

Book Review

The Age of Artificial Intelligence by Subhash Kak, Garuda Prakasha ISBN-13: 979-8885752138.

Avatans Kumar

Columnist, linguist, freelance journalist, president, and trustee, INDICA, Chicago, USA

*Correspondence: avatansk@gmail.com

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Every change brings new challenges and is often disruptive. Artificial intelligence (AI) is one of them. *The Age of Artificial Intelligence* by Subhash Kak thoughtfully explores AI's trajectory, blending technical insight with philosophical, historical, and cultural perspectives. Kak is a Regents Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Oklahoma State University. An AI pioneer and an acclaimed Hindu philosopher, Kak also serves on the Prime Minister of India's Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Council under PM Narendra Modi.

What we saw in the early phases of AI development were expert systems designed to perform routine, specific tasks. Robotics was the commonly understood application of early AI. However, as we have come to know by now, AI in its modern avatar is a much more complex system, and its use has proliferated to cover almost all aspects of our lives. From natural language processing to speech and face recognition, AI customer service agents, AI-driven ordering at McDonald's franchises, drone swarming, AI-assisted medical procedures, etc., AI is transforming every field, directly or indirectly. In Stanley Kubrick's 1968 film '2001: A Space Odyssey,' the HAL 9000 computer had already let people know it could "think" when it said, "I'm sorry, Dave, I'm afraid I can't do that."

Just as with any change, venturing into the age of AI also has its pitfalls and advantages. *The Age of Artificial Intelligence* examines AI's potential to liberate humanity from mundane, machine-like tasks. This prospect brings hope and optimism. While Kak warns his readers of AI's potential risks—alienation, homogenization, and other existential threats—he does so without sounding alarmist. He brings credibility to his analysis, grounding the book in historical context and contemporary challenges. My interest in Kak's book stemmed from his take on current political events, specifically the Russo-Ukrainian war, from an AI perspective. I had reached out to Kak to discuss India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi's February 2025 meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump¹ in Washington, DC, for my regular newspaper column. During our exchange, Kak presented his thesis on an 'AI State.'

Kak theorizes about an *AI State* as "a bureaucratic state on a steroid" in which algorithms decide policy until a crisis emerges and a reset is needed. He contends that in EU countries, for example, the "Algorithm" of the *AI State* has pushed bizarre and self-destructive woke policies, such as deindustrialization, mindless climatism, resistance to

¹ <https://www.globalfirepower.com/purchasing-power-parity.php>

fossil fuels, unrestricted migration, and the need to fight a war with a neighboring nation for the sake of extending a “security treaty [NATO]”.

With the embrace of transgenderism, racism, Islamism, and other woke agendas, Kak said, the *AI State* has breached the response threshold of its citizens. “The reset in the *AI State* [EU or USA during the ascendancy of Obama and Biden with its 73 genders],” explains Kak, “will be done by people who, like the child who said the emperor had no clothes, use common sense and say, ‘Hey, this doesn’t make sense.’”

In *The Age of Artificial Intelligence*, Kak predicts that power will be in the hands of a select few because they can control people’s minds through algorithm-driven propaganda. As totalitarians and religious regimes disallowed specific ideas and introduced their dogmas and orthodoxies, “AI will be harnessed [by tech oligarchs and totalitarian governments] to turn certain ideas disreputable,” Kak warns.

Kak discusses the impending population collapse in great detail. This collapse is more evident in the West and Europe than elsewhere. Social scientists discuss population decline as a function of a multiplicity of factors—breakdown of the traditional family, cost of child-rearing, etc. Kak points to a more substantive decline in societal value in having kids. A lack of personal fulfillment and gratification in raising a family with kids drives this decline. However, Kak thinks that the impact of AI “points to an even more drastic population decline than the one forecast by demographers.”

Linked to the idea of population decline is the notion of replacement migration. Kak believes that such migration will cause chaos worldwide. We have seen some of it, more specifically, in Europe and the US. The United Nations (UN) defines replacement migration² as “international migration that a country would need to prevent population decline and population aging resulting from low fertility and mortality rates.”

Kak draws on his extensive background in computer science and AI research to provide a basic assessment of AI’s scope and scale. He acknowledges AI’s strengths and promises in fields such as robotics, education, and medicine, among others. At the same time, Kak warns readers about potential harms and disruptions—AI’s ability to reshape human society, culture, and freedom being

the most significant. One of the strengths of Kak’s book is that it not only focuses on potential disruptions and places AI in a broader civilizational context but also lays out a framework for navigating them. To help us prepare for such disruptions, Kak provides a comprehensive and crisp analysis of how Western, Chinese, and Indian civilizations have responded to prior large-scale disruptions, such as industrialization, colonization, Marxism, and communism. Some of these disruptions were extremely violent. Kak’s assertion that “culture and memory serve as safeguards” for human dignity is profound because it emphasizes the role of human values in navigating technological innovation and progress.

Drawing on his vast knowledge of the Indian Knowledge Tradition (IKT) and Sanatan Hindu philosophy, Kak emphasizes that understanding truth and meaning can guide ethical AI development. This understanding adds a distinctive perspective rarely found in Western-centric AI literature, making the book particularly valuable for readers interested in global technological perspectives. With its rich background in the IKT, specifically in the fields of mind and cognitive sciences, Kak says, India can expect to play “a significant role in the future development of AI.” Kak thinks that India’s rise in the age of AI is unstoppable.

Written in about 4,000 sutras (aphorisms), the Paninian grammar of Sanskrit (*Aṣṭādhyāyī*³, 4th century BCE or earlier), according to American linguist Leonard Bloomfield, is “one of the greatest monuments of human intelligence.” It has greatly influenced linguistics and mathematical logic, which, in turn, gave birth to modern computer science.

Indian thought, Kak reminds us, was also central to the development of Boolean logic. George Boole’s wife, Mary, was the niece of George Everest. She has claimed that many of the ideas of the Indian Knowledge Tradition were imparted by Everest to figures like Booles, Augustus de Morgan, and Charles Babbage, etc. Everest was an intermediary for Indian ideas, influencing many scientists, including the Booles, Augustus de Morgan, and Charles Babbage. The Indian government, led by PM Narendra Modi, is implementing AI in the social, healthcare, agriculture, and financial sectors. However, Kak sees the Indian judiciary, the

² <https://press.un.org/en/2000/20000317.dev2234.doc.html>

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<https://www.youtubeeducation.com/watch?v=d0tOJ2fHLe>
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colonized education system, left-wing activism, and other challenges as the biggest hurdles to AI's march in India.

Kak has a unique perspective on how AI can be used as a tool in cultural and civilizational erasure. As a Kashmiri Hindu of India, his community was uprooted and displaced from its sacred ancestral land. Its places of worship were destroyed, and the names of places that carried civilizational memory of over 5,000 years were erased due to the excess of Islamic terrorism. "Much of politics," writes Kak, is about the representation of the past, and at its nastiest it is about erasure. The only reason people want to be the masters of the future is to change the past. While discussions among AI scientists may revolve around the idea of ingenious and "conscious" systems, we may also be dangerously close to potentially disruptive AI.

The prospect of AI doing more harm than good may not be that far-fetched. Experts suggest that weaponized AI could play a significant role in future global conflicts, and the late physicist Stephen Hawking indicated that humanity might soon find AI to be the biggest threat to our survival. We saw some of it in the use of digital vaccine passports⁴ during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the Justin Trudeau government's debanking of the Freedom Convoy protestors. Transhumanists⁵, such as Yuval Noah Harari, want to "upgrade" or "enhance" human beings through "biological algorithms."

Readers who were looking for a technical book on AI would be disappointed. There is more to AI than just technology, and *The Age of Artificial Intelligence* is an intellectually stimulating book on that parameter.

⁴ https://www.wsj.com/opinion/vaccine-passports-prolong-lockdowns-11617726629?st=pWjm3u&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

⁵ <https://brownstone.org/articles/transhumanism-and-ai-an-ideology-of-death/>