
HARNESSING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR LEGAL AID: ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY AND EFFICIENCY IN JUSTICE DELIVERY

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ABSTRACT

In India, the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in legal research, judicial administration and citizen engagement is reshaping the boundaries of access to justice. The use of AI-based tools and chatbots exemplifies transformative efficiencies because it provides an opportunity to conduct case analysis faster and enhance legal literacy and decentralise access to legal services. However, the same innovations also cause constitutional and ethical tension in Articles 14, 19(1) (g) and 21 of the Indian Constitution. At the heart of this question is the principle of due process that requires that deprivation of life, liberty, or any other rights under the law be supported by a process that is just, transparent, and accountable.

This article will discuss the two-faceted nature of AI in the legal ecosystem, as improving judicial efficiency and accessibility, the transparency and partiality of the algorithmic-based decision-making put the constitutional safeguard of equal opportunity, freedom, and professional autonomy at risk. By focusing on the doctrinal analysis and comparative analysis, it assesses the constitutional framework of India to implement AI innovations, without jeopardizing the procedural fairness and substantive rights. Using examples of the European Union AI Act, OECD ethical AI principles, and human-centred AI principles of the UNESCO, the study critically evaluates the regulatory preparedness of India to govern AI in the justice delivery process.

The paper wraps up by suggesting a framework of rights responsive AI governance in which interpretability, auditability of algorithms and proportional human supervision are proposed, as the conditions of constitutional legitimacy. This study represents a wider discussion on the need to uphold constitutional morality during the digital revolution of the justice system by incorporating equality, liberty and professional freedom into the emerging technological jurisprudence.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Access to Justice, Constitutional Law, Algorithmic Bias, Privacy, Legal Technology, Ethical AI.

I. The Rise of Legal AI in India

The incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within the Indian legal and judicial frameworks signifies a pivotal shift in constitutional governance. Technological advancements increasingly enhance not only research and administrative productivity but also the decision-making processes that were traditionally the domain of human judgment. In this context, the Supreme Court of India has taken the lead in implementing SUPACE (Supreme Court Portal for Assistance in Court Efficiency), an advanced AI-based research and case management system introduced in April 2021. SUPACE utilizes natural language processing and machine learning techniques to aid judges in navigating extensive case files, extracting pertinent facts, summarizing arguments, pinpointing legal precedents, and organizing information, all while preserving judicial discretion and the fundamental role of judgment.¹

The SUPACE system encompasses various modules, including a file preview feature (which converts PDFs into searchable text), a voice- and text-enabled chatbot (designed for querying case materials and summarizing information), and a logic gate (which facilitates the construction of legal knowledge graphs and the chronological organization of facts). This system markedly alleviates the demands of manual research, with anecdotal evidence from pilot projects indicating a potential reduction in research time of 20 to 25% for intricate cases. These functionalities have established SUPACE as a pivotal element of India's extensive e-courts digital framework, which is being implemented to tackle the judiciary's ongoing challenge of over 50 million pending cases across the nation as of July 2025.

As reported by NITI Aayog in 2024, approximately 62% of Indian courts have embraced some form of AI-assisted data management or analytical tools, highlighting the pressing need and constitutional significance of evaluating technological integration within the justice system. Instruments like SUPACE are intended to augment, rather than replace, judicial reasoning. Their main objective is to improve research precision, accelerate the preparation of judgments, and assist in complex litigation, especially in constitutional and commercial matters. Nevertheless, excessive dependence on AI introduces challenges such as algorithmic bias, data security vulnerabilities, digital disparities, and the necessity to maintain human insight and procedural fairness in all legal outcomes.

¹ Kumari, Shruti, *The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Modern Courts: A Tool of Transformation or a Threat to Justice?* (June 14, 2025). Available at SSRN: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5294742>

The Constitution of India enshrines a triad of rights: equality as stated in Article 14, the freedom to pursue a profession as outlined in Article 19(1)(g), and the right to life and personal liberty as articulated in Article 21.² Together, these rights ensure fairness, autonomy, and the dignity of individuals. Consequently, any infringement upon these rights must adhere to processes that are just, reasonable, and devoid of arbitrariness. However, algorithmic technologies frequently function through opaque reasoning processes, which pose challenges to the established principles of transparency and accountability. This leads to the "black box" dilemma, highlighting the constitutional conflict between the advancement of technology and the adherence to procedural ethics.

From a policy perspective, the appeal of AI lies in its potential to improve judicial efficiency, decrease case backlogs, and broaden access to legal information. However, underlying these advantages is a significant risk of algorithmic bias, where data-driven results may perpetuate the very disparities that constitutional law aims to eradicate. This contradiction positions AI as both a tool for advancement and a possible source of injustice. Consequently, the larger question is not solely about the adoption of technology but about safeguarding the constitutional essence of justice in an increasingly digital landscape.

This paper provides a critical analysis of the relationship between AI and due process within the framework of Indian constitutional law. It utilizes doctrinal analysis to investigate how the implementation of AI in judicial and quasi-judicial settings interacts with fundamental rights and constitutional tenets. By making comparative references to the European Union AI Act, OECD ethical AI guidelines, and UNESCO's human-centered AI framework, the research examines how international standards shape India's regulatory readiness. Ultimately, it advocates for a rights-responsive AI governance model, rooted in interpretability, auditability, and appropriate human oversight, to ensure that in the quest for judicial efficiency, India does not undermine the ethical and procedural foundations of constitutional justice.

As of September 2025, over 62% of Indian courts utilize some form of AI support, ranging from pilot case summarizers and LawBot for legal queries to robust translation tools like SUVAS (Supreme Court Vidhik Anuvaad Software), which has enabled over 36,000 Supreme Court judgments to be translated into Hindi and 17,000 into other regional languages³. The

² India Const. arts. 14, 19(1)(g), 21.

³ India | Increasing use of AI across the justice system," Tech & Justice, University of Oxford (Oct. 2025), <https://www.techandjustice.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/india>.

judiciary's e-Courts Project Phase III, underpinned by a government allocation of ₹1,500 crore, is scaling these innovations across lower courts, with additional modules for automated transcription, defect identification, and predictive case listing seeking to address India's backlog of more than 50 million pending cases.

These AI tools drive three transformational benefits:

- **Judicial Efficiency:** Automation of research and documentation directly confronts procedural delays. SUPACE's NLP engines parse lengthy judgments and distill actionable insights, letting courts process matters that would otherwise languish for months or years in the system.
- **Access to Justice:** Chatbots and ODR platforms decentralize legal literacy, giving ordinary citizens direct, real-time access to basic rights information and case status. SUVAS tackles India's linguistic diversity by enabling translation across 16 major national and nine vernacular languages.
- **Transparency:** Predictive analytics and algorithmic case review offer a more structured, data-driven approach to judicial decision-making. Digital dashboards and reporting reduce subjectivity by providing reasoned, traceable support for judicial pronouncements, although algorithmic logic often remains opaque to judges, lawyers, and litigants.

However, this rapid integration of AI into the legal process brings new risks most notably, "algorithmic opacity." SUPACE, like similar tools worldwide, may not fully disclose the reasoning behind its recommendations, rendering its logic inaccessible for independent scrutiny. This lack of explainability can undermine both transparency and accountability, which are not simply good governance ideals but constitutional mandates under India's Articles 14 and 21. Such opacity also raises the specter of algorithmic bias, where AI trained on historic data may internalize and perpetuate existing prejudices challenging the vision of equal justice that law aspires to uphold.

Ongoing public and expert debate now surrounds these technologies, with Indian courts explicitly clarifying that AI remains an assistive, non-decision-making tool whose findings are filtered by human judgment and constitutional values. As Chief Justice Chandrachud has stated, "technology must serve humanity and constitutional values. AI in courts must uphold

justice, not merely efficiency”. The challenge for India is to balance the undeniable gains in case flow and legal accessibility with rigorous standards for data protection, explainability, and rights preservation a task that the evolving regulatory and academic discourse seeks to address.

II. Constitutional Tensions: Articles 14, 19(1)(g), and 21

The deployment of Artificial Intelligence in India’s judicial system confronts three central constitutional guarantees: equality, professional autonomy, and personal liberty. These rights enshrined in Articles 14, 19(1)(g), and 21 of the Indian Constitution form the bedrock against which all technological innovations must be measured.

Article 14 - Equality Before Law and Algorithmic Bias

The principle of equality before the law, guaranteed by Article 14, is foundational to democratic legitimacy and procedural fairness. However, AI tools used in judicial processes are often trained on historical data that reflect entrenched socio-economic disparities within Indian society. Predictive models and analytics, when exposed to biased training sets, risk replicating and amplifying discrimination thereby undermining the constitutional mandate of fairness and non-arbitrariness. This challenge is particularly acute in lower courts, where digital records of judgments may inadvertently encode patterns of bias based on caste, gender, or economic status. The Supreme Court’s manifest arbitrariness standard, articulated in *Shayara Bano v. Union of India*, (2017) 9 SCC 1⁴, requires that no law or state action may arbitrarily disadvantage citizens. The prospect of AI systems perpetuating such disadvantage constitutes a serious constitutional problem, demanding transparent datasets and regular algorithmic audits to uphold the promise of Article 14.

Article 19(1)(g) - Freedom of Profession and Legal Autonomy

Article 19(1)(g) safeguards the right to practice any profession, including the legal profession. The automation of key activities such as legal research, data analysis, and litigation strategy by AI platforms threatens to reduce the autonomy of lawyers and legal scholars. As AI-driven summaries and argument predictions become more widespread, there is a real risk that lawyerly judgment, creativity, and professional discretion may become sidelined in favour of algorithmic recommendations. This will raise concerns not only about the deskilling of

⁴ *Shayara Bano v. Union of India*, (2017) 9 SCC 1 (India).

advocates, but also about the ethical and constitutional consequences of delegating critical aspects of justice delivery to non-human agents. The legal profession's unique value lies in reasoned argument and interpretative skill qualities that cannot be fully replicated or replaced by AI, and whose erosion could undermine Article 19(1)(g) protections.⁵

Article 21 - Right to Life and Personal Liberty

The right to life and personal liberty, as interpreted by the Supreme Court in *K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India*, (2017) 10 SCC 1⁶, extends to the right to privacy, fair hearing, and transparent adjudication. Opaque AI mechanisms often described as “black box” models may compromise procedural fairness by generating decisions or recommendations that lack interpretability for parties to a case. This opacity makes it difficult to challenge or review algorithmic outputs, potentially leading to unjust outcomes that cannot be remedied by conventional appeals. Moreover, the data-intensive nature of AI systems raises urgent questions about privacy, data security, and the collection of sensitive personal information areas still lacking robust legislative safeguards. The constitutional imperative, therefore, is clear: any integration of AI into the judicial process must maintain full procedural transparency, enable meaningful review, and protect individual rights at every stage.

III. The Doctrine of Due Process in the Age of Algorithms

India's Constitution, particularly Article 21, has evolved to establish both procedural and substantive fairness as the core of due process. Judicial interpretations, beginning with landmark cases like *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*⁷, have held that no person may be deprived of life or liberty except via fair, just, and reasonable legal procedures. With the advent of artificial intelligence in judicial processes, these guarantees face novel challenges. AI systems, especially those employing machine learning and deep neural networks, often operate in ways that are not transparent or easily explained. This opacity means that when an algorithm outputs a legal recommendation or decision, it can be difficult for litigants and appellate courts to understand the reasoning or basis for that outcome, thereby impeding effective judicial review and the ability to contest or appeal decisions.

⁵ Technology-enabled Justice in Indian Courts, *Indian J. Law & Pub. Pol'y*, (2025), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/24551333241262892>.

⁶ *K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India*, (2017) 10 SCC 1 (India).

⁷ *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*, AIR 1978 SC 597 (India).

A related concern is the diffusion of accountability in AI-assisted decision making. As tasks traditionally performed by judges or clerks migrate to algorithmic platforms, questions surrounding responsibility become increasingly complex. When a technical error occurs or bias is uncovered in AI-generated results, responsibility may be split between the software developers, data scientists, judicial administrators, and the court itself. This fragmentation poses risks for procedural justice, as individuals affected by wrongful or prejudiced outcomes may struggle to know where or how to seek redress.

Equally important is the principle of proportionality, which requires a measured balance between technological efficiency and the protection of constitutional rights. While AI has the potential to streamline processes and reduce delays, it must never do so at the expense of human oversight, fairness, and individualized attention to cases. Proportionality dictates that automation should be limited to routine administrative tasks, with robust human intervention in matters that involve substantive legal consequences or the protection of fundamental rights⁸.

Ultimately, algorithmic tools in the judiciary must satisfy Indian constitutional requirements of reasonableness, non-arbitrariness, and proportionality. This necessitates legal and regulatory frameworks that ensure all AI-enabled outcomes are transparent, interpretable, and subject to meaningful appeal and review. Upholding the doctrine of due process while embracing technological innovation is the central challenge for the administration of justice in the digital era.

IV. Global Standards and Rights-Responsive AI Governance

International regulatory frameworks such as the European Union's AI Act, the OECD Principles, and UNESCO's ethical guidelines for artificial intelligence illustrate a holistic approach to AI risk management and rights protection in the justice system. The EU AI Act exemplifies a risk-based regulatory strategy, categorizing judicial and law enforcement AI as "high-risk" applications and imposing strict requirements for transparency, explainability, and continuous human oversight. These mandates include independent algorithmic audits and impact assessments, preserving the role of human judges as the ultimate decision-makers and explicitly safeguarding due process and fundamental rights⁹.

⁸ <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/political-science/articles/10.3389/fpos.2025.1553705/full>.

⁹ Regulation (EU) 2023/1116; EU AI Act: first regulation on artificial intelligence, Europarl (Feb. 18,

The ethical standards set by the OECD and UNESCO similarly emphasize human-centric design, accountability, traceability, and auditability. UNESCO goes further by framing requirements for systematic documentation and civil society involvement as ethical imperatives, establishing procedural safeguards rooted in universal human rights law¹⁰. These global regimes create clear, enforceable benchmarks that facilitate institutional accountability and ongoing evaluation of AI systems.

India's regulatory framework for judicial AI, by contrast, is still developing. The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, addresses privacy and consent but does not provide comprehensive coverage of algorithmic accountability, auditability, or the rights-based evaluation of judicial AI tools. Current proposals for an AI regulatory authority, along with national guidelines and international consultations, indicate growing awareness but underline the absence of binding standards or unified oversight¹¹.

Moving forward, India must adopt a rights-responsive governance model that centers constitutional values, robust institutional oversight, and enforceable safeguards. This approach would require regular, independent algorithmic audits to identify bias and enhance explainability; clear statutory standards mandating proportional human supervision and transparency; mandatory ethics training for judges and legal professionals; and public transparency portals allowing citizens to examine the influence of AI in legal proceedings. Such measures give effect to Article 38's commitment to justice and constitutional morality, ensuring that the pursuit of technological efficiency does not override the foundational principles of equality, liberty, and due process. Only by embedding rights-responsiveness and risk accountability into the core of judicial AI deployment can India reconcile innovation with the constitutional promise of justice.

V. Conclusion

India stands on the threshold of a technological transformation in its justice system, driven by the expanding integration of artificial intelligence into judicial administration, legal research, and access to justice. While AI-powered platforms like SUPACE, SUVAS have demonstrated

2025), <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20230601STO93804/eu-ai-act-first-regulation-on-artificial-intelligence>

¹⁰ UNESCO, Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2021), <https://en.unesco.org/artificial-intelligence/ethics>.

¹¹ Digital Personal Data Protection Act, No. 22 of 2023 (India).

tangible gains in judicial efficiency, data management, and multilingual accessibility, these innovations bring with them profound ethical and constitutional complexity. The risks of algorithmic opacity, inadvertent bias, and weakened professional autonomy are not merely hypothetical; they challenge the doctrine of due process and the foundational guarantees of equality, liberty, and procedural fairness under Articles 14, 19(1)(g), and 21 of the Constitution.

Comparative models from the European Union, OECD, and UNESCO reveal that robust legal and ethical frameworks built on transparency, human oversight, auditability, and participatory accountability are indispensable for harnessing AI in service of justice rather than expediency. India's current regulatory structure remains fragmented; the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, despite its significance for privacy, does not yet resolve the procedural and substantive demands of algorithmic governance in courts.

A rights-responsive AI governance model is therefore imperative. This must involve independent algorithmic audits, proportional supervision by human judges, comprehensive legislative clarity, targeted ethics training for legal professionals, and public transparency mechanisms. Such a pathway would not only reconcile technological progress with constitutional morality, but also reaffirm that the legitimacy of justice delivery in the digital age is anchored in reasoned, transparent, and accountable process.

If India is to lead the world in the deployment of legal AI while preserving the sanctity of constitutional values, policymakers, jurists, and technologists must work in concert. The future of judicial decision-making must be guided by a vision that celebrates innovation without compromising the rights and liberties at the heart of democratic society a vision where efficiency and access are elevated, never at the expense of equality, integrity, or human dignity.