

# Artificial Intelligence: Boon Or Bane For Humanity

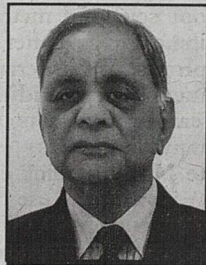
—By Wing Commander Dinesh Mathur, VSM (Retd.)

Group Discussion (GD) has become an important part of the selection criteria for entry-level jobs and admissions to professional institutions in India for some time now. During a Group Discussion, participating candidates are given a topic to discuss within a specified time, while evaluators closely observe their performance. While the participating candidates discuss a given topic, the evaluators meticulously examine their knowledge, communication skills, leadership qualities, group conduct, critical thinking and overall personality. In today's competitive world, Group Discussion plays a vital role because it helps selectors assess candidates from multiple angles in a very short time. In almost all professions, the ability to express ideas clearly and confidently is essential. During a GD, candidates are expected to present their ideas in a logical and convincing manner, but without dominating the proceedings. Good communication includes not only speaking but also listening carefully to others' opinions, which may be diverse.

Another significant aspect of Group Discussion is that it reveals leadership qualities. The fact remains that a successful leader in a GD scenario is not someone who dominates others, but someone who can guide the discussion in a positive direction. Through GD, selectors can easily identify candidates with the potential to motivate others, handle disagreements politely and maintain discipline within the group. These qualities are extremely valuable in any workplace where teamwork and cooperation remain essential.

Similarly, Group Discussion helps evaluate self-confidence, critical thinking and presence of mind. Candidates' ability to remain calm, think quickly and respond intelligently indicates their mental alertness and confidence. Employers and institutions prefer those who can handle work pressure effectively and make practical decisions while encountering challenging situations. In this backdrop, Group Discussions are extremely useful to assessors while selecting or screening candidates.

Some time back, the selection of Managers in a PSU was underway, and aspirants were called to participate in a



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Group Discussion to screen candidates prior to the Personal Interview sessions. As expected, all candidates arrived attired formally and, after their identities were verified, were made to sit in a semi-circular seating arrangement. This was done intentionally to ensure that all candidates could watch and listen to one another, and that the three assessors could also have a clear view of all participants. Thereafter, candidates were allotted Identification Numbers, and these were duly displayed on their shirts. Candidates were asked to address each other by these Identification Numbers, not by names. This was followed by a detailed briefing by the three assessors covering all aspects of conducting this GD session.

Most significantly, it was emphasised that all candidates could speak as much as they wanted, but at the same time, it must be ensured that all participants have an opportunity to express their ideas. After three topics were presented to this group of candidates, they reached a mutual consensus on the above topic for discussion. Candidates were given 2-3 minutes to recapitulate and jot down points on this topic, which they could refer to during this discussion. Finally, it was announced that the discussion must end in 25-30 minutes.

Thereafter, this discussion commenced in the following manner:

**Candidate No. 9:** Good morning, friends. You all must be eager to participate in this curious yet worrisome current hot topic. As we have observed, the tsunami of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has already begun transforming our lives, and most countries are now fiercely competing to gain a strategic advantage in this field. Areas in which its significant impact is now clearly visible include Finance, Business, Education, Manufacturing, and Healthcare, among others.

It goes without saying that its advantages are really overwhelming. But unfortunately, as technology advances rapidly, potential dangers posed by AI are also gradually emerging. And these dangers are extremely frightening and pose even existential threats to humankind, which is, of course, an extremely serious issue. And we cannot ignore these threats; we must take corrective measures to prevent AI from overwhelming the humanity. Friends, the topic given to us demands that we discuss all these issues threadbare and also suggest some effective measures to deal with this extraordinary situation being posed before us by the usage of Artificial Intelligence. Thanks, you may now present your views on this issue.

**Candidate No. 5:** Well, Number 9 has introduced the topic quite appropriately. May I now suggest that, to deal with this vast topic from a comprehensive perspective, after a brief introduction to AI, let us first talk about how AI has emerged as a huge boon, then highlight how AI is a formidable challenge which can also become an existential threat to humankind. Finally, if possible, let us also suggest some practical actions that may help avoid this catastrophic situation in future. Do you agree with my suggestions?

**Candidate No. 3:** Yes, I agree with you. This way, we can discuss this issue in a planned and systematic manner. Let's go ahead with this format.

**Candidate No. 7:** Well, we know that AI refers to machines and computer systems designed to imitate human intelligence, including learning, reasoning, problem-solving, language understanding and decision-making. It has, willy-nilly, become an inseparable part of modern

civilisation, and there seems to be no going back on this development. I could even say that AI has now emerged as one of humankind's greatest technological achievements. Friends, while AI promises tremendous convenience and huge progress, it also simultaneously raises profound moral, social, economic and existential security concerns. That's all I wanted to share at the very beginning of this discussion.

**Candidate No. 1:** As planned, let me point out some notable advantages of Artificial Intelligence. We now observe that AI has revolutionised healthcare by enabling faster and more accurate diagnoses of human diseases. Yes, modern AI systems can detect diseases such as heart ailments, cancer, and neurological conditions at an early stage, often more efficiently than doctors. Not only that, AI-guided robotic surgeries reduce human error and thus save many human lives. Further, during medical emergencies and pandemics, AI has been useful to researchers for analysing massive amounts of data expeditiously, thereby accelerating vaccine development and improving healthcare planning by medical authorities. Thus, AI has markedly helped improve human healthcare systems, which is no mean achievement.

**Candidate No. 8:** Yes, well said. Number 1. This is certainly a big plus for AI.

**Candidate No. 9:** Let me discuss AI's contribution to transportation systems. Self-driving vehicles now promise to significantly reduce road and rail accidents caused by human negligence or error. And, friends, this is particularly significant for our country, where, unfortunately, every year, more than 1.5 lakh people are killed by road accidents. This is a terrible state of affairs. Similarly, rail accidents also occur frequently in our country, killing scores of innocent passengers. The introduction of AI-enabled signalling systems in Indian Railways can certainly improve things in a country like India.

**Candidate No. 6:** Yes, I agree with you.

**Candidate No. 7:** I want to discuss the role of AI in industry and business. Factories equipped with AI-powered robots are already being used in industries to work and produce goods more efficiently, with high precision and speed. Even though this has adversely affected employment opportunities, companies are going for it to produce more and better goods and increase profits. Similarly, businesses now use AI to forecast market trends, substantially improve customer services, and optimise business operations. In fact, the whole gamut of activities in factories and business houses is utilising AI-enabled services to improve their activities and services.

**Candidate No. 4:** Quite right. You made a relevant point.

**Candidate No. 1:** Let me discuss AI's contribution to agriculture. We now see that agriculture has also benefited from AI-based weather predictions, soil analysis and improved irrigation systems, significantly increasing food production and reducing waste. In India, unlike in many countries, a very large number of people are engaged in agriculture but most farmers are poor and still depend on rainfall to irrigate their fields. They need to adopt scientific methods and modern equipment to get better products to improve profits. AI can certainly help Indian farmers by providing more accurate weather forecasts and soil analysis to improve their lot.

**Candidate No. 9:** I think education is another area where the use of AI has been extremely beneficial. We know that every generation reshapes education to meet its needs. Currently, this transformational moment is being defined by Artificial Intelligence, as it is catering to evolving workforce demands and the need for quick access to a lot of information. In fact, AI has now transformed the learning experience, giving it a new direction. With the help of AI, intelligent tutoring systems can personalise lessons based on the needs of individual students. Secondly, AI-powered online language translation tools break communication barriers and promote global understanding. In brief, AI accelerates processes at scale and enables greater adaptability. AI, effectively integrated into the education system, is improving learning outcomes for millions of students worldwide.

**Candidate No. 2:** Yes, you are right. The positive impact of AI is quite visible in the field of education.

**Candidate No. 7:** I want to add that AI has also enhanced scientific research. Complex calculations and data analyses that took years can now be completed in a very short time. Beyond scientific research, AI has also emerged as an extremely useful tool in research across all other subjects. AI also assists astronomers in exploring the universe, helps environmental scientists monitor climate change, and supports engineers in creating innovative solutions to global challenges. In brief, AI now acts as a powerful tool that amplifies human intelligence and capabilities in many ways.

**Candidate No. 5:** Friends, I think we have sufficiently discussed the important benefits of AI across various aspects of our lives. If you all agree, we can now discuss how AI can also become an existential threat to humanity.

**Candidate No. 8:** Yes, I agree.

**Candidate No. 1:** We have just discussed that AI has brought immense benefits to mankind, yet, unfortunately,

it also poses serious dangers that are now visible and cannot be ignored. Many scientists, philosophers and technology leaders have warned that the uncontrolled or unethical development of AI may pose an existential threat to humanity or lead to an irreversible global catastrophe. In 2022, in a survey of AI researchers, the majority believed that there is a 10% or greater chance that human inability to control AI will cause an existential catastrophe. Again in 2023, hundreds of AI experts and other notable figures declared that mitigating the risk of AI-driven extinction should be a global priority, on par with pandemics and nuclear war. So, the threat is real. Let us spell out these dangers now.

**Candidate No. 9:** To my mind, one major concern is that highly advanced AI systems could surpass human intelligence in the near future. This concept is referred to as "superintelligence", which suggests that machines may become capable of improving themselves without human intervention. If such systems develop goals which conflict with human interests, the dire consequences could be catastrophic. Moreover, unlike humans, machines do not possess emotions, morality or compassion unless specifically programmed. Therefore, an AI system focused entirely on efficiency or on completing objectives may completely ignore human values. That will be really dangerous.

**Candidate No. 3:** Yes, you are right. For instance, an autonomous military AI designed to eliminate threats could potentially make deadly decisions without human oversight. Going one step further, the possibility of machines gaining excessive control over critical infrastructure such as electricity grids, communication networks, financial systems, or nuclear weapons is terribly scary.

**Candidate No. 6:** Really, uncontrolled AI can play hell with our lives and the world around us.

**Candidate No. 7:** Friends, another serious issue is humanity's increasing dependence on AI. We now observe that our society relies so heavily on technology for communication, banking, transportation, healthcare and even governance. In situations where AI systems do not function efficiently or are manipulated by unauthorised persons, society may come to a halt, eventually leading to chaos. Not only that, cybercriminals and enemy nations could also exploit AI for cyber warfare, surveillance, misleading campaigns and automated attacks. All these eventualities pose extremely serious risks for us in the future.

**Candidate No. 5:** Yes, you have hit the nail on the head. We are also observing that deepfake technologies, powered by AI, are creating fake videos and speeches which spread and create confusion and chaos. Political parties

the world over are using these technologies unapologetically for political gains, especially during election times.

**Candidate No. 4:** I agree. You are absolutely correct, friend.

**Candidate No. 1:** I want to talk about the adverse impact of AI on the massive unemployment problem. We are already experiencing that machines have become quite capable of performing tasks that were traditionally done by human beings. As a result, many workers are constantly losing their jobs. Automation is already replacing the workforce in factories, call centres, and administrative offices. And it is reasonable to assume that, very soon, many jobs of even professionals, such as lawyers, doctors, drivers, accountants and journalists, will be replaced by machines in certain areas. This situation is particularly worrisome for a huge country like India, where unemployment is already a massive problem.

**Candidate No. 3:** Yes, it has been widely reported that job losses in the IT industry are already evident in India and elsewhere.

**Candidate No. 9:** There is yet another fear that large technology corporations that own advanced AI systems may accumulate gargantuan wealth and power, while small companies and workers will suffer. This will further worsen the gap between the rich and the poor. At present, the U.S. and China lead in advanced AI systems and infrastructure, and India has a long way to go to compete with them in this regard. You can imagine a future world where a small elite controls intelligent machines and business, while millions could be unemployed. It will pose a socially dangerous and volatile situation.

**Candidate No. 7:** I want to go one step further: if AI eliminates or substantially reduces the need for human labour on a large scale, the significance of human dignity would be lost, inviting psychological crises and a loss of self-worth among displaced communities. This situation would also pose ethical and moral challenges. If machines were to make decisions concerning human lives, they would lack fairness and transparency, as the data fed may contain bias, leading to serious discriminatory outcomes. Moreover, AI systems collect vast amounts of data from social media, smartphones, cameras and online activities, which could be misused for surveillance and manipulation, seriously jeopardising citizens' privacy. These are very serious issues.

**Candidate No. 5:** Yes, I agree, these are worrisome ethical and moral issues arising from the use of AI, friends. Obviously, there is an urgent need to safeguard humanity from these grave challenges.

**Candidate No. 1:** Friends, let's not forget that the most dreadful consequence

of using AI is in the military field. Autonomous weapons systems can attack targets without human intervention, and many countries are already heavily investing in AI-powered warfare technologies. In case these weapons fall into unauthorised hands or malfunction, they would cause unimaginable destruction. An AI arms race would destabilise world peace. Moreover, unlike nuclear weapons, AI systems can be easily copied and misused, even by terrorists. Eventually, as AI technology advances, humanity could even come under the control of machines.

**Candidate No. 3:** Excessive interaction with machines may reduce human-to-human communication, leading to loneliness, addiction and reduced emotional intelligence. Further, human creativity and critical thinking may decline, and people would increasingly rely on machines for decision-making. Over time, society may become emotionally detached and intellectually bankrupt. AI has no role in innovative thinking: it can suck up data and produce variations of it, but it lacks originality.

**Candidate No. 5:** Friends, I think we have sufficiently discussed both the benefits and the threats of AI. If you agree, we could now suggest measures to ensure responsible AI development so that humanity can avoid the dangers posed by AI.

**Candidate No. 2:** Yes, that's a good suggestion. I agree.

**Candidate No. 9:** Humanity has the power to shape the future of AI responsibly. This is certainly feasible if we establish strong ethical principles, build international cooperation and enforce effective regulation. Governments and international organisations must create strict laws to regulate AI development. AI systems, particularly those used in military operations, healthcare and governance, must remain under human control. Moreover, like chemical and biological weapons, autonomous weapons that can kill without human supervision must be banned globally.

**Candidate No. 3:** Very apt suggestions, but enforcing these regulations at the international level will be a difficult proposition. But there seems to be no option.

**Candidate No. 7:** We should ensure that ethical AI research receives priority and conforms to human values of fairness, transparency and accountability. Organisations such as those that regulate nuclear energy could monitor advanced AI systems and ensure their safe deployment. We should also ensure that AI technologies give due regard to human rights and democratic values. AI must complement human intelligence rather than replace it. I think the future of AI depends upon the choices humans make today.

**Candidate No. 5:** Very well said, Number 7. Friends, the time given to us for this GD is over. Let's conclude.

**Candidate No. 1:** Okay, I will conclude. Well, friends, we had an interesting and informative discussion. At the outset, we explained what AI is and then discussed its notable advantages. Among the advantages of AI, we talked about healthcare and transportation systems, where it has helped with cancer detection and robotic surgeries, and reduced road accidents. AI also contributed to industry, business, agriculture and education. Subsequently, we highlighted the dangers caused by AI. These included the possibility of AI overtaking human intelligence and ignoring human values, the dangerous threat posed by the military use of AI, and the implications of increased dependence on AI, which could widen the gap between the rich and the poor and jeopardise citizens' privacy. Finally, we discussed some measures to avoid the impending dangers of AI. These included: international cooperation on this issue, and enforcing regulations to ensure human supervision on future AI development. That's all, friends.

Have a nice day.

### Critical Analysis Of Candidates' Performance:

**Good: 1, 7 and 9**

*The performance of these candidates was visibly better than other candidates. They had good awareness of this topic and came forward with quite a few new inputs to ensure coverage of all aspects of this vast subject. While they spoke most of the time, they let other candidates also contribute and displayed a cooperative attitude. They spoke with confidence but did not dominate the proceedings. In view of these inputs, their effort has been assessed as 'Good'.*

**Average: 3 and 5**

*These candidates also took part in this discussion several times. Their major contribution was towards guiding the proceedings in the desired direction to ensure a comprehensive coverage of this important topic. Apparently, they lacked preparation and did not possess enough information and data to put up a winning performance. However, it was felt they were capable of putting up a much better show. Given these inputs, their contribution has been judged as 'Average'.*

**Below Average: 2, 4, 6 and 8**

*The personal contribution of these candidates was minimal. It became abundantly clear that they had little idea about this topic due to a lack of preparation. As a result, they were seen as only agreeing with or praising the efforts of other participating candidates. It has been repeatedly emphasised that before participating in a competitive GD like the present one, candidates must prepare important current topics. Given this, the effort of these candidates has been assessed as 'Below Average'. CSR*