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Humanising Technology: Android Kunjappan Version 5.25 and the Emotional Dynamics of AI Companions

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Abstract:

Integrating AI-powered humanoid devices into daily life has altered human perceptions of relationships, companionship, and care. This paper critically examines these shifts through the lens of the Malayalam film *Android Kunjappan Version 5.25*, which serves as a cultural case study. It investigates how such technologies disrupt and redefine traditional emotional dynamics, reducing the boundaries between humans and machines. By utilising theoretical frameworks such as posthumanism and examining the socio-economic disparities in technological access, the paper explores the dual role of AI companions as both facilitators and disruptors of human emotional ecosystems. Through this exploration, the study contributes to broader debates on the ethical, cultural, and societal implications of human-technology entanglements in a global context.

Keywords: Posthumanism, AI-powered companions, Emotional ecosystems, Technological disparities, Human-machine relationships.

Humans are inherently social beings, shaped by cultural norms and societal expectations (Dhiman). Reputation and social standing depend on conformity, with noncompliance risking marginalisation. Adapting to societal evolution is both necessary and responsible. History reflects this through transformative epochs like the Stone, Bronze, and Iron Ages, each demanding adaptation. In today's world, the existence of humans is largely influenced by rapid digital advancements, and as a result, there is a need for continuous innovation and participation. In other words, to remain relevant, it has become imperative for individuals to embrace change and contribute to societal growth (Vernyuy 56).

Analysing the dynamic relationship between society and technology raises a very compelling question of how they influence each other. While some argue that society shapes the direction and development of technology, others believe that technology acts as an independent force driving societal transformation. This contrasting perspective thus brings us to the theory of technological determinism, which states that technology is the principal driver of societal progress. In contrast, the societal determinism theory posits that societal needs and values govern the course of technological innovation (Țicău and Hadad 148-160). This complex relationship invites a deeper exploration of the topic of whether technology functions as a mere instrument for societal advancement or whether it has become an independent force, reshaping the way human communities live, connect, and evolve.

The Malayalam film Android Kunjappan Version 5.25 provides a compelling example of how emerging technologies entangle human emotions. Through the story of an elderly man's relationship with an AI-powered humanoid, the film critiques how AI can gradually step into spaces that are reserved for human interactions. Today, AI-powered humanoids are transforming human interactions, emotions, relationships, and social order (Cao 2-4). The movie addresses the

evolution of technology from a tool to an emotional aid as technology that alleviates loneliness and dependency. Set within the context of society's increasing dependency on AI, the film seeks to understand how these innovations alter relationships, emotions, and social order in a technology-dominated society.

By analysing the socio-emotional dimensions of these technological interventions, this study highlights their potential to create connection while also evoking deep alienation. The integration of AI into intimate spaces raises important questions about what happens to the nature of relationships when humans are connected through machines (Latonero 6). From the perspective of posthumanism, this paper examines how these kinds of interactions shape the boundaries between humans and machines, challenging the deeply rooted assumption of agency, autonomy, and emotional authenticity.

Dominic Idier suggests that technology is inherently rooted in sociopolitical decisions, thus rendering it not only a tool of convenience but a mirror of societal values and culture (257). This is especially the case when analysing AI-driven humanoid technologies, which are not created solely for practical reasons but rather to embody, reinforce, and subvert social norms. Idier contends that technology is a reaction to human demands, yet it is also an expression of the power divisions and ideologies that characterize a culture (261). Regarding humanoid AI technologies, their incorporation into human relationships complicates the conventional emotional imperatives and derails well-established concepts of empathy, agency, and the very parameters of what constitutes humanness.

The technological determinism theory, posits that technologies have an intrinsic ability to influence society, with technological advancement being equated with social advancement (Wyatt 167). This is in line with the belief that technological advancements, particularly in the field of AI,

are not only influenced by societal demands but also can redefine social relations and cultural structures (Elliott). The classical definition of technological determinism states that though technological innovations determine the developments in society, they are also determined by social structures. This mutuality is fundamental to understanding the emergence of AI technologies and their dual influence on technology and society (Wyatt 173).

AI technologies, especially humanoid robots, are proof of the concept of soft determinism, which facilitates an interaction between technology and society. Soft determinism recognizes the reciprocal influence of human needs and technological advancement in which both powers interact to reshape societal norms (Gil-Garcia et al. 259). This leads to a cultural shift whereby the machine is no longer just a convenience tool but is perceived as entities which can form emotional connections with humans, further blurring the lines between human and machine relationships. The 'third intentionality', the designer's intent and the creative ways users use technological artefacts, accounts for their meaning and morality. Values are embedded and technology relationships are amended through user-initiated interaction (Lizut 105-107).

The term 'digital divide' brings to light how technology, more so AI, can develop socio-economic divisions. Technology accessibility now stands out as a crucial indicator of a person's social and economic status (Pierce 4). When AI-enabled technologies, such as humanoid robots, are highly available in a given society, their lack might mean they are being rendered old-fashioned or deprived (Bongs, 4967). This socio-economic separation has far-reaching consequences for emotional dynamics, in that those with access to caregiving robots based on AI or emotional support based on AI will potentially create new patterns of emotional attachment and dependency on machines, while others can become further alienated or marginalized in the face of technological exclusion. The commercialization of care and emotional support, as offered by the

'digital divide,' raises ethical questions regarding how AI technologies will shape the social fabric of various communities (Pierce 7).

Moreover, technology's connection to society is also analyzed based on technological determinism and the social construction of technology, as noted by Bruce Bimber (81). Technological determinism argues that technological innovations possess a built-in capability to shape society (Wyatt 167). For AI humanoid robots, this means that these technologies can transform social relationships, emotional engagements, and even the construct of family or care. To this extent, AI technologies would promote new forms of emotional attachments between humans and machines, blurring conventional assumptions of human agency and emotional give-and-take. Such robots, modelled as mimics of human behaviour and emotion, have the potential to engender attachment of an emotional nature, facilitating novel forms of human-machine connection (Cao 2).

However, this is not a single-sided influence. Societal norms and values also form the development of technology, as purported by the social construction of technology theory (Klein and Kleinman 30). AI humanoid robots are autonomous machines, yet they are artefacts of human ethics, needs, and desires. The moral and ethical principles underlying the development of these technologies affect their design and functionality. For instance, AI robots designed for caregiving roles must navigate complex emotional dynamics, such as empathising with human emotions, offering comfort, and following ethical standards for autonomy, privacy, and consent. This highlights the role of societal impact on technological advancement and the interactive component of the relationship between technology and society (Islam 115).

In discussing the integration of AI humanoid robots into society, posthumanism comes as a central idea. Posthumanism challenges classic boundaries between the human and the

technological and instead promotes a reinterpretation of human existence based on technological development (Hasse 151). AI technologies, specifically humanoid robots, demonstrate this transition by taking up positions conventionally occupied by humans, including caregiving, companionship, and emotional support. Posthumanism questions the anthropocentric understanding of the world in which human beings are placed at the centre of existence (Kopnina 3) and places technology as an active agent in structuring human life and society. The integration of AI humanoid robots raises the question of what it is to be human since humans start establishing emotional bonds with machines that reproduce human behaviours, leading to crucial questions regarding the nature of consciousness, sentience, and emotional truth in the era of artificial life (Islam).

The rapid integration of AI technologies within emotional realms, like caregiving, companionship, and therapy, undermines customary human relationships in profound ways. AI-powered humanoid robots present new potential for fulfilling emotional and physical demands, especially in elderly people and the disabled. However, such technological artefacts are designed with particular purposes in view (Lizut 99). They are intended to be emotional companions but also disrupt conventional expectations of human intimacy, emotional work, and social interaction. AI humanoid robots' emergence therefore raises a double sword: on the one hand, they provide chances for emotional companionship and support, but on the other hand, they signal the commodification of emotional labour and the dismantling of true human connections.

Human-Technology Dynamics in *Android Kunjappan Version 5.25*

Android Kunjappan Version 5.25 is a movie that functions between technology, ethics, and the human heart. It gives a dense story that forces the viewers to rethink the future of man-machine interaction. On the surface, it is a lighthearted adventure of an old man and a robot becoming

unlikely friends, but beneath that lies a multifaceted philosophical exploration that deals with posthumanism (Cathrine), the ethics of care (Kopnina), and commodification of human relationships (Pierce). Accordingly, the film's handling of these themes requires closer critical analysis, particularly in light of its wider implications for our conception of human identity and technological advancement.

One of the most compelling features of *Android Kunjappan Version 5.25* is how it tries to erase the distinction between human and machine. The movie introduces Kunjappan, a caregiving robot, not merely as a human convenience tool but as a companion who can establish an emotional connection with Bhaskaran, the old father. In this way, the movie enters into posthumanist discourse, which challenges anthropocentrism and the strict divisions between humans and non-humans (Cathrine). Kunjappan, a robot programmed to do work traditionally reserved for humans, challenges the very definition of personhood. What does it mean to be human, if robots can be empathetic and offer care? The movie compels the viewer to ask this question, and although it tries to answer it by way of Bhaskaran's emotional journey of accepting Kunjappan, it is not certain whether the movie's representation of the robot's emotional depth is fully believable or just a speculative fantasy.

The central philosophical concern involved in *Android Kunjappan Version 5.25* is whether machines, especially caregiving robots, can ever replace human emotional bonding. Bhaskaran's reluctance to accept Kunjappan at first pertains to the anxiety of dehumanization with the rising application of technology into intimate and emotional spaces. His hesitation in allowing Kunjappan as a caregiver has nothing to do with the machine-like quality of the robot but everything to do with an underlying existential question that whether a non-biological, non-living machine can feel and respond to human pain. Through its exploration of the problem, the film does

not come to any clear conclusion but instead encourages an examination of what exactly constitutes care, empathy, and emotional feedback.

The depiction of Bhaskaran's changing relationship with Kunjappan opens up further philosophical contemplation upon the nature of emotional development. Bhaskaran's progression, from rejection to acceptance, reflects wider societal change towards embracing technology as a replacement for human contact. The film is not fully persuasive in its depiction of this emotional change, though. The affective connection between Bhaskaran and Kunjappan also comes across as artificial, for it is premised so strongly on the film's dependence upon a sentimental arc. The movie does not probe very deeply into the nature of human-machine interactions and instead depends upon a naive narrative of emotional growth that threatens to reduce the ethical issues involved to simplistic terms.

Furthermore, the movie has important questions about the commodification of care. Kunjappan, being a caregiving robot, is the emerging trend of technologizing human relationships, especially in old-age care. With technological solutions to human issues becoming more common, the ethical consequences of such commodification need to be explored (Lizut 107). The robot, which is programmed to undertake the emotional and physical work involved in caregiving, raises important questions regarding the value of human labour and the exploitation of vulnerable people. By bringing Kunjappan into the caregiving process, the film raises a challenging question as to what would happen to human care when it is commodified and mechanized. The commodification of caregiving through AI-based solutions in the film illustrates the risks involved in reducing human relationships to transactional interactions (Pierce). The movie's handling of the friendship between Bhaskaran and Kunjappan, though it presents the subject of empathy and emotional

development, is incomplete in its deconstruction of the moral implications of commodifying caregiving as a service offered by machines.

Here, the movie's handling of AI-based caregiving resonates with the larger cultural concerns regarding technology's place in intimate human relationships. As society becomes more reliant on AI for caregiving and emotional support, *Android Kunjappan Version 5.25* poses the question of whether technology can ever replace human connection. The film's presentation of Kunjappan as both caretaker and companion implies that technology can provide a solution to the issue of ageing and loneliness, but it also points to the limitations of such solutions. By turning Kunjappan into a substitute for human emotional touch, the film risks reducing the complexity of human relationships and the necessity for human touch and compassion.

Technology's Influence on Subramaniam's Character

Subramaniam's character in *Android Kunjappan Version 5.25* captures the conflict between human emotional reliance and the growing use of technology in traditionally human spheres. His initial resistance to the AI-driven humanoid captures larger societal fears regarding the intrusion of machines into caregiving and friendship. His own identity, informed by generational values and personal relationships, is contrasted starkly with the robot, representing modernity and mechanisation. His scepticism reflects anxiety about the displacement of human roles, especially in emotionally meaningful spaces.

However, Subramaniam's growing interaction with the robot makes this view more complex. As he increasingly anthropomorphises the machine, the robot shifts from a functional tool to an emotional partner, flouting traditional perceptions of man-machine interaction. The shift

underscored the growing use of AI to occupy emotional spaces by society, especially in a time when the traditional family unit is crumbling (Islam 117-119).

Critically, this connection is ethical and psychological, challenging the nature of technologically mediated emotions. Although the robot improves Subramaniam's isolation, it also provokes questions about the essence of natural human interaction. The movie thus questions the resonance of AI-aided companionship, encouraging viewers to rethink the lines between artificial and real emotional experiences in our increasingly digitized lives (Islam 118).

The theoretical framework for this paper is highly influenced by posthumanist theory, which questions human identity and agency in light of technological development. Posthumanism argues that human existence is more and more entangled with non-human systems, such as artificial intelligence and robots, implying that human identity is not understandable without exploring how technology mediates and redefines human experience (Hasse 151). In *Android Kunjappan Version 5.25*, the robot exemplifies posthuman ideals by transcending its role as a mere tool and becoming an engaged participant in co-creating Subramaniam's social and emotional world. The robot's capacity to adjust to Subramaniam's emotional needs illustrates the transition towards a posthuman future, where human identities are not fixed but are continually redefined by technological engagements.

The movie parallels the emotional process of Bhaskaran, who, at first, is resistant to the robot's position as a caregiver, worrying that it might substitute human connection and compassion. This doubt reflects greater societal fears regarding the dehumanization that may arise when technology pushes into intimate human spheres (Islam 116). Idier and Wyatt's work, explains how technology reflects and shapes social values. Here, the technology under focus, the caregiving robot, emphasizes social values about ageing, care, and emotional dependence. The movie puts

these issues into perspective, showing the tension between wanting efficiency and needing authentic human contact.

In the film, Kunjappan's affective bond to Bhaskaran complicates its original caregiving role, problematizing the authenticity of emotions mediated by technology. This contradiction is a reminder of concerns by Wyatt and Pierce about AI obscuring boundaries between human and machine interactions. This is in line with the theory of soft determinism, whereby technology not only reacts to the needs of society but also creates and recreates such needs (Gil-Garcia et al. 259).

However, the film does not probe into the intricacies of human-machine relationships as far as it should, and its depiction of emotional development comes off as forced. Bhaskaran's evolution from resistance to adaptation towards the robot is shallow, as it depends a great deal on a sentimental narrative instead of a more complex probe into the psychological and moral aspects of such relationships. This simplification threatens to reduce the ethical issues at hand, like commodifying care and the psychological implications of substituting human affection with machine-based interaction, to simplistic levels. This critique aligns with objections about AI technologies potentially commodifying caregiving and emotional support, as such technologies have the potential to undermine complex human relations to mere transactional interactions (Pierce).

The ethical issues around the commodification of care are also at the core of the movie's storyline. The entry of Kunjappan as a care robot encourages thought about the increasing practice of technologizing human relations, especially in elderly care. In the movie, the robot is both a caregiver and a companion, an indication of the shift in society towards seeing technology as a possible solution for ageing and loneliness. However, this shift is what poses significant questions about the consequences of AI caregiving. It raises questions on the after-effects when the very act

of care becomes a marketable service provided by machines. While *Android Kunjappan Version 5.25* hints at the potential dangers of this trend, it does not deeply explore the psychological and ethical implications of making caregiving a commodified service (Islam 117).

Posthumanism theory challenges the conventional boundaries of humans and technology, compelling us to reconsider the concept of being human in a time when machines are more empowered to undertake work that is normally related to human care and affection (Cathrine 146). In the case of *Android Kunjappan Version 5.25*, the film encourages the audience to think and question whether machines can truly replace human emotional connections, or whether such replacements are just the pseudo-replicas of the more profound, intricate emotional attachments that characterize human relationships.

At its essence, *Android Kunjappan Version 5.25* presents a thoughtful narrative that explores the changing dynamics of human-machine interactions, specifically relating to emotional care and support. The changing dynamics between Kunjappan and Bhaskaran track how AI-driven humanoid technology challenges conventional emotional dynamics and provides alternative modes of companionship while also showing the shortcomings in mimicking the richness and truth of human interactions.

It is thus concluded that even as AI-empowered humanoid technologies can grant functional and emotional support, these technologies effectively disrupt human emotional structures by ensuring greater demarcation between machine and human engagement. Through the narrative description of Bhaskaran's emotional transformation, from rejection to acceptance of the robot, a critical analysis of the moral implications of care commodification and the psychological effects of substituting human companionship with robotic interaction is provided. While the movie presents thought-provoking observations about the impact of AI on humans, it does not adequately

answer these issues since it reduces them to their simplest form and does not factor in human-machine interaction complexities. This paper therefore urges its readers to consider how artificial intelligence is transforming the character of human relationships and the ethical considerations of this trend, as also the commodification of caring and the sincerity of emotional connection in a more technological world.

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