

The Rise of Machines - ChatGPT-like tools to swallow jobs! Is it real?

TIOL - COB(WEB) - 859

MARCH 16, 2023

By Shailendra Kumar, Founder Editor

THE sotto voce tattle is growing louder! Good or bad, cooing and purring about new technologies have risen to new decibel! A new peak of cacophony seems to have become the epicentre of global debate after the ChatGPT, the most topsiest and turviest development in the recent years, created ripples across the world. In less than 100 days, this chatbot developed by OpenAI has upended the febrile business models of the existing tech *mughals*

and has also provided enormous ammunition to tech pundits to talk about the unsavoury knock-on effects of this boundary-pushing AI-driven tool mimicking human emotions and suggesting recipes if a photo of the inside of a fridge is shown to it and also

wowing doctors with its medical advice! In brief, 'Everything Everywhere All At Once' syndrome! The snoozy wonks are once again up and have begun to talk about how AI poses existential threat to humanity! Their fear is - uber-intelligent computers may not share mankind's goals, ethics and empathy and could turn on their developers - Frankenstein-in-the-making! Such concerns were thundered by the noted physicist Stephen Hawking. Maverick billionaire Elon Musk has gone on record - "***With artificial intelligence, we are summoning the demon***" ! He fears about a future AI overlord becoming too potent for humans to control! ***Aha!*** Scary prognosis about tech apocalypse!

Globally-popular futurist and New York-based theoretical physicist Dr Michio Kaku's brainwaves kayak through the invisible maze of future technologies. The 'Maze-Runner' says that the tiny chip which is the fulcrum of all new technologies in the computer and electronics world, is going to revolutionise the way humans are going to get connected with the world. Future inhabitants of this planet would use internet through chip-embedded eye lenses! A blink or a wink would connect one to the rest of the world and all the gizmos in one's vicinity. He further adds that *coup de grÂce*

would soon come when memories would be uploaded and downloaded (the lab experiment has scored initial successes!)! Let's not be numb to this threat! This would largely mean that mankind would use 'brain-net' rather than internet

. With such an uncanny AI-driven technology, humans would always remain connected with all the electronic goods and the world at large. He further adds that the days are not too far when robo-doc and robo-lawyers would be ubiquitously available and such robo-lawyer would scan the internet and study the laws in all languages in the world and may deliver valuable nuggets of legal advice, matching the best in the legal fraternity today. ***Oh mon Dieu!***

It is already happening if one goes by the last Monday development - A Chicago-based law firm has filed a class action against DoNotPay Inc which uses AI to cater legal services to its users. DoNotPay is a robo lawyer which the complainant alleges, is not licensed. The tailwind behind such a class action is that this robo-lawyer has begun to bite into the business of law firms which had initially treated it as a mere 'bark'!

This brings us to louder and boisterous noise which was created last week by the US Chamber of Commerce which conventionally strains its throat against regulations being excessive! For a change, it has screamed out to governments across the world and has demanded that the proliferating AI ought to be regulated before it hurts growth and national security. The Chamber sees a powerful bugbear in AI! It has called for ramping up regulatory framework so that it does not impact education and is deployed responsibly. It has warned against the present tenuous grip on its regulations. However, its report has also noted in the same breath that AI is projected to add USD 13 trillion to global economic growth by 2030

and has successfully eased hospital shortages and mapping of wildfires to speed up emergency management. Commenting on its looming ubiquity, it says that in 20 years, 'virtually every' business and government agency would use AI. True, AI has seeped into everything, including art, painting, music and literature ***a la***

more than 200 paperbacks and e-books authored or co-authored by ChatGPT being sold on Amazon! Though the report does not directly underline the much-feared tremors of job-erosion but fear-mongering has indeed once again intensified! Is much-debated prophecy going to come true this time?

If history is any guide, new technology has always tiptoed into mass application right from the first Industrial Revolution when textile workers, most popularly the Luddites, had remonstrated that steam and machines would chew at their livelihoods! Famous economist David Ricardo had said in 1821 that the employment of machinery is frequently harmful to the interests of labour! Even John Maynard Keynes had coined the

term 'technological unemployment' in 1940. Some Nobel Prize winners had warned President Lyndon Johnson about how technology may split the society into a skilled elite and an unskilled underclass. But **nuffin** of that sort happened.

Workers began to focus on all such jobs which machines could not do such as operating a machine and repair job needed to keep them running. This catapulted output to explosive proportions. More recently, when ATMs were invented, they were projected to bring doom! But, with the machines taking over routine works, the cost of running a bank branch diminished and allowed banks to set up more branches to meet demand from customers. Experts say that automation does not destroy jobs, only redefines them - reduction in costs and a boost to demand. In a nutshell, new technologies only require workers to go for re-skilling or up-skilling!

When COVID-19 had struck, there was a boom in use of remote technologies and many economists had prophesied that this time workers were really doomed! Even IMF had pointed out that many workers' jobs would never come back! The widespread fear was that workers at mass-scale would be put out to grass! It is true that the character of workplace has put on new skin and home-working with the help of technologies has become most preferred mode of employment but the ground reality in most developed countries is - there are too many jobs, rather than too many workers! 'Great Resignation' has popped up as a new culture. Across the rich world, joblessness is at its lowest ebb in decades even though the fear about recession soars! As per OECD survey, business sentiments are much below its long-run average since 2021 but there is no visible hole of brittleness in the labour market. Fed chief Jerome Powell recently said that despite the slowdown in growth, the labour market remains extremely tight. Unemployment rate was 4.9% in December month across OECD countries.

Let's train our eye-balls toward AI-driven future job scenario. Google's boss has said that AI would do more for humanity than fire or electricity. Starting with automated vehicles, AI is going to eerily transform transport and urban life - pollution would decline and there would be more space for parks, housing and bicycle paths. AI-driven robo docs and robo healthcare workers would be everywhere. It would turbocharge medical and scientific research. Right from cancer research to climate change, AI would help solve problems by distilling through mounds of data and papers and suggesting nexus with hypotheses which might be apt for further investigation. Robots would come more handy for the world's aging population. For the first time, the number of people turning 65 has turned more than the number of children below 5. In the coming decades, the aging population would need more caregivers and robots would come handy. Interestingly, thanks to AI, service and social robots have grown much faster in the recent years and have also outnumbered industrial robots. Machines were always capable of performing many forms of routine manual labour, and are now able to do even some routine cognitive tasks too. Studies reveal that mechanisation has boosted employment in those lines of businesses where automation or improvements in machinery have been more impactful.

Going by the trends in the past, AI is unlikely to trigger mass unemployment, but it would certainly accelerate the on-going trend of automation, walloping the labour markets, and requiring workers to learn new skills quicker than in the past. How rapid and devastating would be the spin-off can be comprehended from some of the studies in the public domain. Bank of America Merrill Lynch has projected that by 2025 the annual creative disruption impact from AI may amount to jaw-dropping USD 14-33 trillion, including USD 9 trillion cut in hiring costs and USD 8 trillion reduction in manufacturing and healthcare costs. The McKinsey Global Institute predicts that AI is triggering a transformation about 3000 times the impact of the Industrial Revolution! Giant serotonin boost! **Voila:**

It's going to be 'deep learning' for the 21st century civilisations - the policy, business, academic, technical, and civil society communities. **Coup d'** AI is going to affect skills, productivity, employment and innovation in a big way! But, the '**Naatu Naatu**' time for the workers is not yet guaranteed even if the scale of history tilts in their favour! Too dodgy time ahead! Time to distil our thoughts and puzzle out the consequences! **Amen!**