

Research Article

Artificial Intelligence and Surrogacy: A Cinematic Study of Filhaal and Mimi

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Abstract: Meghna Gulzar's directorial debut movie, *Filhaal* (2002) was critically well-received, and Sushmita Sen, who performed the role of Sia, was nominated for the Filmfare Award for Best Supporting Actress. It can be considered an offbeat movie that openly supported artificial intelligence through the system of surrogacy, where a friend, Sia, rents her womb to her married friend Rewa, who, after a miscarriage, is unable to carry a baby. In this journey, Rewa develops insecurities, and Sia experiences mood swings during pregnancy; when these emotions collide, their friendship reaches a breaking point. Another film in this category is *Mimi* (2021), directed by Laxman Utekar. The protagonist, Mimi, played by Kriti Sanon, won the IIFA and Filmfare awards for best actress. She becomes a surrogate mother for an American couple, John and Summer, in exchange for 20 lakh rupees to enter Bollywood. However, as the couple breaks its word, Mimi suffers greatly within her family and society as an unmarried mother. Both the movies advocate surrogacy as a miracle for the unprivileged couple, and through various turbulences, psychological and emotional phases, they keep the audience spellbound. Unlike the earlier movie, the latter one promotes adoption as a substitute for infertility, giving a bright example to nurture the homeless children. The primary objective of this paper is to examine surrogacy in the context of Artificial Intelligence, with reference to films.

Keywords: surrogacy; artificial intelligence; adoption; infertility



Introduction

Artificial Intelligence has become a lifeline in the current age, making human life much easier. Unlike earlier, infertility is no longer a lifelong stigma; couples can have babies through various types of surrogacy. Undoubtedly, the process is expensive and entails some emotional risks, but it is beneficial for those who can afford it. Both *Filhaal* and *Mimi* can be considered cult films, as they depict surrogacy. Other films, such as *Dusri Dulhan* and *Good News*, also support the purpose. However, the first two are of the same intensity, in which two well-educated, career-oriented, unmarried women take the risk of becoming surrogates. While Sia in *Filhaal* serves as a surrogate for her childhood best friend, Rewa, Mimi, in *Mimi*, accepts surrogacy to advance her career in the Hindi film industry. Both Sia and Mimi can be seen as bold characters who, despite social restrictions, venture into forbidden paths and embrace motherhood. They rent their wombs to foster the foetus of others, so that they can get the pleasure of being parents of their genetic child.

Theorisation: Artificial Intelligence and Surrogacy

Artificial intelligence and surrogacy are viewed in literary studies as discursive constructions that transform narratives of body, identity, agency, and kinship rather than only as scientific procedures. Both ideas serve as cultural metaphors that help modern literary and cultural texts navigate concerns about gendered labour, technology, and reproduction. Therefore, a literary theory of artificial intelligence and surrogacy focuses on representation, language, power, and ethics rather than therapeutic processes. When viewed from a literary perspective, surrogacy represents issues of body ownership, affective labour, and the commercialisation of motherhood in addition to reproductive help. In a similar vein, artificial intelligence goes beyond its technical meaning to function as a symbolic framework that prioritises calculation, logic, monitoring, and the replacement of human intuition. When combined, surrogacy and AI provide a critical lexicon for examining how contemporary narratives envision the future of human reconfiguration and reproduction.

Major Definitions

1. Artificial Intelligence:

Artificial intelligence can be described as follows in a literary and cultural context: "An algorithmic rationality system that emphasises control, prediction, and posthuman agency while symbolising the transfer of human decision-making to technical processes." According to N. Katherine Hayles, posthumanism views AI as a transition from embodied human consciousness to informational patterns, where intelligence and the body can be separated (*How We Became Posthuman*). As a result, AI in literature functions more as a narrative logic that prioritises efficiency, statistics, and calculability over emotion and moral ambiguity than as a machine.

2. Surrogacy:

Surrogacy can be described as follows from a literary standpoint: "The female body is a contested location of biological, emotional, and socioeconomic



negotiation in this reproductive and narrative process." According to academics like Sarah Franklin, surrogacy is a cultural reinterpretation of kinship in which the mother is divided into social, gestational, and genetic responsibilities. Surrogacy frequently represents sacrifice, displacement, and the negotiation of female agency under capitalist and patriarchal systems in literary works.

3. Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART):

In literary analysis, ART is more than just a medical phrase; it is a technocultural framework that reorganises origin, ancestry, and inheritance narratives. ART-related literary narratives challenge conventional birth and lineage myths by substituting technologically mediated genealogies that undermine ideas of authenticity and "natural" motherhood.

4. Biopolitics:

According to Michel Foucault, biopolitics is the institutional control over life processes that governs populations. When biopolitics is applied to surrogacy and AI in literature, it reveals the control of reproductive organs by contracts, monitoring, and medical authority. By emphasising emotional suffering and moral dilemmas that defy bureaucratic rationalisation, literary works frequently criticise this form of management.

5. Posthumanism:

The concept of the independent human subject is contested by posthumanism. Through Donna Haraway's "cyborg" metaphor, surrogate mothers might be portrayed in literature as hybrid characters formed by both biological embodiment and technological intervention. By integrating reproductive narratives into networks of data, computers, and institutional authority, artificial intelligence (AI) exacerbates this hybridity.

6. Commodification of Reproduction:

Surrogacy is seen from a Marxist-feminist standpoint as "The conversion of reproductive labour into a commodity that can be sold." By ascribing predictive value to bodies, health, and reproductive potential—a feature that is regularly criticised in literary and cultural narratives—AI, as an optimisation and valuation system, perpetuates this process.

Relevance in Literary Analysis:

Artificial intelligence and surrogacy are not empirical facts but interpretive tools for literary scholars. They enable reviewers to look at:

- How do stories portray maternity in ways that go beyond biology?
- How are female bodies portrayed as places of domination and labour?
- How does technology reshape ethical imagination?
- How technocratic systems negotiate agency?

AI structures results while staying narratively invisible, functioning metaphorically as an invisible authority. Surrogacy turns into a metaphor for more



general instances of emotional displacement, gendered exploitation, and moral uncertainty. When combined, they provide a framework for analysing modern writings that address issues of technological modernity, reproductive justice, and bodily autonomy.

Interpretation of the Movie: *Filhaal*:

Sia Sheth and Rewa Singh are childhood best friends who are inseparable. The movie unfolds during a fencing session, when Sia unintentionally injures Rewa; she is taken to the hospital, where Sia cares for her more than the nurse and takes her home upon discharge. Both are devoted to each other, but have different interests in life. Sia, a career-oriented girl, has a boyfriend, Sahil and has twice rejected his marriage proposal to focus on her career. Rewa is a family-oriented girl who eventually marries Dhruv and plans to start a family. However, at a later stage of her pregnancy, she went through a miscarriage. This breaks the couple into pieces, but Dhruv's decency makes Rewa miserable, who goes into depression. Rewa further conceives, but the doctor advises her to abort as her womb is too weak to carry a baby, and that could risk her life too. The doctor informs that the egg of a woman could be developed in another woman's womb, but a womb transplant is not possible, like a kidney or a heart. Finding Rewa in a fragile condition, Sia takes a brave decision to be the surrogate for her friend, as Rewa is not in favour of adopting a baby. When Dhruv is informed of the new development, he disapproves. All three perform at their best in the scene in which Sia and Rewa argue in favour of the decision, while Dhruv opposes it; he ultimately yields to them. In a further consultation, the doctor explains surrogacy in a layman's language as just borrowing someone else's bowl to cook your dishes. Genetically, the baby will have the features of the biological parents; the only complication was the emotional one, as the surrogate will carry the baby in her womb for nine months and give it blood, bones and body. She may start looking for her reflections in the baby.

Rewa's parents welcome the decision, but Sia's parents, especially her mother, do not accept the idea of her unmarried daughter embracing motherhood, as this could pose a problem for Sia's future marriage. Sia even decides without consulting her partner, Sahil, who is disappointed later when the truth is revealed. His parents pressure him to move on without Sia, and for a period, he becomes silent as well. Between Sia and Rewa, Sia has been portrayed as the epitome of friendship, one who does not care about her own future and jumps into the fire. She is the woman who has twice rejected Sahil's marriage proposal for her career, yet does not hesitate to sacrifice her career for her friend's happiness. Rewa, on the other hand, seems more self-centred, as she never stops her friend from taking such a step; instead, she convinces Sia's parents to give their approval. Like Sia, she would have sacrificed her happiness to secure her friend's future.

Sia does not wish to stay with Rewa in Bombay because Rewa is not sick but pregnant. She rents another flat and continues her job of shooting the models. She is presented as making a delicate balance between her job and pregnancy. Everything seems fine until Rewa gets jealous of Sia. Dhruv's care and concern for Sia make Rewa jealous. She also gets envious of not having the experience and pleasure of being



pregnant. She appears more concerned about her baby than about Sia. Sia's refusal to follow her instructions leaves her bitter. The stiffness reaches its zenith when Sia paints the baby's room in a colour of her choice, which Rewa finds in total contrast to her interests. The tension gets so bad that Sia goes to the hospital, and Rewa leaves her house. Despite complications, Sia gives birth to a healthy baby. After transferring the baby to its biological parents, she finally reunites with Sahil.

Interpretation of the Movie: Mimi

The movie unfolds with Summer and John expressing their desire to have a surrogate for Bhanu. Answering his query, Summer expresses that she cannot be a mother biologically; they want to hire a young, healthy girl to carry their baby in her womb. This part is fun because of the misunderstanding between the couple and Bhanu, who thinks John wants a girl in secret. Bhanu was also childless even after twelve years of his marriage, but affording a surrogate was impossible for him. People like him take out loans to provide their children with education; who takes out a loan to have a child? Bhanu's search for a girl takes him to Mimi, a young, healthy, talented dancer who aspires to get a break in Bollywood. She has everything except cash in her purse, including five lakh rupees for a photo shoot. Bhanu's search for his life-changing deal ends at her. Both of them develop a misunderstanding, too, and Mimi slaps Bhanu, but he explains to her that to get pregnant, she does not need to have any physical contact with Mr John. To simplify, he states that the American couple will grow sugarcane on her farm because their farm is infertile, and when the crop is ready, they will harvest it and pay her the rent. Her friend discourages her, but Mimi agrees to take the risk in exchange for twenty lakh rupees. She was already 25 years old, and after a few years, she would only get roles as mothers in films; to avoid that, she preferred to be the mother in real life, have money, and enter films as a lead.

They go to a clinic in Jaipur. The doctor advises Mimi to take care of certain things during pregnancy, such as eating healthy food, walking regularly, staying happy, and exercising. Mimi enquires about developing stretch marks or body disfigurement, but calms down, citing the example of Shilpa Shetty, a film actress. Mimi agrees and again reminds them to pay her all the money after nine months, when the work is completed. The sperm and egg of John and Summer are developed in the lab and are injected into Mimi's womb. Mimi gets pregnant, and the couple flies back to America, paying the first instalment to her and giving custody of Mimi to Bhanu.

Mimi decides to stay at her friend Shama's house to avoid her parents, as her house was far from hers, and her father used to spend most of the time in the mosque being the maulvi. Mimi convinces her parents to allow her to stay out for nine months under the pretext of filming a movie, and she and Bhanu stay at her friend Shama's house with Chand and her husband, Nawajuddin. Bhanu monitors Mimi's health and fitness. Time flies, and in a later stage of pregnancy, the doctor informs John and Summer that their baby will be mentally disabled. Everyone's dreams start to fall apart: Bhanu's deal to get money, Mimi's dream to be an actress and the American couple's dream to become parents. The couple broke down, but instead of taking the responsibility of the Down syndrome baby, they left for America, leaving Mimi



shattered. Mimi's parents discover their daughter's humiliation and lies. Adding to their dismay, they learn that Bhanu is the baby's father. The audience is entertained by the way Bhanu is revealed as a Muslim and having already a wife. It is a crescendo that culminates in the perfect climax. The arrival of Bhanu's wife unveils the curtain, and everybody comes to know the truth. Finally, Mimi is happy with Raj, the baby who is hearty and healthy. Mimi's parents find the joy they were missing at home with the baby. Bhanu, as a good driver, takes Mimi to a beautiful destination. Happiness does not come without pain, right? John and Summer return to reclaim their baby after seeing him dancing with Mimi on Facebook. By then, Mimi, Raj's emotionally attached mother, does not want to leave him. After the struggle, Summer decides to leave Raj to Mimi and adopts an Indian baby. This was the perfect ending and the moment for clapping.

Comparison of both the Movies:

The central characters in both films have changed significantly by the end compared with their initial portrayals. The films teach that everyone can change and forgive mistakes for the greater good. However, Shama stands as a rock for Mimi; initially, she dissuades her from being the surrogate, whereas Rewa has become selfish, neither stopping Sia from making the decision nor emotionally supporting her during her pregnancy. Sia and Mimi, both career-oriented girls, embrace motherhood; one for friendship and the other for money. Both characters have achieved maturity through this journey: Sia has forgiven Rewa for her immature behaviour, and Mimi, showing her broad heart, decides to accept a baby with Down syndrome, though the baby is born healthy. If Rewa and Summer are compared, Summer stands out: she recognises the pitfalls of selfishness and does not aspire to a perfect life; instead, she allows Raj to be with Mimi and adopts an Indian baby, thereby rescuing her from a terrible destiny. Rewa finally visits Sia at the hospital when she is having complications, but that does not reflect her whole-hearted sincerity for her friend, rather more of her concern for the baby. Sia has to sacrifice her career and future as Rewa is not in favour of adoption. In contrast, Summer's adoption of a baby gives a lesson to society to provide shelter to the unprivileged children.

Conclusion:

Humans have invented machines, and those machines have made life easier. A few decades ago, infertility was a curse to many unlucky couples. However, it is said that when there is a will, there is a way. The need for a baby has paved the way to surrogacy, which has blessed numerous people. In recent years, with advances in artificial intelligence, the healthiest eggs could be evaluated for fertilisation, and the most viable embryos for implantation. The use of AI holds great promise for addressing the challenges faced by couples struggling with infertility. In the film *Filhaal*, Rewa, a hopeless woman, becomes a mother; in *Mimi*, Summer reaches the extreme of adopting a baby girl, and Mimi has forgotten her dreams after becoming a mother. Surrogacy has been shown to benefit infertile couples, and the portrayal of this theme in films, particularly the two aforementioned films, has undoubtedly made it more widespread and well accepted.



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