Is Artificial Intelligence (AI) Really the Villain?

By **Avneet Kaur Sooch**

Every time a new technology arises, people tend to panic. This has been encountered before, historically not once, not twice, but every single time. There is a cycle termed the Tech Panic Cycle, which repeats every time a new tool is introduced (Grady & Castro, 2023).

The first stage is known as 'Trusting Beginnings', which is when the tool is not yet public. Hence, the exposure as well as the fear is low. However, critics have already begun targeting possible hypothetical harms. The second stage is known as 'Rising Panic', when the product goes public, and the fear spreads fast. Media and journalists stress the issues with sensationalism, clickbait coverage, and rarely presenting an unbiased opinion. The third stage is 'Deflating Fears', when the public slowly embraces the tool and accepts its benefits, while doomsayers slowly lose their voice. The fourth and final stage is 'Moving On'; here, the technology normalises with the next new technology arriving.

When challenged about failed doomsayers' predictions, alarmists argue that this technology is unique and extraordinary, but that's what they said every single time. This pattern can often be seen repeated in various historical examples, such as when the printing press arrived, professional copyists panicked about losing their jobs, but in fact, ended up creating an entire publishing industry. When electricity came, people called electrical wires 'death wires', fearing instant death. Fast-forwarding to today, electricity is common knowledge. When computers arrived, computerphobia spiked in the 1980s with rising fears of mass unemployment. US employment continued to grow despite fears that automation would eliminate jobs. According to Frey and Osborne's (2013) Oxford study, 47% of all US jobs were predicted to be at risk of automation, but mass unemployment never happened. Instead, a structural shift in the labour market was seen, where jobs did not disappear but changed. This pattern even has a name: 'Luddite Fallacy'. It refers to the mistaken belief that new tech causes permanent mass unemployment, while the reality is that it only causes temporary structural shifts. In countries like India, where job security insight is already high, this fear gets amplified even more. Quite evidently, society as well as the markets adapted to every tech tool before, and the tech apocalypse has never arrived.

What AI Actually is and What it isn't

AI is just a tool, like a hammer; it all depends on how you use it after having the privilege of holding it. Large Language Models (LLMs) are not conscious thought; they are pattern recognition of data that humans themselves have exposed them to. No consciousness or moral agency is involved; hence, no hidden agenda by the tool itself can be justified. There's also this category error where people fight AI as if it were a human being instead of

a system. As a tool, it already declares its own biggest limitation - "I can make mistakes. Double check important info." I would like to represent it simply by a metaphor, just like a knife does not kill but the person using it does, a tool is never responsible, the hand holding it is. We often forget the basics while chasing complexity. The very definition of a machine is simple - a tool that makes our lives easier. That is what AI is.

Using beyond its purpose is, again, a human choice and mistake. A therapist listens, feels, and understands human complexity, whereas a judge weighs values, context, and conscience. These roles demand something AI fundamentally lacks emotional depth and moral accountability. Expecting AI to replace these is not just unrealistic; it is our own immaturity as users. AI was never meant to make our personal decisions, navigate our emotions, or define our values. Centuries ago, an inventor created a knitting machine that could relieve workers from manual labour, but the Queen rejected it, fearing it would make the workers unemployed. According to one study, only 10% of labour roles access major sectors that are impacted by AI (Akpan & Adebayo, 2025). AI cannot replicate human sensorimotor and judgment-based tasks, a phenomenon known as Moravec's Paradox (Akpan & Adebayo, 2025). AI is meant to complement creativity rather than replace it solely. The aim should be a balance between human creativity and mechanical precision. The Bureau of Labour Statistics states that AI will create 17 million more jobs than it eliminates by 2030 (Akpan & Adebayo, 2025). So, if AI is just a tool with no agenda, then where is the real problem? **The answer is human beings.**

The Problem was Never the Tool

Misuse of such a tool should be subject to human accountability. AI basically reflects the society we live in. If there's a bad output, it means, with no doubt, that there must be a bad input or a bad intention of the user, as it only does what humans instruct it to do. The real danger is not even AI acting alone, as it is hyped up on social media; instead, it is humans weaponising AI. Social media just amplifies fear and not facts, creating panic without taking action or at least presenting unbiased information. It again directly reflects the Tech Panic Cycle. The irony is that humans are often more dishonest and manipulative than AI ever is; it is quite evident from what we see around.

The real concerns that exist are cybersecurity, deepfakes and intellectual property. These are valid issues, but completely different from imagined doomsayers' concerns. Unfortunately, the panic about the hypothetical issues overpowers the real issues, making them get ignored in the noise. Deepfakes are synthetic media that are realistic enough to mimic voices and faces convincingly. World Economic Forum ranks misinformation and disinformation among the world's top risks

(World Economic Forum, 2025). Generative AI could drive US fraud losses from $12.3 billion in 2023 to $40+ billion by 2032 (Naffi, 2025). Even students are using deepfake technology to create harassing content of classmates and teachers. Medical professions are facing a "crisis of evidence", which refers to the deepfake videos of doctors promoting medical scams. Arguments that AI will degrade science and ethics relied entirely on false claims about the technology. Software companies were accused of AI secretly listening to users, which was proved wrong. A US Senator claimed in 2023 that ChatGPT taught itself advanced chemistry by saying, "Something is coming. We aren't ready." This also turned false. ChatGPT only patterns existing data fed to it by humans and can't teach itself something. Every single example of AI harm traces back to a human decision. So, the solution is not fear or complete restriction but adaptation.

Adapt or Stay Afraid

Survival of the fittest: this has always been how the world works. Every generation had to adapt to new tools such as scribes, factory workers and computer operators. Those who adapted survived, and those who didn't were left behind. This tool is no different. Georgetown CSET report claims technical skills become outdated in less than 5 years on average (Oschinski et al., 2024).

There is a need for continuous retraining and upskilling throughout workers' careers. AI literacy must be integrated into the existing curriculum for incoming professionals. Even over-reliance on AI tools may hinder skill development; hence, balance must be maintained. Frey & Osborne (2013) reported that acquiring creative and social skills is what AI cannot replicate. A great example of adaptation is COVID-19; during that phase, 305 million jobs were at risk, with 94% workers impacted globally, but economies still recovered, and people adapted (ILO, 2020). If humans survived a global pandemic, they could certainly adapt to a tool.

In India, especially, the opportunity is massive if we choose adaptation over fear. Policymakers should recognise when they are amid a tech panic. Restrictions and regulations targeting misuse, such as deepfakes, fraud and misinformation, instead of attacking the tool itself, as that would be like banning knives because someone misused one. It should be realised that this time is not different, same panic and same solution, this tool should be adapted and regulated wisely.

The age of AI is filled with opportunities along with responsibilities, and those who learn to use it wisely will not just survive but may even lead. The question was never whether AI would change the world. The question is: Will you adapt to it?

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