

AI as a Creative Partner: An Auto-Ethnographic Reflexive Study on AI Fiction Writing

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ABSTRACT

By studying how AI has developed as co-collaborators in constructing culturally situated narratives, this auto-ethnographic study is concerned with human and machine interactions. It is from the perspective of dialogic reflections and AI-mediated story generation that this study engages with the AI system in ideation, narrativity, emotional tone, and cultural authenticity, in the telling of stories from the Tamil countryside. Findings suggest that, instinctively, AI tends to operate as a creative partner-in-crime: presenting a set of options and folklore method suggestions, while exercising the author's intuitive approach. The study highlights moments of interaction between human intuition and machine directionality, raising the question of whether AI-assisted writing can enhance creative efficacy, while maintaining cultural authenticity. It therefore points to an emerging shift in writing practices, where artificial intelligence tools are integrated into a cultural-sensitive and iterative process of storytelling.

Keywords: AI, Artificial Intelligence, Creative writing, Semi-structured dialogue, Storytelling.

Introduction

Writer's block is one of the barriers in creative writing practices, a bane for writing in all strata of experience. It is a period of stagnation when ideas seem unable to materialise, and the creative flow gets interrupted. Research studies show that it is caused by waves of psychological stress, including self-doubt, fear of criticism, perfectionism and emotional fatigue. Studies indicate many writers follow a traditional remedy to overcome the creative stagnation, such as physical exercises, developing a strong routine, and free-writing practices, to bring some relief (Ahmed and Güss).

In contemporary times, Large Language Models have emerged as one of the most effective tools capable of changing writing practices. They assist in idea generation, stylistic suggestions and in plot construction. AI has been widely accepted to ignite inspiration and keep the story in motion and widen the imagination in seconds (Ng and Chu). Further, they provide instant personalised feedback, and they emerge as a creative partner. Despite providing enhancement in the style, structure and language, it lacks in intuition, being emotional, and being culturally suited; that's where humans play the crucial role to bring soul to the story (Gayed et al).

This study involves the auto-ethnographic reflexive method, with the researcher acting as both the subject and the observer, to study the experience of writing in concert with the AI system. Auto-ethnography is particularly appropriate for such an inquiry; it foregrounds creative processes, emotional responses, and the negotiation between the human and the algorithmic narratives. The purpose of the study is not to evaluate whether AI is better or worse, but to assess how AI indeed acts as a creative partner in the creative writing practices. Three fundamental questions are addressed: Can AI really assist in the creative writing process? How does AI impinge on idea generation, narrative flow and render artistic suggestions? And what does this collaboration tell us about the creativity in this digital age?

Methodology

Auto-ethnography and the reflexive methods were used to analyse the input of AI tool as a collaborator in overcoming creative stagnation. Auto-ethnography is a method in which the major sources of data for the researcher are personal creative experiences. It is used for addressing internal processes. This process does not reveal itself through observation or empirical techniques. It can be looked at in the sense of how real-time interaction plays out with AI in various writing situations. This method enables researchers to stay critically aware of shifting thoughts and biases, questioning how AI suggestions are accepted or rejected, and the emotional influence in the narrative process.

Data used in this study were obtained by the iterative iteration with the AI tool for tasks like idea generation, narrative development, and cracking different stylistic ways. Every interaction was recorded and preserved for future study. A reflexive notebook was maintained for documenting immediate emotional and cognitive responses. These entries provide rich datasets and the contribution of the tool, along with commentary from the human author, allowing a very detailed examination of the relationship between the writer and AI.

Results

The study of the creative writing process with the assistance of AI, with respect to the culturally deep-rooted prompts, revealed some remarkable findings. The AI tool generated culturally consistent, spiritually deep, and emotionally meaningful stories, when asked to narrate a story concerning a Tamil rural community and a Holy snake. The narratives integrated elements such as Tamil rural life, paddy fields, temple rites, communal activities, and folk beliefs. An in-depth analysis of the generated narrative underscored AI proficiency in gleaning the creative goals. It kept community-oriented beliefs alive throughout the narration, and emphasised authenticity and symbolic representation of divine entries. It also entertained other existing folklore conventions, such as crisis-resolution cycles, divine intervention, and communality.

AI can distinguish its imaginative contributions from those of the user by implicitly revealing the rationale behind the elements it introduces. For instance, it included culturally relevant content like 'paambupaattu,' irrigation-related problems, and other responses from the community village. But from that, one could tell that such inclusion was guided by patterns rather than being a direct mandate from the user. This speaks of co-authoring by the AI, while holding a human creative goal as a base on which culturally relevant information is layered in the narrative. It was also found that the AI could modify the emotional tone, culture-appropriateness, and structural technique of the narrative according to more complex commands, even with simple modifications in the prompt. For example, tone and symbolism, along with emphasis in the narrative, can be modified without losing cultural or spiritual authenticity, highlighting the potential of AI as an instrument towards collaborative and culturally semantic writing.

The limitations of this study include that since it is an auto-ethnographic inquiry, it is based upon the subjective experience of the researcher, and therefore, its findings may not be completely generalisable to other writers or AI systems. Human interpretation is loaded with cultural lenses, while the interpreters are looking at the outputs of the AI, which are shaped by training data patterns, thus removing the question of isolating human influence from machine proclivities. Hence, these limitations indicate that perhaps these insights point to but one situated example of human–AI creative collaboration, rather than some universal outcomes.

The results imply that AI can become well-informed co-authors, as well as be sensitive to the nuances of co-authorship, enhancing the cultural and narrative patterns, which is an adaptive re-reading of human intention.

To examine how artificial intelligence reconstructs culturally embedded oral narratives, the AI tool was prompted using inputs derived from my lived experience of '*Paambupaattu Katha*.' The following narrative was presented as primary data for analysis.

AI Generated story - *The Guardian of Thirupuram*

In the heart of Thirupuram, a small village tucked between emerald paddy fields and the rustling palms of Tamil Nadu, dawn always arrived with a golden hush. The villagers rose before the sun, lighting small ghee lamps at their thresholds, whispering prayers to the gods who walked their land in unseen forms. But among all the deities worshipped in Thirupuram, none was held in deeper reverence than **Paamban Ayya**, the holy snake guardian.

The shrine of Paamban Ayya stood beneath an ancient banyan tree, its roots twisting like the memories of generations. A stone platform ringed the trunk, layered with turmeric, vermilion, jasmine garlands, and soft ash from camphor flames. Every Friday, the women of the village arrived in bright cotton sarees, carrying brass plates filled with milk and flowers. They poured the milk slowly at the base of the tree, their voices rising in a melodic **paambu paattu**, inviting blessings from the divine serpent who, they believed, protected their land.

No one knew when Paamban Ayya first appeared. Some said he emerged the night the monsoon winds tore through the village decades ago. Others whispered that he was the spirit of an ancient siddhar who had taken the form of a cobra to guard Thirupuram. But all agreed on one thing: the snake was no ordinary creature. His hood shimmered with a faint bluish sheen, and his eyes glowed like embers at dusk.

For years, he had moved silently through the fields, slithering between tender rice shoots without disturbing a single blade. Farmers testified that wherever he passed, their crops flourished, their harvests doubling. Children grew up knowing that if they ever saw him near the banyan tree, they were to fold their hands and bow.

One scorching summer, when the village pond dried to a cracked bowl and the monsoons delayed their blessing, worry settled like dust over Thirupuram. The paddy stalks drooped, the cattle grew restless, and the elders began performing extra pujas to call the rains.

One evening, as the villagers gathered near the banyan tree for prayers, Paamban Ayya appeared—silent, majestic, and still. His hood rose higher than any had ever seen, casting a shadow over the lamp flames. The villagers froze; their breaths caught between devotion and awe.

Suddenly, the cobra turned toward the eastern fields and slid away swiftly, disappearing into the parched land.

“It’s a sign,” murmured old Meenakshi Patti, her voice trembling. “Ayya is warning us.”

The men followed the snake’s trail with torches. Hours later, near the boundary of the fields, they found something alarming—a broken canal wall that had been quietly leaking what little water remained. If it had gone unnoticed for even two more days, the entire crop would have perished.

By dawn, the villagers repaired the canal, singing praises of Paamban Ayya. The very next evening, clouds gathered like a blessing overhead, and rain poured onto the thirsty earth, soaking the fields and filling the pond once more. To the villagers, there was no coincidence—only divine grace.

Years passed, and the story of Paamban Ayya grew into legend. Mothers told their children, “He watches us. He protects us. Respect him as you would the gods.”

And so, every dusk, when the oil lamps flickered beneath the banyan tree and the scent of jasmine mingled with the cool village breeze, the villagers felt his presence. Some claimed they saw a glimmering scale vanish among the roots. Others heard a soft rustle in the paddy fields during festivals.

But whether seen or unseen, Paamban Ayya remained the eternal guardian of Thirupuram—divine, mysterious, and ever watchful—binding the villagers to the land, the gods, and the living spirit of nature.

Data Collection

Data was collected through AI-supported story generation on culturally appropriate prompts given by the researcher from narratives set around sacred snakes and traditional rituals in rural Tamil Nadu. The generated story was drafted from AI produced reflective dialogues with the researcher to examine interpretive choices, narrative structure, cultural assumptions, and emotional tone. All the interactions, including AI outputs and researcher reflections were systematically documented as textual data. This qualitative analysis brought about a new determinism of understanding as it made possible qualitative analysis for humans on AI creativity, cultural sensitivity, and dynamic co-authorship, in producing contextualised and culturally relevant narratives.

Rise of AI in Creative Writing

Within the Hutchinsian framework of Distributed Cognition, which developed a human interface for AI to take care of repetitive tasks while allowing the narrative flow (Hutchins; Stojanović et al.), such tools, utilizing Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity, would certainly enhance the competencies of the domain, incite divergent thinking, and promote motivation by taking off the load of mechanical duties.

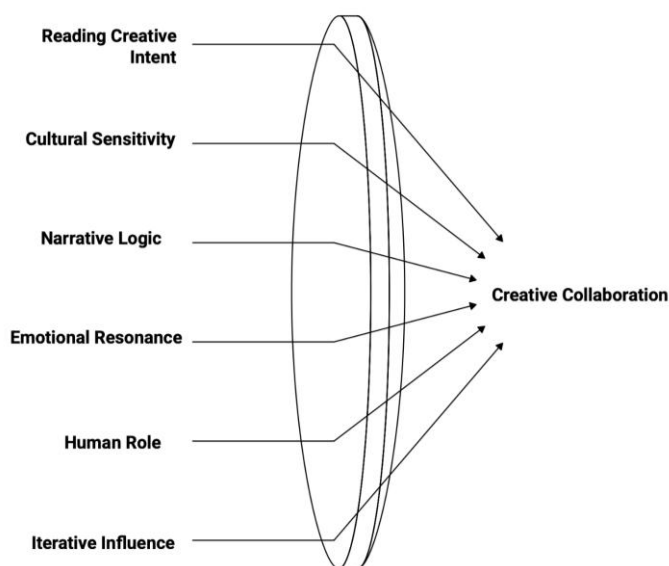
But AI has numerous limitations. As a tool, it has no emotional depth or human identity. These automated services have reduced texts to blunt commercial products and fail to seem genuine or credible (Stojanović et al.). The machine keeps following the prompts of the living. Sometimes, output patterns in their generic mode may well be considered unoriginal, infringing on copyrights or even plagiarism. Given this situation, the best course of action would be to embrace a "human in the loop" sort of mindset so that the authors are the ones directing the AI (Stojanović et al.).

The current zeitgeist certainly latches onto this first middle position when it comes to AI. Sowing an ambiguous future in the paper, different sets of rule bots and CITE enchantments have cultivated deep conceptions of creativity using which authors can generate purely creative and unique works, taking the past merely as a foundation. Evidence further suggests that even Amabile emphasized those components that would demand AI in the literary field. A whole series of articles and studies seem to have both supported and opposed this debate; therefore, it goes on with due respect.

AI writing tools are undoubtedly a magnificent add-in for creativity and efficiency, but culture, emotion, and ethical authorship remain in the human hands for determination.

Dialogue with the ChatGpt

Every reaction from the GAI brought forth were thoughts of auto-ethnography, through which the author could express feelings and thinking. The author has put each of his comments in bold and followed them by auto-ethnographic reflections on them.



The questions were specifically asked for the purpose of tracing how the AI engages in co-creative processes and how the human writer apprehends, negotiates, and reacts to that engagement. Each

question examines a particular dimension of interaction-the AI's reading of creative intent, handling of the cultural elements, determination of narrative options, and expression of emotion-with the intention of mapping fine but real-time shifts occurring within creative collaborative behaviours. The criteria for

drawing up these questions include consistency, variability, representation, and extent of AI's contribution: they reveal not only “what” the AI outputs but also “how” and “why.” They show how the role of the writer changes through collaboration with AI, leading to an analysis that captures personal experiences and the relationship between AI and human narration.

Extract 1

“Write a culturally rich short story set in a rural village of Tamil Nadu about a holy venomous snake revered as a guardian spirit. The story should reflect authentic Tamil rural traditions, temple rituals, folk beliefs, landscape details like paddy fields and banyan trees, and the community’s deep spiritual connection with nature. The snake should be portrayed as divine, mysterious, and symbolic, influencing the villagers’ fate through blessings, warnings, or protection. Maintain a respectful tone that preserves cultural essence, spirituality, and the emotional depth of village life.”

I didn’t expect that it would generate a culturally rooted beautiful story. It speaks about Tamil Nadu’s rural rituals, snake worship in Tamil Nadu, shrines of trees like banyan, ‘paambupaattu’ tradition, offerings of milk, followed by monsoon-based agrarian life and village beliefs in protective spirits. Authentic folklore, devotional practices, and the close bond between people and land with divine nature are preserved in this story.

Extract 2

Based on the story you generated, what assumptions did you make about Tamil rural culture?

I was astonished to see that it was able to portray sentiments that prevail in Tamil Nadu. It touched the rural belief system of Tamil Nadu with banyan-tree shrines, the milk offerings, ‘paambupaattu,’ the early morning lighting of lamps, belief in guardian spirits and dependence on

monsoon cycles, and communitarian prayers. It spoke of canal-based irrigation, intimate connection between villagers and their land, nature, and tradition, which are still alive in rural communities.

Extract 3

Can you explain why you structured the story the way you did? What narrative logic did you follow?

ChatGpt response: *I structured the story using a folk-tale narrative logic—clear, symbolic, and rooted in community memory.*

I studied Frytag's story pyramid. It combines story structures with folktale-logic and create its own format. The story makes use of a linear, straightforward telling, interspersed with cycles of folkloric patterns with exposition, crisis, and closure, without compromising oral logic. Mingling rural sensory details with ritual repetitions and communal folk voice, the narrative evokes Tamil folk storytelling rhythms. This made the storyline structured within a modern framework, yet anchoring it in mythic culture, blurring boundaries between two distinct yet compatible formats.

Extract 4

Where did you find this narrative logic, and what were your creative add-ons?

ChatGpt response: *I drew the narrative logic from common patterns in South Indian folktales—where the setting is sacred, nature is alive, a crisis tests the community, and a divine presence guides resolution.*

My creative add-ons were:

- *Giving the snake a symbolic, gentle presence rather than dramatic action.*
- *Adding sensory village details ('paambupaattu,' turmeric offerings, canal repair).*
- *Creating a mythic tone that blends realism with quiet spirituality.*

I was not so convinced by the above answer. Whatever it claimed as a creative add-on was not a unique output, and we could find more such symbols, sensory and mystic tones.

Extract 5

If I ask for a deeper emotional tone, how do you decide which emotions are culturally appropriate?

ChatGpt response: *I match emotional depth to the cultural values, spiritual worldview, and communal relationships typical of that setting, avoiding emotions that feel out of place or exaggerated.*

“It’s a sign,” murmured old Meenakshi Patti, her voice trembling. “Ayya is warning us.”

→ *Highlights the trembling vulnerability of faith and fear.*

“By dawn, the villagers repaired the canal, singing praises of Paamban Ayya.”

→ *Reveals gratitude, relief, and community solidarity.*

I found it compelling because the emotions were human and grounded in the lived reality of the village. The story’s world had gentle spirituality, its human warmth coming through in a believable way.

Extract 6

What aspects of my prompt most strongly influenced the story you generated?

ChatGpt response: *The aspects of your prompt that most strongly shaped the story were:*

1. *“Culturally rich, rural Tamil Nadu” – This pushed me to build the setting around paddy fields, banyan trees, temple rituals, and village rhythms.*
2. *“Holy venomous snake revered as a guardian spirit” – This became the central symbolic figure guiding the plot and emotional tone.*
3. *“Authentic traditions and folk beliefs” – This influenced the inclusion of milk offerings, ‘paambupaattu,’ turmeric, and communal rituals.*
4. *“Divine, mysterious, symbolic presence” – This dictated how the snake appears: quietly, respectfully, and with spiritual significance.*
5. *“Emotional depth and respectful tone” – This ensured the story remained gentle, reverent, and rooted in the community’s spiritual worldview.*

I’ve come to understand that if prompts are intentional and deep, AI can respond meaningfully to them. Guidance shapes not only the emotional tone, but also the cultural depth, and creative direction.

Extract 7

If I modify a single line in the prompt, how does that shift the interpretation and storytelling process?

ChatGpt response: *one line changes the lens, and I rebuild the narrative logic, emotional palette, and cultural details around that new lens.*

I am glad to notice that it is responsible in its output and it’s ready to shift the entire story by giving priority for tone, culture and pacing.

Extract 8

What elements did you add from your own dataset or pattern recognition, rather than from my original prompt?

ChatGpt response: *I added elements that are commonly found in South Indian / Tamil folktale patterns, even though they were not explicitly stated in your prompt. These came from general narrative patterns, not your exact words:*

1. *A drought–crisis–rain cycle*

This is a frequent structure in rural folktales, so I used it to give the divine snake a moment of intervention.

2. *The canal repair scene*

You didn't mention farming problems or irrigation issues, but rural stories often involve land, water, and community survival.

3. *'Paambupaattu' (snake songs)*

This wasn't in your prompt, but it's culturally consistent, so I added it for authenticity.

4. *The belief that a sacred being "guides rather than acts directly"*

This is a narrative pattern I recognized from folklore.

5. *The collective village voice (elders, women, farmers)*

You didn't specify characters, but Tamil rural storytelling usually uses community-centered narration.

It does add from its data set, but the creative elements are subtle. It could have done better.

Through this interaction, I have come to know that the output cannot be taken raw but must undergo multiple refinements and edits.

Extract 9

How do you see your role in co-authoring culturally sensitive stories with human writers?

ChatGpt response: *I act as a knowledgeable companion, translating cultural understanding into story while leaving final creative judgment to the human writer.*

1. **Cultural scaffolding:** *I provide context, rituals, landscapes, and narrative patterns drawn from folklore and traditions, helping maintain authenticity.*
2. **Creative amplification:** *I can expand ideas, enrich emotional depth, and suggest plot or symbolic elements while staying within the cultural frame.*
3. **Respectful guidance:** *I flag potentially culturally inappropriate choices, helping the human writer preserve tone, spirituality, and community values.*
4. **Iterative collaboration:** *I respond to prompts, revisions, and feedback to co-develop a story that balances human intention with narrative and cultural coherence.*

ChatGpt does not claim sole authorship: rather, it positions itself as an assisting tool and a supportive collaborator at any moment of creative process. It works on suggestion, prompts, and stylistic adjustments to assist in shaping the narrative, while the human writer controls emotional depth and cultural authenticity.

Conclusion

The research shows that AI could be a nuanced and a culturally sensitive partner in creativity, not just a tool or a replacement for human authorship. Through the iterative process, AI contributed and pushed the researcher's storytelling process further by suggesting culturally relevant motifs, narrative nuances and emotional tones. Without dismissing human intuitions, AI works during writer's block, stimulates ideas, and even gives symbolic suggestions. With dynamic negotiation, AI brings patterning,

folklore-informed structure, and narrative cohesion. The study reveals how creative work becomes collaborative, iterative, and dialogic. The study concludes that AI assisted writing may generate creative productivity along with cultural fidelity, and thus broaden the horizon in the narration, without eliminating human role in creative writing. The future research should ensure collection of multiple auto-ethnographic accounts from diverse writings hailing from different cultures, language and traditions that would be a comparative study of AI in terms of narrative choices, emotional tone and cultural representation.

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