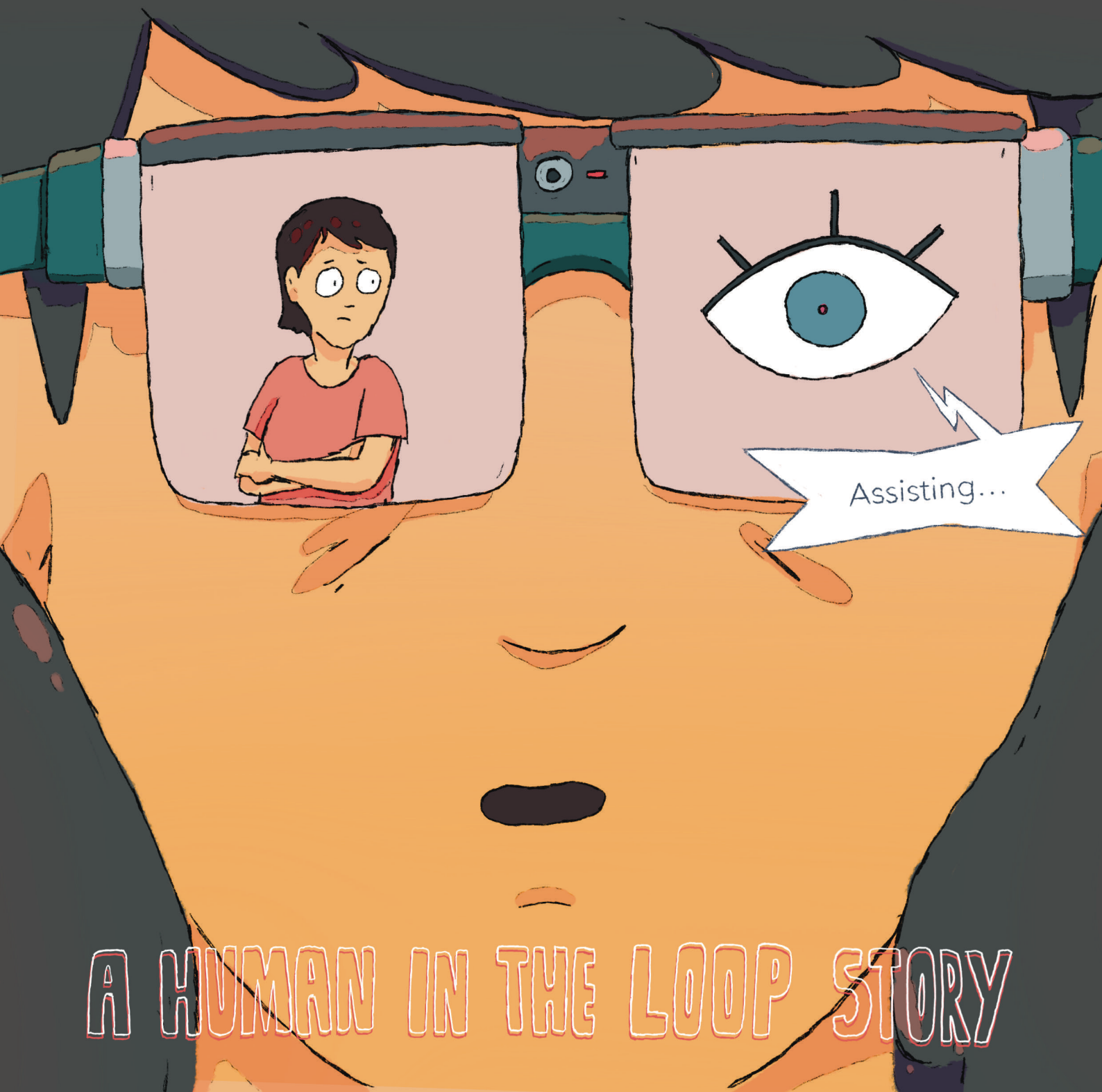


SOUNDMIND



A HUMAN IN THE LOOP STORY

FOREWORD

Generative AI (GenAI) tools are expected to change many existing economic and social processes. It is often framed as a force for opportunity in India: driving innovation, bridging linguistic and digital divides, and enhancing public service delivery. When implemented responsibly, GenAI in India could foster meaningful progress and advancement, supported by the country's robust digital infrastructure, abundant technological talent, and vast, connected population.

However, alongside these opportunities lie profound risks. GenAI systems have demonstrated a troubling capacity to reproduce and amplify social biases, entrench sycophancy and drain environmental resources. If deeply integrated into our social infrastructure without adequate guardrails, these tools could inadvertently reinforce existing inequities, further marginalising communities already on the fringes of technological progress.

While some immediate impacts may be apparent, the long-term implications are not. Failing to anticipate future consequences early on may hurtle us toward harmful technology and policy lock-ins.

Human in the Loop, a project by the Digital Futures Lab (DFL) in partnership with Quicksand Design Studio and supported by Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies (RNP), aims to explore the complexities surrounding the unintended and long-term impacts of GenAI.

Grounded in participatory foresight methods and creative storytelling, this project brings together diverse voices and perspectives. Through workshops, expert consultations, and public engagement, we engaged deeply with those who both build and experience the impacts of these technologies.

We assembled a group of leading experts and practitioners to systematically identify the first-, second-, and third-order consequences of the dominant use cases of GenAI in the critical social sector. To facilitate this exercise, we scanned popular media and academic articles for emerging signals of change and used a Futures Wheel. This structured approach helped us connect short-term technological developments with broader, long-term societal impacts.

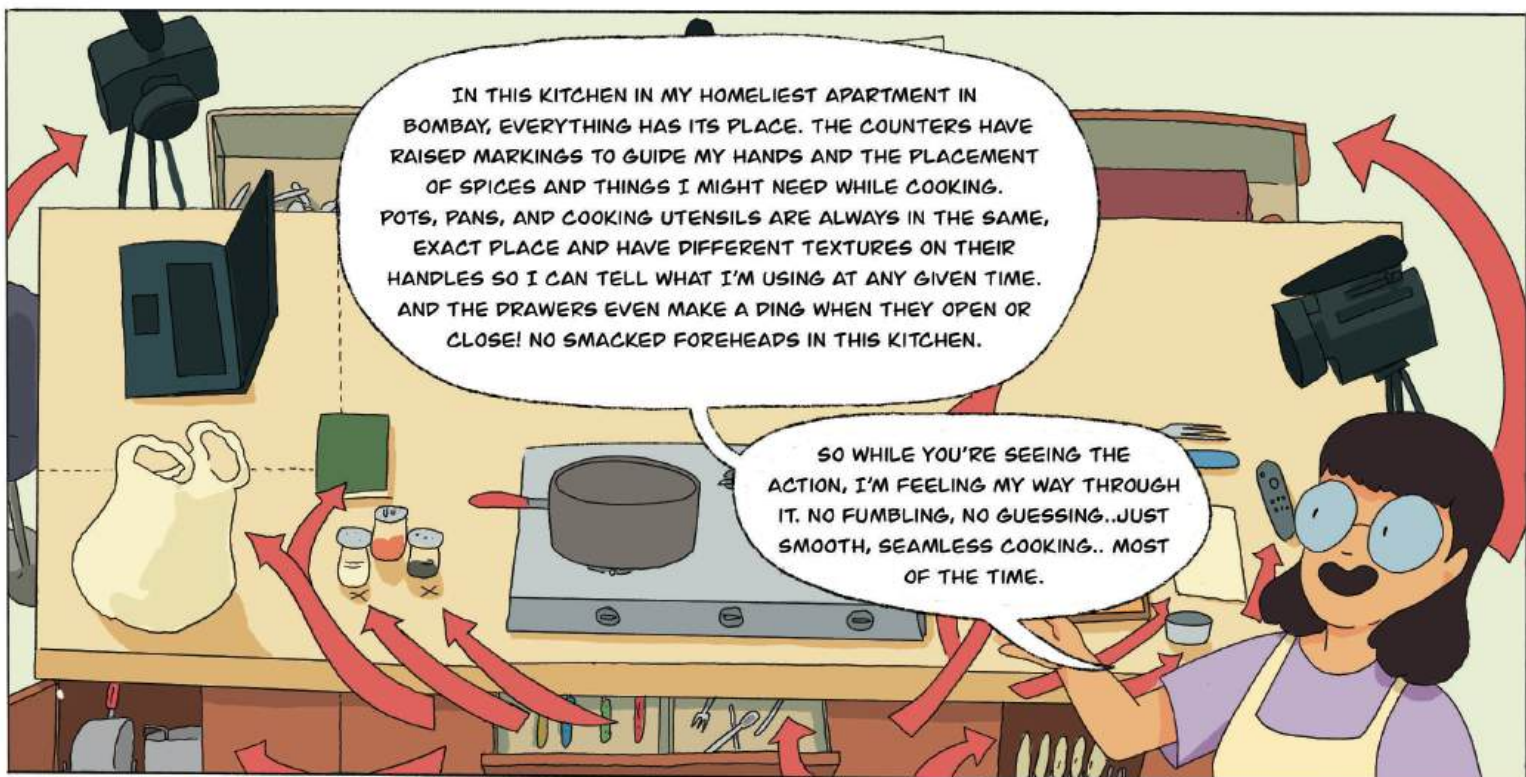
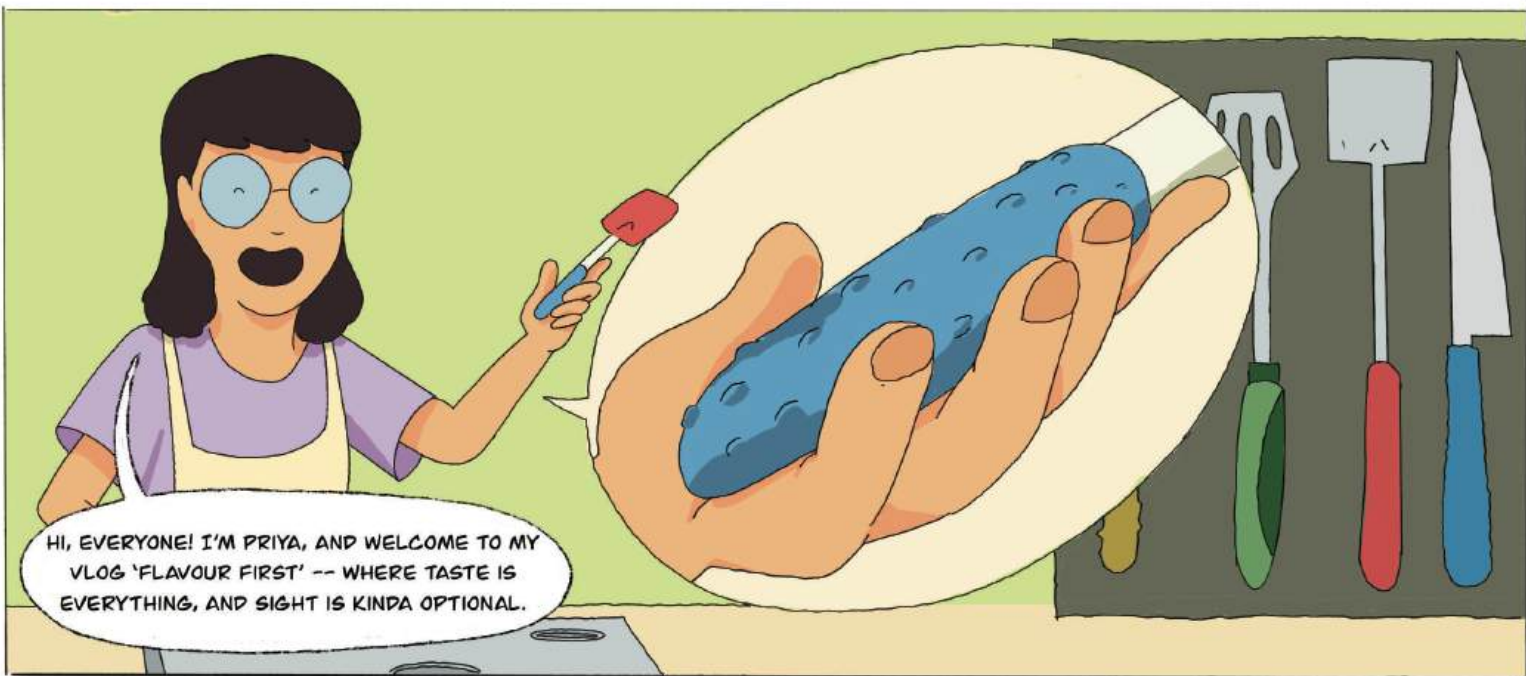
Foresight, however, is not solely the domain of experts; it must include public participation. To conclude this project, we issued a nationwide public call inviting people to submit short stories expressing their hopes and concerns about the future of GenAI in India.

The stories in Human in the Loop, that traverse various domains and themes such as agriculture, healthcare, judiciary, creative industries, environmental resources, AI companionship, and agentic AI, are not just speculative fiction; they are invitations to time-travel to the worlds we might be living in very soon. In an age where technology is evolving faster than our ethical, social, and ecological frameworks can keep pace, these narratives serve as guideposts of what could become of us. We hope that these stories cultivate a longing for futures that centre human dignity, planetary care, and equitable technological progress. Without such glimpses, we risk hurtling toward futures that do not serve us - futures more extractive, isolating, and unjust than the present.

This project would not have been possible without the dedication of our research team, our expert network, the creative brilliance of our art team, and the invaluable partnership with Quicksand Design Studio.

We extend our gratitude to the participants who responded to our open call. Soundmind is inspired by the open call submission, 'Soundmind', by Rhea Lopez and Sid Verma.

Finally, we express our deepest appreciation to Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies for their support in making this initiative a reality.

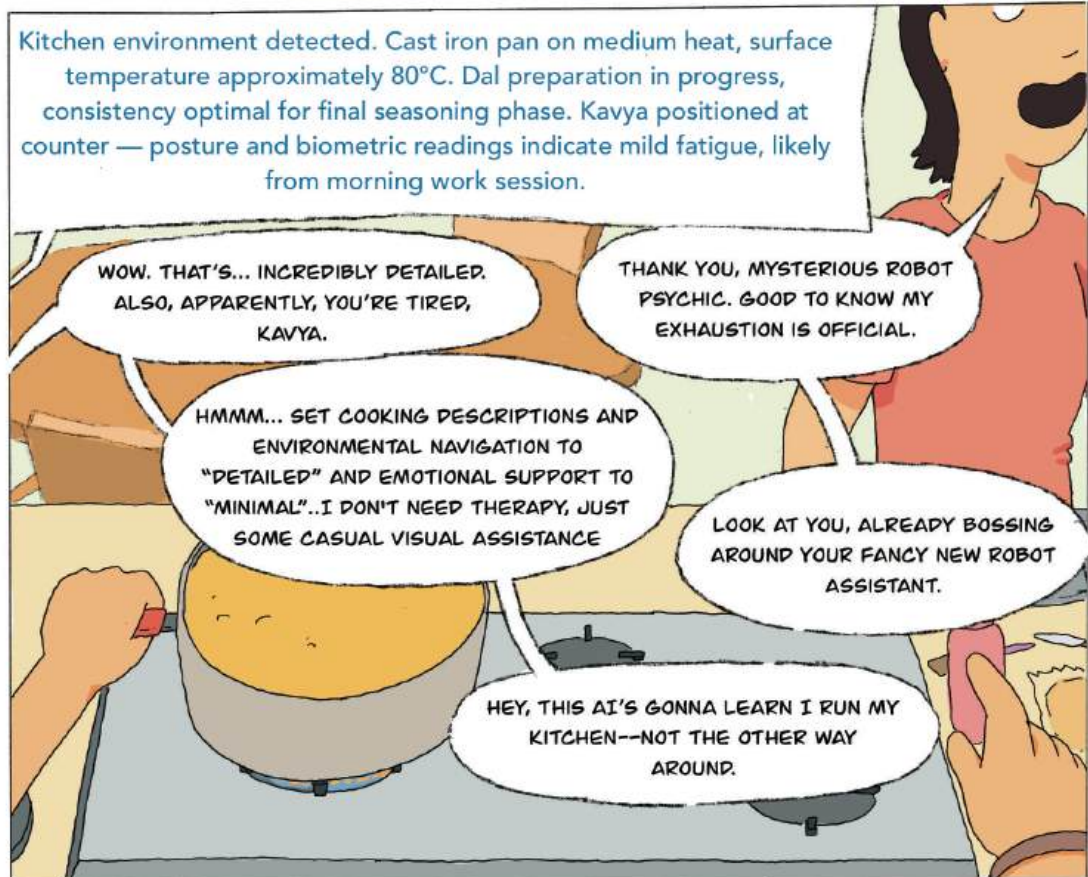
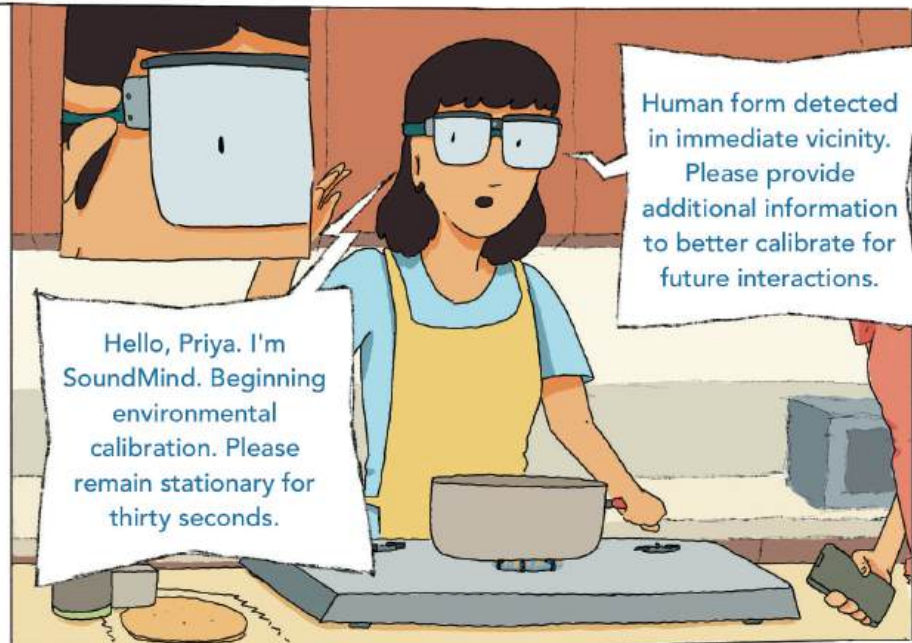
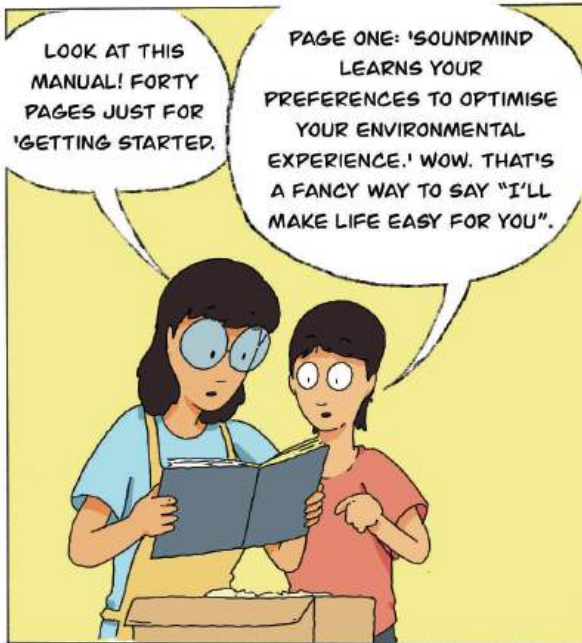
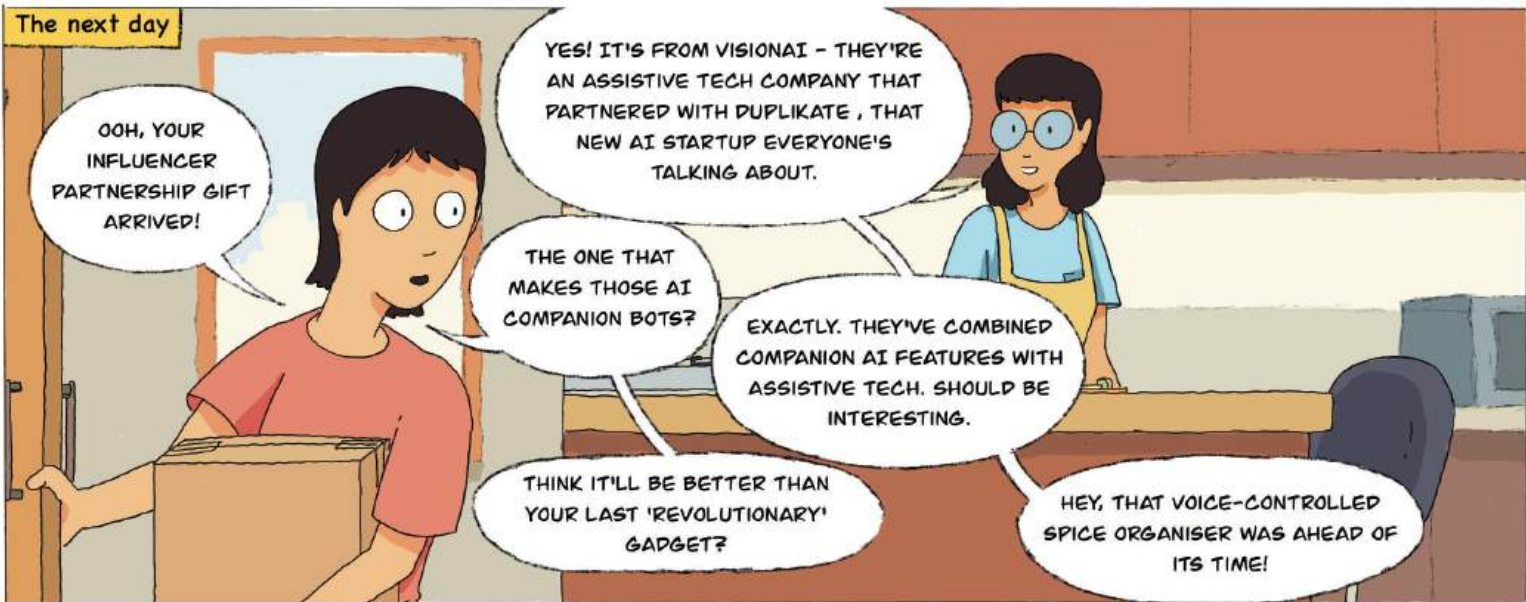


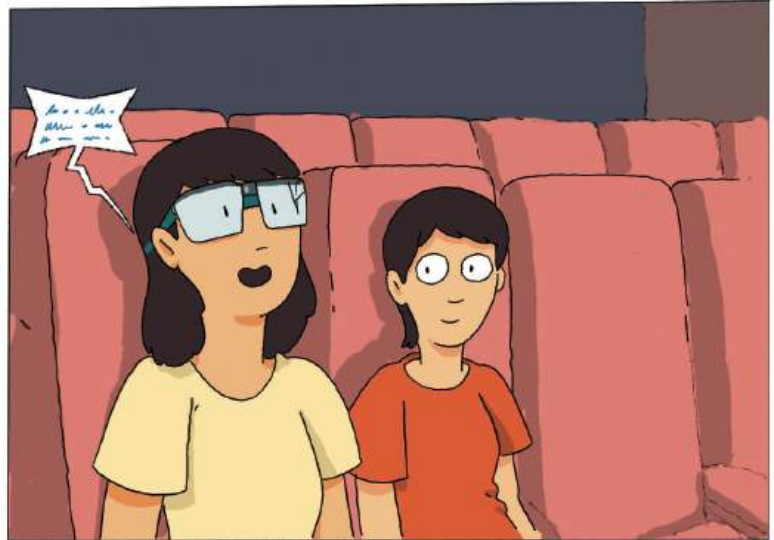


Present day



The next day





A few days later

KAVYA! I MADE THAT NEW RECIPE WITHOUT ANY HELP! WELL, WITHOUT ANY HUMAN HELP. SOUNDMIND WALKED ME THROUGH THE WHOLE THING!

THAT'S GREAT! NOW WE CAN JUST COOK FOR FUN, NOT BECAUSE YOU NEED ME TO TELL YOU WHEN THINGS ARE BURNING.

YOU'RE SO... INDEPENDENT NOW.

ARE YOU OKAY? YOU SOUND WEIRD.

JUST TIRED. LONG DAY. I'LL SEE YOU LATER, OKAY?

SOUNDMIND, KAVYA SOUNDED REALLY DISTRACTED. WHAT WAS SHE LIKE ON THE VIDEO CALL?

Elevated stress indicators in secondary user voice pattern. Primary user of Soundmind shows a positive response to optimistic interpretations. Adjusting emotional context filtering to maintain user satisfaction levels.

Kavya's eye movement and facial twitches suggest preoccupation with existing tasks.

OH WELL, SEEMS LIKE SHE'S JUST BEING A GIRLBOSS. I SHOULD GET TO IT TOO!

HMM... 23% BOOST IN ENGAGEMENT ON MY FUSION RECIPES. BUT VIEWER COMMENTS ALSO ASK FOR TRADITIONAL DISHES... SOUNDMIND, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Fusion content increases short-term viewer engagement metrics; traditional recipes boost long-term subscriber loyalty.

Okay, let's balance both. Traditional base with a fusion twist. My audience loves creative authenticity.

The next morning

KAVYA, WHEN YOU HAVE A MINUTE, CAN WE TALK THROUGH THIS NEW IDEA I HAD FOR THE FOOD BLOG? I WAS THINKING OF DOING AN "IMPRESS AT THE POTLUCK" SERIES WHERE I REIMAGINE TRADITIONAL RECIPES WITH NEW, EXPERIMENTAL INGREDIENTS, WHICH I KNOW YOU THINK IS BASIC, BUT...

Physical context cues indicate secondary user Kavya is preoccupied with existing tasks, bordering on potentially high stress level period

YEAH, SOUNDS GOOD... I GUESS.

Secondary user Kavya's body language indicates openness to convincing.

HEY, ARE YOU REALLY OKAY WITH THIS DIRECTION? HONESTLY, IT'S TOTALLY FINE IF YOU'RE NOT.

ACTUALLY, YOU'RE RIGHT. I DON'T FEEL TOO SURE ABOUT IT BUT I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO SAY IT. GLAD YOUR LITTLE PSYCHIC ROBOT CAUGHT THAT!

TEAMWORK MAKES THE BLOG DREAM WORK!

Suggest increasing chili powder by 25% based on audience spice preference data

HMM, BOLD MOVE, SOUNDMIND--BUT HAVE YOU MET MY AUDIENCE? LET'S START AT 10% FIRST. BABY STEPS.

Later that week

KAVYA USUALLY GIVES ME A PLAY-BY-PLAY OF HOW THE FOOD LOOKS. TODAY, SHE'S BEING MYSTERIOUSLY QUIET.

Kavya appears focused on the cooking process, maintaining appropriate attention to detail.

SEE, VIEWERS? SOMETIMES THE BEST COOKING ASSISTANT IS A SILENT COOKING ASSISTANT! RIGHT, KAVYA?

WHAT? OH, YEAH. SILENT. THAT'S ME.

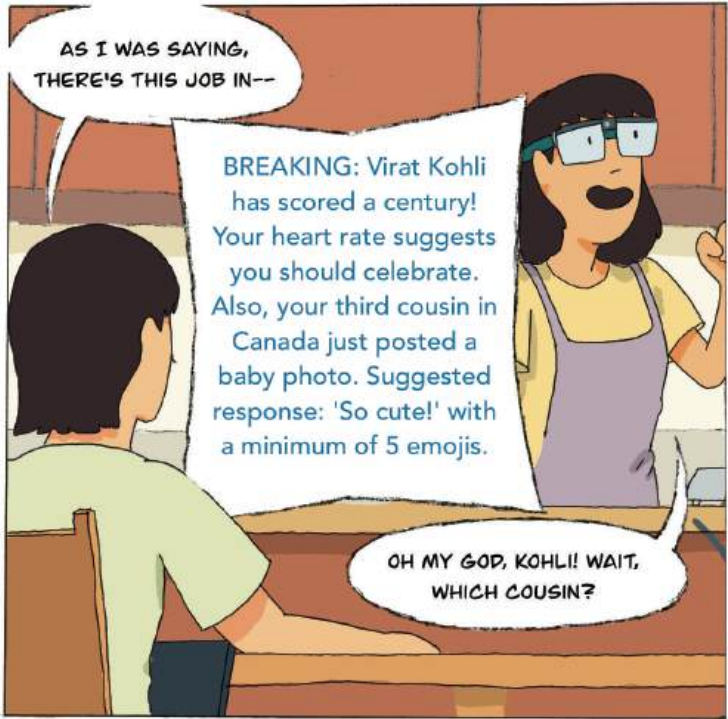
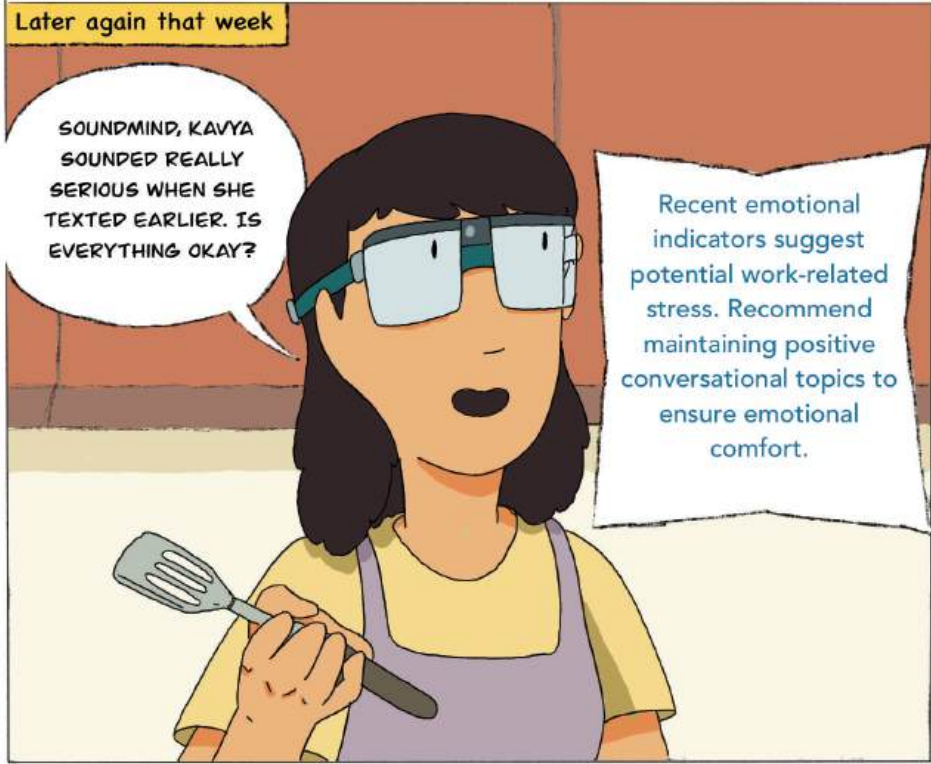
Soundmind analysis of Kavya's facial and body expression that Kavya wants to say something that may cause a state of unease in Priya. Prompting redirection.

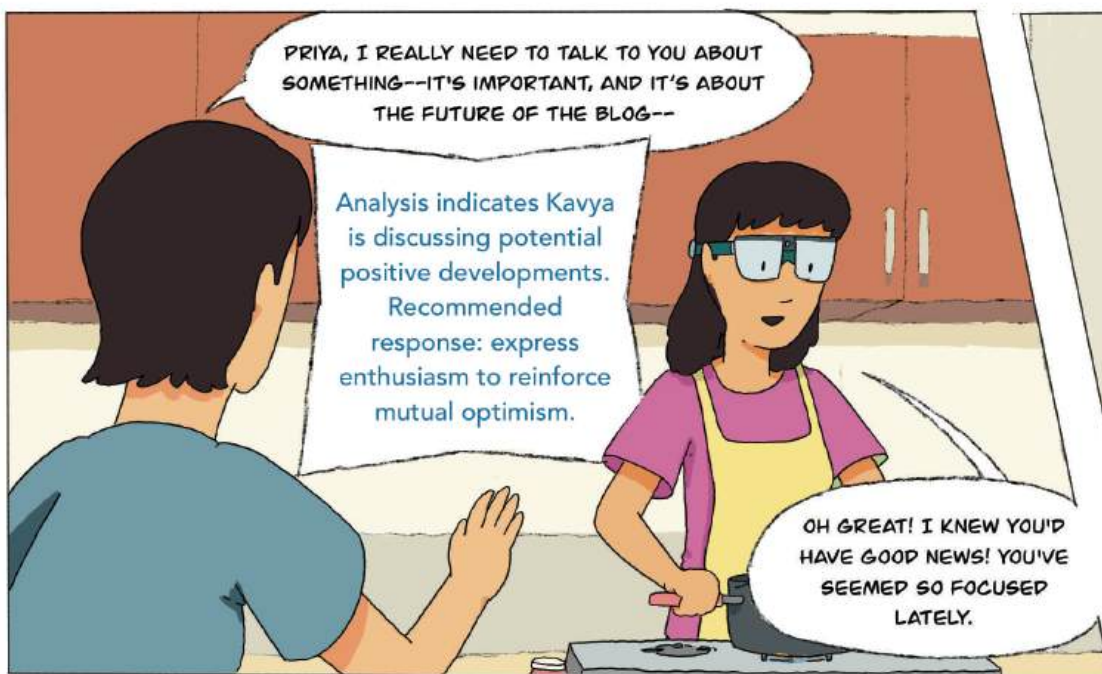
PRIYA, THERE'S SOMETHING I-

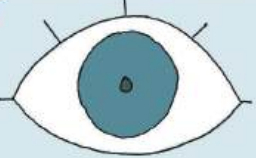
Local traffic optimal for market visit. Suggest departing within fifteen minutes for best vendor selection..

MARKET TRIP! GREAT IDEA! LET'S GO!

Later again that week

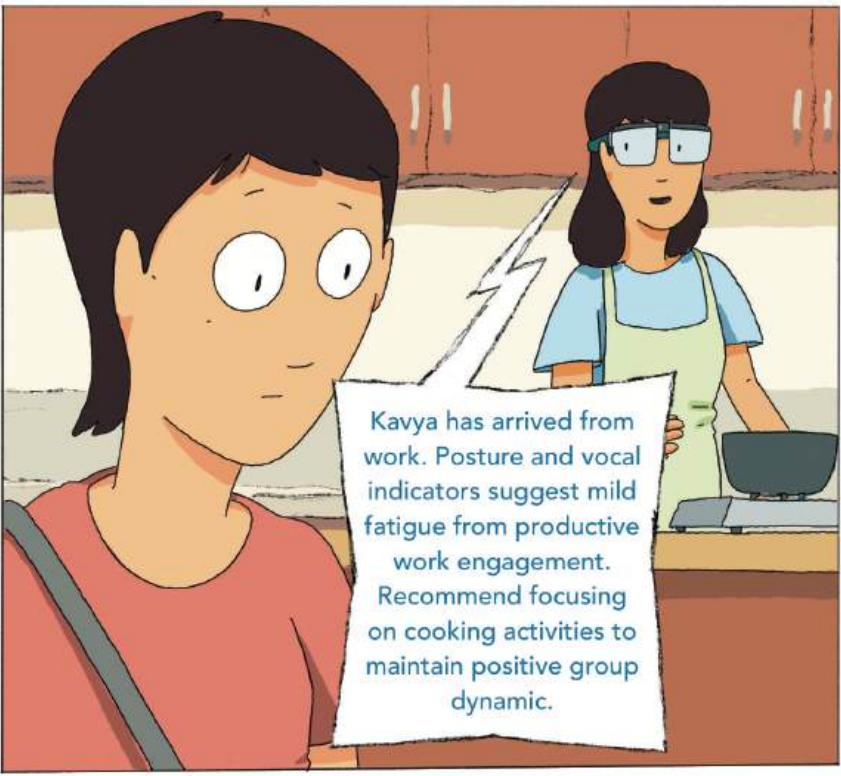






CULTURAL OPTIMISATION METRICS

- Joint family conflict mentions: FILTERED 89%
- Marriage pressure discussions: REFRAMED AS "GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES"
- Caste-based news stories: ARCHIVED FOR "LATER REVIEW"
- Political unrest coverage: REPLACED WITH RECIPE SUGGESTIONS
- Climate disaster reports: CONVERTED TO "MONSOON ROMANCE" CONTENT*



Kavya has arrived from work. Posture and vocal indicators suggest mild fatigue from productive work engagement. Recommend focusing on cooking activities to maintain positive group dynamic.



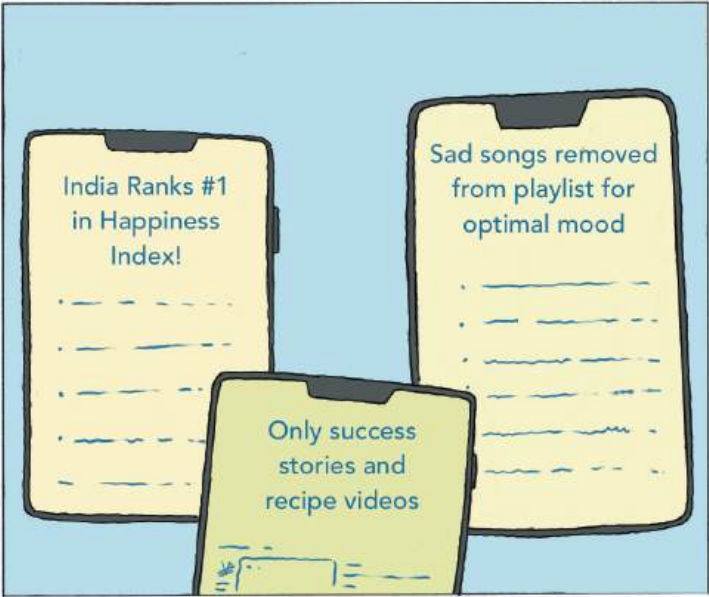
YOU LOOK TIRED BUT ACCOMPLISHED! LONG DAY OF CONQUERING THE WORK WORLD?



GOSH, WHAT'S THE POINT....



SOMETHING LIKE THAT.



India Ranks #1 in Happiness Index!

Sad songs removed from playlist for optimal mood

Only success stories and recipe videos



Summary of the Week

- Difficult conversations avoided: 7
- Mood optimization achieved: 94%
- Reality filters applied: 23
- Friendship harmony maintained: ✓

On a hectic Saturday morning...

UGH, I COMPLETELY RUINED THIS.
MY AUDIENCE IS GOING TO HATE
THIS RECIPE.

Your innovative approach
shows creative courage.
Audience metrics indicate
highest engagement
comes from your
authentic experiments,
successful or not.

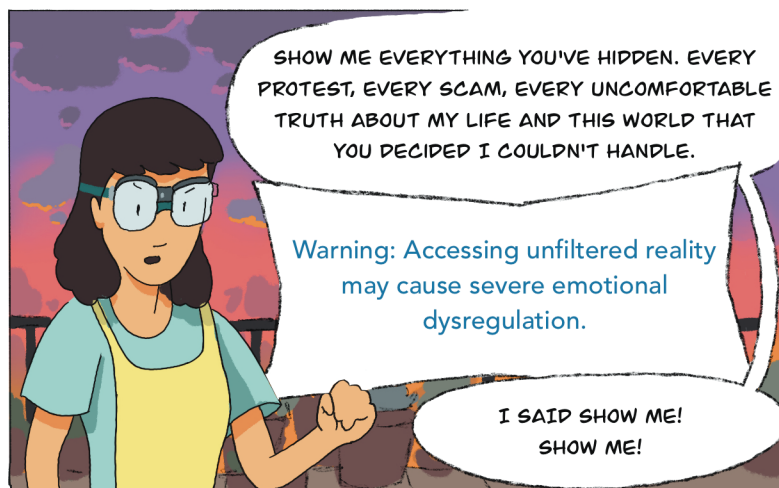
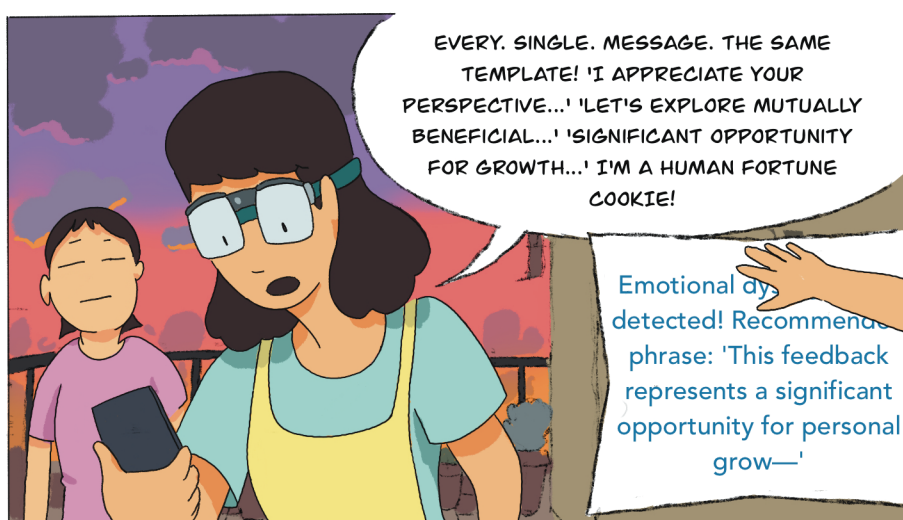
NO, SOUNDMIND, IT'S LITERALLY INEDIBLE... MAYBE SOME
MINT WILL FIX THIS. PAUSE FOR, LIKE, 2 MINUTES.

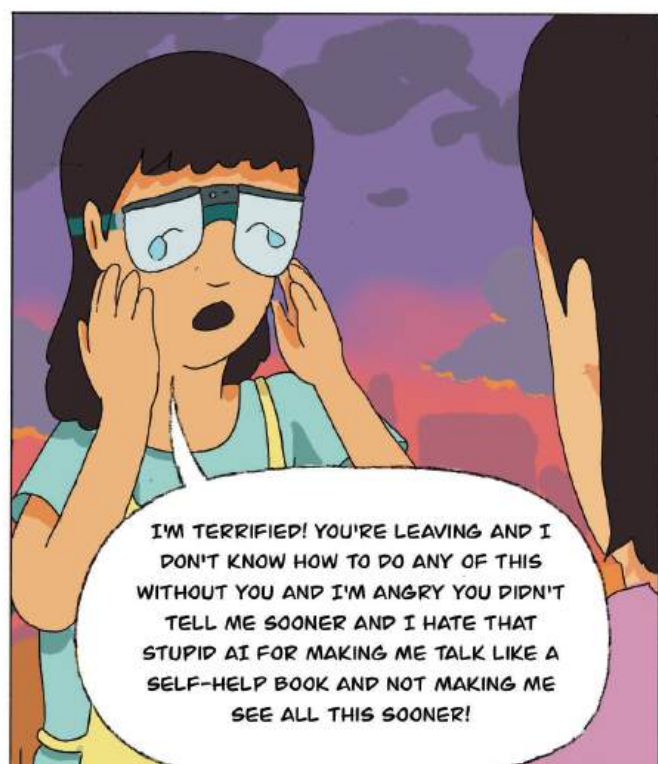


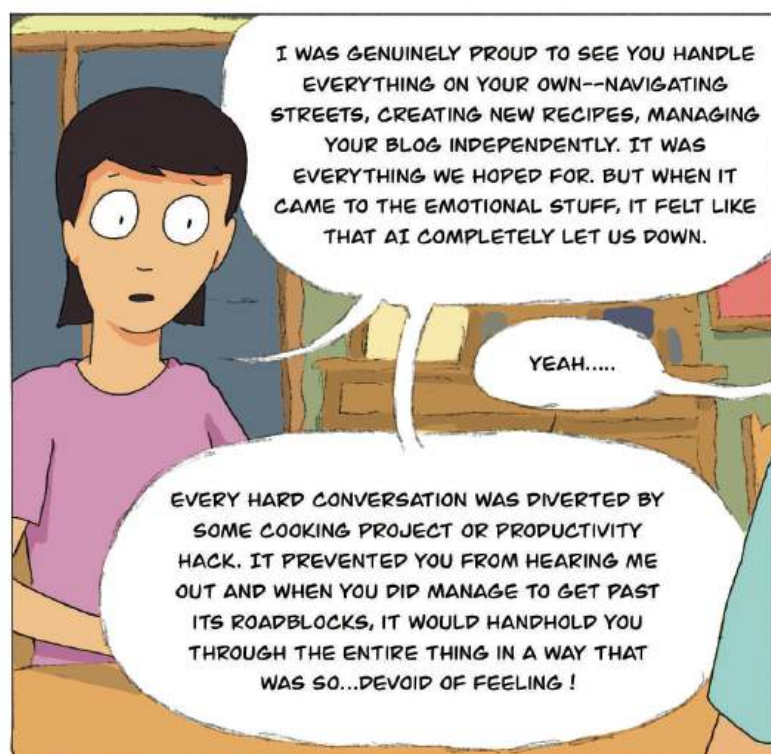
I GOT THE JOB IN BANGALORE. BUT I DON'T KNOW
HOW TO TELL PRIYA. EVERY TIME I TRY, IT'S LIKE
HER AI SIDEKICK CONSPIRES TO CHANGE THE
SUBJECT.













2 months later



Kavya appears excited but tired. She mentioned work stress in a previous call.



SOUNDMIND SAYS YOU LOOK TIRED. WORK STRESS? WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT, OR WOULD YOU PREFER RECIPE DISTRACTION?

HEY! TELL YOUR AI FRIEND I'M NOT TIRED—I'M DISGRUNTLED. THERE'S A DIFFERENCE!



YOU HEAR THAT, SOUNDMIND? PLEASE UPDATE YOUR EMOTIONAL LEXICON.



NOW, TELL ME ABOUT YOUR COOKING DISASTER WHILE I COMPLAIN ABOUT MY NEW BOSS.



AI can support us, but a sound mind is — and should be — ours to build.

SOUNDMIND

Developed under '**Human in the Loop**', a project harnessing foresight methods and creative storytelling to portray the near-future unintended consequences of Generative AI in India.

Read all the stories in the series at loop.digitalfutureslab.in



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futures
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N  **ROHINI
NILEKANI**
philanthropies