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Avinash Kumar



Avinash Kumar has completed his Ph.D. in International Investment Law from the Dept. of Law & Governance, Central University of South Bihar. His research work is on "International Investment Agreement and State's right to regulate Foreign Investment." He qualified UGC-NET and has been selected for the prestigious ICSSR Doctoral Fellowship. He is an alumnus of the Faculty of Law, University of Delhi. Formerly he has been elected as Students Union President of Law Centre-1, University of Delhi. Moreover, he completed his LL.M. from the University of Delhi (2014-16), dissertation on "Cross-border Merger & Acquisition"; LL.B. from the University of Delhi (2011-14), and B.A. (Hons.) from Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi. He has also obtained P.G. Diploma in IPR from the Indian Society of International Law, New Delhi. He has qualified UGC – NET examination and has been awarded ICSSR – Doctoral Fellowship. He has published six-plus articles and presented 9 plus papers in national and international seminars/conferences. He participated in several workshops on research methodology and teaching and learning.

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BEHIND THE MASK: ETHICAL DIMENSIONS OF DEEPFAKE TECHNOLOGY IN INDIA'S LEGAL SPHERE

AUTHORED BY - R. SHARMILA

Abstract

In this blog we delve into the deepfake regulation in India and its implication across the social media platform. Deepfake technology is a contentious technology and it is a type of synthetic media where artificial is used as a weapon to create manipulating the images, audio that even appear to be realistic content and this is going to be Brobdingnagian creak to human security. The doctrinal research methodology was adopted to discuss about the advancement of deepfake technology and their damages in the reputation of individuals and public trust in the legal reform. Persistently, In Indian phenomena where there is a need to investigate and develop the existing regulatory frameworks. The analysis of this study suggests that India's legal sphere would adopt a holistic approach to regulation and ethics to resolve complex challenges.

Keywords: Holistic approach, Framework, Brobdingnagian, Artificial, Manipulating

Introduction:

In recent years, the emergence of deepfake technology has presented unprecedented challenges to the legal and ethical frameworks governing digital media. India, with its vast and diverse population, is not immune to the impacts of deepfakes. This blog explores the ethical dimensions of deepfake technology within India's legal sphere, examining its implications on society, privacy rights, and the efforts to regulate its use.

The Rise of Deepfake Technology: A Brief Overview

Deepfake technology utilizes artificial intelligence algorithms to create highly realistic yet fabricated videos and audio recordings. Initially developed for entertainment purposes, deepfakes have evolved to become tools for malicious activities, including misinformation, defamation, and political manipulation. In India, the proliferation of smartphones and access to high-speed internet has facilitated the spread of deepfake content, amplifying its societal impact.

Understanding Deepfakes: Definitions and Characteristics

Deepfakes are digitally altered media files that convincingly depict individuals saying or doing things they never did. These manipulations often involve the seamless integration of a person's face or voice into existing footage, creating deceptive content that is difficult to discern from reality. The sophistication of deepfake technology continues to advance, posing significant challenges to traditional methods of authentication and verification.

Creation of deepfakes

Deepfake are created using a machine learning technique known as generative adversarial networks (GANs). A GAN consists of two neural networks, a generator, and a discriminator, that are trained on a large dataset of real images, videos, or audio. The generator network creates synthetic data, such as a synthetic image, that resembles the real data in the training set. The discriminator network then assesses the authenticity of the synthetic data and provides feedback to the generator on how to improve its output. This process is repeated multiple times, with the generator and discriminator learning from each other, until the generator produces synthetic data that is highly realistic and difficult to distinguish from the real data. This training data is used to create deepfakes which may be applied in various ways for video and image deepfakes: (a) **face swap**: transfer the face of one person for that of the person in the video; (b) **attribute editing**: change characteristics of the person in the video e.g. style or colour of the hair; (c) **face re-enactment**: transferring the facial expressions from the face of one person on to the person in the target video; and (d) **fully synthetic material**: Real material is used to train what people look like, but the resulting picture is entirely made up.

The Impact of Deepfakes on Society and Individuals in India

The proliferation of deepfake content in India has far-reaching consequences for society and individuals. Misleading videos can damage reputations, incite violence, and undermine public trust in institutions and information sources. In a country as diverse as India, where social tensions and political divisions are prevalent, the dissemination of deepfakes can exacerbate existing conflicts and fuel social unrest.

Legal Landscape: Current Regulations and Policy Frameworks in India

Despite the growing threat posed by deepfakes, India lacks specific legislation addressing their creation, distribution, and use. Existing laws pertaining to defamation, privacy, and cybercrimes offer some recourse for victims of deepfake manipulation, but they fall short in effectively

combating this emerging threat. Policymakers and legal experts are grappling with the need to develop comprehensive regulatory frameworks tailored to the unique challenges posed by deepfake technology.

Ethical Considerations in Deepfake Creation and Distribution

The ethical implications of deepfake technology extend beyond legal concerns, touching upon issues of consent, integrity, and harm. The creation and dissemination of deepfake content without consent raise fundamental questions about individual autonomy and digital rights. Moreover, the potential for deepfakes to perpetuate harmful stereotypes, spread disinformation, and manipulate public discourse underscores the need for ethical guidelines to govern their use.

Deepfake Technology and its Implications for Privacy Rights in India

Privacy rights are increasingly under threat in the digital age, with deepfake technology posing new challenges to individuals' ability to control their personal information. The unauthorized use of someone's likeness in deepfake videos infringes upon their right to privacy and can have devastating consequences for their reputation and well-being. India's legal framework for data protection and privacy must evolve to address these emerging threats and safeguard individuals' rights in the digital realm.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ACT 2000

SECTION 66E- PUNISHMENT FOR VIOLATION OF PRIVACY BY PUBLISHING PRIVATE IMAGES OF OTHERS

If a person captures, transmits or publishes images of a person's private parts without his/her consent or knowledge.

TRANSMIT – Means to electronically send to visual image with the intent that if it be viewed by any person

CAPTURE – With respect to any image , means videotape , photographs, film , or record any means

PRIVATE AREA – It means the naked or undergarment ex prvt area , female breast

PENALTY – Imprisonment up to three years, or/and with fine up to Rs. 2,00,000

R.RAJAGOPAL V. STATE OF TN. 1994 (6) SC 514

SEC 67 PUBLISHING OF OBSCENE INFORMATION IN ELECTRONIC FORM

Whoever publishes or transmits or causes to be published in the electronic form, any material

which is lascivious or appeals to the prurient interest or if its effect is such as to tend to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstance, to read see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it, shall be punished on first conviction with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years and with fine which may extend to one lakh rupees and in the event of a second or subsequent conviction with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years and also with fine which may extend to two lakh rupees

The State of Tamil Nadu v. Suhas Katti AIR 2004

Facts: This case is about posting obscene, defamatory and annoying message about a divorcee woman in the Yahoo message group. E-mails were forwarded to the victim for information by the accused through a false e-mail account opened by him in the name of the victim. These postings resulted in annoying phone calls to the lady. Based on the complaint police nabbed the accused. He was a known family friend of the victim and was interested in marrying her. She married to another person, but that marriage ended in divorce and the accused started contacting her once again. And her reluctance to marry him he started harassing her through the internet.

Held: The accused is found guilty of offenses under section 469, 509 IPC and 67 of the IT Act 2000 and the accused is convicted and is sentenced for the offense to undergo RI for 2 years under 469 IPC and to pay fine of Rs.500/-and for the offense u/s 509 IPC sentenced to undergo 1 year Simple imprisonment and to pay fine of Rs.500/- and for the offense u/s 67 of IT Act 2000 to undergo RI for 2 years and to pay fine of Rs.4000/- All sentences to run concurrently

Challenges of Detecting and Combatting Deepfakes in the Indian Context

Detecting and combating deepfakes poses significant technical and logistical challenges, particularly in the context of India's diverse linguistic and cultural landscape. Automated detection algorithms often struggle to identify subtle manipulations in videos, requiring human intervention for accurate verification. Moreover, the rapid spread of deepfake content across social media platforms complicates efforts to contain its proliferation and mitigate its impact on society.

Case Studies: Notable Deepfake Incidents and Legal Responses in India

Several high-profile incidents of deepfake manipulation have occurred in India, highlighting the urgent need for legal and regulatory intervention. From doctored political speeches to fabricated celebrity scandals, these incidents have underscored the potential for deepfakes to sow confusion,

distrust, and discord in society. Legal responses to such incidents have varied, with some cases resulting in civil litigation, while others have prompted calls for legislative reform.

The Supreme Court in Indian Hotel and Restaurant Association (AHAR) v. The State of Maharashtra AIR 2019 SUPREME COURT 589, AIRONLINE 2019 SC 24, considered the data stored in CCTV footage is the personal information of the person. The court held that “complete surveillance of activities through CCTV cameras inside the premises of dance bars is excessive and disproportionate. The monitoring, recording, storage and retention of dance performances causes unwarranted invasion of privacy and would even subject women bar dancers to threat and blackmail”. As the CCTV footage provides a strong source for identifying an individual it becomes part of his information which attracts the right to privacy.

Balancing Freedom of Expression and Harm Prevention in Deepfake Regulation

The regulation of deepfake technology must strike a delicate balance between protecting freedom of expression and preventing harm to individuals and society. While censorship and content moderation measures may help curb the spread of malicious deepfakes, they also risk stifling legitimate forms of expression and innovation. Effective regulation should prioritize transparency, accountability, and collaboration between government, industry, and civil society stakeholders.

Countries that have taken proactive steps towards curbing the menace of deepfake

The UK government has planned to introduce national guidelines for the AI industry evaluating the implementation of legislation that would require clear labelling for AI generated photos and videos.

The European Union has enforced Digital Services Act which obligates social media platforms to adhere to labelling obligations, enhancing transparency and aiding users in determining authenticity of media South Korea passed a law that makes it illegal to distribute deepfakes that could cause harm to public interest with offenders facing up to five years or imprisonment or fines up to 50 million (approximately 43,000 USD).

Future Perspectives: Emerging Trends and Strategies for Addressing Deepfake Ethical Dilemmas in India

As deepfake technology continues to evolve, so too must India's legal and ethical frameworks adapt to address emerging challenges. Multidisciplinary approaches that combine technological

innovation, legal reform, and public awareness campaigns offer promising avenues for mitigating the risks posed by deepfakes. By fostering a culture of digital literacy and ethical responsibility, India can empower its citizens to navigate the complexities of the digital age and safeguard the integrity of its information ecosystem.

Statistics on Deepfakes in India

Recent reports highlight the growing prevalence of deep fakes in India:

- According to a 2022 report by the Cyberspace Foundation, India is among the top 10 countries globally for deepfake creation and consumption.
- Over 1,000 deepfake videos were created in India in 2021, often used for malicious purposes, including spreading misinformation and defaming individuals.
- A report by the Central for Media Pluralism and Freedom of Expression (CMPF) indicates a rise in deepfakes in Indian politics, utilized to spread false information and sow discord among voters.

Detection Techniques:

1. Facial Inconsistencies: Observe blinking patterns, eye movements, and lip movements.
2. Audio Inconsistencies: Listen for strange pronunciation, unnatural pauses, or inconsistent background noise.
3. Lighting and Shadows: Pay attention to inconsistent lighting and shadow placements.
4. Out-of-Context Behavior : Consider the context of the video and identify actions inconsistent with the person's character.
5. Metadata Inconsistencies: Check creation date, time, and location for potential discrepancies.

Conclusion:

The ethical dimensions of deepfake technology in India's legal sphere present complex challenges that demand proactive and collaborative solutions. By acknowledging the multifaceted nature of the deepfake threat and adopting a holistic approach to regulation and ethics, India can mitigate the risks posed by deepfakes while upholding fundamental rights and values in the digital era. Only through concerted efforts across government, industry, and civil society can India effectively address the ethical dilemmas posed by deepfake technology and ensure a safer and more trustworthy digital environment for all.