

## Role of Artificial Intelligence and Adoption of a Child in India - Changing Dimensions

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### ABSTRACT

As per reports, 4,515 child adoptions, the highest since 2015-16, were recorded in 2024-25. Increased awareness programmes conducted by the respective authorities coupled with the identification initiatives and digital transparency, 4,155 children were placed in domestic adoptions.<sup>1</sup> Central Adoption Resource Agency (CARA) is an autonomous and statutory body which was set up in the year 1990. It monitors and regulates the domestic as well as inter-country adoptions. It is a statutory body of Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India under Section 68 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 amended in 2021 and has been working as a nodal body for all the adoptions.

**Keywords:** Adoption, Artificial Intelligence, Digitalisation, CARA, Juvenile Justice.

### Introduction

Adoption of a child not only establishes a legal relationship between a child and the adopting parent(s) but it also creates a family. In India, adoption of a child has a long history, rooted in the Vedic times it has evolved from being religion centric, with certain exceptions, to becoming secular with the passing of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, in the year 2000. With the development and changes in the society, the law of adoption has evolved and continues to evolve with recent developments and changes brought about by the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act, 2021; Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Model Amendment Rules, 2022; Adoption (Amendment) Regulations, 2021, Adoption Regulations, 2022 and Model Foster Care Guidelines, 2024.

As per reports, 4,515 child adoptions, the highest since 2015-16, were recorded in 2024-25. Increased awareness programmes conducted by the respective authorities coupled with the identification initiatives and digital transparency, 4,155 children were placed in domestic adoptions.<sup>2</sup> Central Adoption Resource Agency (CARA) is an autonomous and statutory body which was set up in the year 1990. It monitors and regulates the domestic as well as inter-country adoptions. It is a statutory body of Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India under Section 68 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 amended in 2021 and has been working as a nodal body for all the adoptions.

With the advancement in technology and increase in digitalisation, the area of adoption has also not remained untouched. This paper proposes to explore the impact of digitalisation, with special emphasis on the feasibility of use of Artificial Intelligence, ethical considerations, limitations etc. in the process of adoption of children.

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<sup>1</sup> PIB Delhi on 01 APR 2025

<sup>2</sup> PIB Delhi on 01 APR 2025

### Centralisation of the Process of Child Adoption

In India, the institution of adoption of a child has been well established since the ancient times. Undeniably, it has gone through a sea change as the society progressed. From desire to have a child to continue the lineage (from the adopting parents' perspective), under the ancient law, to giving paramount importance to the welfare of the child (child centric approach), a principle laid down as law under the Guardians and Wards Act, 1890, the adoption of a child is governed by the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act since 1956. As the name of the Act suggests, it applies only to Hindus. Except for the inter-country adoptions<sup>1</sup>, the in-country adoptions under the Act, remain largely the same as before<sup>2</sup>. However, the other communities too could take recourse to the provisions of the Guardians and Wards Act, 1890 to care of a child or according to prevalent customs in the community or some arrangements of the kind.

The difficulties, discrepancies, profiteering, trafficking and the abuse of the procedure of the law, among other problems in relation to Inter-country Adoptions came to light through a Newspaper report based on which a Public Interest Litigation was filed and the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, considering that there is no statutory enactment in the Country providing for adoption of a child by foreign parents or laying down the procedure which must be followed in such a case, foreign parents, recourse is being had to the Guardians and Wards Act, 1890, laid down detailed procedures etc. and passed various directions<sup>3</sup>, one of which was the desirability of setting up of a Central Adoption Resource Agency by the Government of India and in pursuance to that a centralised system to regulate the process of adoption of a child was established in 1990 by the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000.

Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) functions as the nodal body for adoption and is mandated to monitor and regulate in-country and inter-country adoptions under the Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India. It is a designated central authority to deal with the inter-country adoptions in accordance with the Hague Convention on inter-country adoption, 1993 ratified by Government of India in 2003<sup>4</sup>. It primarily deals with orphan, abandoned and surrendered children through its associated/recognised adoption agencies and discharges a number of functions including those given under the Act<sup>5</sup>. The following statistics show the growth in adoptions, especially the in-country adoptions, from the previous years-

#### Adoption Statistics<sup>6</sup>

Year	In-country Adoption	Inter-country Adoption	Total
2015-16	3011	666	3677
2016-17	3210	578	3788
2017-18	3276	651	3927
2018-19	3374	653	4027
2019-20	3351	394	3745
2020-21	3142	417	3559
2021-22	2991	414	3405
2022-23	3010	431	3441
2023-24	3580	449	4029
2024-25	4155	360	4515

The principle of "best interest of the child" has been reiterated by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India<sup>7</sup> in the context of the Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection of Children) Act, wherein it was stated that, "The provisions of the JJ Act promote the best interest of the child and ensure their development". In the era of the technological advancements by leaps and bounds, it becomes the responsibility of all the stakeholders, particularly of the State, to ensure that the "best interest of the child" principle is given is protected with the rights of the child<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Adoption (Amendment)Regulations, 2021;[Latest Amendment in the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 – Explained](#); PIB Adoption in India, 15 December 2025;

<sup>2</sup> [Why India's Orphaned Children Aren't Making It to Adoption | Outlook India](#), By Snehal Srivastava, 05 August 2025

<sup>3</sup> Laxmikant Pandey v. Union of India, AIR 1984 SUPREME COURT 469

<sup>4</sup> [CARA](#) accessed on 26.12.2025

<sup>5</sup> [CARA](#) and Section 68 (1) of the Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection of Children) Act,

<sup>6</sup> Sourced from [CARA](#) on 26.12.2025

<sup>7</sup> Supriyo @ Supriya Chakraborty &Anr. V Union of India, judgement pronounced on October 17, 2023

<sup>8</sup> [digital-personal-data-protection-rules-2025.pdf](#)

### **Digitisation of the Adoption Process**

To resolve the issue of delays in the process of adoption and to bring more transparency in its secured online platform Child Adoption resource Information and Guidance System (CARINGS), incepted in 2010 and functional since 2011<sup>1</sup>, is an e-governance system on adoption. It has facilitated over 46,618 in-country adoptions and more than 6,142 inter-country adoptions<sup>2</sup>. At the central and state government level CARINGS provides online monitoring of the adoption and post-adoption process by CARA. Its objectives are to bring in transparency in adoption process, minimize adoption delays, empower the prospective adoptive parents, database analysis for policy decisions, online monitoring at central and state levels, to work as the centralised repository for adoption related information with comprehensive database for policy planning, establish connections between agencies and institutions, profiling for better matching of children in need of adoption and prospective adoptive parents, assist tracking for adopting parents etc.

The impact of the above arrangement can be seen in timely decision-making via Data Analysis, seamless registration of adoption agencies, comprehensive networking for adoption processes, streamlining the process by online registration for Prospective Adoptive Parents, streamlining the application management process<sup>3</sup>, easy placement of Special Needs Children and establishment of connections between adoption agencies and child care institutions facilitating the adoption of children without parental care.

Though in 2017 when CARA website was hacked, the promptness in response of the government bodies and the CARINGS application provider, National Informatics Centre, was quick and it was made known that, "no sensitive data has been compromised"<sup>4</sup>. However, in the face of the data breaches that have taken place in recent years in India, viz. Aadhaar Data Breach in 2018, SBI Data Breach, 2019, Indian Council of Medical Research Covid-19 Data Breach, 2023, BSNL Data Breach, 2024, Telangana Police Hawk Eye App Data Breach, 2024<sup>5</sup> highlight the vulnerability of the system, including those of the government bodies, and call for the handling and protecting the personal data of a child, which needs to be constantly monitored and regulated<sup>6</sup>, with utmost care<sup>7</sup> as data from adoption agencies are sensitive by very nature<sup>8</sup>.

### **Artificial Intelligence and Adoption of a Child**

The process of adoption of a child involves a complex process. The registrations, documentations, documentation and procedure of declaring a child free for adoption, suitability and matching of the Prospective Adoptive Parent and the Child, Home Study Reports, follow ups etc. take a long time and a toll on the prospective adoptive parents and the child waiting for a family by way of adoption. Due to the technological advancements, the use of Artificial Intelligence in the matters of adoption, though still in its formative age, is being considered in various jurisdictions.

A social worker developed an AI powered tool and was claimed to help social service agencies find the best adoptive parents for most vulnerable children in the respective country, however it was found that mixed and limited results were produced in various states<sup>9</sup>. It was stated by the developer that, "Family match is a valuable tool and helpful to users actively using it to support their recruitment + matching efforts" according to this report.

The artificial intelligence tools which are changing the face in healthcare and finance systems are expected to bring down the procedural delays significantly. The lengthiest part in an adoption process is the handling and processing the documents, personal identification, home study reports, medical reports etc. It is expected that the time taken for all of these will be reduced significantly. From tool for objectivity, a machine-driven entity capable of synthesizing vast amounts of information, create coherent

<sup>1</sup> Informatics accessed on 26.12.2025

<sup>2</sup> Informatics accessed on 26.12. 2025

<sup>3</sup> Digitalisation of Child Adoption in India: The Legal Problems and Possibilities, by U. Saranya and Dr. Ramakant Agrawal, Indian Journal of Law and Legal Research, Vol. VII ISSN: 2582-8878

<sup>4</sup> Adoption Services through CARINGS portal continue to remain secure and functional inspite of "unauthorised intrusion" into CARA Website

<sup>5</sup> 10 Biggest Data Breaches in India [2025]

<sup>6</sup> The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (As on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025) and the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025

<sup>7</sup> Digital-Personal-Data-Protection-Rules-2025.pdf

<sup>8</sup> 1M Adoption Agency Records Exposed | Security Magazine

<sup>9</sup> Does an AI tool help boost adoptions? Key takeaways from an AP Investigation, November 6 2023, by SALLY HO and GARANCE BURKE

outputs<sup>1</sup>, enhanced matching process, improved communication and tracking, predictive analytics for post adoption support to improved training for adoption agencies and fraud detection and prevention<sup>2</sup>, taking into account that the Courts in India have, on trial basis, started using AI to speed up the justice delivery system, it sure appears to be a preferred recourse that can be taken up in near future<sup>3</sup>.

At another level, the studies are being carried out to check if the use of AI tool can work effectively in a deeply human and systemic issues like adoption. One such research<sup>4</sup> based its outcomes on a software product which focused on relationship difficulties between the child and the adoptive parents, viz. the compatibility aspects of adoption, the parent's readiness for adoption and the bracelet tracker to track the child's heart rate and monitor the progress of the trial adoption in real time was carried out. The detailed study had the child centric approach, focusing the child's specific needs and characteristics with those of the adoptive family, to ensure that the best interests of the child are taken into account throughout the matching and placement process including primarily psychological assessment etc. And the second was the family-centric approach which concentrated on the identifying and matching characteristics of the adoptive family with the child as well as the emotional, physical, financial stability including lifestyle, values, beliefs, the parenting skills and ability to meet the child's needs. It proposes that after matching is done and the potential parents meet the child, and they decide to adopt the child, it can be decided if a trial adoption should begin. If that be the case, a monitoring bracelet will be placed on the child's arm and the child-device identifier correlation in the application will be assigned. This device monitors the heart rate of the child from normal value and will identify the deviations and give an understanding of an individual's heart health and to detect emotional states. The study concluded that the integration of technology offers a novel approach to streamline the adoption process, mitigating the human biases and enhances efficiency. However, the study also noted that as with any technology driven methodology, striking a balance between automation and human touch is paramount and expert consultations are desirable for qualitative evaluations<sup>5</sup>.

### Conclusion and Suggestions

Artificial Intelligence is playing a significant role in various private and public sectors including health care, public welfare, finance, education etc. in today's times. Artificial Intelligence based systems can be very useful in processing vast data, streamlining the process, identifying patterns, predict outcomes etc. which may prove to be useful in more effective and efficient decision making. However, the area of sensitive issue as adoption of a child, which significantly involves emotional and psychological factors, the holistic approach, considering all the pros and cons of the system, is much desirable. The bias in AI systems, the lack of transparency and explainability, privacy, confidentiality and security issues can also be not lost sight of. The dependency on high quality data, infrastructure challenges, limited accessibility<sup>6</sup>, the industry's profit-making motives etc. are only some of the factors which need to be addressed and resolved before adopting any Artificial intelligence-based system in India.

Role of Artificial Intelligence in the area of child adoption, as in all other areas, acting as a mirror, reflects the data and narratives that it is trained on or relies on the already available information<sup>7</sup>. It lacks depth and critical contexts such as severance from the biological parents, emotional trauma of abandonment or relinquishment by the biological parents, one size fit all formula will not give desirable results as the "best interest of the child" principle embodies the particular interest of each child according to the needs. In the light of the changes in adoption law in India recently coupled with the Guidance on AI and Children (v3)<sup>8</sup>, requirements and recommendations issued by the UNICEF, Stringent Data Protection measures will have to be brought in place including secured storage, controlled access, clear and transparent policies regarding data uses, regular auditing and testing for potential bias are likely to ensure fairness, avoid discrimination and adherence to ethical guidelines. The adoption process is deeply

<sup>1</sup>The Artificial Intelligence of Adoption: How AI Perpetuates and Reflects Systemic Lies by Shane Boule, 28Jun 2025

<sup>2</sup>Streamlining the Adoption Process: The Potential of AIByNadeem Ahmad Published Jun 24, 2023

<sup>3</sup> Use of AI-driven support system to help courts in predicting child custody outcomes in India, By Shobhana Sanjay Singh, World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2024, 23(01), 1088–1092

<sup>4</sup> *Internet of Things* 26 (2024) 101170- Algorithm for child adoption process using artificial intelligence and monitoring system for children By Cosmina - Mihaela Rosca a, Adrian Stancu b, Andy - Valentin Ariciu

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> From Survival to Thriving: AI-Powered Pathways for Homeless Children's Adoption and Healing By Syeda Aynul Karim, Md. Juniadul Islam, Mir Faris, International Journal of Scientific Research & Engineering Trends, Volume 10, Issue 6, Nov-Dec-2024, ISSN (Online): 2395-566X

<sup>7</sup> The Artificial Intelligence of Adoption:How AI Perpetuates and Reflects Systemic LiesBy Shane Boule, 28Jun 2025

<sup>8</sup> [UNICEF-Innocenti-Guidance-on-AI-and-Children-3-2025.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/guidance-on-ai-and-children-3-2025.pdf)

human, requiring empathy, understanding and professional judgement which only humans can provide. Hence, a holistic approach is at the core of the adoption process, even if it is supported by an AI technology/system. In every case of adoption of a child, all the stakeholders should be able to make informed decisions, participate and understand the decision-making process of the system, hence transparency and honesty must be maintained throughout the process which will not only build trust but will also ensure accountability.

