Re(AI)magine Conversations

Persistent Podcast | Episode 25

Enterprise AI at Scale: The India Opportunity

Anand Kalidoss, Databricks
Sandeep Srinivasan, Persistent

Sandeep Srinivasan: Everyone, good day. Welcome to **Re(AI)magine Conversations,** where we explore how AI and technology impact enterprise transformation. In every episode, we sit down with leaders who are shaping the world of data and AI, and we talk about what's really happening with organizations today. I'm your host today, Sandeep Srinivasan, Corporate Vice President and Head of APAC at Persistent Systems.

Joining me today is Anand Kalidoss, Senior Director, Enterprise Business at Databricks. Databricks has been at the center of modern data and AI platform movement, bringing data engineering, analytics and AI together into a single platform. And at Persistent, we see how that comes to life, helping customers get ready for AI, in the sense, data-ready for AI and AI-ready for data, and move from experiments to real-world tangible outcomes using platforms like Databricks.

So today, we're going to explore how enterprise AI scales, how it impacts the business, and the role platforms like Databricks play. Anand, it's great to have you on the show. Welcome.

Anand Kalidoss: Thanks, Sandeep. It's wonderful - the job you guys are doing. It just creates a lot more market in the space, and people understand what's happening.

I'm super excited to be here, be part of this conversation, and see what we can share. I'm looking forward to the journey and the conversation ahead.

Sandeep Srinivasan: Thank you, Anand. Once again, welcome. As the first step, let's look at the big picture, right? Why do you feel that it could be an inflection point right now?

You work closely with a lot of enterprise customers across a very fast-growing market like India and broadly across APAC, and especially in a few industry segments like BFSI, healthcare and the digital natives. I think these are some sectors that are driving India's growth, but also driving the adoption of AI in a significant manner.

So, from your vantage point, why do you feel this is the moment of real inflection, where AI goes from the lab or the experimentation phase across India and APAC into real-world outcomes?

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Anand Kalidoss: I think today we are in a zone where no one talks anything beyond AI in any conversation. The conversation starts and ends with, “What is your organization doing around AI?” Or even in a general conversation of what’s happening in the market is first about what AI is doing.

Let’s look in terms of what people have been thinking in the recent past and what is happening today. Most organizations have already moved from pure experimentation to bringing AI to an execution phase.

When I say moving from experimentation to execution, it is easy to run a controlled pilot. But moving that pilot into a real-world environment—with organizational data, workflows, and legacy systems—means bringing it into a journey where you also need to focus on security guardrails.

You need to focus on how people will adopt the platform and how governance will work. This journey is becoming real. Companies are bringing AI into real-life operations. That is one reason we feel the inflection point has already been reached; now, it is about adoption and scaling up.

Coming to the India context, I think the world has already realized Asia is going to be the nerve center of AI adoption at scale. All innovations happen in the West, but the innovation proof points are validated in Asia to make sure this is something which can explode. Primarily, India gives you the enterprise scale.

The next one is in terms of the industry’s readiness to adopt these platforms and the talent in the ecosystem which can drive this at greater acceleration. There is huge momentum within the country, and this also raised the bar in terms of the way the projects will get delivered. There are learnings that can go into the feedback loop.

It’s an interesting phase, and it is for all of us to make this a wonderful moment for humanity. More so, there is value India can create for the world with this momentum, which can change the global equilibrium in terms of where it is going to be.

Sandeep Srinivasan: Interesting points, you bring up, Anand, and it’s an interesting segue into where we go next, right? One of the things that we see every day is that similar patterns emerge across BFSI or life sciences. Some segments are digital natives, especially retail, which is very close. That’s also the reason why we went out and built, what we call iAURA on top of Databricks as a platform. It helps move real-time data, accelerating data readiness for AI, and we are also part of the Databricks Brickbuilder acceleration.

But I think one of the challenges that I see in the market, and maybe when you are dealing with these enterprises and you could also give me your point of view around it, is that there are a lot of platforms out there in the way of scaling. But how do you see the platforms addressing an industry outcome, and what are those things that you see might help in addressing these outcomes?

Anand Kalidoss: There is no point of doing any of technology without a clear benefit for the industry. Organizations are now building a layer of context so that the data and the AI capabilities can dwell deep onto the context and provide clarity for decision-making. It’s the ability to adopt

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Persistent Podcast | Episode 25

analytics, machine learning and the generative AI capabilities in a single platform to give meaningful updates and inputs and a lot more insights to the leadership player of an organization.

Earlier, the focus was more on AI for developers or customer service. Now, we are seeing AI for leadership. Capabilities such as Genie, our conversational AI platform, allow users to ask questions such as: Where are my sales numbers tracking? What changed from last month to this month, and why?

If I’m in Delhi, and if I’m saying, “Okay, this month, suddenly I see a dip in consumptions, if it is a FMCG business and they are saying ice creams, there is a dip in ice cream sale. Is it the change in the climate and weather pattern? How do I relate these two? Earlier it used to be a lot more of a backend and MIS team work with multiple ML, data and other insights to give those inputs.

Today, the leader of that business category can sit at a desktop and do this directly. People are already building the industry context. You are much closer to the customer because you bring the platform to life, and you may hear many more of these challenges.

But I would say, I think, the journey has begun. It is for people to accelerate the journey and see how they can adopt this at greater pace.

Sandeep Srinivasan: Yeah, fair point. Let’s take a view on the solution, right? Because finally, we need to design AI solutions that can actually scale. And as you said, India is a brilliant market for you to test that scale. The hardest part is usually not the model, but how do you design it? How does it survive contact with real-world organization? Because there’s always a lot of latent processes, knowledge, intuitive processes sitting within people’s heads. And how do you translate that into a design that can actually adopt AI? And how do we go from there?

So how do you see that happening, especially given data is at the heart of anything AI? How do you see that happening from a Databricks standpoint?

Anand Kalidoss: I think, partners make that engagement much more easier for the customer because one, there is a clear understanding of the business process, there is a know-how of the business side of the engagement. And second, also equally critical because the business side of the engagement is known to the customer. The business side alignment to the technology solution is where the deployment partner or the system integrator comes to real life. That is an area where people need to understand what is the business outcome they are trying to achieve out of this, create a value out of that engagement, and how technology can play in each layer.

There is a wide spectrum of engagement that happens in the market, there are a lot of learnings that come in every project, in terms of unlocking potential of the platform and ways of addressing that by solving for a business challenge, so that a capability comes together.

The best engagement model brings together someone who understands the industry context and the customer outcomes they are trying to achieve, with the technology context and architectural capability. They create a framework based on tried-and-tested methodologies, the right tools, and a pool of talent that understands product deployment and adoption.

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Many times people look only at a layer which says, “Oh, you have architecture capability, you have talent, let’s just bind it and go ahead with the project.” The most important aspect we need to look at is - how their understanding of the business context is and how are they driving the adoption at scale. Many projects go through that challenge if they don’t do it right.

Sandeep Srinivasan: I was about to ask you, what could be the common pitfalls and I think you already articulated a bit around it, such as understanding of the business outcomes and not leading it purely from a technology standpoint. We’ve seen multiple waves in our industry, right? We had the SMAC, we had cloud, we had analytics, we had then digital come through over these years. But with AI, we always said business outcome is important, but I guess, more so than ever, without business outcomes, adoption of AI is going to be like giving someone a hammer and a nail and saying, “Go figure out where you want to use it.”

From a Databricks standpoint and the enterprise customers that you’re dealing with, Anand, I’m jumping the queue a bit here, where do you see tangible outcomes now happening? Measurable, tangible outcomes. What kind of impacts are you seeing in the market with AI, especially in India? Because India, again, has the ability to leapfrog other Western countries, because they have a lot of legacy that they need to solve for in the technology estates, which in turn impacts the way they deliver their business or create business outcomes.

Anand Kalidoss: Many times, we always feel like regulated entities are slow to adopt technology, but in some areas, regulated entities are faster to adopt technology, especially on AI.

Because in financial institutions, people need AI to help them in terms of fraud analytics. People started seeing how governance and risk can be improved with the capability of AI. Having a strong data foundation, clubbed with an AI capability, really helps customer to leapfrog that journey.

There are voice bots, which also contextually target people with local language, which means that I don’t need to worry whether the person is from West Bengal or Tamil Nadu or Gujarat. I can still target him or her, based on the infrastructure I build with the deeper context I create.

So a financial institution is the first one to start moving much more faster. We see them very deeply adopting this, not just for cost optimization, but for revenue generation. I can expand my target customer base with this capability I have, and already few Indian NBFCs have called out the benefits they are seeing. It is there in a public document where some of them are leapfrogging technology adoption at scale.

The next one, we are also equally seeing, are the telecom operators. How are they adopting this?

The most important thing, as humanity, we need to focus on is how healthcare and clinical trials are adopting this platform. This helps bring down the time required to complete clinical trials because the data generated can be more effectively refined and validated. It can also shorten the time spent at the clinical workbench during the drug discovery process.

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We also see this is helping manufacturing with IoT and data capability, driving impact by reducing unscheduled maintenance events. It gets much more preventive, predictive so that I can solve for it even before the event hits me.

Some of these are happening on matured side of the engagement in global markets. On the manufacturing side, India is just catching up. But in financial services, in healthcare, I think we are far ahead of the global scale and people adoption is also very high.

Last one, is more in terms of hospitality, education and the supply chain models, like in the retail segments, are completely changing the way things are happening. At this point in time, there are pockets adoption happening in the industry. Maybe in the next 24 months, we will see that scale adoption will happen. But whoever has adopted, only success factor for most of the companies like us who create platform and the delivery partners like you, is measurable outcomes. People can see that it is helping them to generate revenue. It is driving improved profitability and reduced turnaround time for anything they do with AI.

Sandeep Srinivasan: I think, at this point, we should also be discussing about how Persistent and Databricks come together. We discussed about inflection, we discussed about platform, we discussed about solution, we discussed about outcomes and how in general, in a market like India, a whole AI wave is going through the process.

How do we bring this to life as two companies that - a.) bring a platform, b.) bring the capability to bring it to life. And that’s where I think as Persistent, we’ve been building the Brickbuilder ecosystem across a verticals, like you alluded to. Healthcare, BFSI, retail, and I would add digital natives because we work with them extensively.

And also bringing out things like iAURA 2.0, which is our framework/accelerator.

But how do you see this from an India perspective? What kind of investments, accelerators are you seeing, and what talent build-out is required in the wave of AI? Because we’ve invested in data people, we might have invested in business people, but how do we now change the mix of talent for AI, and how does that impact the market?

Anand Kalidoss: Thanks for first bringing that point around startup ecosystem, the digital natives. I think they push any product to the next level of validation and proof point into the market because they do the stress testing, with the way they run the business. They are technologists to the core, in terms of, thinking how business can change with technology in play. So they are one of the initial adopters. It doesn’t come to our thinking naturally because we consider them as technologist companies.

So, e-commerce is at a different phase of adoption of any technology that comes out. The second is, partners like you, Persistent, completely changed the platform. It is no more about coming together and starting a conversation. You help both the customers and companies like us move two notches higher because you create the platform which is much more flexible for both of us to engage at a level up than just starting at ground zero.

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What I am trying to say is, with the capabilities you bring, such as market engagement, people, and also being customer first and customer zero, you give the feedback loop of product capability - what is working, what is not working, what needs attention. It helps companies like us to think in terms of, “Oh, let’s get our product refined in many of these events.”

So that is a thing which the partner brings to table for platform companies like us. Second, your presence in the market also helps us unlock new capabilities, such as going to a customer and jointly engaging to showcase it to them, from a execution proof point, to a real-life deployment, to measurable outcomes.

It’s like a thread in a fabric. You just start pulling it from one end, automatically it’ll come through the complete journey cycle without anyone worried about how it is going to work in. Because you bring the industry context, you bring the talent pool which unlocks potential, and it can also be check-in and check-out at various instances, based on the nature of product, right? Like it can start as a data project. It will move on to AI, and they will look for an app capability. You will look in terms of, “how Lakebase can help in the agentic flow the organization is building?”. If an organization want to do this all by itself, think of the talent they need to bring in. And they have to maintain this on a sustained manner – that is another big challenge.

That’s what customers ask us, “See, Databricks is great, this platform brings all these capability, but who’s going to make it real for me? I don’t have that kind of talent. As an organization, I’ll not be able to attract the talent as well. I might be okay to bring them in, but am I the choice of player for those individuals who love to work?” A tech company can provide that opportunity for them and unlock potential from both sides, product capability and customer realization of that value. So, I think specialization is something you are adding value to us by focusing on vertical specialization.

We are horizontal product company, so we understand less of industry context, but you bring lot more industry context. So thanks for doing the great work - what you bring to table - and let’s continue this engagement in a much, much deeper and sharper manner.

Sandeep Srinivasan: Thank you, Anand, for that because I think it’s also important to get a pat on the back for the efforts that we’re putting around products such as yourselves.

I think one aspect that I would like to cover as we move forward and probably segue into is trust, governance and responsible AI, because, you know, there is always responsibility on technology providers on enabling automation, digitalization, et cetera. But where do you see this playing out? Because we’ve made our investments around privacy in India, around responsible AI globally, and we think it’s a very important topic, given the way AI is proliferating so fast, moving from the lab to scale to outcomes.

How do you see that playing out, and where do you see the whole thought process around governance and control coming through?

Anand Kalidoss: I think today we are talking at a right moment on governance. All the frontier model providers have started thinking in terms of how AI governance is going to come and play globally and what the guardrails they should be thinking of building.

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I just want to share, from the Databricks context, what we are thinking. We are building this as an agentic and modern data platform, the thinking is around the four Cs, which talks about context, choice, cost and control. I want to emphasize on control. The customer should have clear control in terms of what they are doing, why they are doing, and in an area where it is autonomously delivered, what has happened, why it has happened, what decision was taken.

That need to be a track-back mechanism with deeper governance controls. I think this is an area everyone is thinking of - how this is going to get built. As Databricks, we bring this in the form of a Unity Catalog. Our product provides organization with the ability to understand how they can track the lineage and how this unified approach allows the organizations to have a strict governance policy so that they know who is seeing the data and who all can at any point in time.

And many companies will be sharing data between dealers, distributors based on product maturity and demand planning, whatever they need to do. But for that, they need to be clear how they are tracking, and it is an ongoing exercise. Every day they can’t keep tracking, “Okay, which sheets, who’s watching and how are we doing this?”

And that’s where the Unity Catalog plays a role. Governance is not an afterthought. Governance is an thought that comes when we start building the use cases. And we also hear, some customers have really thought through where they come and say, “Hey, Databricks team, please help me in these five areas where I need to do data share.”

If I’m doing data sharing, how am I protected in terms of what attributes are seen by others? What level of detailing are being shared by my company to them? And any time, if I want to cut that relationship, because people also transition out of engagements, how do I make sure I am always compliant on my data management and what works for my organization? So our Unity Catalog drives a lot more deeper, in terms of, making it work for the customer.

This is going to be an interesting area where much more capabilities will get built over and over above because once people understand the criticality and depth of this, people will also see how this can help them to address lot more.

Governance, observability and security are going to be the basis of scale adoption of AI by any company, and we are on top of it. And the way your organization is doing it, I think I love that partnership working.

Sandeep Srinivasan: Indeed, Anand. You mentioned about four Cs as Databricks’ approach. I think at Persistent, at a leadership level and at a company level, we see this as three Cs. I think that’s a nomenclature at the end of the day. We call it control, coordination, and context. Control brings the responsibility part, coordination brings the agentic part, and context, which is what is all about data - AI for data, data for AI, and the knowledge layer - which is building up the data that is there in the organization for AI to put it to good use, right?

So I think there’s a lot of synergy there in our partnership. As we move ahead and probably look out into the last part of our conversation, Anand, what do you see happening in the next six to 18 months

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with AI? Where do you see it going? What do you see might be the most tangible areas where it'll impact as you move forward?

What are you stargazing about it?

Anand Kalidoss: I think, AI will move closer to everyone's life. There is lot more in everyone's life where AI will come and play part. There will be flexibility and the technology readiness to adopt AI, even with your legacy systems. AI will possibly move, in terms of a solution, on hybrid and sharing data will become the reality.

Because as we move into this deeper and deeper, we see a lot more autonomous agents getting created. Capability around how people want to automate work, even from the regular daily aspect to actions, which are much more critical for their work, and data-intense work, which requires a lot more security and capability around that.

Governance, observability, security will also get a lot more stricter and stringent, and the capability of technology to manage this will go much more deeper.

The second one is the boundary between analytical layer, application layer and the AI layer will just slowly narrow the gap, and they'll all coexist. That's where we spoke about - Lakebase will just explode because there are a lot of autonomous agentic workflows and automatic work engines, which will get created, and these capabilities will build.

We are thinking ahead in terms of how the world will be in 2030 - 2035, and building some of these capabilities so that we are ready when people are ready to adopt it at scale.

The third one, which is very critical, we have seen lots of technology coming in and probably exploding and adding a lot more value to humanity. Sometimes things just fall flat. The differentiation most of these, other than the technology capability and superiority, is the ecosystem that plays with it.

I think three things which will change is AI everywhere in everything we do. Capability of that product and technology is getting much more robust and, easy to work with. And with the capabilities of AI agentic changing the way we live, Lakebase kind of components will add value, and partners will make it all real for the ecosystem to play with so that there is more space for everyone to live in, and there is a lot more the technology can help us to create economic value in the market.

Sandeep Srinivasan: That's great, Anand. Thank you for joining us today and sharing your valuable insights. It's clear that convergence of data platform, AI and platforms like Databricks are creating an incredible possibility for industries and our partnership around creating real-world impact and moving away from experimentation.

So, Anand, anything that you would like to convey as a closing comment before we wrap up?

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Persistent Podcast | Episode 25

Anand Kalidoss: Thanks, Sandeep. It's been wonderful to have this conversation; I've enjoyed every bit of it. I also see how much you are doing in the market, and I'm excited about what both organizations can achieve together. I look forward to growing this partnership—making it broader, deeper, and more valuable to our customers.

Thanks for having me again.

Sandeep Srinivasan: Thank you, Anand. And thanks to everyone for tuning in to Re(AI)magine Conversations. If today's episode sparked a new thought or idea, share it with your network and let us know. We'd also be happy to host you—drop us a note at podcast@persistent.com.

And until next time, stay curious, stay inspired. Stay inspired by AI to create human impact.

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About Persistent

Persistent Systems (BSE: 533179 and NSE: PERSISTENT) is a global services and solutions company delivering AI-led, platform-driven Digital Engineering and Enterprise Modernization to businesses across industries. With over 29,500 employees located in 21 countries, the Company is committed to innovation and client success. Persistent offers a comprehensive suite of services, including software engineering, product development, data and analytics, CX transformation, cloud computing, and agentic business automation. The Company is part of the MSCI India Index and is included in key indices of the National Stock Exchange of India, including the Nifty Midcap 50, Nifty IT, and Nifty MidCap Liquid 15, as well as several on the BSE such as the S&P BSE 100 and S&P BSE SENSEX Next 50. Persistent has been named one of America's Greatest Workplaces in Tech 2026 by Newsweek and Plant A Insights Group. The Company is also a constituent of the Dow Jones Best-in-Class World Index. Persistent has achieved carbon neutrality, reinforcing its commitment to sustainability and responsible business practices. As a participant of the United Nations Global Compact, the Company is committed to aligning strategies and operations with universal principles on human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption, as well as take actions that advance societal goals. With a 22% YoY growth in brand value, Persistent has been recognized as the Fastest Growing IT Services brand globally in the 2026 Brand Finance IT Services 25 report, among the world's Top 25 IT Services brands and ranks as the 12th strongest brand.

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