BACKGROUNDERS
Press Information Bureau
Government of India

Artificial Intelligence for Culture and Languages

AI IN INDIA
FROM VISION TO IMPACT

February 09, 2026

Key Takeaways
• India is institutionalising AI for culture and languages through national platforms such as BHASHINI, Anuvadini, Gyan Bharatam and Adi Vaani etc. • AI is being used to make cultural and knowledge assets usable by digitisation of manuscripts, translation of academic content, and inclusion of tribal and endangered languages. • AI is being leveraged to integrate cultural and creative sectors into digital value chains, linking artisans to platforms and opportunities.

From Cultural Preservation to Cultural Participation

India's cultural heritage and linguistic diversity shape its social identity and shared knowledge systems. From manuscripts, monuments, performing arts and crafts to oral traditions, folklore and indigenous knowledge, culture in India is created and passed on through many languages, scripts and spoken forms.

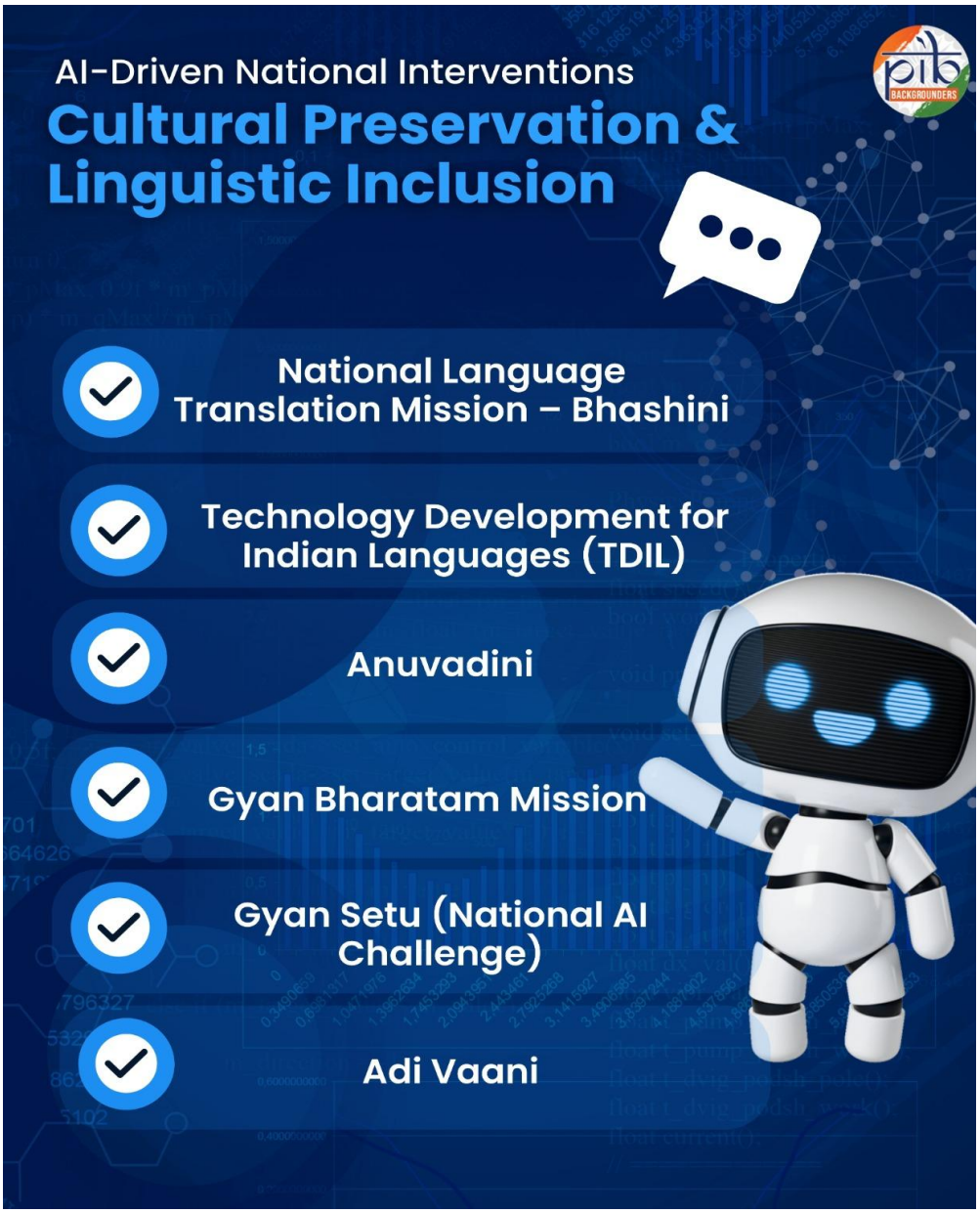
According to Census 2011, India's linguistic landscape includes 22 Scheduled languages and 99 Non-Scheduled languages, spread across multiple language families, along with thousands of mother tongues and tribal languages[1]. The Government of India has undertaken sustained institutional, educational and digital initiatives to preserve and promote our linguistic heritage and the rich traditional knowledge that it holds.

[1] https://language.census.gov.in/eLanguageDivision_VirtualPath/Atlas/pdf/2011.pdf

At the core of this effort is the emphasis on leveraging emerging technology including AI, to preserve cultural resources and traditional knowledge, and make it available to people in the language and formats that they are familiar and comfortable with. This calls for democratisation of technology. AI has emerged as a key enabler in this process. By supporting the digitisation and discovery of cultural assets, enabling multilingual and voice-based access, and facilitating engagement at scale, AI helps bridge gaps between heritage and people, tradition and technology. This approach reflects the vision of using AI as technology for humanity, aligned with the goal of "Welfare for All and Happiness for All".

Building Language as Digital Public Infrastructure

To expand access to culture, knowledge and public services, the Government of India is taking an infrastructure-based approach.



Key pillars of this language infrastructure include:

National Language Translation Mission (NLTM) – BHASHINI[2]

Launched in 2022 under the National Language Translation Mission, BHASHINI was developed to respond to India's wide linguistic diversity in the digital space. The initiative focuses on building language and voice capabilities directly into digital systems. This allows public platforms to function effectively across the many languages used in the country.

BHASHINI addresses three key barriers together:

- Language barrier – systems that do not understand local languages or accents
- Digital barrier – complex interfaces that discourage use
- Literacy barrier – dependence on reading and typing

At a system level, BHASHINI is building multilingual AI as national digital public infrastructure. It provides language services such as translation, speech-to-text, text-to-speech, transliteration and document understanding across Indian languages, allowing platforms to add language and voice features without building them from scratch.

BHASHINI is already operating at scale:

- Supports voice in 22 languages and text services in 36 languages
- Hosts 350+ AI models and datasets
- Has completed over 4 billion language inferences so far

Its strength lies in collaboration. Research institutions, language experts, startups, state governments and industry partners jointly contribute to the platform, ensuring that language models improve through real-world use and local participation.

As a foundational language layer, BHASHINI turns linguistic diversity into practical digital access, enabling people to engage with information, culture and public services in languages and formats they understand.

- Key examples of use of Bhashini
    - Real-Time Speech Translation at Kashi Tamil Sangamam 2.0[3]:

      At the Kashi Tamil Sangamam event in Varanasi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi used the BHASHINI AI platform during his address. His Hindi speech was translated in real time into Tamil so that Tamil-speaking attendees could understand the address directly in their language, demonstrating BHASHINI's real-time translation capability in a live cultural exchange context.

[2] https://bhashini.gov.in/
[3] https://indiaai.gov.in/news/pm-modi-used-the-ai-tool-bhashini-while-delivering-his-speech-in-varanasi?utm

- Multilingual Support at Maha Kumbh 2025[4]:

  BHASHINI powered the Kumbh Sah'AI'yak chatbot, a multilingual, voice-enabled assistant used at Maha Kumbh 2025 to provide navigation and event information to pilgrims in 11 languages (Hindi, English and nine others). It also supported features like a digital Lost & Found solution with real-time text and voice translation to make the event more accessible for attendees from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

As foundational language infrastructure, BHASHINI translates diversity into access, helping people engage with information, culture and public services in their own languages and formats — a critical step toward inclusive participation and empowerment.

Technology Development for Indian Languages (TDIL)[5]

TDIL is a long-standing Government of India programme that laid the foundational technology base for Indian language computing, covering scripts, speech and text across multiple Indian languages.

- It focuses on the development and standardisation of core language technologies, including:
  - machine translation
  - optical character recognition (OCR) for Indian scripts
  - speech-to-text and text-to-speech systems
  - handwriting recognition and transliteration tools
- TDIL enables practical use by:
  - creating shared linguistic resources, datasets and standards that can be reused across platforms
  - supporting cross-lingual access, allowing users to retrieve and interact with information in their own languages
  - ensuring consistent digital representation of Indian languages across systems and devices
- TDIL-supported systems, such as Indian language machine translation tools, demonstrated early real-world applications of multilingual access in governance, education and information dissemination.

As a foundational language technology programme, TDIL enabled India's transition from language research to scalable language infrastructure, eventually directly supporting platforms such as BHASHINI and strengthening inclusive access to digital, cultural and knowledge ecosystems.

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[4] https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2093333&reg=3&lang=2
[5] https://tdil-dc.in/index.php?lang=en

Anuvadini (AICTE)

Anuvadini is an AI-based multilingual translation platform developed by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to enable large-scale translation of academic, technical and knowledge content into Indian languages.

- It supports practical language access through:
    - AI-enabled translation of textbooks, reference material and learning resources
    - Multimodal capabilities, including text, document and speech-based translation
    - Integration with national repositories such as e-KUMBH[6], enabling access to translated content at scale
- Anuvadini enables practical use cases such as:
    - expanding access to higher education and technical knowledge for students in regional languages
    - supporting skilling and capacity building by making learning resources available in local languages
    - strengthening Indian languages as mediums of knowledge, not only communication

As an AI-driven language access platform, Anuvadini expands access to knowledge and skills in Indian languages. By enabling participation in education, skilling and cultural knowledge systems, it contributes to social empowerment and livelihood opportunities.

AI for Cultural Heritage, Knowledge Systems and Linguistic Diversity

To preserve India's vast cultural legacy while enabling wider public access and participation, the Government of India is deploying AI across heritage preservation, traditional knowledge systems and linguistic diversity, with a focus on scale, discoverability and inclusion.

Gyan Bharatam Mission[7]

It is national mission for the survey, documentation, digitisation and dissemination of India's manuscript heritage and traditional knowledge systems, including creation of a National Digital Repository.

- Leverages AI-enabled tools such as:
    - handwritten text recognition (HTR) and OCR for ancient manuscripts
    - metadata extraction and intelligent cataloguing across scripts and languages
    - improved discovery and access to digitised heritage content

[6] https://ekumbh.aicte-india.org/
[7] https://gyanbharatam.com/

- Key achievements include[8]:
    - Over 44 lakh manuscripts documented in the Kriti Sampada digital repository
    - Mission approved with an outlay of ₹482.85 crore (2024–31) to scale digitisation and access

The mission will ensure cultural heritage to move from physical archives to shared digital access, supporting long-term preservation and increased public engagement.

Gyan-Setu (National AI Innovation Challenge under Gyan Bharatam)[9]

Gyan-Setu was launched as a national challenge to source AI-led solutions for manuscript preservation, decipherment, restoration and access.

- Focused on practical AI use cases including:
    - Cataloguing and Dataset Creation
    - Digitisation and Archiving
    - Script deciphering and Knowledge dissemination
- Key outcomes include:
    - Successful completion of the national challenge with award-winning AI prototypes identified for heritage applications

The initiative created a pipeline of deployable AI solutions, strengthening collaboration between cultural institutions and the AI ecosystem.

Adi Vaani – AI Platform for Tribal Languages[10]

Adi Vaani is an AI-based platform for the preservation, promotion and revitalisation of tribal languages, which are central to India's cultural and oral heritage.

- Enables practical use through:
    - real-time translation between Hindi, English and tribal languages
    - speech-to-text transcription for oral languages
    - language learning modules for younger generations
    - digitisation of folklore, oral histories and community narratives
- Key achievements (beta phase[11]):
    - Initial rollout covering tribal languages such as Santali, Bhili, Mundari and Gondi, with expansion underway

[8] https://www.pib.gov.in/PressNoteDetails.aspx?NoteId=155185&ModuleId=3&reg=3&lang=2
[9] https://www.gbm-moc.in/gyansetu
[10] https://adivaani.tribal.gov.in/
[11] https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2162846&utm_&reg=3&lang=2

- Use of the platform for subtitling advisories and public messages in tribal languages

- Strengthens inclusion by bringing tribal languages into digital, educational and public communication spaces.

Enabling Participation and Opportunity through AI[12]

As AI improves access to culture, language and knowledge, the next step is to turn this access into economic opportunity and social empowerment. This is especially important for India's cultural and creative sectors, where livelihoods depend on traditional skills, local knowledge and community-based practices.

Artisans, craftspeople and cultural practitioners make up a large part of India's informal and creative economy. When designed to be inclusive and sensitive to local context, AI can support these livelihoods by improving visibility, productivity, skills and participation in digital markets—while preserving cultural identity.

AI-Enabled Pathways for Artisans and Cultural Workers

- Improved market access through language-inclusive platforms
    - AI-based translation and discovery tools help artisans present their products, stories and cultural value across different languages and regions.

[12] https://niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2025-10/Roadmap_On_AI_for_Inclusive_Societal_Development.pdf

    - Multilingual catalogues and interfaces reduce dependence on intermediaries and expand reach to wider markets.

- Voice-first and inclusive digital engagement
    - Voice-enabled interfaces allow artisans with limited literacy or digital familiarity to access platforms, training modules and services in their own languages.
    - Such interfaces enable broader participation in digital systems.
- Skilling, productivity and enterprise support
    - AI-enabled learning tools can deliver on-demand training in areas such as quality improvement, digital marketing, pricing and inventory management.
    - Data-based insights help artisans plan production, manage demand and improve efficiency.
- Trust, provenance and cultural authenticity
    - AI-supported documentation and tagging systems help establish authenticity and build trust for heritage and GI-tagged products.
    - Clear and transparent digital representation increases consumer confidence and protects cultural value.

By building language access, voice-based tools and cultural understanding into AI systems, artisans and cultural workers become active users of technology, not just beneficiaries. In this way, AI supports social empowerment by strengthening dignity of work, sustainable livelihoods and India's cultural and creative traditions.

Advancing Inclusive AI for Culture, Languages and Livelihoods

As India expands the use of AI across public systems, the main aim is to ensure that technology leads to greater cultural participation, social empowerment and sustainable livelihoods. Recent policy thinking, including NITI Aayog's report on AI for Inclusive Societal Development, points to the following key aspects for better use of AI in the public space[13]:

- Building trust through verifiable digital credentials, allowing training providers, employers, platforms and government bodies to issue reliable work and skill certificates that can be easily verified across systems.
- Strengthening AI infrastructure by expanding language-based AI tools and supporting AI systems that work offline and in areas with poor internet access.
- Encouraging innovation at the local level by supporting state and district programmes, using local facilities as digital work hubs, and working with community organisations to improve digital skills and adoption.

[13] https://niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2025-10/Roadmap_On_AI_for_Inclusive_Societal_Development.pdf

- Promoting multi-stakeholder collaboration, bringing together government, technology providers, academia, industry bodies and civil society to scale inclusive AI solutions in a coordinated and sustainable manner.

These efforts will position AI not merely as a technological tool, but as a public good that reflects India's cultural and linguistic diversity. This human-centred approach reinforces the idea of technology for humanity—AI that listens, understands and responds to people's lived realities. By aligning AI deployment with inclusion, participation and opportunity, India can ensure that its cultural heritage and creative communities continue to remain active contributors to a digitally empowered and socially inclusive future.

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