

The Hindu Mythology and Indian Society in Gore Vidal's Kalki

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Abstract

This study explores how Indian and Hindu folklore influenced Gore Vidal's "Kalki." The book deftly combines elements of two distinct mythologies: Hindu and Christian, while Vidal explores how Christ is portrayed in the Gospels and tells the story of Vishnu's tenth avatar in relation to books like the Mahabharata, Vayu Purana, and Agni Purana. The story of Vishnu's image and the depiction of Christ's development are deeply ingrained in national consciousness in the manner that India and the United States have done, that have their own governments. In "Kalki," Vidal uses sarcasm as a storytelling device, offering a unique perspective via the voice of an epicene pilot and the private vessel of a Vietnam War veteran. One believes that he is Vishnu's last incarnation. Vidal explores concepts of denomination, capacity, and dictatorship through this glass, demonstrating how a group masquerading as conscientious can rise to power, manipulate governmental structures, and ultimately succeed in wreaking madness of a deceived leader. Through a detailed analysis of the text, the article delves into how Vidal draws upon Hindu religious concepts, such as the avatar Kalki, to weave a narrative that intertwines Eastern spirituality with Western storytelling.

Keywords: Almighty, Hinduism, Love, Supremacy, Myth, Human, Society

Introduction:

"The Hindu Mythology and Indian Society in Gore Vidal's Kalki" explores the ways in which Vidal incorporates elements of Hindu mythology and Indian culture into his novel. Through a detailed analysis of the text, the article delves into how Vidal draws upon Hindu religious concepts, such as the avatar Kalki, to weave a narrative that intertwines Eastern spirituality with Western storytelling.

The article examines Vidal's portrayal of Indian characters, landscapes, and traditions, considering how they contribute to the overall thematic and aesthetic richness of the novel. It may explore the significance of Vidal's engagement with Indian culture within the context of Western literature, reflecting on broader questions of cultural exchange, representation, and globalization. Additionally, the article discusses the reception of "Kalki" among readers and critics, considering how Vidal's treatment of Hindu mythology and Indian Society has been perceived and interpreted. It might also reflect on the novel's place within Vidal's larger body of work and its contribution to discussions about the intersection of East and West in contemporary literature.

"The Hindu Mythology and Indian Society in Gore Vidal's Kalki" offers valuable insights into how Vidal navigates cultural boundaries and explores universal themes through the lens of Indian spirituality and mythology.

Gore Vidal was well-known for his remarkable versatility in a variety of traditional literary forms, making him a significant contributor to American literature. Even though his most well-known works are his engrossing novels, he has proven himself to be a versatile critic who can communicate ideas in a variety of ways. In addition to his academic pursuits, he wrote endearing stories and became well-known for his insightful articles, which he consistently selected. As the Hollywood workshop approach was coming to an end, Vidal also experimented with screenwriting, judgement happiness on Broadway, television, and cinema. Along with well-

deserved recognition for his well-researched and complex works on a variety of topics, such as politics, religion, love, and the arts, he received considerable praise for his historical fiction. Vidal waited resolutely despite the criticism of a small number of critics who said that his essays showcased his welcome abilities even more than his welcome novels.

The story of "Kalki," a tale that captivates readers with its chaotic aviatrix that describes Vishnu's last incarnation and his plan to fulfil benevolence's destiny, is revealed. Gore Vidal frequently incorporates real-world and governmental tapestries into his imagined rural landscapes. Vidal meticulously analyses the suffering of current people in these stories, portraying bureaucracy as a victim of a morally bankrupt and damaged human race. Vidal's work is renowned in all genres for his deft technique and nuanced humour.

Vidal deftly disentangles the complexities of adultery, personal struggle, and incompetence within the field of politics, thereby demythologizing some highly esteemed national individuals. Vidal reveals a world full of foolishness, haughtiness, love, and sexuality in all its seductive forms—both heterosexual and homosexual—through his narrative glass. His analysis explores the domains of superstition, dishonesty, the phoney façades of religion, the devastation caused by war, and the unsettling undertones of interpersonal strife and official malfeasance. This is a universe that is well-described, authentically crafted, and frighteningly bold in connection with actuality.

The beliefs, hypocrisies, and affectations are tolerated in puritanical groups, are deftly exposed by Vidal. Both the clergy and followers elevate preferred subjects for appreciative, pointed ridicule in a welcoming social appraisal. Still, very few have the audacity to openly question or ridicule the god itself. In Vidal's "Kalki," the meticulous teachings of Hinduism and Christianity are explored. Vidal jointly highlights the deity assigned to Christ and Kalki while mocking the fervent followers of both faiths with a fresh portrayal of gods represented inside the protagonists of his literature. In doing so, Vidal exposes the beliefs, hypocrisies, and potentially harmful influences employed by respectable establishments that rely on the loyalty of ordinary citizens. The observation made by Merle Rubin in their piece "A Wrinkle as long as,"

Vidal's best novels are, in the best sense intellectual. They display intelligence, they engage with ideas and they aim both to mock and to enlighten in the anti-religious tradition of the Enlightenment and Voltaire. Vidal's critique of Christianity in Julian, of messianic religion in general in Messiah and Kalki, is not only provocative but substantive³.

Religion has had a significant role in influencing the ideas, associations, and characters of both India and America. In the same way that the Pilgrim Fathers fled persecution in order to find refuge in the New World, they continue to imagine stories that are associated with the premise Bureaucracy saw God's remarkable thrift and management. They saw themselves as the chosen community and saw America as the Promised Land. Over time, the nation with its own government and attractive autonomous administration changed with the ethical environment, giving rise to a multitude of diverse views. Nonetheless, the fundamental tenets of Christianity were required. America once again viewed itself as a country "under God," with mythology guiding diplomatic, political, and even economic decisions—a fundamental aspect of history itself.

"Kalki" explores the story of Teddy Ottinger, a producer and pilot who finds a book titled "Beyond Motherhood," written by Kalki, a manager of a committed conflict in Kathmandu. Through drug dealing, this conflict secretly amasses wealth, which is then dispersed via lotteries with sitting figures as the subject. On April 3, Kalki continues to be welcomed as a god and declares himself to be the final manifestation of Vishnu. He also announces a plan to bring about total goodness. His goal is to erase the memory of evil and solidify the habit in preparation for the handing out of playing cards and the dawn of a new, golden age. Ottinger is aware of indications that Kalki plans to trigger a catastrophic event that will wipe out all life on Earth and leave behind a barren wasteland.

In contrast to Ottinger's ominous and bleak description, however, the anticipated final chances turn out differently—even if they do occur—and ultimately prove to be more advantageous than the capitulation of kindness to destruction. In Hindu mythology, Kalki, also known as Kalkin, is foretold to be the tenth manifestation of Vishnu. He was regarded as a Brahmana as the Kali Yuga came to a close, assigned a task of defeating evil and upholding morality. Nonetheless, Kelly, a Catholic boy born in America, takes on Kalki's behaviour in Vidal's portrayal. According to Hilary Mantel's well-known article, "How Pleasant To Be Enraged,"

Vidal demonstrates a cold-blooded self-awareness, acknowledging his own incapacity to save democracy. His empathy for sexual relationships has led him to pursue romantic relationships with individuals such as Myra and Julian, but they finally give up on changing the experience to suit their desires in an attempt to challenge the dominance of Christianity and social status. On the other hand, he shows less tolerance for characters who manage to realise their dreams, such as Kelly in "Kalki" or the Buddha in "Creation." He believes that lack is not just the privilege of the aristocracy but also highly widespread among the world's positive people, such as Reagan or Christ².

Vidal skillfully blends genuine and fantastical components into his work using a postmodernist style that is often appreciated. Folklore and brochures have always been inseparable as many countries' main literary works are inherently mythological. For example, Greek and Indian literatures were similar because they were perverted

to fit their own myths. Prominent scholars drew extensively on these legends, interacting with the ruling class in a symbolic and classic manner. In "The Vidalian Manner," Robert F. Kiernan notes in his welcome article that,

Even if "Kalki" (1978) is considered a less successful novel than "Two Sisters" or even "The Judgement of Paris," Vidal's signature combination of elements is still evident in the book. Teddy Ottinger, a forthright bi pilot and feminist, provides a unique perspective on the story of this momentous flight. Teddy has had infertility and struggles to support her ex-partner financially. She has gained notoriety due to her best-selling novel, "Beyond Motherhood." Teddy grudgingly agrees to travel to India in order to meet James J. Kelly, a Vietnam veteran who has chosen the role of "Kalki" and believes that he is the final embodiment of the Hindu god Vishnu, under pressure from her ability to finish her business obligations¹.

Vidal relies on a richly storied basis to portray Kalki. Former American military combatant James J. Kelly learns a devastating truth: the US and the USSR were on the approach of testing an atomic weapon known as the Model B. This arm possesses the capability to wipe out every living thing on Earth, rendering the planet unsuitable for habitation for a certain day or period of time.

According to Hindu legend, Kalki, also known as Kalkin, is revered as the tenth manifestation of Vishnu. He is destined to emerge as a Brahmana at the end of the Kali Yuga, tasked with defeating the wicked and establishing morality. Vidal deviates from the norm, though, by modelling himself after Kelly, a non-Aryan person who is naturally Catholic and identified as a "Mleecha," as Kalki. Vidal undermines Kalki's story with this strange portrayal. There is a hilarious resemblance buried in the sardonic rhetoric that culminates the narrative's contradictions. By enriching each work to the point of excessive attraction, Vidal takes use of the inherited paradoxes within the concept of personification—to a certain extent, God/brother and soul/humankind. By doing thus, he undermines the fundamental basis of the abstract hostility at which the concept.

Teddy Ottinger notes the mandali, which is positioned inside the ashram in a state of focused attention. "The 1970s were the ideal decade to create a church because they were like robots, ready to be turned on. Allow God-some God, anyway-to fill in the spaces above things if you have an instinctive understanding that you do not, in fact, persist and that there is expressionless, reason."⁴

The educational landscape of the 1970s, as Ottinger incisively outlines, offered fertile ground for the creation of cults and their gods. Kalki appears as the deity stated earlier. While the established gods convey themes of unending protection and hope, Kalki's concept of non-hope finds resonance and belief, particularly among Hindus.

Americans who disobey Hindu teachings may undoubtedly ridicule the innocence surrounding Kalki's forecast in its entirety. But, Vidal asks, how can one characterise the widespread belief among Christians When it comes to teaching about the New Heaven and New Earth, the Second Coming of Christ, the Rapture, and the Millennium Kingdom to some extent if the Kalki story performs unrealistic and ridiculous expectations taken critically in the grown experience? Vidal brings this closeness to a head with three examples of parallelism between Kalki and Christ: the knowledge of the desert, the concept of matter, and the trilogy.

Vidal's critique of the dubious methods seen in many religious institutions is aptly shown by Kalki's lucrative engagement in heroin trafficking. It is not unfounded to draw a stark difference between the two points of view of Reverend Sun Myung Moon and Kalki. It's interesting that Vidal calls Moon's comments "apocalyptic," given that Moon was really imprisoned in 1982 for evading gains taxes. Vidal's fascination with the Moon serves to extend his offhand comment. Moon's guarded manual, "The Divine Principle," imagines a golden period and a flawless past, a realm governed by a king, where marriages between ideal members of the society will take place. Nonetheless, Moon brought these ideas to Earth via customs like unrestricted sexuality in communes and distorted apparitions of the divine following everyday activities. The proximity of celestial appearances to plausible events is what connects Moon's reverence for the Kalki figure.

With a delightful portrayal of Christian Science founder Mary Baker Eddy, Vidal further parodies the synthesis of science and mythology. He sees a great deal of risk associated with this combination. Kalki's function serves as an embodiment of the instabilities inherent in such a combination. Conscientiousness and regulated knowledge are much appreciated when they combine to create a deadly medication that is worthy of "ruining all humankind." Geraldine provides further context for understanding this risky arrangement. Ottinger is drawn to Kalki because of her unwavering faith in her divinity and her scientific prowess. Regarding Geraldine, it's undeniable: "... scrupulous conviction combined accompanying a clean ardour for the erudition of genetics created it attainable for her to help cause success the end of the humankind that had happened regarded inadequate." Vidal's Concern over the previously described combination is still relevant now, just as it was when the story was written⁵.

Declaring the impending apocalypse of civilization and assuming the mantle of Kalki, James J. Kelly resorts to a convoluted theological ruse in order to preserve goodness. All people on the asteroid are scheduled for elimination under the welcome clandestine plan, with the exception of him and his welcome flatmate Lakshmi. In the aftermath of this devastating event, they would supposedly inherit the earth as the only surviving human pair.

Kalki and Lakshmi set out on a quest to repopulate the planet from their isolated refuge. They brought

three boys and six girls into the world throughout a twelve-year period. Now that their children have grown, Kalki and Lakshmi are about to tie the knot, marking the beginning of humanity's slow comeback like a new Adam and Eve.

But Kalki's ambitious plan is about to run into a serious problem. Their plan for repopulation is thwarted when Lakshmi fails to conceive with Kalki despite their best attempts. Their aspirations shattered, Kalki's plan perilously close to collapse. Desperate to save their scheme, Kalki invites three more people, known as Flawless Masters, to come live with them in their new world. Teddy Ottinger, Geraldine O'Connor, and Dr. are a few of them. Lowell Giles.

But Kalki's well-built façade starts to break as tensions rise and secrets are revealed. It comes to light that Dr. Lowell betrays Kalki's confidence by acting with hidden agendas. When Kalki has to face Dr. Lowell's betrayal in a time of reckoning, it results in a terrible and violent conclusion as Kalki takes matters into his own hands. In Vidal's portrayal of Kalki, he adheres closely to the fiction's conventional basis. With the help of James J. Kelly, Kalki gathers information about Earth, boldly claiming his own place and settling at an ashram in Nepal. From this foundation, he disseminates a positive interpretation of the impending collapse of civilization, inspiring others to rely on him, set themselves free, and take action before the inevitable.

Kalki remains devoted in a welcoming role despite widespread disdain and incredulity. Subsequently, on a singularly momentous morning, he performs the waltz of forgetfulness, leading to a five billion community fall. Just five of the disaster's welcoming, dependable followers -perfect masters-are pardoned. They take command of the remnants of the realm with this small crew, pausing to start a new generation and usher in the Golden Age by raising a new species of people.

In a brilliant display of creativity, Vidal crafts Kalki as a notion of a mythological god while introducing elements of contradiction that cast doubt on the veracity of this supernatural figure, as was previously noted. But the disrespect doesn't stop there. The deconstruction of humanity and the bureaucratic regulations of a bygone era that accompanied a novel creation are the welcoming goals that Kalki's approach to achieving leads to the crest of scorn directed at the newest style and its supporters.

Usually, Kalki erodes his own assertions of divinity. Despite admirable attempts to refine his behaviour and present a religious persona, admirable lusts and acts reveal another aspect of admirable resemblance. "Since Vishnu is entirety, entirety are Vishnu" is Kalki's statement, which embraces several surfaces rather than being limited to a single correspondence. Even when Kalki takes on Vaikuntha's name and accuses him of being Vishnu, something about his honesty remains doubtful.

The human side of Kalki battles with the supernatural in this welcome example of her internal conflict: "Shiva whispers crush man." Brahma whispers, begin a new age; Vishnu whispers, sustain. Do you have any hops? Vidal uses the story of Kalki to his advantage, highlighting the fundamental distinctions between personification and abstraction.

The fable's elements are all characterised as conventional, ambiguous, and debased, highlighting Kalki's character's complexity and internal problems. In "Kalki," Vidal uses humour to make fun of the prevalent religious views in the US. He reveals the deceitful aspects of many faiths and common members of sects that result from bureaucracy. Vidal breaks some naive commitment to seductive dogma by climaxing the flaws and faults inside the organised religion via a welcome representation. Vidal encourages readers to rethink and reevaluate their beliefs by focusing on the darker sides of virtuous wholes, which makes piety more critically vital and discerning.

Conclusion:

"Kalki" is a guide that shows how a group operating under false pretences can be even with power, infiltrate political structures, and eventually degenerate into dictatorships or, in the case of an insane ruler, plan the annihilation of all humankind. Vidal uses the domain of mythology as a vehicle for mockery of the dominant American religious ideologies. He reveals the dishonesty of religions through a welcoming narrative, with special attention paid to Christianity and Hinduism. He also discusses the rise in many conscientious organisations that result from bureaucracy. Vidal challenges elocutionists to consider the sincerity of scrupulous doctrine and the sources of inspiration behind scrupulous actions by exposing the hypocrisy and baseness inside scrupulous organisations.

Vidal's critical analysis of the virtuous doctrines of Christianity and Hinduism, his appalling discrediting of the gods that validate Christ and Kalki, and his elevation of characters such as Julian underscore the possibility of human deception within virtuous belief systems. By sharing these stories, Vidal encourages readers to critically examine and reevaluate pious convictions and to develop a sophisticated understanding free from slavish commitment. This methodology fosters a positive perspective by promoting intellectual progress and encouraging people to question the sincerity of religious beliefs rather than accepting them unquestioningly.

In "Kalki," Gore Vidal skilfully weaves elements of Hindu mythology and Indian culture into his narrative, creating a rich tapestry that blends Eastern spirituality with Western storytelling. The novel revolves around the enigmatic character of Kalki, who is believed to be the final avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu, tasked

with bringing about the end of the world and the beginning of a new cycle of existence.

Throughout the novel, Vidal draws upon various themes and motifs from Hindu mythology, such as the concept of karma, reincarnation, and the eternal struggle between good and evil. He explores the complexities of human nature and the moral ambiguities inherent in the quest for enlightenment. By intertwining these mythic elements with the modern-day setting of America, Vidal invites readers to reflect on timeless philosophical questions about the nature of existence and the search for meaning in a rapidly changing world.

Moreover, Vidal's incorporation of Indian culture extends beyond mere mythological references. He provides vivid descriptions of Indian landscapes, customs, and traditions, offering readers a glimpse into the vibrant tapestry of Indian society. Through his characters' encounters with Indian spirituality and philosophy, Vidal challenges Western assumptions and invites readers to reconsider their perspectives on religion, identity, and the human condition.

Overall, "Kalki" stands as a testament to Gore Vidal's ability to seamlessly blend diverse cultural influences into his work, creating a thought-provoking narrative that transcends geographical and temporal boundaries. Through his exploration of Hindu mythology and Indian culture, Vidal not only enriches the literary landscape but also fosters a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of global cultures.

Gore Vidal's portrayal of Indian culture in a Western literary context holds significant importance on several levels. Firstly, it contributes to the diversification and enrichment of Western literature by introducing readers to unfamiliar cultural perspectives and traditions. By incorporating elements of Indian culture, Vidal expands the scope of literary discourse, challenging readers to engage with ideas and themes that may lie outside their usual frame of reference.

Furthermore, Vidal's portrayal of Indian culture fosters cross-cultural dialogue and understanding. In a world marked by globalization and interconnectedness, exposure to diverse cultural narratives is essential for promoting empathy and appreciation for the experiences of others. Through his novel "Kalki," Vidal bridges the gap between East and West, inviting readers to explore the complexities of Indian society and spirituality from a Western perspective.

Moreover, Vidal's portrayal of Indian culture prompts critical reflection on the dynamics of cultural appropriation and representation in literature. By respectfully engaging with Hindu mythology and Indian traditions, Vidal demonstrates a commitment to authenticity and cultural sensitivity. His portrayal of Indian characters as fully realized individuals with agency and depth challenges stereotypes and clichés, paving the way for more nuanced and inclusive representations of non-Western cultures in literature.

Overall, Vidal's portrayal of Indian culture in "Kalki" enriches Western literature by broadening its cultural horizons, fostering cross-cultural understanding, and prompting critical reflection on issues of representation and authenticity. As global literary boundaries continue to blur, Vidal's work serves as a testament to the transformative power of cultural exchange and dialogue in shaping the literary landscape of the 21st century.

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