

Kalki 2898 AD in Kaliyug: An Ecocritical Perspective

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'Kalki 2898 AD' is a Telugu-language epic science-fiction action film from India that debuted in 2024. With direction by Nag Ashwin, this film features a remarkable ensemble cast, including Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, Prabhas, Deepika Padukone and Disha Patani. The narrative draws deeply from Hindu scriptures; because of this, it establishes a foundation for an innovative cinematic saga. The film immerses audiences in a post-apocalyptic world set in 2898 AD. However, amid this dystopian environment, a brave group embarks on a perilous mission to protect the unborn child of laboratory subject SUM-80—a child destined to become Kalki, a symbol of hope and renewal during humanity's bleakest moments. Drawing upon the Mahabharata, the film emerges as a significant platform for ecocritical examination, shedding light on humanity's complicated relationship with nature and the repercussions of neglecting ecological integrity. By exploring themes like technological overreach and environmental degradation this review probes how the film confronts pressing environmental and ethical issues. Although the narrative is fundamentally fictional, its implications resonate deeply because they reflect real-world challenges in modern society.

Technological Overreach and Environmental Degradation

The film's setting portrays a world ravaged by climate change, resource depletion and ecological collapse. Hyper-urbanized environments—marked by towering megastructures and mechanized societies—starkly contrast with the barren wastelands that lie beyond. These desolate areas (dry, polluted and lifeless) serve as a grim reminder of the costs humanity has incurred due to its technological overreach. This dystopian backdrop resonates strongly with the Mahabharata's

theme of '*adharma*' (unrighteousness), illustrating how unchecked greed and ambition can inevitably lead to societal downfall. However, it prompts viewers to reflect on their own choices; because the implications of such overreach are evident. Although the allure of progress is compelling, the consequences are dire and this serves as a cautionary tale for future generations.

A notably striking scene accentuates this critique (which holds considerable significance): Roxie, a character who is a partner of Bhairava, introduces him to the 'Complex'—a hyper-urbanized edifice intended for the elite. She elucidates how energy is produced for the Complex by extracting resources from the Earth, which consequently renders the surrounding environment barren and devoid of life. Outside this mega-structure, individuals inhabit a perpetual state of despair, encircled by dust, pollution and an arid landscape. The once-sacred River Ganga has withered away; however, rainfall has been absent for decades. These visual cues and narrative elements underscore humanity's exploitation of nature (this is evident) and the ensuing environmental collapse, although such realities are often ignored by those in power.

From an ecocritical standpoint, 'Kalki 2898 AD' critiques (the hubris of humanity) in its attempts to dominate the natural world. In the film, however, nature's wrath is vividly illustrated through climatic catastrophes and environmental degradation, reinforcing the notion that ecological imbalance is a direct response to humanity's transgressions. Although this representation is stark, it serves as a poignant reminder of the potential ramifications of our choices, because it urges a reconsideration of our relationship with the environment.

The Figure of Kalki: A Symbol of Renewal

The character of Kalki embodies hope and renewal; it resonates with the Mahabharata's prophecy regarding Vishnu's tenth avatar. Kalki's quest for restoring

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balance aligns with ecocritical principles, underscoring sustainability and the urgent need to re-establish harmony between humanity and the natural world. In Hindu mythology, Kalki's arrival signifies the conclusion of Kali Yuga—an era marked by moral decline and environmental neglect. 'Kalki 2898 AD' adapts this prophecy to a futuristic context, depicting the advent of Kalki as a harbinger of new age in their bleak age. By advocating for environmental ethics and sustainable living, this movie serves as a rallying figure for the restoration of 'dharma' (righteousness).

SUM-80 later called as Sumati (Deepika Padukone) in the movie, her unborn child is a hope for the inhabitants of barren land to heal the Earth (and) rekindle humanity's connection to nature. The long-dormant tree, which symbolizes despair and desolation, begins to display signs of life with the sudden emergence of a small, tender leaf when Sumati enters the region known as Shambhala in the film. Her arrival infused the arid landscape with a renewed sense of vitality and hope, acting as a harbinger of positive transformation. This shift is poignantly highlighted by the use of objective correlative (a literary device), as the narrative reflects emotional and thematic undercurrents through external symbols. The onset of rain (which was desperately needed), followed by the emergence of fresh leaves from the previously lifeless branches, signifies the return of fertility and harmony to the world.

Kalki and Environmental Ethics

In the realm of Hindu cosmology, Kalki is prophesied to emerge after Kali Yuga (the age of darkness) to obliterate 'adharma' and reinstate 'dharma'. His coming heralds a transition to Satya Yuga, an epoch distinguished by virtue and cosmic equilibrium. The term Kalki, stemming from 'Kal' (which signifies time), emphasizes his function as a catalyst for change, aimed at concluding the bleak era of Kali Yuga. 'Kalki 2898 AD' adeptly intertwines these mythological tales with its narrative, addressing contemporary ecological crises. For instance, the portrayal of barren landscapes and tainted waters reflects the Mahabharata's depiction of the Kurukshetra War, where human conflict leads to extensive environmental ruin.

The film delves deeper into the idea of intergenerational responsibility—a crucial principle of environmental ethics. Just as characters in the Mahabharata wrestle with the repercussions of their ancestors' decisions, 'Kalki 2898 AD' accentuates the duty of present generations to confront the ecological damage inflicted by those who came before them. This concept aligns, furthermore, with the principle of 'rita' (cosmic order), which highlights the interdependence of all life forms and the imperative of maintaining equilibrium. However, one

might argue that the weight of this responsibility can be overwhelming; it raises questions about agency and accountability. Nevertheless, it is precisely because of this interconnectedness that individuals must actively engage with these pressing matters.

The film's visual narrative intricately interweaves ecological symbolism, effectively reinforcing its ecocritical themes. The stark contrast (between the artificial, metallic urban landscapes and the dwindling remnants of nature) underscores humanity's disconnection from its natural origins. A recurring motif emerges: the image of the tree—a powerful symbol of life and continuity in Indian mythology. The withered and dying trees depicted in the film serve as poignant reminders of the loss of ecological balance; this evokes a sense of mourning for what has been lost and a call to action to reclaim a sustainable future. 'Kalki 2898 AD' functions as both a cautionary tale and a beacon of hope. Its dystopian depiction serves to alert audiences to the severe repercussions of environmental negligence. By weaving together mythology and futuristic narratives, the film underscores that solutions to ecological crises reside within the domain of sustainable practices and the cultivation of a profound connection with nature. This ecocritical lens urges viewers to contemplate their interactions with the environment.

Conclusion

The interplay between film and literature is undeniably symbiotic, as each medium enriches the other in profound ways. 'Kalki 2898 AD' serves as an exemplary case of this connection: it intricately weaves literary mythology into a cinematic narrative, thereby demonstrating how stories can transcend their formats to delve into the complexities of the human experience. Both mediums, in their distinctive manners, consistently inspire, challenge and provoke thought. However, this relationship reminds us of the enduring power of storytelling, which resonates deeply because it captures the essence of what it means to be human. Although they may appear different, the core of storytelling remains unchanged. The movie also adeptly weaves together the timeless motifs of the Mahabharata (a pivotal literary piece) and a vision of the future, thereby presenting a profound critique of humanity's ecological challenges. However, while the film examines the pitfalls of technological excess, it also advocates for restoration of environmental balance; this tension creates a thought-provoking dialogue about the significance of sustainable practices. Through its ecocritical perspective, 'Kalki 2898 AD' not only entertains (which it undoubtedly does) but also enlightens, compelling viewers to acknowledge their responsibility to safeguard the planet for generations to come.