

Deepfake Performativity: Synthetic Actors, Consent, and the Ethics of Digital Resurrection in Indian Cinema

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Abstract—Deepfake technology has moved from the margins of internet subculture to the centre of Indian media production, generating a crisis of definition for performance, consent, and legal personhood. This paper argues that deepfake imagery and voice cloning constitute a new mode of *synthetic performativity* — a form of acting in which the face and voice are algorithmically generated rather than humanly inhabited, yet produce the affective impact of embodied presence. Through four Indian case studies spanning consent, resurrection, and political weaponization — the Rashmika Mandanna non-consensual deepfake of 2023, the Shammi Kapoor Cadbury resurrection advertisement of 2021, the cloning of Amitabh Bachchan's voice for political outreach in 2024, and the deployment of synthetic media in the 2024 general election — the paper maps a terrain in which Indian law, framed by the Copyright Act of 1957 and still-developing personality rights precedents, lags far behind technological capability. Drawing on Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra, posthumanist performance theory, and the emerging jurisprudence of digital personhood, the study argues that deepfake performativity dissolves the traditional triad of actor-body-audience into a fourth term: the synthetic likeness that circulates independent of the person it represents. The paper also addresses the ontological question at the core of the phenomenon: when an actor's face performs actions the actor never consented to perform, who — or what — is doing the acting? The research contributes to urgent interdisciplinary conversations at the intersection of performance studies, media ethics, Indian constitutional privacy law, and the governance of artificial intelligence in creative industries.

Index Terms—deepfake, synthetic performance, digital resurrection, consent, personality rights, Indian cinema, simulacra, voice cloning

I. INTRODUCTION

In November 2023, a video circulated across Indian social media platforms showing the actress Rashmika Mandanna entering an elevator. The woman in the video wore a fitted black outfit; her face was unmistakably Mandanna's. Except it was not. The video was a deepfake — a face-swap generated by artificial intelligence, grafting the actor's likeness onto the body of a British-Indian woman whose original footage had been scraped from Instagram without her knowledge. Mandanna responded publicly, calling the experience "extremely scary," and the incident ignited a national conversation about synthetic media, consent, and the vulnerability of public figures — particularly women — to algorithmic violation (BBC News, 2023).

Two years earlier, in 2021, the same technology had produced a very different public reaction. Cadbury India's "Not Just a Cadbury Ad" campaign used deepfake technology to resurrect the deceased actor Shammi Kapoor, mapping his younger face onto a body double and having him appear to endorse the chocolate brand while naming local shopkeepers in a personalized video message. The campaign won awards. It was widely celebrated as innovative and emotionally resonant — a beloved star returned to the screen through the magic of technology (Ogilvy India, 2021).

The tension between these two uses of the same underlying technology — one traumatic for the subject, the other celebrated by the public — maps the ethical territory this paper investigates. Deepfake performativity in Indian cinema is not one thing. It is a spectrum of practices with radically different relationships to consent, authenticity, and exploitation. At one end lies the non-consensual deepfake, a form of image-based violence that weaponizes a person's likeness against them. At the other end lies the consented resurrection, in which an actor's estate authorizes the posthumous use of their likeness for commercial or artistic purposes. Between these poles lie vast grey zones: political deepfakes deployed during elections, de-aging technologies that blur the boundary between visual effects and synthetic performance, and voice clones that reproduce a living actor's vocal identity without their direct involvement.

This paper takes that spectrum seriously, refusing both the techno-utopian claim that deepfakes are merely a new creative tool and the techno-pessimist claim that they are inherently destructive. Instead, it argues that deepfake technology constitutes a new ontological category for performance studies: *synthetic performativity*, in which the actor's face and voice circulate independent of the actor's body, will, and presence. Understanding this category requires not only legal and ethical analysis but also a re-engagement with foundational questions about what performance is: who performs, for whom, and under what conditions of consent.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SIMULACRA, POSTHUMAN PERFORMANCE, AND THE UNMOORED FACE

Baudrillard and the Deepfake as Pure Simulacrum

Jean Baudrillard's (1981) theory of simulacra provides an unexpectedly precise vocabulary for the deepfake condition. Baudrillard described four successive phases of the image: first, the image as a reflection of a basic reality; second, the image as a mask that perverts reality; third, the image as a mask that conceals the absence of reality; and fourth, the image bearing no relation to any reality whatsoever — the pure simulacrum, "its own pure simulacrum" (p. 6).

A deepfake of Rashmika Mandanna does not pass through phases one and two. It does not reflect a reality (Mandanna never filmed that elevator video) nor mask one (there is no underlying truth to conceal). It operates at Baudrillard's third and fourth orders: it replaces the absent real with a generated surface that is indistinguishable from it, and in its most extreme form — when the deepfake circulates more widely than the authentic performance — it becomes its own reality. The deepfake Mandanna in the elevator exists as a cultural object; millions of people have seen it. The real Mandanna's protestations that it is not her have no power to unmake the image. The simulacrum has detached from its referent and achieved autonomous existence.

This Baudrillardian framework is not merely theoretical ornamentation. It explains why deepfakes are experientially and legally different from earlier forms of image manipulation. A Photoshopped still image announces its artificiality through its fixity; a deepfake video moves, breathes, blinks, and looks at the camera, engaging the viewer's evolved neural architecture for face recognition and social cognition in ways that a still image does not. The deepfake does not deceive the rational mind — viewers may know intellectually that the video is synthetic — but it bypasses rationality to engage affective and perceptual systems at a pre-conscious level. This is what makes deepfakes simultaneously powerful as entertainment (the Shammi Kapoor campaign "feels" like watching the actor) and dangerous as non-consensual imagery (the Mandanna deepfake "feels" like witnessing an invasion of the actor's body).

III. POSTHUMAN PERFORMANCE AND THE DISAGGREGATED ACTOR

Performance theory has long grappled with the relationship between the actor's body and the character portrayed. From Stanislavski's system, which demanded affective truth drawn from the actor's own experience, to Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, which insisted on the visible gap between actor and role, the discipline has understood performance as a negotiation between the person who performs and the fiction performed. Deepfake technology disrupts this negotiation by disaggregating the actor entirely: the face belongs to one person, the body to another, the voice to a third (or to an algorithm), and the performance choices — expression, timing, gesture — to a machine learning model trained on thousands of faces that are not the actor's own.

Matthew Causey's (2006) analysis of digital performance as a "dislocation of the human subject" (p. 17) anticipated this disaggregation, though even Causey could not have predicted the

granularity with which deepfake technology would dismantle the unity of the performing body. A deepfake performance is not a human actor using technology; it is a technological assemblage producing the effect of a human actor. The labour of performance is distributed across the body double who provides movement, the data subjects whose facial expressions trained the model, the engineers who designed the generative adversarial network, and — crucially — the original actor whose likeness is being reproduced, whose prior performances constitute the raw material from which the synthetic performance is built, and who may have no knowledge that any of this is happening.

This distributed model of performance agency extends the posthumanist framework developed by Karen Barad (2007), in which agency is not a property of individual actors but an effect of intra-actions within a network. The deepfake "performance" is intra-active: it emerges from the entanglement of original footage, training data, algorithmic processing, and the interpretive labour of viewers who supply the affective response that completes the performance event. There is no single "actor" to whom the performance can be attributed — and this absence of a locatable agent is precisely what makes deepfake performativity so legally and ethically volatile.

IV. THE FACE AS DATA: FROM LIKENESS TO EXTRACTABLE RESOURCE

A third theoretical layer concerns the transformation of the human face from a site of identity and expression into a data resource that can be extracted, commodified, and redeployed without the face's owner. This transformation has deep implications for actors, whose faces are not incidental to their personhood but central to their professional identity, economic value, and artistic agency. Indian law has begun, tentatively, to recognize this transformation. In 2024, the Delhi High Court issued an interim order protecting the personality rights of actor Amitabh Bachchan, restraining unauthorized use of his name, image, voice, and likeness, including through AI-generated content (WIPO Magazine, 2025). The order represents a landmark in Indian personality rights jurisprudence — but it also reveals the law's conceptual lag. Personality rights were developed to protect celebrities from unauthorized commercial exploitation of their likeness in advertisements and merchandise. They were not designed for a technological environment in which a person's face can be extracted from existing footage, processed through a neural network, and made to perform new actions — including actions the person would never consent to perform — at near-zero marginal cost.

Case Studies: Four Modalities of Deepfake Performativity in India

Case Study 1: The Non-Consensual Deepfake — Rashmika Mandanna (2023)

On 6 November 2023, a video of actor Rashmika Mandanna wearing a black outfit and entering a lift went viral on Indian social media. The clip appeared at first glance to be an unremarkable piece of celebrity footage — the kind of candid moment that paparazzi and fan accounts circulate daily. Closer inspection revealed the video's true nature: the face was Mandanna's, but the body belonged

to Zara Patel, a British-Indian woman whose original Instagram video had been scraped and face-swapped without her consent (BBC News, 2023).

Mandanna's response was swift and public. "I feel really hurt to share this and have to talk about the deepfake video of me being spread online," she wrote. "Something like this is honestly extremely scary, not only for me, but also for each one of us who today is vulnerable to so much harm because of how technology is being misused" (Mandanna, as cited in BBC News, 2023). Her statement was notable for its framing: she positioned herself not as an exceptional victim — a celebrity suffering the unique burden of fame — but as representative of a generalized vulnerability. If a major film actor could have her face stolen and repurposed within hours, what protection existed for anyone?

The political response was rapid. Congress MP Manickam Tagore wrote to the Union IT Minister demanding a legal framework for deepfake regulation, explicitly citing the Mandanna incident as evidence of regulatory failure (The News Minute, 2023). The Delhi Police filed an FIR and, in January 2024, arrested a technology worker from Andhra Pradesh who had created the deepfake (The Hindu, 2024). The arrest was symbolically significant — it demonstrated that non-consensual deepfake creation could carry legal consequences — but it also revealed the reactive, case-by-case character of the existing response. The perpetrator was identified and apprehended because the victim was famous; thousands of non-consensual deepfakes targeting non-celebrities circulate without any legal consequence whatsoever.

From a performance studies perspective, the Mandanna deepfake is significant because it reveals the non-consensual deepfake as a form of *performance without performer*. The video is not Mandanna, yet it acts as Mandanna. It performs Mandanna-ness — the recognizable face, the characteristic expressions, the visual identity that the public associates with the actor — without any act of performance on Mandanna's part. The deepfake borrows the cultural capital of celebrity while severing the celebrity's control over their own image. This is not identity theft in the traditional sense; it is something stranger — identity *ventriloquism*, in which the stolen face speaks (or in this case, simply walks into a lift) without the stolen person's involvement, knowledge, or consent.

Case Study 2: The Consented Resurrection — Shammi Kapoor and Cadbury (2021)

In 2021, Cadbury India, in partnership with Ogilvy and Wavemaker India, launched "Not Just a Cadbury Ad" — a campaign that used deepfake technology to resurrect the late actor Shammi Kapoor, who had died in 2011. The advertisement featured a body double whose facial movements were algorithmically replaced with a younger version of Kapoor's face, enabling the deceased star to appear to endorse Cadbury chocolate while naming local retailers in hyper-localized versions of the ad. The campaign was a collaboration with the Kapoor family, who granted permission for the use of Shammi Kapoor's likeness (Ogilvy India, 2021).

The public reception was overwhelmingly positive. The campaign won multiple advertising awards and was widely praised in Indian media as an innovative and emotionally resonant use of AI. Viewers reported feeling moved at seeing the beloved actor "alive" again on their screens. The

deepfake here functioned not as violation but as tribute — a technological séance that allowed audiences to reconnect with a performer they had lost.

The contrast with the Mandanna case could not be starker, yet it is produced by the same underlying technology. The difference lies entirely in the presence or absence of consent. The Kapoor family authorized the use of Shammi Kapoor's likeness; the campaign was transparent about its technological methods; the deceased actor's image was deployed in a context (a chocolate advertisement) that was benign and affectionate. The Mandanna deepfake involved no consent, no transparency, and a context — the unauthorized appropriation of a living woman's body — that was inherently violating.

But the Kapoor case raises its own unresolved questions. Shammi Kapoor is dead and cannot consent. His family consented on his behalf — a legal arrangement that depends on Indian succession and personality rights law, which provides far less clarity than comparable frameworks in jurisdictions like California, where posthumous publicity rights are codified in statute. What if the Kapoor family had disagreed among themselves? What if Cadbury had used the deepfake for a product that Shammi Kapoor had morally opposed during his lifetime? The consented resurrection, however warmly received, rests on a fragile legal foundation — and the absence of controversy in this specific case obscures the regulatory vacuum beneath it.

Case Study 3: Voice Cloning and Political Personhood — Amitabh Bachchan (2024)

In early 2024, during the run-up to India's general election, synthetic media entered the political sphere in a new form: voice cloning. Reports emerged that the voice of Amitabh Bachchan — arguably India's most recognizable vocal signature — had been cloned using AI and deployed for political outreach without the actor's direct participation. The details remain contested, but the phenomenon was significant enough that Bachchan sought and obtained legal protection: the Delhi High Court issued an interim injunction restraining unauthorized use of his "name, image, voice, personality attributes, and/or any other traits exclusively identifiable with him," explicitly including AI-generated content (WIPO Magazine, 2025).

The Bachchan case represents a third modality of deepfake performativity: the *ambiguous-consent scenario*, in which a living celebrity's likeness or voice is used in a context they may not have explicitly authorized but that falls within the general domain of their public persona. Political parties argued that using a cloned Bachchan voice to deliver campaign messages was an extension of the celebrity endorsement model that has been standard practice in Indian elections for decades. Bachchan's legal team argued that voice cloning without explicit consent constituted a qualitatively different intervention — the difference between an actor choosing to lend their voice to a campaign and an algorithm appropriating that voice without the actor's knowledge of what specific words would be spoken.

This distinction — between lending and appropriating — goes to the heart of what performance means. When a living actor records an endorsement, they control their delivery: tone, emphasis, pacing, the specific words spoken. When an AI clones their voice, it can make them "say" anything — words they would never speak, sentiments they do not hold, positions they have never taken. The performance is severed from the performer's intentionality. The voice circulates as a free-

floating signifier of Bachchan-ness, attached to content over which Bachchan exercises zero control.

The Delhi High Court's order in the Bachchan case represents the most significant Indian legal intervention in deepfake performativity to date. It establishes that personality rights extend to synthetic reproductions of a celebrity's likeness and voice — a principle that, if upheld and extended, could provide the foundation for a comprehensive regulatory framework. But the order is an interim measure, not a final judgment, and its application to non-celebrity plaintiffs remains untested.

Case Study 4: Political Deepfakes and the 2024 General Election

The 2024 Indian general election was widely described as the country's first "AI election." Political parties across the spectrum deployed synthetic media — deepfake videos, voice clones, AI-generated campaign imagery — at a scale and sophistication that outpaced regulatory capacity. The Times of India reported that cybersecurity experts had raised alarms about the "possible misuse of artificial intelligence and deepfake technologies" to manipulate voters, spread disinformation, and impersonate political figures (Times of India, 2024).

What distinguishes political deepfakes from the previous case studies is their relationship to performance theory. A political deepfake — a synthetic video of a candidate appearing to say something they never said — is a performance in the most consequential sense: it seeks to produce effects in the world (votes, outrage, mobilization) through the manipulation of an audience's perception. It is theatre without a theatre, acting without an actor, political speech without a speaker. The "actor" is an algorithm trained on the target's face and voice; the "script" is written by a political operative; the "audience" is the electorate, most of whom will never know they witnessed a synthetic performance.

The epistemological crisis this produces is profound. In a media environment saturated with synthetic content, the default assumption that a video of a person speaking constitutes evidence that the person spoke those words — an assumption on which journalism, jurisprudence, and democratic deliberation have relied for decades — collapses. The deepfake does not merely deceive; it undermines the evidentiary status of all recorded performance. After deepfakes, every authentic video becomes potentially inauthentic — suspect not because of any flaw in the footage but because the technology of flawless forgery exists.

This crisis has specific Indian dimensions. India's linguistic diversity — 22 scheduled languages, hundreds of dialects — makes deepfake detection particularly challenging, as synthetic-media verification tools are predominantly trained on English-language and Western facial datasets. India's high smartphone penetration combined with relatively low digital literacy in large segments of the population creates an audience that is simultaneously highly exposed to synthetic media and poorly equipped to identify it. And India's vibrant, emotionally charged political culture, in which

video content spreads rapidly through WhatsApp groups with minimal fact-checking, provides an ideal distribution environment for synthetic political performance.

Table 1: Four Modalities of Deepfake Performativity in India

Modality	Example	Consent Status	Subject Status	Legal Framework Invoked	Performance Studies Concept
Non-consensual appropriation	Rashmika Mandanna deepfake (2023)	None; subject publicly objected	Living	IT Act 2000, IPC provisions; personality rights untested for non-celebrities	Performance without performer — face circulates independent of will
Consented resurrection	Shammi Kapoor Cadbury ad (2021)	Estate-authorized; subject deceased	Deceased	Contract law; personality rights inheritance unclear in Indian statute	Posthumous performance — the dead "act" through algorithmic proxies
Ambiguous-consent voice cloning	Amitabh Bachchan political outreach (2024)	Disputed; subject sought legal protection	Living	Delhi HC interim injunction on personality rights; WIPO-recognized precedent	Ventriloquized performance — voice detached from intentionality
Political weaponization	2024 general election synthetic media	None; deployed against political targets without consent	Living public figures	No specific deepfake election law; ECI guidelines advisory only	Instrumentalized performance — synthetic acting as political weapon

V. LEGAL ANALYSIS: INDIA'S REGULATORY VACUUM

Indian law approaches deepfake performativity through a patchwork of provisions, none of which were designed for synthetic media and none of which provide comprehensive coverage.

The Information Technology Act of 2000, as amended in 2008, contains provisions — notably Section 66E (violation of privacy) and Section 67A (publishing sexually explicit material) — that can be applied to certain categories of deepfake content. But these provisions are reactive and content-specific. A non-consensual deepfake that is not sexually explicit and does not meet the threshold for privacy violation under the IT Act may fall entirely outside its scope. The Act does not address the core harm of non-consensual deepfakes: the unauthorized appropriation and redeployment of a person's likeness, independent of the content that likeness is made to perform. The Indian Copyright Act of 1957 offers similarly incomplete coverage. Section 13 protects original literary, dramatic, musical, and artistic works — but a deepfake video is not "authored" by the person whose face it displays, and the person whose face is appropriated has no copyright claim over the resulting work. The deepfake creator may, perversely, have a stronger copyright claim than the deepfake subject, since the creator has contributed the labour of face-swapping and video production that copyright law recognizes as authorship. As noted in the parallel analysis of AI-generated screenplays earlier in this research series, the Copyright Act's 1994 amendment addressing "computer-generated works" (Section 2(d)(vi)) predates modern generative AI and has never been tested against deepfake content (Vintage Legal, 2026).

The most promising legal development is the emergence of personality-rights jurisprudence through the Delhi High Court. The Bachchan interim order and related rulings establish that Indian law recognizes — at least provisionally — a celebrity's right to control the commercial and political use of their likeness, including through synthetic reproduction. But personality rights in India remain a judicial creation rather than a statutory framework. They protect celebrities, not ordinary citizens. And they have not been tested in the specific context of non-consensual deepfakes created for harassment rather than commercial gain — the Mandanna scenario, in which the harm is dignitary and psychological rather than economic.

The regulatory gap is particularly acute in the electoral context. The Election Commission of India has issued advisories on synthetic media, but these are non-binding. No Indian statute specifically criminalizes the creation or distribution of political deepfakes, and the practical challenges of enforcement — identifying creators, proving intent, establishing causation between a deepfake and an electoral outcome — are formidable.

VI. ETHICAL DIMENSIONS: CONSENT, DIGNITY, AND THE RIGHT TO ONE'S OWN FACE

The legal analysis points toward a deeper ethical question that law alone cannot resolve: does a person have a right to their own face?

This question sounds absurd — of course one has a right to one's own face — but the deepfake phenomenon reveals that this right has never been adequately theorized or codified. Property law protects ownership of physical objects. Copyright law protects ownership of creative works. Privacy law, in its Indian constitutional form under the *Puttaswamy* judgment (2017), protects the right to be left alone and the right to informational self-determination. But none of these

frameworks precisely captures the harm of having one's face extracted, processed through an algorithm, and made to perform actions one never performed.

The harm is, in part, a harm to dignity. The deepfake subject is reduced from a person to a resource — their face becomes raw material for another's creative or malicious project. This reduction is the same logic that underlies other forms of image-based abuse, but deepfake technology intensifies it by making the reduction invisible. A Photoshopped image can be detected; a deepfake video, at the current frontier of the technology, cannot be reliably distinguished from authentic footage by either human perception or automated tools — a meta-analysis of 56 studies found that human accuracy in deepfake detection hovers only marginally above chance (ScienceDirect, 2024).

The harm is also a harm to agency. To perform is to choose — to decide what expression to wear, what words to speak, what actions to take in front of an audience. Performance is an act of will. The deepfake erases will. The face performs; no one chose the performance. The actor is alienated from their own likeness in the most literal sense: their face belongs to someone else's project, and they have no power to withdraw it.

For deceased actors, the ethical calculus shifts. The dead cannot be harmed in the way the living can — they cannot experience violation, humiliation, or distress. But the dead can be misrepresented. The Shammi Kapoor deepfake was benign because it made the deceased actor "do" something (endorse chocolate) that was consistent with his public persona and uncontroversial in nature. A deepfake that made a deceased actor appear to endorse a political candidate they would have opposed, or a product they would have found objectionable, or an ideology they spent their life fighting, would constitute a very different kind of act — a posthumous rewriting of the person's values, perpetrated on an audience that may not know the performance is synthetic.

VII. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE INDIAN FILM INDUSTRY

For an industry built on the commercial value of faces, deepfake technology presents both opportunity and existential threat.

The opportunities are real and already being exploited. De-aging technology — a close cousin of deepfake methods — allows older actors to play younger versions of themselves, extending careers and enabling narrative possibilities that were previously impossible without recasting. Digital resurrection can bring deceased stars back for cameo appearances, tribute sequences, or franchise continuity. Voice cloning can enable dubbing across India's many languages without the quality loss that currently characterizes the dubbing process. And personalized advertising, in which an actor appears to address individual consumers by name, can deepen audience engagement in ways that traditional endorsements cannot.

The threats are equally real. Non-consensual deepfakes targeting actors — particularly actresses — are a growing form of image-based violence that the industry has no systematic mechanism to address. The use of synthetic performers may reduce employment opportunities for junior and

character actors, whose faces are the industry's most replaceable assets. The legal uncertainty surrounding AI-generated performances complicates contracts, insurance, and rights management. And the epistemological crisis produced by political deepfakes threatens the trust relationship between screen performers and audiences — if any video of an actor can be synthetic, the actor's authentic political speech, charity work, and public statements lose their evidentiary force.

The Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA) in the United States has begun negotiating AI protections into its contracts, including requirements for informed consent and compensation when an actor's likeness is digitally replicated. No equivalent framework exists in the Indian film industry, where unionization is weaker, contracts are less standardized, and the power asymmetry between producers and performers — particularly junior performers — is more extreme.

VIII. CONCLUSION: TOWARD AN ETHICS OF SYNTHETIC PERFORMANCE

Deepfake technology does not mark the end of performance or the death of the actor. It marks the emergence of a new category of performance — synthetic performativity — that demands new conceptual, legal, and ethical frameworks.

Conceptually, performance studies must expand its vocabulary to account for performances that lack a performing subject. The deepfake video of Rashmika Mandanna walking into a lift is a performance — it has a face, a body, movement, an audience, and affective impact — yet Mandanna herself performed nothing. The performance is real; the performer is absent. This paradox is not a puzzle to be solved but a condition to be theorized. It requires performance scholars to engage seriously with the posthumanist proposition that agency is distributed, that performance can emerge from assemblages rather than individuals, and that the face can act without the person.

Legally, India needs a comprehensive deepfake regulation framework that addresses the full spectrum of synthetic performativity. Such a framework must, at minimum: criminalize non-consensual deepfake creation, regardless of whether the content is sexually explicit; establish statutory personality rights that protect all citizens, not only celebrities; create specific provisions for electoral deepfakes with expedited enforcement mechanisms; and require transparency labelling for consented synthetic media, so that audiences know when they are watching a synthetic performance. The IT Act, the Copyright Act, and the Election Commission's advisory powers all require amendment or supplementation to meet the moment.

Ethically, the principle must be that no person's face or voice should be made to perform without their consent — living or posthumous, celebrity or private citizen. This principle is simple to state and enormously difficult to operationalize. It requires answering questions that Indian law and culture have not yet addressed: Does consent survive death, and who inherits the right to grant or withhold it? Can consent be given in advance, through contractual clauses or estate planning, for uses of one's likeness that have not yet been invented? What compensation is owed when a synthetic performance generates revenue — and to whom?

The Rashmika Mandanna deepfake and the Shammi Kapoor resurrection are not opposite phenomena; they are two points on a single technological spectrum, separated only by the presence or absence of consent. The task facing Indian cinema, Indian law, and Indian performance scholarship is to build the infrastructure — legal, contractual, ethical, and pedagogical — that ensures consent is the rule rather than the exception. Until that infrastructure exists, every face on every screen is potentially a stolen face, and every performance is potentially a performance from which the performer has been erased.

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