Spare the Pope: The AI writing panic is looking at the wrong problem

Something quietly amusing is happening in professional writing circles. Writers are contorting their syntax, inserting deliberate imperfections, performing studied casualness, all to signal that AI played no part in their work. The effort is real. So is the irony. What presents itself as a principled defence of authentic expression is, on closer reading, a very old anxiety in new clothing — the recurring conviction, each time a technology displaces a familiar skill, that something irreplaceable is being lost.

We have been here before. Multiple times.

When the printing press arrived in the fifteenth century, scribes warned that mass-produced text would cheapen knowledge and destroy the discipline of careful hand-copying. When the calculator became commonplace, educators feared students would lose their grasp of arithmetic. When word processors replaced typewriters, writers lamented the end of deliberate composition. When GPS became standard, people mourned the death of the instinctive navigator. The concern was understandable each time. The deeper human capacity survived each time. What these transitions shared was a consistent misidentification: the anxiety attached itself to the instrument rather than the capability the instrument served.

The pen-to-keyboard transition is now complete enough to examine honestly. Handwriting, once treated as a marker of education and character, gave way to the keyboard because keyboards were faster, more legible, and more accessible to more people (Remember the doctor's notoriously illegible handwriting?). Human expression did not suffer. People wrote more, not less. The instrument changed; the capacity for thought and communication remained and, by most measures, expanded. The scribes who mourned penmanship were defending a delivery mechanism while believing they were defending literacy itself.

Autonomous driving is delivering the same lesson in real time. For generations, driving carried associations of freedom and identity, so its automation feels like a kind of surrender. The steering wheel, however, was never constitutive of the human spirit. Transportation is a practical need, and as machines absorb the task of managing the road, human attention redirects toward purpose and destination. The need remains; the method evolves. Nobody mourning the loss of manual driving is actually arguing that human beings should travel less.

The story does not end there.

3D printing is positioned to do to manufacturing what AI is doing to knowledge work. Custom fabrication, precision tooling, complex prosthetics, architectural modelling, and food production are increasingly designed digitally and printed physically. It's even being proposed to build and facilitate civilisational infrastructure on the Moon and Mars. Skills that took years to acquire — machining, model-making, artisan tooling — are being absorbed into a technological layer that performs the same functions with greater speed and reach. The same moral panic will follow: arguments about irreplaceable human craft, predictions of civilisational loss, calls to preserve the dignity of the skilled hand. The arc from resistance to normalisation to universality is well-worn enough to predict with confidence.

AI-assisted writing belongs in this same sequence. It automates the production of fluent prose. Judgment, conceptual originality, and the determination of what is worth saying remain human responsibilities, and they are the responsibilities that decide whether any piece of writing is worth reading. The anxiety surrounding AI writing is not really about writing at all. It is about the status economy that formed around the skill of producing grammatically fluent sentences — an economy that automation is now disrupting, exactly as it has disrupted comparable economies before.

The real divide in this debate sits between generative literacy and evaluative literacy.

Generative literacy is the ability to produce fluent text. Evaluative literacy is the ability to assess, interrogate, and refine that text. AI is changing the first, and may make it less scarce. The second grows more consequential as a result. A person who can assess ideas with precision, weigh evidence carefully, and edit with genuine discipline is made more capable by AI assistance. The tool serves the thinker. Writers performing AI-avoidance rituals are defending the old instrument of expression, not the quality of thought the instrument once served. Conflating the two has never served writers well in any previous transition.

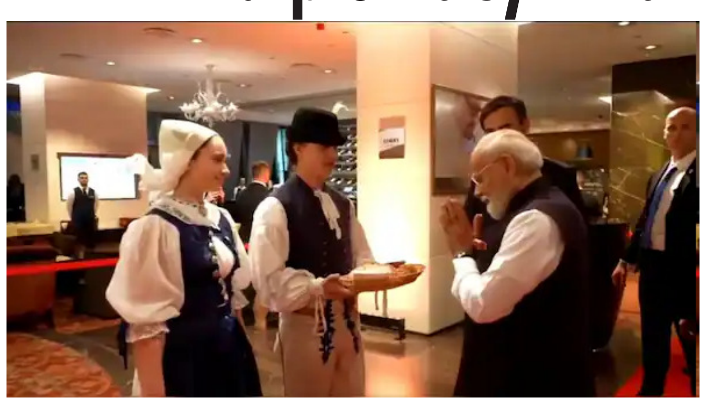
Civilisational progress has always advanced this way. Writing offloaded memory. Print offloaded reproduction. Computing offloaded calculation. 3D printing is offloading fabrication. AI is offloading synthesis. Each transition looks, at close range, like loss. Over time, each has expanded what humans can produce and redirected human attention toward more demanding problems. Real concerns exist within this picture: workers displaced faster than institutions can adapt, productivity gains concentrated rather than distributed, skills eroded before successor capabilities are cultivated. These deserve serious policy attention, and the institutions responsible for education, labour markets, and social protection have significant ground to cover. They are concerns about the pace and equity of change, not the direction.

The people best positioned for what comes next are asking what each new offload frees them to do, rather than defending what is being automated away. They are investing in evaluative judgement: the capacity to assess what AI generates, identify where it falls short, and shape raw material into something with genuine intellectual force. That is where human advantage is concentrating, and it is precisely the capacity that no current AI system replicates reliably.

The writers hunting for em dashes, interrogating sentence rhythm, and cataloguing so-called AI fingerprints in other people's work are staring so intently at individual trees that the forest has gone entirely out of view. The forest is this: the human species has always been defined by its capacity to move beyond the skills it has already mastered. AI writing is the next instrument of human expression, not its conclusion.

So, stop hunting for hyphens, syntax patterns, and the Pope. Evaluate the content and the idea it presents. That is the only literary standard worth defending, and no technology has yet come close to replacing it. And if history is any guide — and on this question, it is a remarkably reliable one — most people raising objections today will be using these tools without a second thought before the decade is out.

PM Modi's Slovakia visit: India's calibrated diplomacy in a fractured Europe



When Prime Minister Narendra Modi landed in Bratislava on Saturday, he became the first Indian head of government to visit Slovakia since the country declared independence in 1993. Three decades of bilateral invisibility ended with what the Indian Ministry of External Affairs describes as a visit to "reaffirm commitment to strengthening bilateral relations".

Automobiles, railways, and defence manufacturing: these are the talking points. But the more consequential story lies elsewhere. In a burst pipeline, European sanctions politics, and what it means that Slovakia's leader is simultaneously conducting back-channel diplomacy with Moscow. The backdrop could scarcely be less conventional. Barely five weeks ago, Robert Fico was the only European Union head of government to attend Vladimir Putin's Victory Day parade in Moscow. Poland and the Baltic states refused him transit rights through their airspace, forcing a reroute through the Czech Republic. He declared from his flight home that he rejected "a new Iron Curtain between the EU and Russia" and described the EU's intention to detach itself from Russian energy supplies as purely ideological and "detrimental to European competitiveness".

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz issued a public rebuke. For India, the spectacle registered as something different: the visible confirmation that Europe's post-Ukraine energy consensus is not just fraying at the edges, but it has a structural crack running through its centre.

The Outlier Who Builds Back Channels

Fico's posture has not been adopted solely for domestic audiences, though domestic politics clearly feed it. He threatened to block Ukraine's •90 billion EU loan in February 2026, consistently obstructed sanctions packages alongside Hungary, and called sanctions against Russia "economic sabotage".

Following his Moscow meeting on May 9, he convened an emergency session with Transpetrol, the operator of Slovakia's Druzhba pipeline section, telling journalists he had "important information" from Russia on the future of energy cooperation. Putin, for his part, gave Fico a public assurance: Russia would "do everything possible to meet the energy needs of the Slovak Republic". Orbán's departure from Budapest in April changed the arithmetic but not the underlying problem. Fico had been playing this game long before Hungary lost its appetite for it. He does not need Brussels to agree with him. He needs the man Moscow calls, and the man whose phone Zelenskyy must factor into any calculation about what information travels in which direction. That is a different kind of power than the veto. Less dramatic, considerably harder to contain.

After returning from Moscow, Fico convened an emergency session with Transpetrol, the pipeline operator, telling journalists he carried "important information" about future energy cooperation with Russia. No transcript was required. The meeting was the message. The Emergency

On January 27, a Russian drone found itself exploding in the Brody oil hub in western Ukraine. It was the southern leg of the Druzhba pipeline, a Soviet-era artery that has fed Central Europe's refineries since the 1960s, and it went dry. For Hungary, which operates multiple refining facilities with substantial storage capacity, the blow was manageable. For Slovakia, it was close to catastrophic. The country has one refinery, Slovnaft, on the edge of Bratislava, and its equipment is calibrated specifically for Russian-grade crude. You cannot simply switch the feed.

Bratislava drew down 250,000 tonnes from its strategic reserves, buying itself time until roughly September. Prague and Bratislava, meanwhile, negotiated a •40 million fix: to reverse the flow of the now-idle Czech section of the pipeline and push Western-sourced crude eastward. In emergency mode, the arrangement would deliver tens of thousands of tonnes monthly. Scaled over two to three years, capacity could reach 2 to 3 million tonnes annually. It's a useful measure; nonetheless, it is insufficient on its own.

The crisis spilt far beyond the refinery gates. Slovakia suspended emergency electricity supplies to Ukraine and refused to participate in the latest EU loan package, with Fico citing annual damages of 500 million euros due to Kyiv's unacceptable behaviour.

The European Commission's Oil Coordination Group has maintained that no immediate security risk existed for either Slovakia or Hungary. But Bratislava's governing coalition has certainly taken a considerably bleaker view. A state of energy emergency was declared. The Calculus India Recognises - India has been playing this particular board for three years. When Western sanctions on Moscow's energy sector reshaped global oil markets in 2022, India pivoted en masse to Russian crude, encouraged, as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar again noted in Finland on 11 June, by Washington itself. The US specifically asked India to buy Russian oil in 2022 to stabilise the global market, he said, adding that India purchases oil based on price and availability. The United States subsequently imposed tariffs on Indian goods for doing precisely that, then reversed those tariffs under the bilateral trade framework agreed earlier this year. Four years on, India is a major buyer of Russian crude, and Russia is India's single-largest oil supplier.

Jaishankar rejected the notion that Western pressure was built on core values. He also criticised the shifting policies as contradictory and stressed that India has successfully diversified its energy basket, with Russia remaining a steady partner for crude imports and the United States as its top supplier of natural gas. His broader message was that nations make energy decisions based on cost, availability, and

Scorching heat continues in Gujarat, pre-monsoon effect in remaining states

Ahmedabad

The intense heat of summer is continuously raging in Gujarat. Currently, the mercury is recording above 42 degrees. The maximum temperature in the state was recorded in Ahmedabad at 42.7°C, which is 3°C higher than the normal temperature. The lowest temperature in the state was recorded in Dwarka at 33.6°C. During the last 24 hours, the weather remained completely dry in the entire Gujarat region, Saurashtra-Kutch as well as Diu, Daman and Dadra and Nagar Haveli. According to the forecast of the Meteorological Department, there is no possibility of any major change in the maximum temperature of the state during the next 7 days.