities unless deliberately designed to counteract them, since well-resourced schools and confident, literate households are best positioned to exploit AI tools for genuine learning gains while under-resourced ones may experience AI merely as a further source of confusion or surveillance (Pedro et al., 2019, pp. 9–15, 41–47).

2.3 Digital and Infrastructural Exclusion in Northeast India

The literature specific to Northeast India substantiates and regionalises these general theoretical concerns. Raile Rocky Ziipao's study of digital exclusion among the region's tribal communities argues that the digitalisation of welfare schemes and e-governance platforms, when rolled out without commensurate investment in digital and physical infrastructure, does not simply fail to include tribal populations passively; it actively produces a “new horizon of

social exclusion,” layering digital marginalisation on top of pre-existing patterns of geographic and administrative neglect (Ziipao, 2023, pp. 141–145). This argument resonates strongly with the position of the present article: digitalisation is not a neutral modernising force that merely awaits diffusion; its social effects are conditioned by the infrastructural and institutional terrain into which it is introduced, and in much of Northeast India that terrain remains markedly uneven. Complementary policy research on internet connectivity in the region documents persistent gaps in mobile network coverage, higher network downtime, slower speeds, and a low proportion of village-level administrative units covered by broadband, even as national schemes attempt to close the gap (Internet Connectivity in Northeast India, 2025; Digital Horizons, 2025). The Digital Empowerment Foundation’s assessment of access, connectivity, and inclusion in the North Eastern region similarly documents wide inter-state disparities in school-level computer and internet availability, noting that the presence of a computer in a school register does not guarantee a functional, usable machine, given constraints on teacher training and institutional priority (Digital Empowerment Foundation, 2023, pp. 8–9).

Within this regional picture, Tripura occupies a distinctive position. It was reported as the first Northeastern state, and the first state in eastern India, to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Digital India Bhashini Division, a national initiative intended to enable voice-based, multilingual interaction with digital governance platforms across twenty-two Indian languages, explicitly framed as a means of allowing citizens with limited literacy to engage with technology through speech rather than text (India: Digital Inclusivity, 2025). This is a genuinely significant development, because it represents an attempt to address the language layer of the access-skills-usage model directly: a Kokborok- or Tripuri-speaking citizen with limited facility in English or the Bengali script might, in principle, be able to interact with e-governance services through voice recognition and machine translation, an application of AI that could narrow rather than widen the state’s internal digital divide. Whether this promise is realised in practice, however, is precisely the kind of question that requires the layered, sceptical analysis developed in van Dijk’s and Ragnedda’s frameworks: a voice interface still presupposes network access, a functioning smartphone, and confidence in speaking to a machine, none of which can simply be assumed for the state’s older, rural, and less formally educated residents.

2.4 The Generational Dimension: Childhood and Old Age

A further body of literature makes explicit the generational differentiation that this article treats as central. Sonia Livingstone’s foundational work on children and new media argues that each generation’s relationship to a dominant communication technology is shaped by the specific developmental and institutional context—home, school, peer group—in which it is first encountered, such that the same technology can simultaneously function as an educational resource, a site of peer sociability, and a source of parental anxiety (Livingstone, 2002, pp. 17–24, 158–166). UNESCO’s policy guidance on AI in education develops this concern in relation to automated and adaptive learning systems specifically, cautioning that while such systems can personalise instruction and extend access to quality content in under-resourced settings, they also risk entrenching dependence on proprietary platforms, exposing children’s data to commercial exploitation, and substituting algorithmic assessment for the professional

judgement of teachers, especially where regulatory oversight is weak (Pedro et al., 2019, pp. 21–30).

At the opposite end of the lifecycle, a distinct and rapidly growing literature documents what is sometimes called the “grey digital divide.” Basabadatta Jena and Tattwamasi Paltasingh’s systematic review of digital literacy among older adults in India finds consistently lower rates of ICT adoption among the elderly relative to younger cohorts, a gap compounded by a pronounced rural-urban disparity in which older adults in rural areas have markedly less access to the internet and to reliable tele-density than their urban counterparts, and conclude that ageing itself interacts with, rather than simply parallels, other axes of digital disadvantage such as gender, education, and place of residence (Jena & Paltasingh, 2024, pp. 372–380). This finding is significant for a state like Tripura, where a large proportion of the elderly population resides in rural and semi-rural settlements, including tribal hill villages, where both the infrastructural and the educational preconditions for confident AI-mediated technology use documented in the national literature are least likely to be met.

Taken together, this body of literature supports three propositions that structure the remainder of the article. First, AI’s social consequences cannot be adequately theorised through general accounts of networked or algorithmic society alone; they must be read through the specific, layered structure of the digital divide—access, skill, usage, and outcome—as elaborated by van Dijk and Ragnedda. Second, this layered divide interacts in Northeast India, and in Tripura specifically, with a distinct set of infrastructural, linguistic, and administrative conditions documented by Ziipao and by regional policy research, such that national-level narratives of “digital India” require substantial local qualification. Third, the divide is not experienced uniformly across the lifecycle: children, youth, working-age adults, and the elderly each face a structurally different configuration of opportunity and risk, as the literature on childhood media use and on the grey digital divide separately demonstrates. Section 4 develops these three propositions into a generationally organised discussion specific to Tripura.

3. Research Methodology

This article adopts a qualitative, conceptual, and documentary method rather than a primary empirical design based on surveys, structured interviews, or fieldwork, supplemented by limited informal observations and family conversations undertaken in Tripura. Rather than presenting systematic survey or ethnographic evidence, these observations are used only as illustrative insights and are interpreted alongside established theoretical and empirical literature. This methodological choice is deliberate rather than a matter of convenience, and it is stated candidly here because methodological transparency is itself part of responsible scholarship on a topic where robust, Tripura-specific primary data is not yet available in the published record. The method proceeds in three stages.

First, the article establishes a theoretical frame by drawing on canonical and widely cited work in the sociology of technology and digital-divide research, principally van Dijk’s access-skills-usage model and Ragnedda’s concept of a third, outcome-based digital divide, supplemented by broader theorisations of networked and algorithmic society (Castells, 2010; Floridi, 2014; Zuboff, 2019; Turkle, 2011; Carr, 2010). This theoretical layer supplies the analytical

categories—access, competence, usage, and outcome—through which the subsequent discussion is organised, rather than treating “AI’s impact” as a single undifferentiated variable.

Second, the article draws systematically on the existing empirical and policy literature specific to Northeast India and to India’s ageing population, including peer-reviewed studies of tribal digital exclusion in the region (Ziipao, 2023), systematic reviews of digital literacy among India’s elderly (Jena & Paltasingh, 2024), UNESCO’s policy analysis of AI in education (Pedro et al., 2019), and recent policy-research reports on internet connectivity and digital inclusion in the Northeast (Digital Empowerment Foundation, 2023; Internet Connectivity in Northeast India, 2025; Digital Horizons, 2025; India: Digital Inclusivity, 2025). These sources were identified through a targeted search of peer-reviewed databases, institutional repositories, and recognised policy-research organisations, and were selected on the basis of direct relevance to digital or AI-mediated technology use in Northeast India, in India’s rural or tribal populations, or among specific age cohorts, rather than through a generic or exhaustive keyword sweep.

Third, the article triangulates these two layers—theoretical frame and regional evidence base—through a structured, generationally organised analytical reading, distinguishing four broad cohorts (children, youth, working-age adults, and the elderly) and, within each, considering access, competence, usage, and social outcome in turn. This structure is presented in Section 4. Because this triangulation is interpretive rather than statistical, the article does not present findings in the form of percentages, effect sizes, or sampled respondent quotations, and it explicitly avoids attributing invented figures or testimony to any Tripura-specific population. Where the cited literature reports quantitative findings—for instance, regarding Northeast India’s share of national broadband subscribers, or the extent of rural-urban disparity in elderly ICT adoption—these figures are drawn directly and only from the cited sources and are not extrapolated to Tripura without qualification. The analytic value of the method lies in its capacity to organise a scattered and regionally thin evidence base into a coherent, theoretically disciplined account, and in doing so to identify precisely where future primary research—household surveys, school-based studies, and ethnographic work across Tripura’s hill and valley communities—is most urgently required.

A final methodological caveat concerns positionality. The author writes from within Tripura’s higher-education system, at a university whose own teaching increasingly relies on video-conferencing platforms and digital assessment tools; this vantage point informs the article’s attentiveness to language, pedagogy, and generational difference in technology use, while also requiring guard against over-generalising from institutional experience, which is itself unrepresentative of the state’s rural and non-literate populations. The discussion that follows attempts to hold this tension in view throughout.

4. Discussion and Findings

This section develops the article’s central analytical claim: that AI’s transformation of everyday social life in Tripura is not a single process but a set of distinct, generationally specific negotiations with a common, unevenly distributed technological infrastructure. Each subsection considers access, competence, patterns of use, and likely social outcome for a given

age cohort, before the section turns to three cross-cutting themes—language, gender, and community and cultural life—that cut across all four cohorts.

4.1 Childhood: AI as Curriculum, Companion, and Concern

For Tripura’s children, AI enters everyday life primarily through two channels: the smartphone, typically a shared household device rather than a personal one, and, increasingly, the school, where digital and “smart” classroom initiatives are being layered onto an educational system historically organised around print textbooks and face-to-face instruction. The theoretical literature on childhood media use cautions against treating either channel as straightforwardly beneficial or harmful; Livingstone’s account of children’s relationship to new media insists that the same device functions differently depending on whether it is encountered within a supervised, resource-rich home environment or a less supervised, resource-constrained one (Livingstone, 2002, pp. 158–166). Applied to Tripura, this suggests an important internal differentiation: an urban, English-medium-educated child in Agartala with a personal tablet and educated parents able to mediate its use is likely to experience AI-assisted learning applications as genuinely additive to formal schooling, in keeping with the more optimistic scenarios sketched in UNESCO’s policy literature (Pedro et al., 2019, pp. 21–25). A child in a rural or hill-tribal household with a single shared family smartphone, limited parental digital literacy, and intermittent connectivity is more likely to experience the same category of application—an AI-driven learning app, say—as unreliable, confusing, or simply inaccessible for a meaningful proportion of the time, a pattern consistent with the broader access and skills divides documented for the region (Digital Empowerment Foundation, 2023, pp. 8–9; Ziipao, 2023, pp. 142–144).

These structural risks are not merely theoretical possibilities but find some support in informal observation and family-level conversation conducted in the course of this research in Tripura. Informal conversations with parents and family members suggest that children now show a marked reluctance to go out and play in open fields or engage in outdoor group activity, gravitating instead toward mobile games and algorithmically curated short-video “reels,” to the point that many will not eat a meal without a phone or screen playing in front of them. Such observations, while impressionistic rather than systematically sampled, are consistent with the broader concern, noted above, that recommendation-driven video consumption is displacing the open-ended, self-directed, and outdoor play through which earlier generations of Tripura’s children built physical and social competence. A related and more troubling concern raised in these informal accounts is that exposure to AI-curated reels and short-form video content has, in some cases, exposed children to sexually suggestive or otherwise age-inappropriate material embedded within an ostensibly entertainment-oriented feed, content that a purely algorithmic recommendation logic is poorly equipped to filter for a child audience. Family members further observe that children who spend extended periods absorbed in such content appear to become less sociable within their own peer groups, showing reduced interest in face-to-face play, conversation, and shared activity with other children, a pattern that resonates with Turkle’s broader argument that dense technological connectivity can paradoxically produce social withdrawal rather than richer sociability (Turkle, 2011, pp. 1–19). Taken together, these observations reinforce the article’s methodological point that dedicated, systematically

sampled primary research on children's AI-mediated media use in Tripura—capable of establishing prevalence and causal pathways rather than relying on impressionistic parental report—remains an urgent priority for future study.

A further, more qualitative concern raised in the literature is the substitution of algorithmically curated video content—recommendation-driven entertainment platforms—for the more open-ended, self-directed play and reading that earlier generations of children relied upon. Carr's argument about the erosion of sustained attention under conditions of rapid, fragmented digital content (Carr, 2010, pp. 115–125) has direct, if unproven, relevance here: to the extent that Tripura's children, like children elsewhere, spend increasing amounts of unsupervised time inside recommendation-driven video ecosystems, the analytical question is not merely how much time is spent online but what kind of attention and literacy that time cultivates, relative to the sustained reading and face-to-face imaginative play that literary and educational traditions in the state have historically valued. This is precisely the kind of question that, as noted in Section 3, requires dedicated primary research in Tripura's schools rather than extrapolation from studies conducted elsewhere; what the existing literature permits us to say with confidence is only that the risk is structurally plausible and unevenly distributed by household resource and parental literacy, not that it has been empirically confirmed for Tripura's child population specifically.

4.2 Youth: Platforms, Gig Work, and Algorithmic Self-Presentation

For Tripura's youth—broadly, secondary-school and college-age young people and recent graduates—AI mediates everyday life chiefly through social-media recommendation systems, examination and admission portals, and an emerging gig and platform economy in which task allocation, ratings, and payment are managed algorithmically. danah boyd's ethnographic account of networked teenagers, though developed in a very different national context, offers a transferable insight: young people's engagement with algorithmically organised social platforms is rarely passive consumption but an active, socially strategic performance, in which visibility, popularity, and self-presentation are continuously negotiated against the platform's own recommendation logic (boyd, 2014, pp. 11–14, 199–208). For Tripura's young people, this negotiation takes on a specific regional inflection: platforms whose recommendation algorithms and trending content are calibrated to metropolitan, Hindi- or English-dominant usage patterns may systematically under-represent regional languages, tribal cultural content, and local concerns, subtly disadvantaging young people who wish to build a public digital presence around Kokborok-language content, indigenous music, or local literary and theatrical traditions, relative to those producing content in more algorithmically “legible” majority languages.

At the same time, AI-mediated platforms open genuinely new avenues for youth participation in wider economic and cultural life: gig-economy applications extend earning opportunities beyond the traditional, geographically constrained local labour market, and translation and voice technologies of the kind promoted through Tripura's Bhashini initiative could, in principle, allow young people more comfortable in Kokborok or Bengali than in English to access national digital-service ecosystems on more equal terms (India: Digital Inclusivity, 2025). The analytical caution here, following Ragnedda's third-divide framework, is that

access to a platform does not guarantee a favourable outcome from it: algorithmically managed gig work has been widely documented elsewhere as producing precarious, unevenly remunerated, and closely monitored labour, and there is no theoretical reason to expect Tripura's youth to be exempt from these dynamics simply because the platforms in question are marketed as tools of digital inclusion (Zuboff, 2019, pp. 8–13, 201–217).

4.3 Working-Age Adults: Governance, Livelihood, and the Language Interface

For working-age adults, AI's most consequential entry point into everyday life is arguably not entertainment but governance and livelihood: digital payment systems, e-governance portals for welfare schemes, ration and land records, and, for those engaged in small trade or agriculture, market-information and advisory applications, many of which now incorporate some element of automated processing, voice recognition, or machine translation. Ziipao's analysis of digital exclusion among Northeast India's tribal communities is most directly applicable to this cohort, since it is precisely at the point of digitised welfare delivery that the consequences of an access or skills divide translate into tangible material disadvantage: a household unable to complete a digitised welfare application, whether because of unreliable connectivity, unfamiliarity with the required digital literacy, or linguistic mismatch between the interface and the applicant's first language, does not merely miss out on a convenience but risks exclusion from an entitlement (Ziipao, 2023, pp. 144–145). The introduction of voice-based, multilingual interfaces through Bhashini is a direct policy response to exactly this problem, and its significance should not be understated; equally, following the layered digital-divide model, its success cannot be assumed from the existence of the interface alone; it depends on parallel progress in device access, network reliability, and citizens' basic confidence in interacting with an automated system, none of which follow automatically from a memorandum of understanding, however substantively important that agreement is as a policy signal (India: Digital Inclusivity, 2025; van Dijk, 2020, pp. 34–49).

For working adults engaged in small business, the adoption of AI-assisted digital payment and inventory tools has plausibly reduced transaction friction and extended access to formal financial services, echoing the broader, cautiously optimistic literature on AI's role in rural digital governance, which emphasises both the promise of improved service delivery and the continuing dependence of that promise on adequate infrastructure and digital-literacy support (Ziipao, 2023, pp. 141–142). The theoretically consequential point, consistent with the third-digital-divide framework, is that these tools tend to benefit most those already possessing complementary resources—literacy, some prior digital experience, proximity to reliable network coverage—meaning that AI adoption in this cohort is likely to widen, rather than narrow, pre-existing intra-state disparities between Tripura's urban, valley-based trading centres and its more remote hill markets, unless deliberately counterbalanced by targeted infrastructure and literacy investment (Ragnedda, 2017, pp. 88–104).

4.4 Old Age: The Grey Digital Divide and the Reorganisation of Care

Tripura's elderly population is, on the evidence of the wider Indian literature, the cohort least equipped to participate in AI-mediated everyday life and, simultaneously, among the most affected by its indirect consequences. Jena and Paltasingh's systematic review finds that lower

digital literacy among older Indian adults is the principal reason for reduced ICT adoption in this group, and that the disparity is significantly worse in rural relative to urban settings (Jena & Paltasingh, 2024, pp. 372–378). Given that a substantial proportion of Tripura’s elderly population resides in rural and hill-tribal settlements of exactly the kind this literature identifies as most disadvantaged, there is strong theoretical warrant, though not yet direct empirical confirmation specific to Tripura, for expecting the state’s elderly to experience a pronounced grey digital divide.

The social consequences of this divide extend well beyond the elderly individual’s own technology use. As families increasingly conduct communication, financial transactions, and even routine caregiving coordination through smartphone-mediated and AI-assisted channels—group messaging, digital payment to hired caregivers, appointment booking through hospital chatbots—an elderly person unable to participate in these channels risks a secondary, relational exclusion: not simply lacking a skill, but being organisationally bypassed by a family and institutional environment that increasingly assumes digital participation as a baseline. Turkle’s broader argument about the paradox of connectivity—that a densely networked household can nonetheless produce isolation for those outside the network’s operative logic (Turkle, 2011, pp. 1–19)—describes this dynamic with some precision, even though her own research was not conducted among elderly populations in South Asia. The risk, in other words, is not only that Tripura’s elderly are digitally excluded in the narrow technical sense, but that this exclusion is compounded by a generational restructuring of family communication and care around tools they cannot easily use, a dynamic that Indian research elsewhere has already associated with feelings of marginalisation among digitally illiterate elderly people (Jena & Paltasingh, 2024, pp. 379–380).

4.5 Comparative Overview: Generational Responses to AI across the Lifecycle

The preceding discussion can usefully be summarised in comparative form. Table 1 sets out, for each stage of the lifecycle considered in this article, the primary point of AI access, the typical level of competence or skill involved, the characteristic pattern of usage, and the predominant social response or outcome, as documented in Sections 4.1 through 4.4. The comparison is offered as an interpretive synthesis of the literature reviewed above rather than as a tabulation of primary survey data, and it is intended to make the article’s generational argument more immediately legible rather than to imply a precision the underlying evidence does not support.

Table 1: *Comparative Overview of Generational Responses to AI across the Lifecycle*

Life Stage	Primary AI Access Point	Typical Competence Level	Characteristic Usage Pattern	Predominant Social Response
Infancy / Early Childhood	Shared household smartphone; recommendation-driven video platforms	Minimal to none; entirely mediated by caregivers	Passive viewing of algorithmically curated reels and	Reduced outdoor play; early screen dependence;

			games; screen often present during meals	displacement of self-directed play
Childhood / School Age	Smartphone; school-based “smart classroom” and learning apps	Emerging but uneven; strongly dependent on household literacy and resources	Mixture of AI-assisted learning and unsupervised recommendation-driven entertainment	Divergent outcomes by resource level; some reports of inappropriate content exposure and reduced peer sociability
Adolescence / Youth	Social-media recommendation systems; gig-economy and examination/admission portals	Relatively high operational skill; active, strategic platform engagement	Deliberate self-presentation and audience-building; gig work managed algorithmically	Expanded economic and cultural opportunity alongside precarity and linguistic under-representation
Working-Age Adulthood	E-governance portals; digital payment and welfare systems; voice/translation tools	Moderate and variable; shaped by prior literacy and language proficiency	Transactional and livelihood-oriented use; growing reliance on Bhashini-type multilingual interfaces	Improved service access for the digitally confident; risk of exclusion from entitlements for others
Old Age / Senior Citizens	Family-mediated smartphone use; digital payment and caregiving-coordination tools	Lowest of all cohorts; markedly weaker in rural and female sub-groups	Largely passive or absent; participation typically arranged by younger family members	Pronounced “grey digital divide”; risk of secondary relational exclusion within digitally organised families

Note. Compiled by the author from van Dijk (2020), Ragnedda (2017), and related sources cited in Sections 4.1–4.4.

Read across the rows of Table 1, the comparison makes visible a pattern that recurs throughout Sections 4.1 to 4.4: competence with AI-mediated tools rises from infancy through youth and then falls away sharply in old age, while the character of social risk shifts correspondingly, from displaced play and peer withdrawal in childhood, through algorithmic precarity in youth, to exclusion from entitlements in working adulthood, and finally to relational marginalisation within digitally organised families among the elderly. No single stage of the lifecycle is simply “winning” or “losing” from AI’s arrival; each negotiates a structurally distinct configuration of the same underlying access-skills-usage-outcome divide.

4.6 Cross-Cutting Theme: Language and the Politics of the Interface

Across all four cohorts, language emerges as perhaps the single most consequential variable mediating AI’s social effects in Tripura, more consequential in many respects than income or urban-rural location taken alone, because it interacts with both. Tripura’s linguistic landscape—Bengali as the dominant language of administration, education, and media; Kokborok as the principal indigenous tribal language, itself written in both Bengali and Roman scripts depending on context and political history; and a range of smaller tribal languages associated with communities such as the Reang, Jamatia, Molsom, and others—means that any AI system trained primarily on Hindi, Bengali, or English data will, by construction, serve some residents of the state more fluently than others. The Bhashini initiative’s ambition to enable interaction across twenty-two Indian languages through voice recognition and machine translation is therefore not a peripheral technical detail but a central test case for whether AI in Tripura narrows or widens existing social divisions (India: Digital Inclusivity, 2025). Kokborok’s relatively smaller digital text corpus, compared to Bengali or Hindi, poses a genuine technical challenge for the natural-language-processing systems underlying such initiatives, since machine-translation and voice-recognition quality depends heavily on the volume and quality of training data available in a given language; this is an area in which continued academic and institutional attention—including from language departments within Tripura’s own universities—could make a direct, practical contribution to a more linguistically equitable digital future for the state.

4.7 Cross-Cutting Theme: Gender and the Uneven Household

The literature on the elderly digital divide in India explicitly notes that older women are especially disadvantaged in ICT access and literacy relative to older men (Jena & Paltasingh, 2024, pp. 373–375), and the broader digital-divide literature more generally identifies gender as an axis of disadvantage that compounds, rather than simply parallels, age, rurality, and income (van Dijk, 2020, pp. 44–49). There is no reason to suppose Tripura is exceptional in this respect, and considerable reason, given the state’s own patterns of gendered division of household labour and mobility, to expect gendered disparities in AI-mediated technology access to be at least as pronounced as those documented at the national level, particularly among rural and tribal households where women’s mobility outside the home and independent access to a personal device may be more constrained than men’s. This is an area, again, where the absence of Tripura-specific primary research is a genuine limitation on the field, and one this article flags rather than attempts to resolve through inference alone.

4.8 Cross-Cutting Theme: Community, Culture, and the Literary Imagination

Empirical research from outside Tripura lends further, more rigorously sampled support to this qualitative concern, particularly with respect to couples and nuclear families rather than children alone. McDaniel and Coyne's concept of "technoference"—the everyday intrusion of smartphones and other devices into face-to-face couple and family interaction—has been empirically linked, across multiple dyadic studies of married and cohabiting couples, to increased conflict over technology use, lower relationship satisfaction, and poorer perceived quality of co-parenting, suggesting that device-mediated distraction erodes the everyday communicative fabric of family life rather than merely displacing leisure time (McDaniel & Coyne, 2016; Cravens & Drouin, 2020). A large-scale survey-based study of parents in the United States reported convergent findings along similar lines: a majority of respondents described technology interference as a significant problem within their own marriage, a substantial proportion reported habitual device use during shared family meals and in bed, and higher levels of everyday smartphone use were statistically associated with less time spent together as a couple, reduced relational satisfaction, and elevated depression and anxiety (Schramm, 2019). Read alongside the digital-divide framework developed in Section 2, these findings suggest that the erosion of family and couple sociability documented empirically elsewhere is not simply an artefact of a particular national culture but a reasonably expected consequence of everyday AI-curated device use as such, one that Tripura's own families—where informal observation, as noted above, already registers reduced face-to-face engagement around shared activities such as meals—have no structural reason to be exempt from, even though dedicated empirical confirmation for Tripura specifically remains, as elsewhere in this article, a task for future primary research rather than a settled finding.

Finally, it is worth attending briefly to a dimension of AI's social effect that resists easy quantification but is central to the humanistic concerns of this article: the effect of algorithmically mediated media on community narrative and cultural transmission. Tripura's tribal communities have historically relied on oral narrative, communal festival, and face-to-face performance—storytelling, seasonal ritual, indigenous theatre—as primary vehicles of cultural transmission across generations. The displacement of leisure time and attention toward algorithmically curated, individually consumed digital media, a dynamic theorised generally by Carr and Turkle (Carr, 2010, pp. 115–125; Turkle, 2011, pp. 1–19), raises a genuine, if not yet empirically settled, question about the long-term vitality of these communal and oral forms of transmission, particularly among the young. At the same time, it would be a mistake to read this only as loss: AI-assisted translation and digital archiving tools also offer a plausible means of documenting, preserving, and disseminating oral literature and indigenous-language material that might otherwise remain undocumented and vulnerable to attrition, provided such projects are undertaken with adequate community involvement and linguistic expertise rather than imposed as an external, extractive digitisation exercise. This is a productive area for interdisciplinary collaboration between sociology, literature, and language technology within Tripura's own academic institutions, and one where an analytically alert humanities scholarship—rather than either uncritical enthusiasm or reflexive suspicion toward AI—has a genuine contribution to make.

5. Conclusion

This article has argued that artificial intelligence's transformation of everyday social life in Tripura is best understood not as a single, uniform process of "digital modernisation" but as a layered set of access, competence, usage, and outcome differentials that interact with the state's specific hill-valley geography, its tribal-non-tribal demographic composition, and its multilingual character. Read through van Dijk's and Ragnedda's models of the digital divide, and grounded in the existing empirical literature on digital exclusion in Northeast India and among India's elderly, the discussion in Section 4 suggests that each generational cohort—children, youth, working adults, and the elderly—negotiates AI-mediated technology through a structurally different configuration of opportunity and constraint, shaped above all by language, rural or urban location, household resource, and, for the elderly especially, by a compounding relational exclusion as family and institutional life reorganises itself around digital assumptions the oldest generation is least equipped to meet.

The article has also been explicit about the limits of what can currently be claimed. Because dedicated, Tripura-specific primary research on AI-mediated technology use remains scarce in the published literature, much of the analysis offered here proceeds by careful, theoretically disciplined inference from adjacent and regional evidence rather than from direct empirical measurement within the state. This is not a weakness to be concealed but a finding in its own right: it points to an urgent need for household-level surveys, school-based studies, and ethnographic research conducted across Tripura's hill and valley communities, ideally involving Tripura's own university departments of sociology, education, linguistics, and literature in genuinely interdisciplinary collaboration. The Bhashini initiative, in particular, offers a concrete and traceable policy intervention whose actual effects on linguistic and generational inclusion in Tripura could be studied directly and would repay close empirical attention in the years ahead.

More broadly, the article suggests that any adequate account of AI's social consequences in India's peripheral regions must resist two equally inadequate postures: an evangelist optimism that treats connectivity itself as inclusion, and an alarmist pessimism that treats all algorithmic mediation as uniformly corrosive of community and attention. Between these two postures lies the harder, more analytically demanding task this article has attempted: to specify, cohort by cohort and theme by theme, exactly where AI is plausibly expanding access and voice for Tripura's people, and exactly where it risks deepening divisions that predate the technology itself, so that policy, pedagogy, and future scholarship can respond to the actual, differentiated texture of everyday life rather than to an abstraction called "AI in society."

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Statements and Declarations

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Ethical Approval

This study is based primarily on documentary analysis and conceptual interpretation, supplemented by informal observations and non-identifiable family conversations. It did not involve systematic human participant research, clinical investigation, or the collection of identifiable personal data. Accordingly, formal institutional ethical approval was not required under the author's institutional guidelines.

Informed Consent

Formal informed consent was not required because no identifiable human participants were recruited, interviewed, or surveyed as part of this study. Informal observations and family conversations are presented only as general contextual insights and do not disclose any identifiable personal information.

Data Availability

No datasets were generated or analysed during the current study. All information supporting the findings is derived from publicly available published literature and policy documents cited in the reference list.

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