

There's an upside to automation

How more innovation can lead to more jobs

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INDIA HAS A long history of innovation and, today, the country has another opportunity to be at the forefront of innovation. India has the potential to become the global hub for robotic process automation (RPA), helping to reinvent workstreams across the world's biggest enterprises. Taking a page from China's book as it slowly overhauled its manufacturing sector a few decades ago, India can become the centre of an upcoming automation revolution.

What India has is a solid foundation of ITeS companies that have continued to grow and expand. The first phase of the development of this foundation involved the movement of simple data entry tasks, which was then followed by more complex processes being outsourced here, which then evolved to domain-specific processes being run from India. The fourth phase, and the most important, will involve the world's largest digital workforces being run out of India. At the heart of this revolution is automation.

Today, anything that can be automated will be automated, and the Indian IT industry is primed for this by offering RPA services that are faster and more affordable. So, there is no reason why the upcoming golden age of IT and the next great innovation cannot originate from India.

The underlying function of automation enables routine jobs that follow fixed patterns to be replicated by a machine and supervised by RPA algorithms. This gives humans the ultimate reward, the time, to focus on building proactive solutions and disruptive technologies.

For years, Indian IT has been all about outsourcing, offshoring and building on existing technologies by performing mundane tasks. However, the talent and resources are certainly available to build disruptive new technologies and solve more sophisticated problems. RPA represents a chance for the next generation of IT innovators to direct their resources

towards building an IT infrastructure that the world's industries rely on.

Automation will boost jobs, and not eliminate them

Operational efficiency is one of automation's measurable benefits, and can boost the quality and volume of output for service providers. This translates into more orders, more revenue and more innovation, which ultimately impacts hiring patterns. Beneficiaries are the economy, workers, technology, and this effectively sets up India for another IT boom.

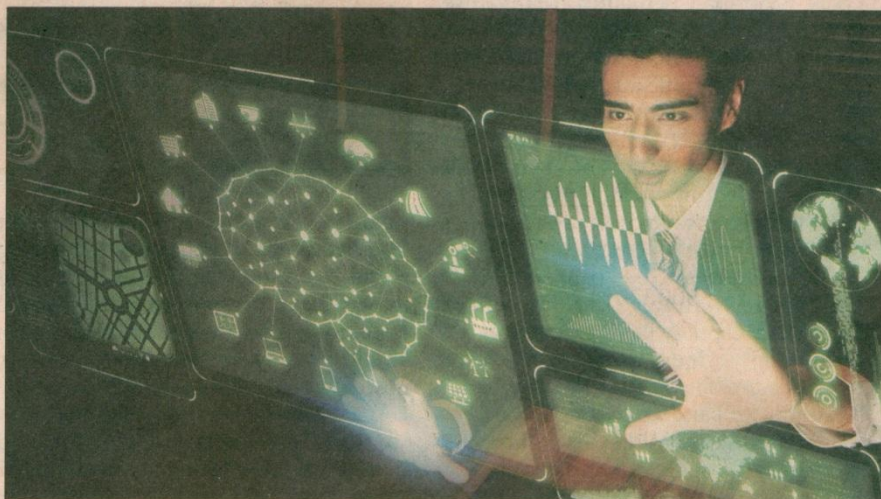
History has plenty of such examples of advancements and mankind has always

tries and jobs will arise as an outcome.

In fact, high-end automation requires even more precise human intervention and monitoring. The question we should ask is not how many jobs will be lost if we automate, but how many jobs will be lost if we don't automate. After all, if India falls behind and doesn't capitalise on existing strengths of the ITeS industry, other countries will soon make it irrelevant.

The golden age of IT is here

In five years from now when we look back at the rise of RPA, these transformative years will be seen as the tipping point for success and the era of disruptive Indian



come through with newer and better jobs. So, why would automation be any different when it is simply an evolution of the way work is done? For instance, when ATMs first began operating, bank tellers feared for their jobs. However, due to the operational benefits that ATMs granted, banks expanded their operations and opened more branches. They then hired more people, and not just tellers.

The 'lump of labour' is an important concept to remember here. It is an economic notion that is as relevant today as when it first surfaced decades ago. It falsely believes that there is only a limited amount of work to be done and a limited number of jobs to be filled. In reality, as RPA takes over repetitive tasks, new indus-

innovation. For the Indian IT industry in particular, the upskilling that has now begun is the first step in this journey. As partnerships between humans and bots become commonplace, customer experience will get a boost and India has the potential to be known as a market leader and enabler of true digital transformation.

There are sure to be hurdles as we move forward, but this is the time for India to position itself beyond IT service provider. We're not far from the day when India will be known as the innovation hub for reinventing the future of automation.

The author is co-founder & CRO of Automation Anywhere, the robotic process automation platform. Views are personal