



In the light of Literature: AI Elevates Humans or is it Dehumanization?

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Abstract: With reference to the sub-theme “Ethics and challenges of AI Interaction” the topic selected for this paper is “In the Light of Literature: AI Elevates Humans or is it Dehumanisation?” “Post Humanism” when looked through the lens of “Literature” is a study of blurring lines between Humans, and Technology which questions the traditional human-centered view of the world i.e., Anthropocentrism that places humans as the most important being, puts humans interests above all other living beings and nature itself.

Though Humans are a unique species known for sophistication, complex social structures and ability to adapt to varied environment. But basically, Post-Humanism is a thought of 21st century that signifies that it's beyond humanism- a critical theory or idea. It's a continental philosophy. According to this theory, the human society includes members other than natural biological beings. These other members contribute to the society through structures and dynamics.

Key words: literature, technology, humanity, and dehumanization.

Artificial Intelligence has become one of the most transformative inventions of the twenty-first century. From virtual assistants and self-driving cars to medical diagnosis and automated education systems, AI is rapidly changing human life. While some people believe that



AI elevates human potential by making life easier and more efficient, others argue that excessive dependence on AI leads to dehumanization. Thus, the debate “AI elevates humans or is it dehumanization?” has become highly relevant in today’s technological world.

On one hand, AI undoubtedly elevates human life in many ways. It increases efficiency, accuracy, and productivity in various sectors. In the field of medicine, AI helps doctors detect diseases at an early stage and perform complex surgeries with precision. In education, AI-powered platforms provide personalized learning experiences and make knowledge accessible to students across the globe. Similarly, industries use AI to reduce human effort, save time, and improve production. By handling repetitive and dangerous tasks, AI allows humans to focus on creativity, innovation, and critical thinking. Therefore, AI can be viewed as a tool that enhances human capabilities rather than replacing them.

Moreover, AI contributes to social and economic development. Smart technologies help farmers predict weather conditions, assist businesses in market analysis, and support communication across linguistic barriers. AI-driven applications such as translation tools and accessibility devices empower people with disabilities and create a more inclusive society. In this sense, AI acts as a partner that supports human growth and progress.

However, the rapid expansion of AI also raises serious concerns about dehumanization. One major issue is the growing dependence on machines. People increasingly rely on AI for communication, decision-making, and even emotional support. This dependence may weaken human creativity, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal relationships. For example, excessive use of virtual communication and AI chatbots can reduce face-to-face interaction, leading to social isolation and emotional detachment.

Another concern is the loss of employment opportunities. Automation and robotics are replacing human workers in factories, offices, and service industries. While AI creates some new jobs, it also threatens traditional occupations, especially for low-skilled workers. This economic displacement may increase inequality and social insecurity. Furthermore, AI systems often collect large amounts of personal data, raising ethical questions about privacy, surveillance, and human freedom.



Critics also argue that AI may reduce humans to mere consumers of technology. When machines perform tasks that require thinking and judgment, humans may gradually lose essential skills such as problem-solving, empathy, and moral reasoning. In extreme cases, over dependence on AI could create a society where human values are subordinated to technological efficiency.

Nevertheless, AI itself is neither entirely beneficial nor entirely harmful. Its impact depends on how humans design, regulate, and use it. If AI is developed ethically and used responsibly, it can become a powerful instrument for human advancement. Education, ethical guidelines, and human-centered policies are essential to ensure that technology serves humanity rather than controls it.

Literature connectivity

Coming to the main point of the paper, 'Literature' has always reflected humanity's hopes, fears, and moral struggles regarding scientific advancement. From early science fiction to contemporary dystopian narratives, writers have explored the relationship between humans and intelligent machines. The question of whether Artificial Intelligence elevates humanity or leads to dehumanization finds powerful expression in literary works such as *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, *I, Robot* and *The Bicentennial Man* by Isaac Asimov, and *Harvest* by Manjula Padmanabhan. These works reveal both the promise and danger of artificial intelligence and technological dependence.

Let's go through the essence of the novelette *The Bicentennial Man* a science fiction written by Isaac Asimov, where a humanoid robot is introduced into a family to perform housekeeping and maintenance duties and this domestic Robot gradually it discovers that it feels emotions, wants to spend more time with humans. Also develops creativity and a desire for humanity, ultimately fighting to be legally accepted and recognized as a 'Human'. Though, over two centuries, Andrew becomes an artist and an inventor, desires to sacrifice his immortality and wanted a decaying brain which he actually possessed a unique positronic brain. On its two hundredth birthday, the Robot was declared a Bicentennial Man by the world Legislature. He dies shortly after fulfilling his aspiration to become a mortal man.

Bicentennial Man is a famous science fiction story by Isaac Asimov that explores what it truly means to be human. It was first published in 1976 and later expanded into a novel titled *The Positronic Man* (co-written with Robert Silverberg).

A short description could provide a vivid picture of the story.

The story follows a robot named Andrew Martin, who is purchased by the Martin family as a household robot. Over time, Andrew begins to display creativity, emotions, and a desire for independence—qualities that go beyond his programming.

The aspirations and skills of the Robot

- **Artist:** Andrew starts carving wood into beautiful artworks, showing imagination.
- **Quest for Freedom:** He demands legal recognition as a free individual, not property.
- **Transformation:** Over decades, Andrew replaces his mechanical parts with organic ones to become more human.
- **Search for Identity:** He strives to be accepted as a human being.
- **Final Recognition:** After nearly 200 years, Andrew is legally declared human—just as he chooses mortality.

Themes in the Story

1. Humanity vs. Machinery

The story questions what defines a human—biology, emotions, or consciousness.

2. Freedom and Rights

Andrew's journey mirrors struggles for civil rights and equality.

3. Mortality

A powerful idea: Andrew becomes truly “human” only when he accepts death.

4. Ethics of AI

The story connects closely with Asimov's famous Three Laws of Robotics, which govern robot behavior.

Relevance to Humanoid Robots Today

Bicentennial Man is more relevant than ever in the age of Artificial Intelligence:

- Raises questions about robot rights

- Explores human-robot relationships
- Predicts emotional AI and humanoid integration

4. Asimov's Vision of Robots

Asimov introduced the idea of “**positronic robots**”, intelligent machines capable of reasoning.

The character Andrew Martin represents:

- The possibility of machines evolving beyond programming
- A bridge between humans and artificial beings

Asimov's story is not just about a robot—it's about identity, dignity, and the essence of being human. Andrew's journey shows that humanity may not be defined by how we are made, but by what we feel, choose, and aspire to become.

Literature often presents technology as a means of elevating human life. In *The Bicentennial Man*, the robot Andrew gradually develops emotions, creativity, and moral understanding. Though he is a machine, Andrew aspires to become human because he values love, freedom, and individuality. Through Andrew's journey, Asimov suggests that technology can evolve toward humanity rather than away from it. AI, in this sense, becomes a bridge that expands human understanding of identity, consciousness, and compassion.

Similarly, in *I, Robot*, Asimov introduces the famous “Three Laws of Robotics,” which are designed to ensure harmony between humans and machines. The stories portray robots as helpful assistants that perform dangerous tasks, protect humans, and contribute to scientific progress. Here, AI elevates civilization by reducing human suffering and improving efficiency. The texts reflect optimism that ethical technology can coexist with humanity.

However, literature also warns about the dehumanizing effects of technological advancement. In *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, Victor Frankenstein's obsession with scientific achievement leads to isolation, guilt, and destruction. Though the creature is not an AI robot in the modern sense, the novel symbolically represents the dangers of creating intelligence without responsibility or empathy. Shelley warns that unchecked scientific ambition may alienate humans from morality and emotional connection.

The novel begins with letters written by Robert Walton, an Arctic explorer, to his sister. During his journey to the North Pole, he rescues a weak and exhausted man named Victor Frankenstein. Victor then narrates the tragic story of his life.

Victor Frankenstein grows up in Geneva and becomes deeply interested in science and the secrets of life. While studying at a university in Ingolstadt, he becomes obsessed with creating a living being.

After years of secret experiments, Victor successfully creates a gigantic human-like creature. However, the moment the creature comes alive, Victor is horrified by its appearance and abandons it.

The Creature's Suffering

The abandoned creature wanders through forests and villages. People react with fear and violence because of his ugly appearance. Though naturally gentle and curious, he becomes lonely and miserable.

The creature secretly observes a poor family and learns:

- language
- reading
- human emotions
- kindness and love

He hopes humans will accept him, but when he finally reveals himself, they reject him in terror. This rejection fills him with anger and sadness.

The creature confronts Victor and blames him for creating him and abandoning him. He asks Victor to create a female companion so that he will not remain lonely forever. Victor first agrees, but later fears that the two creatures may destroy humanity. He destroys the unfinished female creature. Enraged, the creature vows revenge, "I shall be with you on your wedding night."

The creature then kills several people close to Victor, including:

- Victor's younger brother William Frankenstein
- his friend Henry Clerval

- and finally his bride Elizabeth Lavenza

Victor's father also dies from grief. Finally, filled with guilt and sorrow, Victor chases the creature across Europe and into the Arctic. During this pursuit, Victor becomes weak and exhausted. Eventually, he is rescued by Walton's ship.

After finishing his story, Victor dies.

Soon afterward, the creature appears beside Victor's dead body. He expresses deep sorrow and admits that revenge has made him miserable too. The novel ends with the creature disappearing into the icy darkness, planning to end his own life.

Themes discussed in the novel are as follows.

1. Danger of Blind Ambition

Victor's uncontrolled desire for knowledge destroys both himself and others.

2. Isolation

Both Victor and the creature suffer because they are cut off from society and human affection.

3. Nature vs. Nurture

The creature is not born evil; society's cruelty turns him violent.

4. Responsibility of Creation

The novel questions whether creators are responsible for what they create.

Frankenstein is considered one of the first major science-fiction novels and remains important because it raises timeless ethical questions about science, technology, and humanity.

Now, let's discuss the core part of this paper, where humans have become machines in the sense of pragmatism and materialism. Here a beautifully imagined and written play is being portrayed i.e. a play by Manjula Padmanabhan.

Let's discuss the heart of the matter, discussing about "**Robotic Humans**", i.e., humans behaving like robots mechanised, as they are being "indoctrinated" rather than educated, accustomed to think, examine, review and understand. As society favours convention and custom, repetition rather than invention and originality, as if sheep are being prepared for slaughter rather than making opponents to the wolves in power, just follow the system ignoring the exploitation. And this is well explained in the following story of the play *Harvest* written by

Manjula Padmanabhan. It's a dark satire manifesting the "commodification" of human body, where a family enters a "Faustian contract" with an International company to sell organs for wealth.

The gist of *Harvest* -A horrifying reality

Harvest (1997) is a powerful Indian English play that explores technology, globalization, poverty, and exploitation of the human body in a futuristic setting. It is a deeply unsettling play that critiques modern society through a dystopian lens. It goes beyond a simple story of organ trade and becomes a sharp commentary on power, technology, and human dignity.

The play is set in a dystopian future Mumbai, where poor people can sell their body organs to wealthy foreigners through a company. The story revolves around a poor family of four members. Om Prakash – unemployed young man, Jaya – his practical and strong wife, Ma – his traditional mother and Jeetu – Om's younger brother. Due to poverty a desperate and drastic step is taken by Om—he signs a contract with a multinational company called InterPlanta Services to sell his organs to a rich foreign client.

Once the contract is signed:

- The family's house is transformed with high-tech devices
- They are constantly monitored through a system controlled by the company
- Their lifestyle, food, and movements are strictly regulated

A representative named Virgil appears through a video interface, controlling their lives. Exploitation Begins when the company mistakenly identifies Jeetu as the donor instead of Om and Jeetu is taken away for organ extraction. The actual organ receiver is Ginni, a wealthy woman from abroad. She appears through a virtual image and seeks not just organs but control over the donor's life but actually Ginni becomes obsessed with Jaya and wants to take over her body eventually. Jaya realizes that the system is dehumanizing and that the family is losing their dignity and freedom. She resists the control imposed by technology and the company. In a powerful moment Jaya rejects Ginni's demands and by that she challenges the entire system of exploitation. The play ends on an ambiguous but strong note, Jaya asserts her identity and autonomy and she refuses to be reduced to a body or commodity.



Globalization and Neo-colonialism

One of the strongest critical point to be discussed of *Harvest* is its attack on global inequality. The rich “First World” literally consumes the bodies of the poor “Third World”. The fictional company InterPlanta Services symbolizes multinational corporations that exploit weaker economies

Technology in the play is not liberating—it is oppressive.

- Surveillance devices monitor every action
- The characters lose privacy and autonomy
- Human interaction is replaced by artificial interfaces

This reflects fears about technological over reach, similar to dystopian works like *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell.

In fact a strong critique of dehumanization (humans behaving mechanically like machines) appears in *Harvest* by Manjula Padmanabhan. The play portrays a futuristic society where poor individuals sell their body organs to wealthy global consumers. Technology becomes a tool of exploitation rather than liberation. Human beings are reduced to commodities, and personal relationships lose emotional depth. The play demonstrates how technological systems, when controlled by capitalism and power, can strip individuals of dignity and humanity.

Contemporary literature continues this debate by portraying AI both as a companion and a threat. Many dystopian narratives show societies controlled by surveillance technologies, automated systems, and artificial intelligence. These texts caution readers that overdependence on technology can weaken critical thinking, individuality, and freedom. At the same time, optimistic science fiction imagines AI assisting humanity in solving global problems such as disease, poverty, and climate change.

Thus, literature does not provide a single answer to the question of AI and humanity. Instead, it presents a balanced exploration of both possibilities. AI can elevate humans when it is guided by ethics, empathy, and social responsibility. Yet it can also lead to dehumanization when technology dominates human values and relationships.



In conclusion, AI has the potential both to elevate humans and to contribute to dehumanization. It enhances human capabilities, improves quality of life, and drives innovation, but it also poses risks related to dependency, unemployment, and loss of human connection. Therefore, society must maintain a balance between technological progress and human values. AI should remain a tool that empowers humanity, not a force that diminishes what makes us human.

Literary works across different periods reveal that the true issue is not technology itself but the human attitude toward it. Writers like Mary Shelley, Isaac Asimov, and Manjula Padmanabhan remind us that humanity must remain at the center of technological progress. AI should serve human welfare, creativity, and compassion rather than reduce people to mechanical or emotionless beings. Literature therefore acts as both a mirror and a warning, encouraging society to balance innovation with humanity.

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