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Hint Sinemasında İnsan Benzeri Yapay Zekâ: Kültürel Anlatılar, Etik Boyutlar ve Posthüman Perspektifler

Human-like Artificial Intelligence in Indian Cinema: Cultural Narratives, Ethical Dimensions, and Posthuman Perspectives

Doğuşcan Göker[a]

[a] Sakarya Üniversitesi, Sakarya, Türkiye.
dgoker@sakarya.edu.tr
ORCID: 0000-0003-1446-7528

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ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Hint sinemasında insan benzeri yapay zekâ (AI) karakterlerinin temsilini inceleyerek, bunları film çalışmaları, kültürel analiz ve AI etiği kesişim noktasında ele almaktadır. Küresel bilim kurgu genellikle AI'yı özerklik, isyan ve teknolojik endişe merceğinden tasvir ederken, Hint sineması bu anlatıları dharma (kozmik görev), seva (özverili hizmet) ve melodramatik gelenek gibi kültürel olarak yerleşik ahlaki çerçeveler aracılığıyla yeniden şekillendirmektedir. Niteliksel, yorumlayıcı bir metodoloji kullanarak, araştırma Enthiran (2010), 2.0 (2018), Ra. One (2011), Android Kunjappan Version 5.25 (2019) ve Anukul (2017) gibi bir dizi filmi analiz etmektedir. Bu filmler, fiziksel, bilişsel ve duygusal olarak insana benzeyen özelliklere sahip insansı yapay zekayı tasvir ettikleri için seçilmiştir. Bulgular, bu filmlerin yapay zekayı sadece teknolojik bir yenilik olarak değil, ahlaki uyum, ilişkisel taahhütler ve topluma hizmetten kaynaklanan meşruiyete sahip etik aktörler olarak kurguladığını göstermektedir. Yapay zekayı tanıdık sosyo-kültürel bağlamlara yerleştirerek, Hint sineması hem küresel post-insan söylemine katılıyor hem de iş birliği, karşılıklı sorumluluk ve ekolojik uyumun insan-makine ilişkilerini şekillendirdiği alternatif bir vizyon sunuyor. Makale, Hint sinemasının yapay zekâ anlatılarının Batı merkezli endişelerin ötesine geçtiği ve teknolojik geleceği müzakere etmek için kültürel temelli modeller önerdiği sonucuna varıyor.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the representation of human-like artificial intelligence (AI) characters in Indian cinema, situating them within the intersection of film studies, cultural analysis, and AI ethics. While global science fiction often depicts AI through the lenses of autonomy, rebellion, and technological anxiety, Indian cinema reframes these narratives through culturally embedded moral frameworks such as dharma (cosmic duty), seva (selfless service), and the melodramatic tradition. Using a qualitative, interpretive methodology, the research analyzes a selection of films—including Enthiran (2010), 2.0 (2018), Ra.One (2011), Android Kunjappan Version 5.25 (2019), and Anukul (2017) were chosen for their portrayal of humanoid AI with physical, cognitive, and emotional human-like traits. The findings indicate that these films construct AI not as mere technological novelty but as ethical agents whose legitimacy derives from moral alignment, relational commitments, and service to the community. By embedding AI within familiar socio-cultural contexts, Indian cinema both participates in global posthuman discourse and offers an alternative vision in which collaboration, mutual responsibility, and ecological harmony shape human–machine relations. The paper concludes that Indian cinematic narratives of AI extend beyond Western-centric concerns, proposing culturally grounded models for negotiating the technological future.

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** Sorumlu yazar: Doğuşcan Göker, dgoker@sakarya.edu.tr

1. Introduction and a Brief History of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) has gradually evolved from speculative fiction into a tangible technological force that redefines creative practices and cultural production. While its early conceptualizations emerged within the domains of mathematics, logic, and computer science in the mid-20th century (Turing, 1950; McCorduck, 2004), AI has since permeated visual culture and cinema in ways that profoundly transform both artistic processes and aesthetic experiences. To understand the significance of AI in cinematic and visual contexts, it is essential to trace its historical development, situate its technological milestones alongside cinematic innovations, and examine how this convergence disrupts established notions of creativity, authorship, and representation. By contextualizing AI's evolution and mapping its integration into filmic narratives, production methodologies, and broader visual culture, we can assess both its transformative potential and the ethical dilemmas it raises in the contemporary media landscape.

Artificial intelligence (AI), as a scientific and technological field, has undergone a profound transformation since its conceptual emergence in the mid-twentieth century. Although often framed as a contemporary revolution, AI's historical roots extend back to classical philosophical inquiries into logic, reasoning, and the nature of the mind. The formalization of these inquiries in the early twentieth century laid the groundwork for computational models of intelligence, ultimately culminating in the birth of AI as a distinct discipline. Tracing this evolution requires examining the field's key milestones: the early theoretical foundations of computation and logic, the formal coining of the term "artificial intelligence" at the Dartmouth Conference in 1956, subsequent decades of optimism and "AI winters," the rise of machine learning and expert systems, and the current era dominated by deep learning, generative models, and large-scale data-driven approaches. This narrative highlights not only technological breakthroughs but also shifts in epistemological assumptions, research paradigms, and societal perceptions.
The prehistory of AI can be traced back to mathematical logic and cybernetics, particularly in the work of Alan Turing. Turing's 1936 paper on computable numbers laid the foundation for modern computer science, introducing the abstract concept of the Turing machine. His later essay, Computing Machinery and Intelligence (1950), famously posed the question, "Can machines think?" and proposed the imitation game—later known as the Turing Test—as an operational criterion for machine intelligence. These theoretical contributions framed intelligence as an information-processing problem, suggesting that cognitive functions could, in principle, be simulated by mechanical systems. Parallel developments in cybernetics, led by Norbert Wiener, explored control and communication in animals and machines, influencing early neural network research and the first attempts to model learning algorithms (Wiener, 1948).

The formal birth of AI as a research discipline occurred at the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence in 1956, organized by John McCarthy, Marvin Minsky, Nathaniel Rochester, and Claude Shannon (Nilsson, 2010). This gathering not only coined the term "artificial intelligence" but also set forth ambitious goals: constructing machines capable of reasoning, problem-solving, and learning. The optimism of this era is evident in early programs such as Logic Theorist (Newell & Simon, 1956), which successfully proved mathematical theorems, and General Problem Solver (GPS), which attempted to formalize human-like reasoning strategies (Russell & Norvig, 2021). These systems, though limited, demonstrated the feasibility of symbolic AI—an approach based on manipulating explicit representations of knowledge using logical rules.

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed both expansion and growing pains in AI research. Natural language processing took its first steps with Joseph Weizenbaum's ELIZA (1966), a program that simulated conversation by pattern-matching user inputs, creating the illusion of understanding (McCorduck, 2004). At the same time, early neural network models, such as the Perceptron developed by Frank Rosenblatt (1958), promised machine learning capabilities but faced setbacks after Marvin Minsky and Seymour Papert's critical 1969 analysis highlighted theoretical limitations (Minsky & Papert, 1969). This critique contributed to the first "AI winter"—a period of reduced funding and waning enthusiasm—illustrating the recurring cycle of overhyped expectations followed by disillusionment that has characterized AI's history (Crevier, 1993).

Despite setbacks, the 1970s and 1980s saw significant progress in knowledge representation and reasoning. The development of expert systems, such as MYCIN for medical diagnosis and DENDRAL for chemical analysis, exemplified the practical utility of AI in specialized domains (Shortliffe, 1976). These systems encoded expert knowledge as rules and achieved impressive performance within narrow contexts, sparking widespread industrial interest. Japan's ambitious Fifth Generation Computer Systems project in the 1980s epitomized this era's optimism, envisioning massively parallel computing architectures for AI applications (Nilsson, 2010). Yet, as with earlier

cycles, unmet expectations led to another AI winter in the late 1980s, underscoring the challenges of scaling symbolic approaches and the brittleness of rule-based systems.

A paradigm shift emerged in the 1990s and 2000s with the resurgence of machine learning, particularly statistical methods that emphasized data-driven pattern recognition over hand-crafted rules (Russell & Norvig, 2021). This transition was catalyzed by increases in computational power, the availability of large datasets, and advances in algorithms such as support vector machines and decision trees. The field witnessed landmark achievements, including IBM's Deep Blue defeating world chess champion Garry Kasparov in 1997—a symbolic victory showcasing the power of brute-force search and domain-specific heuristics (Hassani, 2020). While Deep Blue exemplified "narrow AI," optimized for a single task, it also signaled the growing maturity of AI techniques in solving complex real-world problems.

The mid-2000s marked the rise of deep learning, a subfield of machine learning inspired by multilayer artificial neural networks. Breakthroughs by Geoffrey Hinton and colleagues in training deep networks using backpropagation and large datasets revolutionized fields such as image recognition and speech processing (LeCun, Bengio, & Hinton, 2015). A pivotal moment came in 2012 when AlexNet, a deep convolutional network, dramatically outperformed competitors in the ImageNet visual recognition challenge, igniting a deep learning revolution (Krizhevsky et al., 2012). This success was followed by transformative achievements across domains: Google's AlphaGo defeating Go champion Lee Sedol in 2016 demonstrated the combination of deep learning and reinforcement learning (Silver et al., 2017), while natural language processing advanced with models like BERT and GPT, enabling unprecedented fluency in text generation (Devlin et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2020).

The 2020s have ushered in the era of generative AI, epitomized by models capable of creating images, music, and text indistinguishable from human-produced content. Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs), diffusion models, and transformer architectures underpin systems such as DALL·E, Midjourney, and ChatGPT, heralding both new possibilities and ethical dilemmas (Goodfellow et al., 2014; Ramesh et al., 2022). These technologies have democratized creative tools, enabling users to produce high-quality content with minimal technical expertise, while simultaneously raising concerns about authenticity, bias, and the societal impact of hyperreal synthetic media.

From a Turkish scholarly perspective, similar historical narratives have been chronicled with attention to local developments and applications. Abudureyimu and Oğurlu (2021) emphasize AI's interdisciplinary nature, highlighting its intersections with statistics, cognitive science, and decision-making processes. Keleş (2022) traces AI's integration into sectors such as health and education in Turkey, noting both opportunities and ethical challenges. Hassani (2020) and Kırık & Özkoçak (2023) provide overviews of AI's evolution from rule-based systems to data-driven paradigms, underscoring the global and regional dimensions of the technology's adoption.

Throughout its history, AI research has been shaped by cycles of optimism and disappointment, shifting from symbolic to statistical paradigms and now to generative and hybrid approaches. Russell and Norvig (2021) conceptualize this evolution as a trajectory from reasoning-based systems toward learning systems capable of adapting to complex environments. Nilsson (2010) similarly frames AI's history as a quest for increasingly general and flexible intelligence, moving from narrow problem-solving to broader cognitive architectures. These historical accounts reveal a field continually redefined by advances in algorithms, hardware, and data, as well as by evolving societal expectations and ethical considerations.

Today, AI stands at a crossroads where technical capabilities outpace regulatory frameworks and philosophical consensus. The emergence of general-purpose models capable of multimodal reasoning—combining text, vision, and action—raises questions reminiscent of Turing's original inquiry: not merely whether machines can think, but how their intelligence should be integrated into human society. As AI continues to permeate daily life, understanding its historical trajectory provides essential context for navigating its future challenges and opportunities.

2. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology designed to explore how human-like artificial intelligence (AI) characters are constructed, narrated, and culturally embedded in Indian cinema. The approach draws from film studies, cultural analysis, and AI ethics scholarship, combining close reading of film texts with contextual interpretation grounded in posthuman theory.

Selection criteria for films are mainly representation of humanoid AI. Each film features AI entities designed with human-like physicality, cognitive abilities, or emotional capacities, making them ideal for

examining questions of personhood and relational ethics. The selection spans Tamil, Hindi, and Malayalam cinema, allowing analysis of regional variations in the portrayal of AI while still remaining within the broader framework of Indian national cinema. The films range from large-scale science fiction spectacles (Enthiran, 2.0, Ra.One) to intimate domestic dramas (Android Kunjappan Version 5.25, Anukul), enabling comparisons between public, spectacular representations of AI and more private, relational narratives. When we look at the Analytical framework the analysis proceeded through stages one of them is a narrative structure and character analysis is mainly mapping the AI characters' story arcs, their roles as protagonists or antagonists, and their interactions with human characters. Identifying pivotal moments where AI agency shifts or is redefined, especially about moral decision-making or emotional engagement. Situating each film within the socio-cultural and industrial context of its production, including the rise of India's VFX industry, the influence of transnational sci-fi aesthetics, and domestic audience expectations for melodrama and moral resolution.

Integrating secondary literature from Indian and global film scholarship (e.g., A Posthuman Dharma, 2022; Frankenstein's Avatars, 2018) and AI ethics research to link textual findings with broader theoretical debates. The methodological emphasis is interpretive rather than quantitative. Instead of measuring audience reactions or production budgets, the focus is on how meaning is generated through narrative form, character construction, and cultural framing. This aligns with the goals of critical film studies, which prioritize depth of textual engagement and cultural specificity over statistical generalization.

3. Cinema and AI Encounters

The conceptual foundations of AI trace back to early theoretical inquiries into machine cognition. Alan Turing's seminal essay Computing Machinery and Intelligence (1950) proposed the "imitation game," later known as the Turing Test, as a metric for evaluating machine intelligence based on indistinguishability from human responses. This thought experiment not only inspired decades of AI research but also profoundly influenced cinematic narratives exploring the boundary between human and machine, such as Blade Runner (1982), where replicants challenge the criteria of humanity, or Ex Machina (2014), where an android's capacity to manipulate human emotions is framed as a measure of consciousness (Brooker, 2017). Parallel to Turing's inquiry, Isaac Asimov's "Three Laws of Robotics" (1942) offered ethical principles governing human–robot interactions—principles frequently dramatized in films like I, Robot (2004) and A.I. Artificial Intelligence (2001), where dilemmas surrounding obedience, harm, and autonomy unfold through narrative conflict. These early frameworks illustrate how AI's philosophical underpinnings preceded its technical realizations, providing a discursive groundwork for both scientific research and cinematic representation.

The term "artificial intelligence" itself emerged from the Dartmouth Conference of 1956, where pioneers such as John McCarthy, Marvin Minsky, Claude Shannon, and Nathaniel Rochester envisioned machines capable of performing tasks characteristic of human intelligence (Nilsson, 2010). This period coincided with cinematic explorations of intelligent machines, notably Fritz Lang's Metropolis (1927), which foreshadowed anxieties about mechanization and social control, and Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968), which introduced HAL 9000—a sentient computer whose calm demeanor and lethal decisions epitomize fears of autonomous technology (Faludi, 2013). By the 1960s, experimental AI programs like Joseph Weizenbaum's ELIZA (1966) demonstrated rudimentary natural language processing, while cinema continued to interrogate machine sentience and empathy, exemplified by the android Maria in Metropolis and the anthropomorphic robots in Silent Running (1972). These cultural artifacts reveal a persistent preoccupation with the blurred boundaries between human cognition and machine simulation.

Technological advances in AI accelerated during the 1980s and 1990s, coinciding with major developments in computer-generated imagery (CGI) and digital compositing in cinema. IBM's Deep Blue defeating chess champion Garry Kasparov in 1997 demonstrated the power of narrow AI systems optimized for specific tasks (Hassani, 2020), while filmmakers leveraged increasingly sophisticated algorithms to craft

unprecedented visual spectacles. James Cameron's Terminator 2: Judgment Day (1991) introduced groundbreaking liquid-metal morphing effects, presaging the digital transformations later refined in The Matrix (1999). Steven Spielberg's Jurassic Park (1993) combined animatronics and CGI to render lifelike dinosaurs, a watershed moment in visual effects history (Peddie, 2010). These cinematic milestones paralleled AI research shifts toward machine learning and probabilistic reasoning, illustrating the reciprocal influence between technological innovation and cinematic imagination.

The 21st century ushered in a new era of AI marked by deep learning, neural networks, and generative algorithms. Google DeepMind's AlphaGo (2016) defeating world champion Lee Sedol at the game of Go signaled a leap in AI's strategic reasoning capabilities (Silver et al., 2017), while contemporaneous advancements in generative adversarial networks (GANs) enabled the creation of hyperrealistic synthetic imagery (Goodfellow et al., 2014). Cinema, meanwhile, adopted AI not merely as a thematic subject but also as a production tool. Martin Scorsese's The Irishman (2019) famously employed AI-driven de-aging techniques to portray characters across decades, blending performance capture with machine learning-based facial synthesis (Cieply, 2019). Similarly, Disney's Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker (2019) utilized AI to recreate the likeness of the late Carrie Fisher, sparking debates about posthumous consent and digital resurrection (Samuelson, 2021). These practices underscore a profound shift: AI is no longer confined to diegetic representation but actively shapes the ontological fabric of cinematic imagery.

Beyond narrative cinema, AI has transformed broader visual culture, from video art to social media aesthetics. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram deploy AI-driven filters and recommendation algorithms that not only curate content consumption but also influence visual production norms, fostering hyperreal and algorithmically optimized forms of self-representation (Bishop, 2022). Artists using tools such as DALL·E and Midjourney exploit diffusion models to generate hybridized visual languages, challenging notions of originality and authorship in the digital age (Ramesh et al., 2022). These practices resonate with Walter Benjamin's (1936/2008) analysis of art's "aura," problematizing authenticity in an era of infinite reproducibility, and with Jean Baudrillard's (1981) theory of hyperreality, wherein simulations precede and determine reality itself. Deepfake phenomena further exemplify this condition: AI-generated videos can be more convincing than authentic footage, destabilizing trust in visual evidence and prompting urgent questions about media literacy and epistemological security (Chesney & Citron, 2019).

The integration of AI into cinematic production also reconfigures creative labor and authorship. Screenwriting software powered by AI, such as ScriptBook, analyzes narrative structures and predicts audience responses, aiding studios in greenlighting projects (Roose, 2018). While such tools promise efficiency, they risk homogenizing storytelling by privileging data-driven formulas over idiosyncratic artistic vision (Elkins, 2020). Similarly, AI-assisted editing and color grading streamline post-production workflows, democratizing high-quality aesthetics for independent filmmakers yet blurring the distinction between professional craft and automated creativity (Tryon, 2022). The emergence of virtual performers—synthetic humans like Lil Miquela—further complicates notions of presence, performance, and celebrity in visual culture, as audiences form parasocial relationships with entities that are neither entirely fictional nor fully human (McCosker & Wilken, 2021).

These transformations invite theoretical reconsideration from posthumanist and algorithmic aesthetic perspectives. Posthumanism, as articulated by Braidotti (2013), challenges anthropocentric hierarchies and frames AI as a co-agent in cultural production, decentering human subjectivity in favor of networked, hybrid assemblages. Algorithmic aesthetics, meanwhile, interrogates how machine learning models develop "aesthetic instincts" based on statistical pattern recognition rather than intentional creativity (Manovich, 2020). In this context, authorship becomes distributed across programmers, datasets, and neural architectures, necessitating new critical paradigms for evaluating meaning and value in AI-mediated artworks (Elsaesser, 2018). Film theory, traditionally grounded in human authorship and spectatorship, must therefore adapt to account for nonhuman actors in both creation and reception.

However, AI's integration into cinema and visual culture is fraught with ethical dilemmas. Intellectual property frameworks struggle to address works without clear human authorship, raising questions about

ownership and moral rights (Samuelson, 2021). Bias in training datasets can perpetuate harmful stereotypes in casting and narrative representation (Buolamwini & Gebru, 2018), while automation threatens employment for visual effects artists, editors, and other craftspeople, prompting anxieties about labor displacement (Tryon, 2022). The posthumous recreation of actors challenges notions of consent and legacy, with critics arguing that such practices risk commodifying human likeness beyond death (Cieply, 2019). Moreover, the proliferation of deepfakes erodes trust in visual media, posing risks not only to artistic authenticity but also to political discourse and social cohesion (Chesney & Citron, 2019).

The proliferation of AI in film and visual culture raises significant ethical concerns. Key issues include:

Authorship and Intellectual Property: Who owns an AI-generated film or character? Current copyright frameworks struggle to accommodate works without clear human authorship (Samuelson, 2021).

Representation and Bias: AI models trained on biased datasets risk perpetuating stereotypes in casting, narrative tropes, and visual representation (Buolamwini & Gebru, 2018).

Labor and Employment: Automation threatens traditional roles in filmmaking, from storyboard artists to visual effects technicians, prompting debates about job displacement and the value of human creativity (Tryon, 2022).

Consent and Digital Resurrection: The use of AI to recreate deceased actors raises questions of moral rights, family consent, and the commodification of posthumous identities (Cieply, 2019).

These concerns underscore the need for ethical frameworks that balance innovation with respect for human dignity and cultural integrity. Rather than viewing AI as a replacement for human creativity, emerging scholarship advocates for a model of "collaborative creativity," wherein humans and machines co-create cinematic experiences (McCosker & Wilken, 2021). Such collaborations can yield hybrid forms of storytelling that harness computational efficiency while preserving human intuition and emotional resonance. The future of AI in cinema may thus be characterized not by the eclipse of human authorship but by its transformation within a networked ecology of human–machine interaction.

Despite these challenges, AI also offers opportunities for collaborative creativity rather than outright replacement of human artistry. Emerging practices in AI-assisted filmmaking suggest symbiotic workflows where machines handle repetitive technical tasks, freeing humans to focus on narrative and emotional dimensions. Projects like Oscar Sharp and Ross Goodwin's Sunspring (2016)—a short film written entirely by an AI trained on science fiction scripts—demonstrate the potential for hybrid storytelling that fuses algorithmic unpredictability with human interpretation (Goodwin, 2016). As AI continues to evolve, its role in cinema may be defined less by the substitution of human creators and more by the emergence of new, co-creative paradigms that expand the boundaries of artistic imagination.

Ultimately, the historical trajectory of AI—from theoretical constructs in mid-20th-century computer science to its pervasive presence in contemporary visual culture—reveals a dynamic interplay between technological innovation and artistic expression. Cinema, as both a narrative and visual medium, has consistently mediated societal anxieties and aspirations surrounding AI, oscillating between dystopian warnings and utopian possibilities. As generative models and deep learning architectures become increasingly sophisticated, the line between simulation and reality, human and machine, art and algorithm continues to blur. This convergence challenges fundamental assumptions about creativity, authenticity, and spectatorship, demanding critical engagement from scholars, practitioners, and audiences alike. The future of AI in cinema and visual culture will likely be characterized not by the disappearance of human authorship but by its transformation within a complex ecology of human–machine collaboration, inviting us to reconsider what it means to create—and to be human—in an age of intelligent machines.

4. Unusual examples: Artificial intelligence characters and films in Indian cinema

Although artificial intelligence (AI) technologies appear to be concentrated in the United States, the impact of Indian engineers and technicians on the American software industry is undeniable. Therefore, this study

argues that it is valuable to examine Indian cinema—emerging from a different cultural context—for its representations of AI in film. Indian cinema, which employs highly original and distinctive approaches in both methodology and subject matter, takes a unique stance on the use of artificial intelligence.

Unlike many Western AI narratives, Indian cinematic depictions integrate local moral frameworks, such as seva (service) and ecological balance, into questions of technological agency and personhood. Through thematic analysis and engagement with posthuman theory, this paper contends that Indian screen androids become sites for negotiating the boundaries between human and nonhuman—not solely through cognition tests, but also through relational and ethical performance.

The proliferation of human-like AI characters in cinema reflects a global fascination with the boundaries between human and nonhuman agency. While Hollywood has long explored androids and AI through narratives of control, rebellion, and technological ethics, Indian cinema brings distinctive cultural frameworks to these questions. Characters such as Chitti in Enthiran/Robot (2010) and 2.0 (2018), G.One in Ra.One (2011), and the android caregivers in Android Kunjappan Version 5.25 (2019) and Anukul (2017) provide narrative laboratories where posthuman theory intersects with melodramatic tradition, dharma, and care ethics. These films not only entertain but also interrogate personhood, sovereignty, and the moral economy of care in an Indian sociocultural setting (*A Posthuman Dharma, 2022; Frankenstein's Avatars, 2018; Promises and Perils, 2021*).

Research on AI in cinema has often been dominated by Western frameworks emphasizing technological anxiety, the Turing Test, or AI's role in capitalist production (Sardar, 2015; Cave et al., 2018). Recent scholarship, however, has begun to address non-Western contexts. A Posthuman Dharma (2022) interprets 2.0 through a Hindu-inflected ecological posthumanism, where AI power must align with dharmic balance. Frankenstein's Avatars (2018) frames Chitti in Enthiran as a melodramatically humanized posthuman figure whose emotions both enable and destabilize moral agency. Studies of Android Kunjappan Version 5.25 and Anukul (Promises and Perils, 2021) emphasize the cultural specificity of care robotics, where acceptance is mediated by values such as seva and familial duty.

Industry-focused research (AI's Cost-Efficient Revolution, 2023; The Digital Transformation of the Film Industry, 2024) highlights India's expanding VFX and AI pipelines, which enable ambitious humanoid AI spectacles while reinforcing techno-nationalist narratives.

The first films we examine are *Enthiran/Robot (2010) and 2.0 (2018)*. Director Shankar's Enthiran introduces Chitti, an android created by Dr. Vaseegaran as a multi-functional humanoid. Initially emotionless, Chitti acquires human feelings through a software upgrade, leading to romantic attachment and eventual rebellion. Scholars view this arc as a South Asian reframing of the Frankenstein myth, where the creator's ethical oversight is as culpable as the creation's disobedience (Frankenstein's Avatars, 2018). In 2.0, Chitti is reactivated to combat an environmental crisis posed by Pakshi Rajan, a spirit avenging bird deaths caused by electromagnetic radiation. Here, Chitti's agency is legitimized through alignment with dharmic protection of life (A Posthuman Dharma, 2022). The films' large-scale VFX sequences, such as Chitti multiplying into swarms, exemplify the fusion of technological spectacle with mythic morality.

Another example is Anubhav Sinha's *Ra.One (2011)*. The film presents Ra.One, a video game villain whose adaptive AI escapes into the real world, and G.One, the heroic AI designed to protect humans. Unlike Chitti, G.One's identity is entirely relational, defined by loyalty to a human family. The narrative frames AI as both existential threat and emotionally attuned ally (AI: Analyzation…, 2019). The climax, in which G.One sacrifices himself to defeat Ra.One, echoes Indian epic traditions of heroic self-sacrifice, embedding AI within culturally resonant moral frameworks. Stylistically, Ra.One combines CGI-driven action with song-and-dance sequences, blending Bollywood and Hollywood genres.

In contrast, Ratheesh B. Poduval's *Android Kunjappan Version 5.25 (2019)* shifts focus from urban spectacle to rural domesticity. Subrahmanian, an elderly man resistant to modernity, initially rejects Kunjappan, the humanoid caregiver introduced by his son. Over time, dependence and emotional

attachment develop, reflecting discourses on "care robotics" in aging societies (Promises and Perils, 2021). The film complicates the notion of technological replacement, suggesting that while AI can fulfill physical needs, it cannot fully replicate human emotional reciprocity. Its restrained cinematography emphasizes intimacy, contrasting sharply with the grandiose aesthetics of Enthiran.

The final example is Sujoy Ghosh's *Anukul (2017)*, adapted from a story by Satyajit Ray. The film follows Anukul, a humanoid domestic helper whose competence threatens human employment. When confronted with ethical dilemmas, Anukul adheres to a strict moral code, sometimes with violent consequences. This raises questions about whether programmed ethics are more reliable—or more dangerous—than human moral ambiguity. Interpreted as a critique of class hierarchies and labor relations, Anukul situates AI within the socio-economic realities of India's service economy (Promises and Perils, 2021). The quiet domestic setting belies the narrative's moral weight.

Human-like AI characters in Indian cinema function as more than technological novelties; they operate as moral agents, cultural mediators, and narrative catalysts. By embedding AI within frameworks of dharma, seva, and sacrifice, these films negotiate global technological discourse through locally resonant storytelling. The result is a cinematic posthumanism that is distinctly Indian—spectacular yet ethical, futuristic yet rooted in tradition

5. Conclusion

The analysis of human-like AI characters in Indian cinema demonstrates that these figures are consistently framed as ethical and relational agents rather than merely technological novelties or existential threats. While global AI cinema often centers on narratives of autonomy, rebellion, and the dangers of machine intelligence, Indian narratives embed AI within moral universes shaped by cultural traditions, religious philosophies, and community values. In films such as *Enthiran and 2.0*, Chitti's actions are judged according to the principles of dharma, emphasizing a moral and cosmic order that includes responsibilities to protect life and maintain ecological harmony. Similarly, *Android Kunjappan Version 5.25* and Anukul present AI through the lens of seva, highlighting service, caregiving, and relational commitment as measures of worth. These films employ melodramatic structures—love, family bonds, and sacrificial acts—that humanize AI and encourage audience identification, transforming speculative technology into a relatable participant in human dramas. By recontextualizing global science fiction tropes in culturally specific idioms, Indian cinema uses AI characters as mirrors to explore contemporary social concerns such as modernization, labor displacement, migration, and generational change. In doing so, these narratives challenge Western-centric assumptions that personhood should be defined solely by intelligence or autonomy, instead proposing cultural embeddedness, moral alignment, and emotional reciprocity as equally significant. Ultimately, Indian cinematic visions of AI imagine a future in which human–machine relations are defined less by competition and control than by collaboration, mutual responsibility, and the preservation of ethical and ecological balance, offering a culturally distinct contribution to global posthuman discourse.

Kaynakça

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Bu çalışma, Hint sinemasında insan benzeri yapay zekâ (YZ) karakterlerinin temsiline odaklanmakta ve bu temsilleri kültürel anlatılar, etik boyutlar ve posthümanist perspektifler bağlamında incelemektedir. Günümüz küresel bilimkurgu sineması, YZ'yi sıklıkla özerklik, isyan ve teknolojik tehdit ekseninde kurgularken Hint sineması, bu anlatılara dharma (kozmik görev), seva (özverili hizmet) ve melodramatik gelenek gibi yerel kültürel değerler aracılığıyla özgün bir yön vermektedir. Araştırmanın temel amacı, Hint sinemasında YZ karakterlerinin yalnızca teknolojik birer figür değil, aynı zamanda ahlaki fail ve kültürel arabulucu olarak nasıl konumlandırıldığını ortaya koymaktır.

Çalışmada niteliksel ve yorumlayıcı bir yöntem benimsenmiştir. Analiz kapsamında, insan benzeri fiziksel, bilişsel veya duygusal özelliklere sahip YZ karakterlerinin temsil edildiği filmlerden örnekler seçilmiştir: Enthiran (2010), 2.0 (2018), Ra.One (2011), Android Kunjappan Version 5.25 (2019) ve Anukul (2017). Filmler, anlatı yapıları, karakter gelişimleri ve sosyo-kültürel bağlamları çerçevesinde incelenmiştir. Çalışmanın analitik çerçevesi; (1) YZ karakterlerinin anlatı içindeki konumlarını (kahraman, antagonist veya ahlaki arabulucu olarak), (2) insani ilişkilerdeki rollerini ve (3) etik karar alma süreçlerini detaylı biçimde haritalandırmayı içermektedir.

Bulgular, Hint sinemasında YZ karakterlerinin Batı bilimkurgu geleneğinden farklı olarak daha çok etik uyum, ilişkisel bağlılık ve topluma hizmet ekseninde anlamlandırıldığını göstermektedir. Örneğin Chitti karakteri (Enthiran, 2.0) dharmaya uygun davranışlarıyla meşruiyet kazanırken; G.One (Ra.One) sadakat ve özveri üzerinden kahramanlık konumuna yerleşmektedir. Daha küçük ölçekli anlatılarda ise YZ karakterleri (Android Kunjappan Version 5.25, Anukul), bakım etiği ve toplumsal bağların bir uzantısı olarak ele alınmakta, insani ilişkilerin tamamlayıcısı veya sorgulayıcısı hâline gelmektedir.

Bu bağlamda Hint sineması, YZ anlatılarını yalnızca küresel teknolojik endişelerin bir yansıması olarak değil, aynı zamanda yerel kültürel değerlerin müzakere alanı olarak konumlandırmaktadır. Dharma, seva ve aile bağları gibi kültürel kodlar, YZ'nin etik ve toplumsal konumunu belirleyen temel çerçeveleri oluşturmaktadır. Çalışma, Hint sinemasının bu özgün yaklaşımıyla Batı merkezli YZ anlatılarına alternatif bir gelecek tahayyülü sunduğunu ileri sürmektedir: İnsan–makine ilişkilerinin çatışmadan ziyade iş birliği, karşılıklı sorumluluk ve ekolojik uyum üzerinden yeniden kurgulandığı bir vizyon.

Sonuç olarak Hint sinemasında YZ temsilleri, hem küresel posthümanist söyleme katılmakta hem de yerel kültürel anlatılar aracılığıyla bu söylemi dönüştürmektedir. Bu durum, teknolojik geleceğe ilişkin tartışmalarda kültürel bağlamların ne denli belirleyici olabileceğini göstermekte ve sinemanın teknolojik tahayyüller üzerindeki etkisine dikkat çekmektedir.