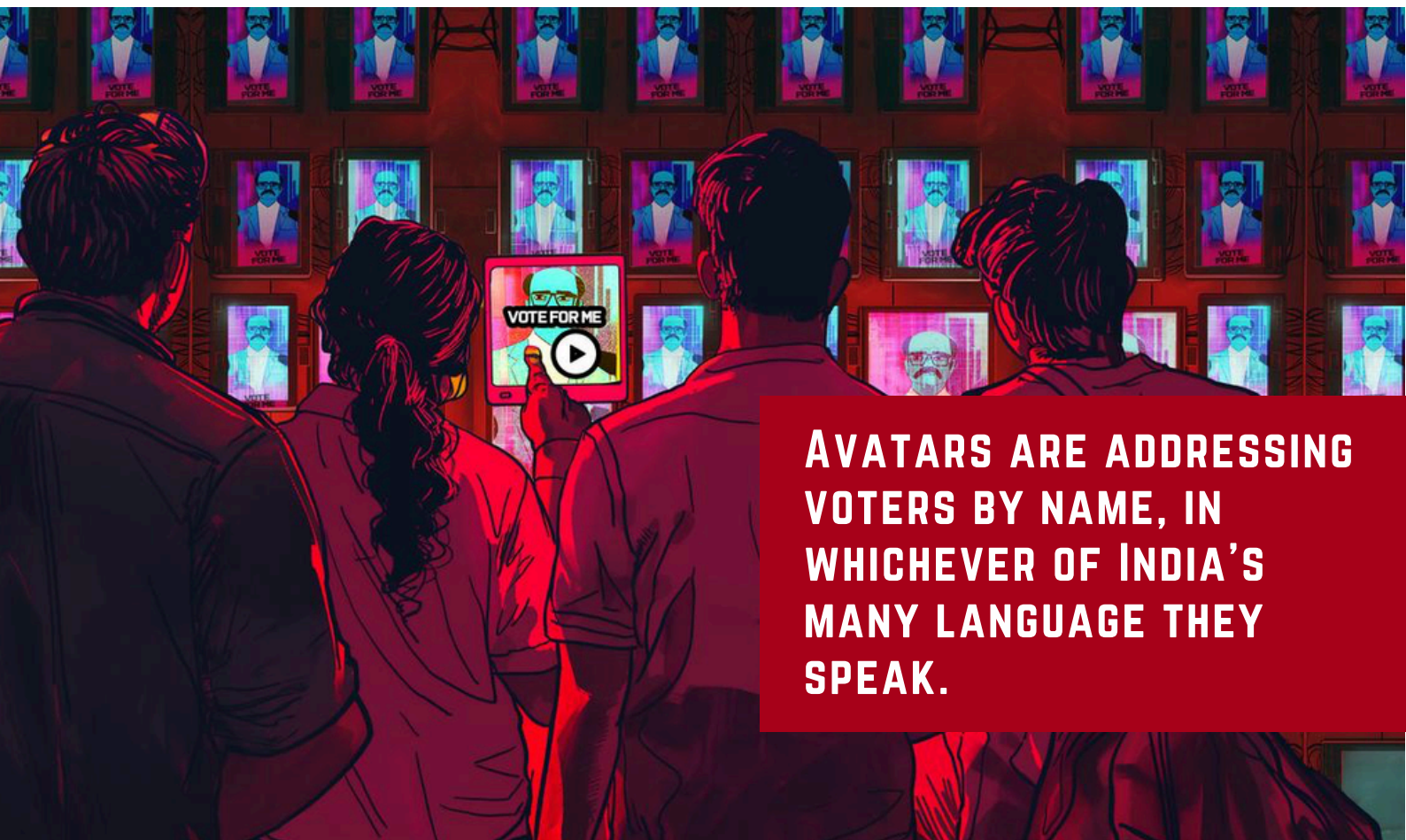


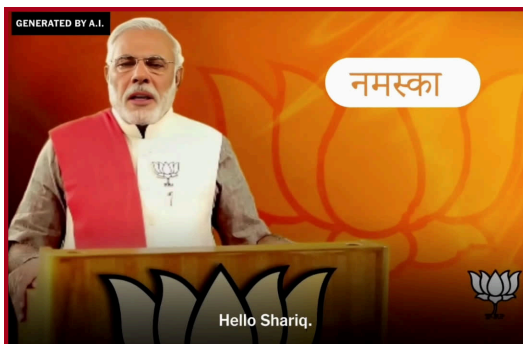
HOW AI TOOLS COULD CHANGE INDIA'S ELECTIONS

Know everything about it



AVATARS ARE ADDRESSING VOTERS BY NAME, IN WHICHEVER OF INDIA'S MANY LANGUAGE THEY SPEAK.

TOOLS PROVIDED BY AI CAN CREATE DIGITAL REPLICAS OF PEOPLE



For a glimpse of where artificial intelligence is headed in election campaigns, look to India, the world's largest democracy, as it starts heading to the polls on Friday.

An A.I.-generated version of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that has been shared on WhatsApp shows the possibilities for hyperpersonalized outreach in a country with nearly a billion voters. In the video — a demo clip whose source is unclear — Mr. Modi's avatar addresses a series of voters directly, by name.

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AI'S RISE IN ELECTIONS

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Chatbots and personalized videos may seem more or less harmless. Experts worry, however, that voters will have an increasingly difficult time distinguishing between real and synthetic messages as the technology advances and spreads.

"It'll be the Wild West and an unregulated A.I. space this year," said Prateek Waghre, the executive director of the Internet Freedom Foundation, a digital rights group based in New Delhi. The technology, he added, is entering a media landscape already polluted with misinformation.

Around the world, elections have become a testing ground for the A.I. boom. The tools have been used to turn an Argentine presidential candidate into Indiana Jones and a Ghostbuster. During the New Hampshire primary, voters received robocall messages urging them not to vote, in a voice that was most likely artificially generated to sound like President Biden's.

Among those getting the A.I. treatment is Shakti Singh Rathore, a 33-year-old B.J.P. member. His job this election season is to tell as many people as possible about Mr. Modi's programs and policies. So he decided to create a replica of himself.

"A.I. is wonderful and the way forward," Mr. Rathore said as he settled in front of a video camera at the office of The Indian Deepfaker, preparing to become digitally incarnated. "How else could I reach the beneficiaries of Mr. Modi's programs in such large numbers and in so short a period of time?"

As Mr. Rathore adjusted a saffron scarf with the party's logo that hung around his neck, Mr. Jadoun instructed him, "Just look into the camera and talk as if the person is sitting right in front of you."

Political parties are not only texting constituents video messages but also using cloned voices to call people directly, all powered by chatbots like ChatGPT.

In the past, when a party representative would call voters, they would hang up, Mr. Rathore said. "But now, when a local leader utters a voter's name, it immediately catches their attention."

During the conversation, the chatbot asks about local government programs that offer free electricity or funding for start-ups. Mr. Jadoun said the calls were recorded and transcribed for quality control and A.I. training.

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