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In this engaging interview, Nitesh Khandelwal, Co-Founder & Director of QuantInsti, discusses how India's trading landscape is undergoing a fundamental shift — with retail traders embracing discipline, automation, and data-driven strategies like never before.

1. India has seen a rapid rise in algorithmic trading — how does the country's growth trajectory compare with global trends in this space?

India's algorithmic trading landscape has grown immensely over the last decade. While we began our journey slightly later than markets like the US or UK, where algorithmic trading already accounts for a major share of market volume, our pace of adoption has been truly inspiring.

What stands out to me is the accessibility of algo and quant trading today. It's no longer just for large institutions or elite trading desks. We now see engineers, data scientists,

finance professionals, even college students, contributing to the algorithmic trading domain. And this is happening not only in Mumbai or New Delhi, but in cities and towns across the country.

Compared to mature markets, we still have ground to cover in terms of volume and infrastructure maturity. But what we do have is momentum, and in many ways, a more agile, innovation-friendly mindset. That, to me, is India's edge. The desire to learn, to adapt, and to compete is strong. And with the right ecosystem support, we can bridge that global gap faster than many expect.

2. How are Indian institutional investors and retail traders adapting to the growing influence of technology and automation in trading compared to their global counterparts?

On the institutional side, Indian firms have adapted very well to the rise of algorithmic and quantitative strategies. Many of them operate with world-class infrastructure and execute sophisticated strategies across asset classes.

These institutions are no longer just mimicking what works in global markets; they are innovating based on the unique nature of Indian markets, from fragmented liquidity to intraday volatility patterns.

Retail traders, on the other hand, are now entering what I would call their "systematic awakening". For a long time, retail trading in India was primarily discretionary, driven by gut feeling or technical chart patterns. But that's changing fast.

More and more traders now want to build rule-based strategies, automate parts of their execution, and leverage data and analytics to make decisions. The rise of API-driven brokerages, the availability of cloud-based backtesting tools, and access to education have all made this possible.

What retail traders in India are now realizing is that discipline is potentially more likely to beat instinct over the long run. That's a shift I'm deeply excited about.

3. What unique challenges and opportunities do you see for algorithmic and quantitative trading in India's regulatory and market infrastructure?

India's market landscape offers some exciting opportunities for algorithmic and quantitative trading, especially with the growing interest from retail participants. What stands out is how SEBI is actively working to shape a space that encourages innovation while keeping investor protection at the core.

As the regulatory framework around retail algo trading evolves, I see it opening up more clarity and confidence for everyone involved like traders, brokers, and platforms. This kind of structured guidance is a big step toward making advanced tools more accessible to individual traders, and it sets the stage for healthy, responsible growth in the space.

Another area that's shaping up well is access to market data. As infrastructure continues to improve, we're likely to see better availability of quality price and alternative data, which is key for strategy development and testing. That's going to unlock a lot of potential for retail quants and aspiring traders who are just getting started.

Combine all that with India's huge base of tech-savvy talent and rising interest in quantitative finance, it is likely indicative of a dynamic, inclusive phase of growth.

4. Through QuantInsti, how are you helping shape India's ecosystem for algorithmic trading and empowering the next generation of quant traders?

When we started QuantInsti about 15 years ago, the goal was simple — to make algorithmic trading education accessible and practical. At that time, there were very few resources for someone in India (or even in most of the financial hubs globally) to learn about algorithmic trading in a structured, hands-on way.

With structured programmes like EPAT (Executive Programme in Algorithmic Trading) and our self-paced platform Quantra and other learning initiatives, we've helped individuals from over 190+ countries and territories in their journey to transition into the world of quant and algorithmic trading.

But beyond just education, what drives us is the desire to empower a community. We want someone sitting in Kanpur, Indore, or Kochi, with a passion for markets and coding, to have the same shot at success as someone in New York or London.

We've seen EPAT alumni go on to launch their own trading firms, join global hedge funds, or create fintech products that solve real-world problems. And that's the most fulfilling part of this journey, to see talent unlock its potential and thrive, regardless of where it began.

We also actively collaborate with brokers, fintech startups, and global exchanges to ensure that education, technology, and regulation evolve together. Because that's how you build an ecosystem: not in silos, but in synergy.