

Introduction

The AI Age and the Need to Rediscover the Human Edge

Within a few decades, machine intelligence will surpass human intelligence, leading to The Singularity—technological change so rapid and profound it represents a rupture in the fabric of human history.

*—Ray Kurzweil, American computer scientist, author,
entrepreneur, futurist and inventor*

At last year's (2024) Salesforce Dreamforce event in San Francisco, Marc Benioff, the co-founder, chairman and CEO of Salesforce, declared in his keynote, 'We are moving from an AI-assisted to an autonomous world,' highlighting a transformative shift underway in technology.¹ To drive the message home, he urged attendees to experience Waymo's autonomous cars first-hand—a glimpse into the future of autonomy in action. The statement was not just a call to explore innovation but a bold reminder of the pace at which the world is evolving.

I decided to take his advice and had the thrilling opportunity to ride in Waymo's autonomous cab service for the first time. And Marc

was absolutely right! The precise navigation with which the vehicle handled traffic and complex intersections left me in awe of how far AI-powered technologies have advanced. The absence of a driver felt a bit unsettling at first, but as I watched the car effortlessly navigate real-world driving scenarios, it quickly instilled an unexpected sense of trust. While so far, most of our understanding and much of our discussions around AI focused on the potential of human-AI collaboration, this ride was a profound revelation for me. It showcased the transformative power of truly autonomous machines. And with that ride I could easily envision a future, not too far away, where science fiction transcended into reality.

However, amidst all my excitement about the future, I had a sobering moment when the next day, I shared my autonomous cab experience with my regular rental cab driver. Clearly, he didn't share my enthusiasm. How could he? Because for him, proliferation of autonomous vehicles meant the loss of livelihood. He shared his genuine fear that his job could be replaced by autonomous cars within the next two years. This would force him to return to his native country, as even luxury car services would most likely transition to autonomous vehicles by then. It was a bittersweet reminder of the dual-edged nature of technological progress, especially with the acceleration of innovation in the AI age. While advancements like autonomous cabs offer incredible possibilities and efficiencies, they also raise tough questions about the future of jobs and the livelihoods of those who may be left behind in this transition.

If you look at the way it's evolving—rapidly getting better at a range of capabilities, from decision-making to automation—we have to admit that AI is rapidly mastering many skills that were once considered uniquely human. The interaction with the cab driver was another trigger for me, emphasizing that we need to reimagine our competitive edge as humans as we embrace the AI age. These are incredibly exciting times, but they also call for meaningful dialogue

to ensure that, as innovations continue to shape our world, we identify and cultivate our next competitive advantage to thrive both in our professional and personal lives.

We are in the AI age

Over the past few years, the already exciting digital age has evolved into the AI age especially with the advent of generative AI (Gen AI). The explosive breakthroughs in AI can be attributed to advancements in three distinct areas—Big Data, algorithms and computing capabilities. Significant innovations in these areas have converged like never before, with the promise of revolutionizing industries, economies and societies on an unprecedented scale.

Although over the years, humankind has gone through multiple waves of technological innovations, AI is not just another major technology trend. It is truly disruptive because, for the first time, machines are not merely augmenting but actively replicating many human capabilities. In fact, AI is already proving superior to humans in several domains once thought to be our exclusive strengths, challenging the long-held belief that *‘the creation cannot be greater than the creator’*.

The AI age is truly transformational

AI is no longer just imitating human abilities, it is evolving at a pace where it is beginning to *outperform* us in areas that were long considered the pinnacle of human uniqueness. From creativity and emotional intelligence to complex decision-making, AI is crossing thresholds we once believed to be unbreachable. There are at least five core areas where AI is delivering breakthrough performance—each of which has historically defined what it means to be human. One of our unique capabilities is our ability to learn. We can absorb knowledge, apply it, learn from it and continuously grow through

life. AI, with its **deep-learning** capabilities, is able to do so too, but in a fraction of the time we take, and it is better at learning continuously and improving through exposure to new situations and outcomes.

Another critical area is **problem identification**, where defining the problem and identifying its root cause is typically the most important part of any problem-solving process. AI, especially with the emergence of Gen AI, now excels in this area too, owing to its ability to rapidly analyse and sift through vast and complex data sets with unprecedented speed and precision and identify patterns.

Our ability to hold conversations and tell stories has always set us apart from any machine, or any other species on this planet. Lo and behold, now AI is rapidly outpacing humans in **conversational storytelling**, owing to its natural language processing capabilities enabling human-machine interactions in a more fluid and personalized way. This breakthrough has truly democratized access to AI systems and tools for a broader audience, regardless of technical expertise.

AI has also ventured into the realm of creativity, challenging our unique human ability to innovate and bring new ideas to life through imagination and ingenuity. With **new content-creation** capability, including synthetic-data creation, AI is constantly pushing the boundaries of what technology can achieve.

And last but certainly not least, as the AI age unfolds, AI has begun to mimic **emotional awareness**—once considered an invincible human capability, given that machines lack emotions. What we underestimated, however, is its remarkable ability to convincingly ‘mimic’ emotional intelligence, despite having no true feelings of its own. In fact, some studies are now claiming that AI is performing even better than humans on empathy. For example, studies have shown that, in patient care, AI has often demonstrated better bedside manners than doctors and nurses.

The ‘human quotient’ is at a crossroads

From the human perspective, our once-assumed edge is now fundamentally challenged. The capabilities we believed to be our unique advantages are no longer guaranteed to provide a sure-fire upper hand. These capabilities draw from the core dimensions of human potential that have historically enabled us to live meaningfully, work effectively, and succeed—together forming what I call the *Human Quotient*. This quotient is shaped by the interplay of four broad dimensions: physical quotient (PQ), intelligence quotient (IQ), emotional quotient (EQ) and spiritual quotient (SQ). And as we trace the arc of human evolution, it becomes clear that machines and AI have been steadily encroaching on each of these dimensions—reshaping what it means to have a human edge.

For much of human history, PQ—strength, stamina and might—marked our dominance, a trend that lasted until the Industrial Revolution. As machines took over physical tasks, the focus shifted, and IQ started emerging as the key human advantage. The advent of the information age in the twentieth century solidified IQ as a critical differentiator, driving success in education, careers and the knowledge economy, which highly valued problem-solving and innovation.

However, over the past ten to fifteen years, with the digital age giving rise to machine learning (ML) and AI, IQ as a human edge has also steadily diminished. AI now surpasses humans in tasks like pattern recognition, natural language processing and even creative problem-solving. The recent emergence of Gen AI has further accelerated this shift, with AI performing at par and even surpassing human levels in an increasing range of IQ-driven fields.

More recently, in the AI age even EQ—our ability to understand and manage emotions—is under threat. AI systems have begun to mimic empathy and emotional understanding, offering emotional

support and connecting with users in ways that challenge human advantages in EQ-driven roles too.

The spiritual blueprint behind AI's power

While AI has been evolving for decades within the research labs of tech giants and universities, it reached a pivotal tipping point with the advent of Gen AI. What made this breakthrough so powerful wasn't just technical sophistication—it was AI's ability to tap into and process vast amounts of internet data, effectively unlocking the 'collective wisdom of the crowd'.

This shift lifted one of AI's long-standing constraints: access to quality data. Suddenly, AI could generate meaningful responses—even with limited input—achieving 40–60 per cent accuracy in many real-world contexts.

But that's only part of the story.

The bigger leap lies in what AI can now do with that data. No longer confined to automation or narrow, task-specific use cases, AI is stepping into the domain of creativity—writing articles, composing music, designing products and generating code. It's transitioned from a tool to a transformational force.

And yet, there's a deeper reason behind this transformation—one that extends beyond engineering. The architecture of AI, in many ways, mirrors the profound construct of the *self* as described in traditional Indian wisdom.

According to Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, the self is composed of three interconnected layers. *Buddhi* represents innate cosmic intelligence—the universal foundation of reason. *Aham* is the layer of human consciousness that gives rise to self-awareness. And *manas* defines our individual mind and personality—our unique interpretation of the world.

In a fascinating parallel, AI also functions across three interlinked levels. At the **macro level**, AI draws from massive

global datasets to identify patterns and generate broad insights. At the **enterprise level**, it uses focused, contextual data to learn continuously and solve complex problems. And at the **individual level**, AI personalizes outputs—adapting to preferences, behaviour and context in real time.

Just as harmony between buddhi, aham and manas unleashes human potential, the integration of macro-, enterprise- and individual-level data fuels AI's unprecedented power. This alignment across layers—once a hallmark of human self-actualization—is now being executed flawlessly by machines.

When machines integrate better than humans

Over time, as we've become more digitally connected, we've paradoxically grown more fragmented within ourselves. Living in a hyper-stimulated, always-on world, we're bombarded by distractions that detach us from deeper awareness—our connection with nature, with others and even with ourselves is steadily eroding. Most of us now operate primarily at the manas level—individualistic, reactive and ego-centred—rarely accessing the higher dimensions of consciousness that once anchored our growth.

AI, on the other hand, is designed for integration. From the moment it is deployed, it flows naturally across its layers—macro, enterprise and individual—without friction. It operates at full bandwidth, continuously learning and refining its performance by unifying knowledge, context and application.

That's the irony: machines, which lack consciousness, are increasingly better at integrating layers of intelligence than many of us are. And that's precisely why AI is challenging what was once thought to be innately human. In some dimensions, it is becoming more human than humans.

AI is causing fundamental shifts across industries

In my previous books, *Winning in the Digital Age* and *Mastering the Data Paradox*, I discussed how the rise of digital and data proliferation has disrupted businesses, forcing them to rethink business models and structures to stay competitive. Now, the AI age is set to further revolutionize everything. We are already witnessing transformative shifts across industries that are unlocking unprecedented opportunities across multiple domains. These transformations can be categorized into four major areas: personalization, automation, innovation and business models, each driving a new paradigm in how businesses operate and deliver value.

One of the most profound shifts brought about by AI lies in personalization. Gone are the days of broad customer segmentation. We are entering the realm of the ‘segment of one’, where every individual becomes their own unique segment. AI would deliver **hyper-personalized** experiences, products and services specifically tailored to the unique needs, preferences and behaviours of each individual in real time. This revolution is already transforming consumer-centric industries, but its most significant promise lies in areas like healthcare and education. Imagine treatments and learning programmes designed exclusively for an individual, adapting dynamically as needs evolve—unlocking possibilities that were once unimaginable.

Beyond personalization, AI is revolutionizing **automation** by moving from assistance to autonomy. Autonomous vehicles, manufacturing robots and AI-powered logistics are not just enhancing productivity but are steadily reducing the need for human intervention in decision-making and task execution. This shift signals a profound change in how industries operate, with far-reaching implications for tech services to finance and healthcare, to even agriculture. Furthermore, the era of AI-driven **innovation** is just

the beginning, and its potential to redefine creativity, collaboration and problem-solving is limitless, positioning AI not just as a tool, but as a catalyst for the future.

Finally, AI is driving fundamental changes in **business models**, moving beyond incremental efficiency gains to enabling entirely new forms of value creation. Traditional linear models are being replaced by intelligent ecosystems that are more efficient, transparent and massively scalable. AI is not just supporting operations—it is becoming the core engine of decision-making and continuous optimization. We are already seeing the rise of *AI-native platforms* where intelligence is embedded at the core, not bolted on as an afterthought. These platforms are redefining value chains, collapsing layers of intermediation and enabling businesses to operate with near-zero marginal cost at scale. As we move toward fully autonomous marketplaces—where AI agents initiate, negotiate and complete transactions on behalf of users—the very nature of how we buy, sell and interact is being reimaged. Business models of the future will not be powered by AI—they will *be* AI. AI will transform every industry, and this will create unprecedented opportunities for both large enterprises and entrepreneurs to innovate, solve interesting problems and create extraordinary value. The latter are likely to benefit disproportionately, and I see the AI age becoming the ‘**age of entrepreneurs**’. However, these drastic shifts will have a significant impact on how work is conducted and the skills required to perform it. What does this mean for us? The implications are profound.

Every job will change and many will be lost

The AI age is unlike any previous wave of technological change. In the past, as machines took over physical tasks (PQ), humans advanced up the value chain—from physical to intellectual (IQ) to emotional (EQ) capabilities.

This time, AI is disrupting that very top of the chain. Roles involving complex thinking, decision-making and even empathy—once thought immune—are now at risk. What's especially concerning is the scale: some estimates suggest that by 2040, up to 80 per cent of knowledge workers could be displaced. For the first time, it's not just low-skill or routine jobs, but high-skill, high-wage roles—investment bankers, consultants, surgeons—that are most vulnerable. That's what sets this revolution apart.

I foresee job disruption unfolding in three waves.

In the short term (2025–30), only 2–5 per cent of total jobs will be lost while impact will be higher on specific job categories like customer service and software development. However, this loss will be partially offset by new AI-related roles such as AI trainers, integration specialists, ML engineers that will be required to build and maintain intelligent systems.

In the medium term (2030–2035), as AI becomes cheaper and more powerful, its impact will intensify. Up to 45–60 per cent of all roles may be significantly transformed and an estimated 15–35 per cent of jobs could be eliminated altogether—including many processing and analytics intensive jobs and even EQ-centric roles.

In the long run (2035–2040), virtually every job will be touched by AI. Humanoid robots and autonomous agents may become integral to the workforce. As AI agents attain greater autonomy, even many of the 'human + AI' hybrid roles created in the earlier phases will become redundant. By this stage, it's estimated that **35–50 per cent of all jobs could be lost to AI**, making it the most sweeping labour disruption in modern history.

We are still in the early years of this transformation, but the implications are profound. The impact of AI on jobs is no longer a speculative debate—it is a defining challenge of our time. The critical question now is: where will the human edge lie in the AI age, and what must we do to cultivate it?

Where does the ‘human edge’ lie?

As we look ahead, one thing is clear: the AI age is not for the faint-hearted. Machines are already outperforming us in many areas—and they are only getting better. The coming years will be both profoundly transformational and disruptive. Many existing jobs will vanish. And yet, we are also on the brink of perhaps the greatest era of value creation in human history. The AI age will be defined by duality—massive displacement on the one hand and unprecedented entrepreneurial opportunity on the other.

Standing still is not an option. In this new world, we cannot wait for opportunities to be handed to us—we must create them. That demands a return to the spirit of the early man: adventurous, curious, self-reliant and unafraid to explore the unknown.

Ironically, while human civilization has advanced, we’ve become narrower in our skills, more dependent on systems and increasingly risk-averse. We’ve traded survival instincts for comfort and predictability. But AI will shake that comfortable flow of life—especially in the realm of work. To adapt, we must reconnect with the raw, exploratory energy that once defined our species.

At the same time, the AI age represents more than disruption—it may be the next catalyst for human evolution. Whether through breakthroughs in genetic engineering, accelerated space exploration or something we can’t yet imagine; the shift is already underway. But beyond physical or technological evolution, what we truly need is a growth in consciousness—in compassion, empathy and a broader sense of purpose. These are the deeply human traits that no machine can replicate.

So where does the edge lie? It lies in this rediscovery—of instinct, imagination, resilience. It lies in reconnecting with the timeless principles that have powered human success across generations. Whether we think of this as rekindling the survival skills of the ‘early man’ or unlocking the potential of the ‘super man’, the message is

the same: to thrive in the AI age, we must double down on what makes us human.

The POSSIBLE path: Eight timeless mantras to succeed in the AI age

As we navigate the uncertainty and promise of the AI age, one truth becomes increasingly clear: our future success will not be defined by how much we resist technology but by how deeply we rediscover and elevate what makes us human. This rediscovery is not just philosophical, it must be practical, actionable and anchored in principles that can guide us through rapid change.

Reflecting on my own journey, I feel immensely fortunate. I am a product of both worlds—the extraordinary business and technological progress of the past thirty years and the enduring spiritual wisdom of Indian traditions. This blend of experiences has shaped how I view the disruptions and opportunities that lie ahead. It has helped me recognize that while tools and technologies may change, certain human truths do not.

Based on this perspective, I want to share with you **eight timeless mantras** that I believe will be essential for building and sustaining our *Human Edge*—both professionally and personally—in the AI age. These are not abstract ideals; they are deeply practical, field-tested principles that have enabled individuals to thrive across generations.

When everything around us is shifting, it becomes even more critical to anchor ourselves in what endures. These mantras have stood the test of time. They draw from the *Human Quotient*—those dimensions of human capacity that cannot be easily coded, automated or replaced. And that is precisely why they will remain relevant, no matter how advanced AI becomes.

The Eight Timeless Mantras form a fitting anagram, **POSSIBLE**, which perfectly captures the idea that there is a path

to unlocking and strengthening our unique human edge in the AI age. These are:

Mantra 1: Enhance PROBLEM-SOLVING skills

Problem-solving and, in particular, problem-identification is a critical skill for thriving in the AI age. Structured problem-solving will remain a critical human skill even while a lot of problem-solving is taken over by machines. This method starts with identifying the root causes of the problem and breaking down complex issues into smaller, manageable parts. The most astute leaders and problem-solvers I've encountered consistently pinpoint the core issue, enabling them to develop solutions that deliver maximum impact.

There are numerous frameworks that can aid the structured problem-solving process, but simply understanding them is not enough—the key lies in practising and mastering them. Moreover, while we focus on structured problem-solving, in the AI age, wisdom and intuition are likely to play an equally important and perhaps an even greater role. These qualities enable us to pause, clarify what truly matters and apply sound judgment to complex situations. This systematic approach—structured problem-solving combined with wisdom—helps us cut through noise, focus our energy and move from confusion to clarity.

Mantra 2: OPENNESS to change

As I've often said, the AI age is an era of disruption, where significant changes are inevitable. The way we work and live and the skills required are set to undergo a dramatic transformation. In such times, embracing openness to change is not just important, it is essential. Those who resist change risk being left behind in a

world that is evolving faster than ever. Moreover, as AI continues to excel in technical capabilities, the value of purely technical skills will diminish. Instead, the focus will shift to one's ability to adapt, grow and acquire new knowledge.

This is why the ability to 'learn to learn' becomes a critical factor of success. It's no longer about mastering a single skill or discipline but about cultivating the mindset to continuously explore, question and acquire diverse skills. In essence, staying curious, adaptable and open to lifelong learning will be the key to unlocking future opportunities.

Mantra 3: Connect with the self through SPIRITUALITY

In the age defined by hyperconnectivity and material excess, spirituality is no longer optional, it is essential. It provides a much-needed anchor to maintain inner peace, clarity and emotional balance. Far from being abstract or mystical, spirituality offers practical tools to develop deeper self-awareness and intuition—qualities that are increasingly vital to unlock one's full potential in the AI age.

Practices like meditation, yoga, pranayama (breath control) and prayer create space for individuals to step back from the noise, reduce stress and reconnect with their core values and purpose. Through my own journey, I've come to see how integrating these practices into daily life strengthens not only ethical reasoning and emotional resilience but also enhances clarity of thought and decision-making.

Spirituality, at its core, is about anchoring—a journey within to find clarity and balance. In a fast-paced, often overwhelming world shaped by algorithms and constant change, it serves as a quiet but powerful counterforce. It helps us act with intention, stay grounded amidst uncertainty and live a life that is not just successful but truly meaningful.

Mantra 4: Learn teamwork and resilience through SPORTS

I've always believed that sports offer invaluable lessons in teamwork, leadership, and resilience—traits that have always mattered but are now indispensable in the AI age. In a world changing at breakneck speed, no individual can succeed alone. The future will demand greater collaboration, adaptable strategies and the ability to persevere through uncertainty—all of which are best learned on the playing field.

Sports mirror the challenges of business and life: working toward shared goals, playing to each team member's strengths and staying composed under pressure. Just as in professional settings, setbacks in sports are inevitable. But more importantly, they teach us how to bounce back—how to recover from failure, recalibrate and try again. That mindset is crucial in a world where volatility is the new normal.

Whether inspired by the grit of underdogs or the discipline of great teams, participating in sports—at any level—is one of the most effective ways to build resilience, develop character and nurture the collaborative spirit needed to thrive in the AI age.

Mantra 5: Make an IMPACT

The spirit of going beyond ourselves will be what truly sets us apart from machines and becomes our strength to rise above the disruptions that lie ahead in the AI age. By ensuring purpose-driven actions, we can create a foundation for positive change. It is essential to not just empower ourselves but also one another to unlock their full potential, ensuring that humanity not only adapts to change but thrives in the face of it.

However, as they say, before you go out to change the world, you must 'put your own house in order first'. So finding your sweet spot, the intersection of your passion, talent and what the

world needs, is the starting point. Furthermore, taking personal responsibility is key to driving change, whether in your community, workplace or the world at large. This mantra encourages us to think beyond personal success and focus on the broader societal impact of their actions. By embracing the role of change-makers, we can help address the complex challenges of the modern world, recognizing that even the smallest positive action can have a ripple effect that can change the entire system.

Mantra 6: Find the right BALANCE

In our personal and professional lives we constantly face conflicting objectives, and this challenge is even more pronounced in the AI age. Success requires every individual to be able to navigate and master these dualities. Conquering these dualities requires us to understand their true nature so as to find the right way of dealing with them.

As we navigate through the highly dynamic, fast-paced world around us, it is important to take a moment to live the momentary, while working towards achieving the momentous. Similarly, learning two-speed execution, achieving short-term goals while simultaneously working towards achieving long-term objectives, can help individuals achieve sustained success. To succeed in the AI age, individuals need to be able to move beyond mere trade-offs and handle the pressure of competing objectives without losing focus on the bigger picture.

Mantra 7: Unleash the LEADER within you

The AI age marks the end of not just the ‘era of jobs’ but also the ‘age of managers’! As AI takes over both administrative and analytical tasks, the need for traditional management roles diminishes. To thrive in this new era, every individual must embrace leadership—

demonstrating initiative, creativity, adaptability and the ability to inspire others.

However, leadership in the AI age is neither for the meek or the cautious. Sure, the core principles of leadership, such as helping others realize their potential, inspiring through vision and making a positive difference, remain unchanged. However, the approach to these principles must evolve to meet the demands of today's world. Leaders must balance the head and heart, build trust, show humility and demonstrate integrity. Leadership is about giving more than getting and about creating a compelling vision that can inspire others to act beyond their limits. The ability to adapt constantly, create trust and be role models for change are crucial qualities that help leaders navigate the challenges of the AI age.

Mantra 8: Be an ENTREPRENEUR

The AI age is, above all, the 'age of entrepreneurs'. It marks a paradigm shift where the focus is no longer on seeking jobs but on solving problems and creating something new. This would hold true for those who are building a startup and those working within organizations. With AI automating a wide range of tasks and providing powerful tools, individuals now have unprecedented opportunities to innovate and build something new.

Entrepreneurship in today's AI age requires a mindset that embraces calculated risk taking, continuous learning and an unrelenting focus on solving problems. Being an entrepreneur means challenging the status quo, identifying new opportunities and making disruptive breakthroughs. Entrepreneurship also demands resilience in the face of failure and the ability to pivot when necessary. Lessons from the life stories of iconic entrepreneurs like Steve Jobs and Elon Musk highlight the importance of challenging norms, being persistent and staying adaptable in the

face of adversity. To put it simply, entrepreneurship is not just about starting a business, but a way of thinking that helps create lasting value in the AI age.

Clearly, this is the age of disruption, but it is also the age of extraordinary possibility for those who are ready to dig deep and rediscover what makes us truly human. The future will not be defined by technology alone but by how we choose to evolve alongside it—with clarity, courage and conviction.

As you embark on this journey through the eight timeless mantras, I hope this book serves as both a guide and a companion, helping you navigate the profound shifts of the AI age with purpose and confidence. Each mantra has been carefully chosen to offer not just practical insights but enduring wisdom—rooted in history, tested by experience and designed to help you thrive in a rapidly changing world.

I encourage you to reflect deeply, act deliberately and embrace the journey of growth ahead. Because the edge we seek isn't just about staying ahead of machines—it's about becoming better, more conscious versions of ourselves.

Here's to unlocking the *Human Edge* in the AI age.
Enjoy the journey—and let's make it POSSIBLE.