



Indian Science Fiction Cinema: A study of Humanoid Ontology.

Romy Tuli, Dr. Nancy
Research Scholar, Assistant Professor
CT University Ludhiana

Abstract

Indian cinema has been experimenting with the genre of Science Fiction since the 1950s. Starting from the representation of mysterious species present on the earth, these speculative elements move towards highly advanced life however not limited to aliens, robots, humanoids, space and time travels, animal behaviorology, high-tech machinery, Artificial Intelligence, and zombies.

Some cyberpunk movies have shown a dystopian vision towards technologically entangled life. The humanoids, presented in these movies, try to fit into the human culture and environment.

It is professed that the major issue of this research is to seek the ontology of humanoids concerning Indian culture, customs, and morals.

This is qualitative research and it critically analyses two movies from Indian Science Fiction Cinema; *Robot* (2010) by S. Shanker and *Ra.One* (2011) by Anubhav Sinha. There is the theoretical exploration of bioethics, personhood, and critical posthumanism with the textual analysis of primary with the help of various secondary sources such as critical articles, books, and video clips.

The article argues that *Robot* and *Ra.One* presents an emotional, humane, and soft corner for non-humans, especially humanoids and cyborgs. The ontological quest of these Artificially Intelligent machines provides the phenomenological-hermeneutic way of understanding their existence.

Robot and *Ra.One* observe humans and humanoid through a religious and moral lens to fit them into the multicultural Indian environment. These cyberpunks provide a cinematic view high-tech view of life where human autonomy is challenged.

Introduction

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The ontology is a far-fetched philosophical notion that covers everything a being surrounds. Ontology crosses the borders of society, culture, physical body and moves towards the metaphysics that is associated to the being.

“Ontology is usually taken to encompass problems about the most general features and relations of the entities who do exist “ (Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy)

As far as posthumanism is concerned, it is an “ontological condition” (Nayar 13) of humans that they have started living in a scientifically enhanced environment and started evolving in it and the Philosophical turn it moves in the sphere of the critical and social position of humans. Posthumanism tries to limit the constructed supremacy of humans over the rest of the universe but it rejects both human exceptionalism (the idea that humans are unique creatures) and human instrumentalism (that humans have a right to control the natural world). This strand is far more critical of the traditional humanism, and treats

(i) The human as co-evolving, sharing ecosystems, life processes, genetic material, with animals and other life forms; and

(ii) Technology not as a mere prosthesis to human identity but as integral to it. (Nayar 19).

Humans have been in a symbiotic relationship with the non-humans (including technology). This means that human beings are associated with their environment and their life is in co-ordination with rest of the world. However, technology is included in the definition of symbiotic living from earlier times. Various philosophers (Modern) has projected the relationship between the technology and the world. Martin Heidegger has associated technology as a medium to bring affinity with the world. (verbeek 27)

Karl Jasper has presented the cultural approach of technology and humans. He considers the functionality of technology as it creates new social and material environment for existence (Verbeek 78). Humans have been treated as mere factor of production. Jasper, in this way, has alienated humans in this process.

Humans have been represented in a symbiotic relationship with the non-humans (including technology), whereas Posthumanism challenges the Autonomous status of humans. The symbiogenesis of the species marks the socio-scientific value of life and interrogates the notion of anthropocentrism. Humans are “embedded within an environment, an instantiation of a series of information exchanges, transfers of data and feedback mechanisms that cause the system to close itself off operationally in order to regulate itself as a response to the complexity of the environment” (Nayar 53).

In Bollywood movie ‘Ra.One’, Human characters and G.One play their roles as socially symbiotic. Body piercing done by Human and Humanoid at airport check questions the difference between organic and inorganic bodies. In *Robot* movie an Idea of Robosapien, Chitti wants to impregnate Sana via Artificial Cell. Human wants to treat Robot as their helpers at home and lab who co-ordinate with the commands of the human characters. Where the human mechanics fail, they take help from the artificially constructed materials. We can observe

through one of the Dialogues from the movie 'Robot', like "It is just a stupid machine", "I have created you (chitti)", "You (Vasigaran) are my God"... create Cartesian dualistic aspects.

The concerning areas of Postphenomenological aspects, Humans experience the world by **BODY I** and **BODY II**

BODY I is motile (muscular). It is perceptual

BODY II includes Cultural context (gender and age...)

These bodies are mediated by technology (Ihde 30). But Technosciences are more than interpretations of reality. They even encroach upon reality (Verbeek 25).

The active participation of objects in human lifestyle makes the link between Body I and Body II. Technology transforms human perception and perspectives, helping to 'speak' the unspoken and to make the unseen 'visible' (Verbeek 30)

In **Robot** movie, Humans interacting with Chitti, the Robot. Their experiences and perceptions for the world varies and in movie **Ra.One**, Humanoids Ra.One and G.One (characters of a video game came out of the system) acts as both BODY I and BODY II. But we can also detect that G.One is controlled by the human operator (Parteek/Lucifer) and acts individually as well. Ra.One can take shape of any human. Moravec talks about downloading the mind but the movie focuses on the body. Immanence has been equally valued, thus rejecting Humanist ideas.

Now, the four basic forms of technological mediation are as

- **Embodiment Relations-** Reshaping user's experience through a device. (eg: eye glasses)

In **Ra.One**, Parteek's VR goggles and VR headsets. Human experiences the game through them at PlayStation. So, here Technological device is used to experience a literary form of virtual world, which creates a metafictional approach towards science fiction. And in **Robot**, Usage of Bluetooth Device by Chitti to connect with Sana (female protagonist) for helping her in exam. A human using technology to connect with a humanoid.

- **Hermeneutic Relations-** Experience transformation by direct encounter with the technology (wristwatch). In **Ra.One**, shows Visual representation of the world. And in **Robot** movie, we can see that Chitti's eyes acting as a camera, both CCTV and recording camera.

- **Alterity Relations-** Interacting with technological devices just like interacting with other humans (Iphone's Siri). **Ra.One** and **Robot** both present alterity relations of technology to humans.

- **Background Relations-** that make up the environment. There is an Excessive technology in the movies make a hand-in-hand relationship.

As far as Technological singularity is concerned, Scientists have mixed views regarding a situation in the coming future that Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) will control the human condition and eliminate it. This "self-recursive improvement" is on a speedy pace that the human body and its physical boundaries feel challenged. The human condition may show changes after the explosion (Neumann 21). This scenario may be the result of "ultra-intelligent machines" (Goods 22). So, this singularity can happen due to "self-improving AI" and can bring unimaginable results (Vinge 12). These redefining artificially intelligent machines become smarter than humans and the condition may occur that becomes comparable to "the knotted space-time at the centre of a black hole".

Now, the relationship between Posthumanism and singularity is that Humans have already shown a coexistence with machines and have appeared as a single whole. Rosi Braidotti urges us "to think critically and creatively about who and what we are actually in the process of becoming" (8).

So, here is the concept of Singularity which seems out of the scope by Posthumanists because they believe in

technology and life as a unified whole. For them “the singularity stands as, and valorizes, the unique, uncertain, unpredictable, incalculable, unrepresentable, untranslatable, and unproductive” (Baldwin). We can see in movie **Ra.One** that Characters coming out of the game, the system goes out of control, characters do mass killing and the humanity has been shown as in threat. Here, AGI has been presented as self-learning. This concept is directly associated with Technophobia and Techno-euphoria. And same as in movie **Robot**, Emotional chip and Destruction chip installation in Chitti, and how Stealing of Vasigaran’s bank details and even signature, making him controlled by a machine, connected with the concept Technophobia and Techno-euphoria. This could be observe by one of the Dialogues like “I (Chitti) and better than humans”, “I am immortal”. The movies present humanoids that live I Indian Culture and tries to fit in it. These machines co-ordinate with humans and they try to modify their Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) by following human culture.

In the movie **Ra.One**, the robotic character, G.One, pierces his body (1:16:12-1:17:08) to pass the security check at the airport. From postphenomenological aspects, the human body and machines co-ordinate with each other. But, the movie marks a question that how human security check can fail to distinguish between a human body and a machine. Similarly, **Robot** also presents an instance where human body means a certain chip that masks the difference between a human body and a machine. Such technological self-intelligent errors signals towards technological singularity.

Human Values should also considered in such concepts, The idea of Good and Bad in both the movies has been shown only from human perspectives and non-human living beings have been ignored. Dualism arises when there is a Superiority of Humans over technology at the end of both the movies as the humanoids dismantle and delete themselves considering as if they are unfit for the human world. Romanticisation of colours- Blue (cool and compassionate), Red (hot and unruly), can easily perceived through both of the movies. The idea of cultural and empathetic values are deal with Voice effects, Vision effects , Self-realization by the humanoids, POV angle to get empathy for humanoids and Love relations. Romantic and compassionate feelings of humanoids for the female protagonists detected When G.One (Blue) respects Sonia, Chitti (Red) tries to seduce Sana sexually. G.One is a fatherly figure for Parteek, a fellow friend for Sonia and Chitti (Blue) is a friend for Sana and Vasigaran, a son for Vasigaran’s mother.

Conclusion

Indian Sci-Fi cinema adds new dimensions to the theoretical perspectives of Posthumanism. Action scenes present for financial gains. Financial ideology of the makers deliberately gave movies the movies a humanistic touch (Renaissance Humanism).**Ra.One** appears more inclined towards Posthumanism despite that **Robot** was a blockbuster hit. Sudden and immense flow of 3D effects in Indian cinema has been presented.

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