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FILMS

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HUMANS IN THE LOOP

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY
ARANYA SAHAY





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ABOUT THE FILM

Humans in the Loop

Genre | Drama

74' | India | 2024 | Hindi, Kurukh

Director | Aranya Sahay

Producers | Mathivanan Rajendran,
Sarabhi Ravichandran, Shilpa Kumar

LOGLINE

A recently divorced Adivasi woman working as an AI data labeller navigates the blurry boundaries between technology and real life as she struggles to raise her city-bred daughter in her native village in Jharkhand.

SYNOPSIS

Nehma, an Adivasi woman from the Oraon tribe, returns to her village with her children twelve-year-old Dhaanu and one-year-old Guntu, after her divorce. She begins to work as a data labeller, training the 'childlike' AI models to recognise images.

While Nehma faces the challenge of connecting with Dhaanu - who is biased against village life and forever tempted to flee back to the city - she also notices that the AI she works with is adopting harmful human biases, echoing prejudices against her own community.

CURATOR'S NOTE

Humans in the Loop has a simple story of individual grit at its heart: a woman's struggle against odds, trying to find a foothold materially and emotionally. But it finds a whole 'world'—in the many-layered scales that it operates, in its utter contemporaneity—in the everyday; even in what is commonly thought of as outside of modernity. As technology unsettles notions of authenticity, all claims of authenticity appear facile. Experiences are scalar; emotions have a universal plane. The knowledge that micro and macro sites of human life produce, in that the indigenous worlds and the world of technologically driven transnational capital worlds produce, loops into each other. So does nature and technology. These confrontations create a hall of mirrors, reflecting each other manifold. Reflections are never in scale.

- RATHEESH RADHAKRISHNAN
Selection Committee - South Asia Features,
MAMI Mumbai Film Festival 2024

PRESS RELEASE

Directed by Aranya Sahay and produced through the Storiculture Impact Fellowship, *Humans in the Loop* follows Nehma, an Adivasi Oraon woman working in a remote data labelling center in Jharkhand. Torn between her role as a data labeller and her attempts to connect with her young daughter, Dhaanu, Nehma's journey offers a tender lens into the complexities of technology's reach into marginalized lives. As Dhaanu struggles with questions of cultural identity and heritage, their relationship illuminates the deep intergenerational impacts of technological change.

Set against the backdrop of Nehma's work labeling data to train AI models, "*Humans in the Loop*" spotlights the human prejudices that become woven into AI systems and the unacknowledged consequences for communities excluded from the tech revolution. Nehma's internal struggle symbolizes a broader dilemma, prompting urgent questions: How can we bridge ancient knowledge with modern technology? How can we ensure AI serves all communities, not just a select few?

By weaving together the emotional and ethical dimensions of AI, "*Humans in the Loop*" urges us to consider the importance of inclusive, intersectional AI that prevents the deepening of social inequalities and creates a technology landscape that respects diverse communities.

A woman with dark hair and a bindi on her forehead is looking off-camera with a thoughtful expression. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an indoor setting with some greenery.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

ARANYA SAHAY

Aranya is an Indian filmmaker based out of Mumbai. He studied Direction at FTII, Pune. He went on to assist Imtiaz Ali and Patrick Graham as an Associate Director & Director's Assistant.

He has directed five short films, of which 'Songs for Babasaheb' and 'Chait' have screened at Mumbai International Film Festival, Signs Film Festival and Jaffna Film Festival. In 2021, his film 'Saaya' was selected as a 'Film Bazaar Recommends' project. He was a participant and grant winner in the Museum of Imagined Futures Impact Fellowship Programme in 2023.

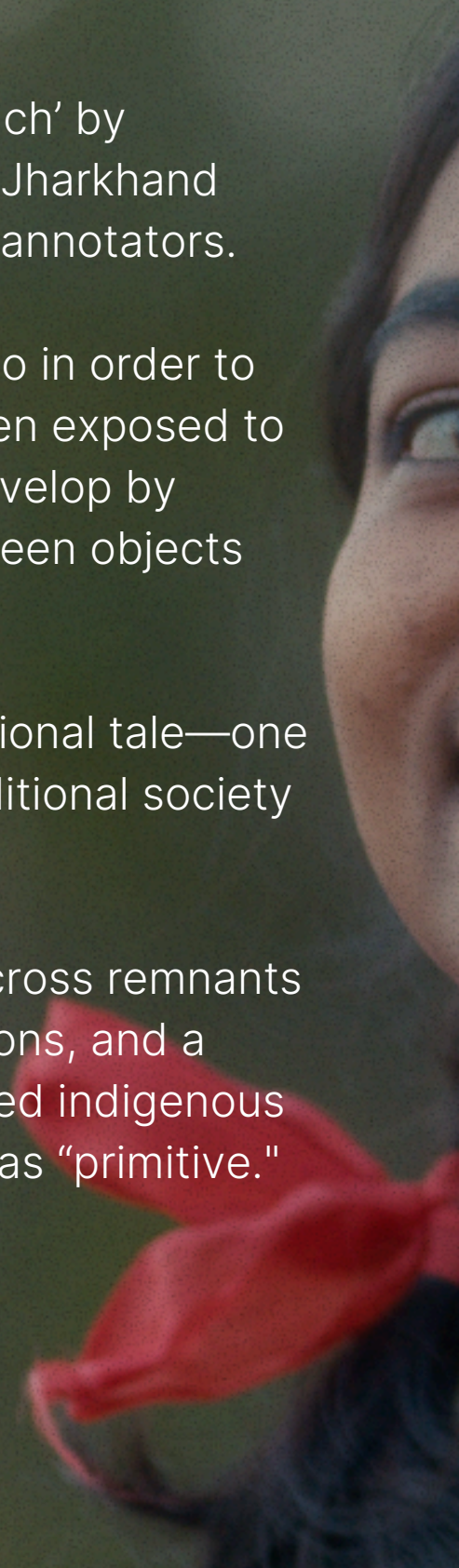
DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In 2022 I read an article titled 'Human Touch' by Karishma Mehrotra about tribal women in Jharkhand working with artificial intelligence as data annotators.

Annotators 'label' images, videos and audio in order to improve machine learning algorithms. When exposed to new data, these applications learn and develop by themselves, learning to differentiate between objects and recognise patterns, much like a child.

This provided the inspiration for a civilizational tale—one that explores the interplay between a traditional society and technologies of the future.

While researching in Jharkhand, I came across remnants of colonialism - buildings, arches, institutions, and a painful history of imperialism that destroyed indigenous communities, dismissing their knowledge as "primitive."



The rise of AI, largely shaped by Western perspectives, threatens to replicate this exclusion.

This phenomenon, known as "AI Bias," perpetuates human prejudices through limited and biased data that is used to train machine learning models, eliminating the identities and cultural knowledge of the very people who are recruited to label this data.

My mother's work as a researcher in tribal regions of India left an indelible mark on me. It has long inspired me to tell a story set in Jharkhand. There is place no better than this to situate an indigenous story set against the backdrop of a world that is rapidly changing through AI.

PRODUCER'S NOTE

"Humans in the Loop" is produced by The Storiculture Company under The Museum of Imagined Futures. It is one of two films selected to shed light on the evolving landscape of digital societies in India.

Set in the underrepresented world of India's data-labelling workforce, the film offers a rare glimpse into the life of an Adivasi woman navigating the intersection of tradition, identity, and the digital economy. Through her story, the film bridges the abstract complexities of technological change with the tangible, human realities at its core.

With Aranya's dedication to portraying the human experience amidst these shifts, the film invites audiences to reflect on how we can build a tech-driven world that values every voice, especially those at the margins.

As we launch our impact campaign, our goal is to address the issue of representation in AI development. By highlighting the biases embedded in the AI pipeline, we aim to make a call for inclusive, equitable practices—through a story that leaves viewers informed and deeply moved.



MATERIALS

[Poster](#) | [Stills](#) | [Trailer](#) | [Clip](#)

IN THE PRESS

Outlook

[Becoming Our Beliefs: A Contemplation on
Humans In The Loop by Apeksha Priyadarshini](#)

The Indian Express

[FTII alumni connects the dots between AI future,
colonial past with debut feature film by Tanisha Kunden](#)

CREDITS

Director
Aranya Sahay

Screenplay
Aranya Sahay

Production Company
Storiculture
SAUV Films

Supported by
Omidyar Network India

Producers
Mathivanan Rajendran, Sarabhi Ravichandran, Shilpa
Kumar

Cast
Sonal Madhushankar, Ridhima Singh, Geeta Guha,
Anurag Lugun, Monika, Aranya Sahay

Director of Photography
Monica Tiwari, Harshit Saini

Editing
Swaroop Reghu, Aranya Sahay

Sound Design
Kalhan Raina

Music
Saransh 'KHWAGBAH' Sharma

Colorist
Uday Oswal, Toshik Saraf

Production Design
Shubham Solanki





CONTACT

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