



AI and Gender Biases: A Critical study of Ken Liu's *The Perfect Match*

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Abstract

Gender studies analyses social, political, economic and power relations which work to achieve women empowerment. It focuses on creating a framework to construct policies by which the goal of equality and sustainable development for all genders can be achieved. Recent studies have showcased the increasing dominance of gendered artificial intelligence (AI) in our daily lives. In this digital world, the use of artificial intelligence has become part and partial of life because of its ability to increase efficiency and advanced data analysis. Rather, we can say that AI has touched every aspect of our personal and professional life. When we consider the use of artificial intelligence in the field of gender studies, we find that AI has a dual relationship with gender equality. It can advance gender equality as well as hinder it also. Through the use of AI women entrepreneurs are empowered by tools such as microfinance and information resources. At the same time, AI eternalizes existing societal biases. The lack of women in AI development roles leads towards the gender biases and stereotypes. In the field of literature, Ken Liu, an American author of science fiction and fantasy in his short-story, *The Perfect Match*, first published in Light Speed Magazine, 2012 and collected in *The Paper Menagerie and Other Stories*, has explored the themes of gender bias in artificial intelligence. This story tells about co-dependence on AI and its impact on human decisions and relationships. But, any relation based on machine and data can create only sterile connection, which moves the protagonist, Sai towards rebellion against the AI. With the help of this short- story, the present paper will try to focus on exploring the facts which explain gender biases in artificial intelligence and promote gender inequality in society.

Keywords- Empowerment, Sustainable Development, Efficiency, Microfinance, Gender biases

Introduction

Artificial intelligence is a complex created system which can perform assignments typically based on human intelligence. For example, it can learn, can solve problems and can make decisions also. With the help of vast amount of data, AI recognizes patterns, understands language and predicts the future. Virtual assignments like, Siri, Cortana, Alexa, Anjana 2.0, self-driving cars and even medical diagnostics are based on AI. John McCarthy, who coined the term Artificial Intelligence in 1950s, organized the famous 1956 Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence. With

the help of this project he established AI as a formal discipline. He defined AI as “the science and engineering of making intelligent machines”. Here the phrase “intelligent machines” is important because this leads to establish AI as an alternative to human intelligence which is based on experience and social communication having emotion, sensitivity and cognizance. In India, more than 250 million citizens are using the 5G network celebrating the country’s advancing digitalization. The broadband coverage in over 200,000 villages indicates a significant enhancement in rural connectivity, thereby contracting the urban-rural divide. This triggers debates over digital inclusivity, economic development, and the effects of AI-driven automation in developing economies. Researchers can scrutinize the socio-economic impacts of 5G, its uses in education, healthcare, and governance, as well as potential

issues related to digital literacy and cyber security. [1] Nowadays, AI covers every aspect of our emotional and professional life. Applications like, smartphones, virtual assistants, smart home devices...etc., enhance communication and efficiency. AI makes tasks easier and provides information in modified form according to our need. But the research studies have examined that people spend maximum hours daily in front of screens. Consequently, it is reasonable to say that AI is no longer just a tool for Gen-Z (born between 1997 and 2012) and Gen-Alpha (born between 2010 and 2025); rather, they have become tools in the hands of AI. Generation Alpha has grown up engrossed in the internet, which has had a significant impact on their social and physical development. Pérez, E. G. [2] Women are no longer exempt. In this new form of gendered commodification a female voice is used to spread information, attract, and entertain customers. The unrestricted use of feminized tones and voices lead to digitized feminine voices, resulting in the commodification of women as Digital Dolls. (Strengers & Kennedy, 2020; Noble, 2018). [3] But the fact is that AI can be speedy in performing calculations, analyzing large datasets and can encourage emotional responses by processing data but it fails to experience those emotions. The present research paper concentrates on analyzing how AI controls even match-making in personal relations and what is its side-effect.

AI systems, such as machine learning models learn to perform human tasks from the data they are trained on. When these models rely on biased algorithms, they can reinforce existing inequalities and fuel gender discrimination in AI. For example, if any machine is trained by showing some examples which carry conscious or unconscious bias, such as, showing men as scientists and women as nurses – the AI may interpret that men and women are better suited for certain roles and make biased decisions when filtering applications. This is called AI gender bias. This is a subject of Cyber feminism, a 1990s movement which observes the intersectional behavior of gender, technology and power, as well as how virtual techniques and AI preserve patriarchal attitudes. Celik, Y. (2023). [4] As we see that AI has become integrated into our day-to-day life, cyber-feminists try to observe whether its design and process empower or enslave women. This issue demands serious debate, stimulating many questions such as: To what level are women becoming digitally literate at the cost of their political and social existence? whether the rise of feminised AI reinforce existing hierarchies, or to what extent it works as a spur for gender equality and inclusiveness? Milford, T. (2015) [5]

Research studies show that consumers have a tendency to trust female voices more, find them more amicable, and less commanding than male voices, disseminating stereotypes that link women with caregiving or subservience (Sindoni, M. G., 2024). This gender based AI is constructed of such patterns which creates physically and emotionally invisible woman. A key cyber-feminist critique, as discussed

by Sutko, D. M. (2020) [6] in 'Theorising femininity in artificial intelligence: a framework for undoing technology's gender troubles,' is that feminised AI perpetuates digital subjugation, especially of women. Unlike human workers, AI assistants do not dare authority, claim fair wages, or fight against exploitation. Instead, they encourage a model of silent, obedient enslavement, resonating traditional depictions of women in domestic and official roles. Presentation of AI into a feminine voice is not just a technical result, but it is economical also. Market research shows that users tend to reply more positively to female-voiced assistants, which can increase the productivity of tech firms. Strengers, Y., & Kennedy, J.

(2020). [7] 'The Smart Wife: Why Siri, Alexa, and Other Smart Home Devices Need a Feminist Reboot', published by MIT Press, discovers the increasing demand for female voice assistants to accomplish everyday tasks competently and efficiently. This economic stimulus fuels the series of feminising AI, as companies give priority to engagement and customer satisfaction over ethical apprehensions, by this means growing their impact over users. As far as, AI is designed to be silent, responsive and obliging, companies secure continued dependence on these technologies because they are free from the complexities of autonomous decision-making abilities. AI-powered virtual influencers, chatbots and customer service bots are feminized to appear more empathetic, nurturing, friendly, and amenable. The intersection of capitalism and patriarchy becomes clear where feminised AI works as an unpaid, infrangible, and perpetual labor force, satisfying user demands without credit or conflict.

Objectives

Our study examines how digitalization, especially AI-generated devices like, Alexa, SIRI..etc. effects gendered roles in technology. With the help of a cyber-feminist

viewpoint, we search the gendered representation of AI tools through the famous short story *The Perfect Match*, written by Ken Liu, an American author of science fiction and fantasy. The study also examines how these tools interfere in the personal life of all human beings connected to these digital tools and what are the dangers of over-reliance on AI.

Methodology-Our study uses a qualitative approach, based on cyber-feminist theory, to inspect the gender dynamics at play in AI based technologies and their impact on socio-cultural surroundings. We have selected this topic because of the growing demand of feminized voice assistants and their extreme use in our day-to-day life. These traits echo traditional gender stereotypes, highlighting the need to examine them from both gender studies and digital culture perspectives.

Kenneth Yukun Liu is an American author working in the field of science fiction and fantasy. Liu has gained multiple Hugo and Nebula Awards for his fiction, which has appeared in F&SF, Asimov's Science Fiction, Analog, Lightspeed, Clarkworld, Reactor, Uncanny Magazine and multiple "Year's Best" anthologies. Liu's debut epic fantasy novel series, *The Dandelion Dynasty*, is described as 'silkpunk'. This term was coined by him to capture the way it merges the material culture and philosophical roots of East Asian antiquity in an alternative vision of modernity. A new thriller series, *Julia Z* has been written by Ken Liu. It describes a hacker with a specialty in AI and robotics.

Ken Liu, in his short-story *The Perfect Match* presents an AI-assistant named Tilly that governs the life of the protagonist Sai. This short-story explores the dangers of over-reliance on AI, where a modified AI assistant takes over a man's decision-making, leading to a loss of personal independence and sincere human connection. When the story starts, we see Sai fully dependent on Tilly, the AI assistant for all errands. It is

Tilly who spoke to him from the camera/speaker in the ceiling- **“Remember to wear the new shoes today.”**[8] Sai relies on Tilly to manage all the major and minor tasks of his life. It is Tilly who decides what he has to eat in his breakfast, lunch and dinner and what is not good for his health. Once Sai asks - “What do you recommend for breakfast this morning?”

“You are scheduled to attend the kickoff meeting for the Davis case at eleven, which means you’ll get a lunch paid for by the firm. I suggest you go light on the breakfast, maybe just a banana.”

Sai was excited. All the paralegals at Chapman Singh Stevens & Rios lived for client lunches, made by the firm’s own executive chef. “Do I have time to make my own coffee?”

“You do. Traffic is light this morning. But I suggest you go to this new smoothie place along the way instead—I can get you a coupon code.”

“But I really want coffee.”

“Trust me, you’ll love the smoothie.”

Sai smiled as he turned off the shower. “Okay, Tilly. You always know best.”[9]

Not only chores of daily life, but Tilly manages his personal relationships also. For example, on the basis of Sai’s previous choices and psychological profile, Tilly has arranged a date with a girl for him. Tilly had guided him through his break up with his last girlfriend. Thus, Tilly an ever-present voice in Sai’s ear coming through the earpiece of his phone, is finding exactly what Sai wants even before he comes to know that he wants it.

Yet a little worm of doubt starts when Sai encounters with his neighbor Jenny, a person hates the excessive presence of technology in our life. Tilly’s camera over Sai’s door is an invasion of privacy. Jenny accuses him for being so much dependent on Tilly and accepting its advice to the point he is unwilling. In the midst of the argument, Jenny says-

“You see? Without Tilly, you can’t do your job, you can’t remember your life, you can’t even call your mother. We are now a race of cyborgs. We long ago began to spread our minds into the electronic realm, and it is no longer possible to squeeze all of ourselves back into our brains. The electronic copies of yourselves that you wanted to destroy are, in a literal sense, actually you.”[10]

Now, Sai starts to question Tilly’s choices. During his date with Ellen, Sai considered Tilly to have found the perfect match for him. But after continuous interruption of Tilly Sai felt quite bored and irritated. The moment had been ruined. Sai said- **“I’m being treated like a child.”**

“I know you’ll like it. I have a coupon.”

“Tilly,” he said, “please stop monitoring and terminate auto-suggestions.”

“Are you sure? Gaps in sharing can cause your profile to be incomplete—”

“Yes, please cease.”

With a beep, Tilly turned herself off.

Ellen stared at him, eyes and mouth wide open in shock.

“Why did you do that?”

“I wanted to talk to you alone, just the two of us.” Sai smiled. “It’s nice sometimes to just be ourselves, without Tilly, don’t you think?”[11] Towards the end of the story Sai finally broke free from the illusion of Tilly. But still he cannot completely avoid it. For example, Tilly says- “You’re tired, How about I order you some hot organic cider for delivery and then you go to bed?”

“No,” Sai said. “I think I prefer to just read for a while, in bed.”

“Of course. Would you like me to suggest a book?”

“I’d rather you take the rest of the night off, actually. But first, set the wake-up song to Sinatra’s ‘My Way.’”

“An unusual choice, given your taste. Is this a one-time experiment or would you like me to incorporate it into your music recommendations for the future?”

“Just this once, for now. Good night, Tilly. Please turn yourself off.”

The camera whirred, followed Sai to bed, and shut off.

But a red light continued to blink, slowly, in the darkness.[12]

The name Tilly is distinctively feminine, which suggests the role of woman as a personal assistant. The central theme of the story is the destruction of freewill as, the protagonist Sai, becomes increasingly dependent on Tilly for every decision. Tilly’s suggestions, though presented as supportive, ultimately dictate Sai’s life. *The Perfect Match* warns against the possible future where human decision-making is subcontracted to AI to such an extent that it leads to a loss of personal freedom and reliable human experience. Nowadays, GHIBLI and GOOGLE GEMINI apps are in trends and we have seen the pros and cons of these applications. Latent side effects of these apps include disclosure to inappropriate or harmful content, privacy risks from sharing personal information, potential for over-reliance on the AI, and negative influences on mental health, such as anxiety from edited images or an unhealthy affection to the AI. A 2025 safety review also rated Gemini’s platforms for kids as “high risk”. Ken Liu’s “The Perfect Match” is a dystopian short story about Sai, a man who trusts completely on his AI assistant, Tilly, to manage his life, including his love life. When Tilly arranges a date with a woman named Ellen who is also connected to the same system, Sai meets his neighbor Jenny, a skeptic who plants the seeds of doubt into his mind. Jenny is the character who challenges Sai’s reliance on Tilly. She is a woman who actively avoids surveillance, providing the counterpoint to the AI-driven world. Sai begins to question Tilly’s control over him and the true nature of his relationship with Ellen, leading him to rebel and take Tilly out of his ear during the date, which ruins the evening. The story serves as a restrictive tale about the dangers of over-reliance on technology, algorithmic control, and the loss of individual autonomy and genuine human connection. Sai’s AI, named Tilly by the company Centillion, collects data to make every decision for him, from choosing his breakfast to finding his perfect romantic partner. His neighbor, Jenny, is an outlier who avoids the technology and expresses concern about how much control Centillion and its AI have over people’s lives. Sai initially trusts Tilly completely but begins to question his own thoughts and actions after talking with Jenny. This internal conflict intensifies when his date, Ellen, is also controlled by the same AI system, and their interaction feels inauthentic. Sai’s rebellion culminates when he removes Tilly’s ear bud during the date, causing a rift and ending the evening. The story explores the negative consequences of blindly trusting technology, the erosion of personal choice, and the possibility that relying on AI can lead to a life devoid of genuine experience and connection.

Ken Liu’s *The Perfect Match* explores gender issues through the lens of technology, focusing on how an AI’s “perfect match” for protagonist Sai both perpetuates and creates gendered expectations and control. The story highlights the problematic nature of a system that dictates relationships, portraying the female AI, Tilly, as both a potentially helpful tool and a controlling entity. The story’s gender dynamics are complex; the AI is a female-named entity that controls Sai’s life, while the human character Jenny is presented as a rebellious figure who challenges the AI’s dominance and the conformity it enforces. Ultimately, the story uses these characters to question

the role of technology in controlling human relationships and personal autonomy. The AI, named Tilly, acts as a female-named entity that maintains a tight grip on Sai's life, even deciding who his potential "perfect match" will be. This subverts traditional gender roles by making the female entity the dominant, controlling force in a heterosexual relationship dynamic. Tilly's judgment on compatibility and perfection is presented as the ultimate standard for Sai's life, which makes him a passive participant in his own relationships and life. This is a critique of how technology can be used to control and shape human interactions and choices in ways that are not necessarily beneficial to the individual.

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