BW CIO magazine interview

1) **How will artificial intelligence in the coming years change the job space?**

There were lots of uncertainty and anxiety surrounding mechanization when industrial revolution came into picture. People were skeptical about losing their jobs. However the mechanization brought in a lot more variety of jobs and employment grew manifold. Similarly, lots of debate surrounding whether artificial intelligence (AI) will take our jobs in future is going on. No doubt, certain jobs will be automated and it's not just the low-wage employees who will be affected by automation, even high skilled and knowledge based employees in certain sectors may see their profile getting decimated in future. AI or Robotics will **"Complement, supplement and takeover"** in future.

Historically the unemployment rate has remained largely at the same level with the advancement of technology, and I presume this will be the case in the next decade, where unemployment will be less of a concern rather there will be a displacement and repositioning of workforce into jobs that don't exist at present however will be a reality in future. People, whose skills will be obsolete, will have to unlearn and relearn new skills to reposition themselves into new career.

However, not all countries will be equally affected in near future. In developed countries like US or Japan, having a robo-workforce is a better option where it is economically more attractive to bring in robotics to absorb some of the human work. However in developing countries like India and China, where cheap labor is abundant switching to automation completely will have to be a strategic move. No doubt the "low-hanging fruits" or the low-skill jobs will have higher chance of getting replaced by automation, but an employer will definitely have to do a cost-benefit analysis before jumping the bandwagon.

2) **What according to you will be the biggest advantage of AI in the job sector?**

I can think of two major benefits of AI in job sector

- **Reskilling of workforce** – As stated earlier, adoption of AI will lead to rise of many new high-skilled jobs. Also, existing jobs will demand better skill set. This will give rise to a workforce which is technologically better than its predecessors.

- **Better remuneration** - Automation will definitely lead to higher productivity and better efficiency, which will ultimately get reflected in the balance sheet of a company. Part of the profit made by organizations can be passed on to the workers, which will increase the minimum wage of the high-skilled employees.

3) **Do shed some light on how various sectors like healthcare, real estate for example will change with the help of AI**

No sector, no business will be immune to AI in future, even though the degree to which each sector will be impacted may vary to a great extent. Let me cite a few examples of how different sectors will be affected.

a. **Healthcare sector-**

One sector which will be most positively impacted is healthcare. AI can help in diagnosis, medicine prescription and even in critical surgery. At present, Medical industry is creating huge amount of unstructured data. Using traditional computing algorithms it is difficult to make any sense out of this data pool, but AI is helping in parsing through, evaluating, and categorizing the enormous amount of patient data available. Using the insight generated out of these data, a better diagnosis model can be created thus reducing the cost and the chances of a wrong diagnosis. Also, AI will help analyzing a person's medical history and prescribe medicines according to it

b. **Retail sector-**

Retail sector has started applying AI in many parts of its value chain starting from supply chain, assortments to pricing and promotion. AI will help in better forecasting, thus helping in predicting trends, managing warehouses and logistics. It is helping to understand the customer needs better and drive the personalized promotion strategy accordingly.

c. Real estate sector –

Real estate agency will move online. The physical middleman between seller and buyer will get replaced by automated agents. Uberization of real estate agents has already started, soon automization will take over. Using technologies like image recognition, chatbot, intelligent search engine, buyer and seller will come together.

4) What does AI's growth mean for the IT sector?

Like many other sectors, IT sector will also have a dual impact. First, most of the manual, repetitive, rule-based work will be automated and thus lost to automation. If we consider IT sector of developing countries like India, companies earn revenue by adding employees to their workforce, thus having a linear relationship between its profitability and workforce strength. With the advent of AI, most IT firms will target non-linear growth i.e. faster revenue growth as compared to increase in number of employees. Consequently, majority of the IT workforce will have to learn new skills to keep themselves employable.

On the other hand AI will create more job opportunities in areas such as data science, machine learning, big data etc. Huge investments in AI will be done by online firms and digital natives. This will give required boost to commercial adoption of AI.