

AI and the Future of Gender Fluidity in Social Transformation: An Analysis of *Kalki 2898 AD*

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Abstract

Films are praised as literary narratives capable of reflecting society, and this paper examines the increasing trend in cinema of exploring gender fluidity in the age of artificial intelligence (AI), focusing on the recent successful film *Kalki 2898 AD* (2024), directed by Nag Ashwin. The integration between artificial intelligence (AI) and gender identity presented with a mythological background is an exceptionally captivating area of investigation especially against the background of impending social transformation. The paper uses Donna Haraway's Cyborg Theory from "A Cyborg Manifesto" to show how solidly conventional binary notions about identification are disrupted by gender fluidity among different characters, this signifies that there is a possibility for crises in selfhood and post-gender identity. Ahead in the paper, Cary Wolfe's theories on posthumanism help to understand better how *Kalki* articulates the breakdown of human-machine divides signifying new forms of being beyond traditional humanist paradigms. This paper also examines the views of Marxist feminists regarding labour and connects it with the portrayal of gender commodification in AI-oriented society presented in the film. In this sense, gender elasticity can be interpreted as a kind of resistance against emerging capitalist structures that are planning to define and dominate human identities. Being a speculative fiction, *Kalki 2898 AD* is a crucial work for discussing how AI intersects with gender identity and social transition in a dystopian future. The paper thus comments on unchecked technological advancement's possible effects on gender roles, identity, and society at large.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Gender Fluidity, Identity Crisis, Cyborg Theory, Posthumanism, Gender Commodification, Marxist Feminism, Dystopian Future.

Introduction

Kalki 2898 AD, the movie produced by Nag Ashwin in the year 2024, combines elements of Indian mythology with an etch of futuristic science fiction. This unique narrative addresses complex socio-political topics like gender fluidity and the role of Artificial Intelligence in shaping identity. The story takes place in a dystopian world where remnants of old mythology mesh rather smoothly with high technology yielding a fertile avenue within which traditional positions on gender and identity are disrupted by technical progress. In *Kalki 2898 AD*, the concerns about identity shifts and social evolution intensified with the inclusion of mythological elements which help in the discourse of divinity-artificiality duality in relationships as a way to reflect on these transformations.

Recently, movie genres showing societal shifts under technological influence gained more popularity. For instance, *Ex Machina* (2014) and *Her* (2013) address the ethical consequences regarding AI; on the other hand, *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015) and *The Matrix* (1999) explore how technology reshapes identity and power. With this premise, these stories are just an expression that fear associated with unregulated technological development is increasingly becoming real about what it might do, not only to society but also to man's own being. In *Kalki 2898 AD*, the concerns are further intensified through the infusion of mythological elements, where myths facilitate the discourse on the nexus of divinity and artificialness as a means of reflecting on the nature of identity changes and the scenario of societal evolution.

This paper will examine how the film *Kalki 2898 AD* subverts traditional binary identities by representing gender fluidity and AI-powered social control. The study will use cyborg theory, posthumanism and Marxist feminism to analyse the movie and demonstrate its criticism of capitalist domination over bodies and labour. *Kalki 2898 AD*'s story acts as a conjectural reflection on tomorrow's essence of being within which lines separating humankind, mechanisms and legends are getting fainter, corresponding to larger apprehensions in society concerning technology's function in civilizational changes.

Theoretical framework

Kalki 2898 AD that delves into identity, technology, and social changes can be comprehended through various dimensions. The three important theories are Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*, Cary Wolfe's posthumanism and Marxist feminist critique on labour and commodification which broadens the scope for exploring gender, human-machine relationships and capitalist structures as portrayed in the film.

Donna Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto

The boundaries separating human beings, machines, and gender are redefined in a foundational manner by Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985). For Haraway, the cyborg depicts the breakdown of the binary differences that have traditionally organized human thinking; especially those dealing with the male/female contradiction and that between man and machine as well as nature and culture. "Cyborgs challenge the idea of a fixed, essential identity, and open up new possibilities for hybridity and multiplicity," Haraway argues (150). Hence, from a gender perspective, the cyborg destabilizes these rigid identity categories facilitating novel fluid modes of selfhood that transcend conventional social constructs. Haraway's idea of a cyborg also critiques essentialist notions about gender. The cyborg thus transmutes into a metaphor for resisting patriarchal authority and taking on fragmented identities that sit uncomfortably in binary categories when we turn away from one-disposed biology as the only basis upon which identity could possibly be figuratively constructed (Sadie 96). Embracing these hybridized existence types enable them to reject power dynamics associated with traditional identities.

Cary Wolfe's Posthumanism

By probing into the concept of the human subject's centrality in ethics and social thought, Cary Wolfe's posthumanism extends Haraway's ideas. Wolfe's *What Is Posthumanism?* (2010) illustrates posthumanism as rejecting the anthropocentric perspective on human exceptionalism, but, rather, stressing on interconnections among humans, non-human beings and technologies. "The human subject is no longer the autonomous being of self-determination but rather is intermeshed within technological and non-human systems," according to Wolfe (Wolfe 48). Posthumanism challenges traditional humanist frameworks that focus on the human as the centre of ethical considerations

by advocating for a rethinking of how we construct human identity in relation to technological devices. In posthumanity, humans and machines are becoming less distinguishable from one another. Consequently, individual identities no longer revolve around an autonomous and separate person. Wolfe's theory is especially relevant in investigating the ways through which sophisticated technologies (AI mainly) transform social structures and personal identities.

Marxist Feminist Critiques of Capitalism and Gender Commodification

Marxist feminism presents an integral framework for examining the interrelationships between capitalism, gender, and labour. In this light, Marxist feminist critiques focus on the devaluation of women's bodies as commodities as well as reproductive labour; a case in point is Silvia Federici's work. She argues in her book *Caliban and the Witch* (2004) that capitalism uses women's reproductive systems systematically to exploit them, hence making their work serve patriarchal and capitalist interests. This is despite the fact that reproductive labour which is crucial for workforce preservation is frequently marginalized and transformed into a commodity within a capitalist setting. Plant's cyberfeminism approach further explores how technology is implicated in the commodification of gendered labour. Although, in the hands of capitalism, it may control and regulate women's bodies, plant contends that it also provides a means for resistance and subversion. Thus, Plant asserts that "gender elasticity can be interpreted as a form of resistance against emerging capitalist structures" (Plant 211), suggesting that gender fluidity is a reaction against technological capitalism's commodification of identities and labour.

Marxist feminists critique the capitalist system's tendency to treat women's bodies as commodities, particularly in terms of reproductive labour. This perspective helps us see how technologically advanced forms, including artificial intelligence, may be adapted to exploit and regulate the feminine labour force; thereby transforming the capacity for reproduction into a profitable resource. In resisting these systems of control, reproduction and sex-typed work become targets where one resists through gender pluralism and hierarchy subversion, indicating that such modalities are within reach.

Disrupting Gender Binaries: Fluidity Of Identity

Kalki 2898 AD illustrates characters who go beyond traditional roles assigned to gender and adopt identities that are devoid of gender stereotypes. Initially, Sumathi is portrayed as the mother of Kalki, through whom biological reproduction, a primary site for patriarchy, is understood. However, over the course of the narrative, her identity becomes increasingly intricate and fluid, emerging from the fixed categories of gender dictated by both AI (Artificial Intelligence) and society. In this regard, Haraway's idea of a cyborg which represents someone that crosses frontiers can be seen in Sumathi's defiance against being confined to her motherhood function only.

Instead, as she confronts the capitalistic abuse of her flesh by Project K which is driven by AI technology then she becomes a symbol of the fight against the system, epitomizing strength and moving outside the stereotyped female characteristics.

There are other female characters that deserve special mention in this regard. Mariam, for instance, is depicted as the prominent leader of the rebel forces; her resolve to fight for a better tomorrow is unyielding. Moreover, she assumes a significant role in organizing the resistance against Yaskin's dictatorial regime which makes her an exception to conventional gender stereotypes. Her role as a commander of the insurrection is crucial because it breaks with the common film theme where women can only play supportive or nurturing roles. In contrast, Mariam represents a kind of leadership that is tactical, firm and very much self-sufficient thus corroborating Donna Haraway's claims.

An illustration of this defiance against gender norms is also provided by Roxie, a supporter of Bhairava (Prabhas). The power of her entering the scene is extreme since she is seen repelling men with harmful intentions, making a show of freedom and strength. In a society where ladies are generally depicted as weak, Roxie's ability to safeguard herself upsets the cliché that women need protection from men. Instead of being passive, Roxie takes charge of her circumstances indicating that she does not require any male protection but rather has the capacity to fight for herself and others. The significance of this change in the traditional gender hierarchy is that it empowers Roxie making her independent hence defying the male defenders' storyline.

The story also involves Kiara and Lilly, who help to show how women can resist oppressive forces. Kiara is especially important in this context because she fights against raiders and bounty hunters with advanced weaponry. In doing so, she proves that women are capable of fighting alongside men and even dying alongside them for a cause. Her actions make the rebellion seem to be the only thing that matters, which shows just how strong a warrior Kiara really is. Kiara's character disrupts the traditional association of combat and violence with masculinity, instead positioning her as a figure of active resistance, much like the cyborgs Haraway describes, who "reject essentialist notions of gender and instead embrace multiplicity and hybridity" (Haraway 153).

Lilly is the one who allows Sumathy to break free from Yaskin's laboratory, defending the fugitive with her acute sense of bravery and strategic abilities against the Raiders. In the end, she loses her life but acts in line with a larger principle of sisterhood and opposition to patriarchal domination. Not only does she exhibit courage by choosing to deal with the raiders through personal sacrifice but also does so in defiance of those limited forces opposed to her entitlement as a woman over reproductive rights and autonomy.

Kalki 2898 AD presents a speculative vision of post-gender identity, where characters' roles are shaped less by their biological sex and more by their relationships with AI and mythological powers. This aligns with Haraway's view that the cyborg, as a hybrid being, "does not aspire to organic wholeness" and instead represents "the potential for new forms of identification that transcend biological determinism" (151).

The Blurring of Human-Machine Boundaries

Kalki 2898 AD movie's blurring of boundaries between human and machine shows the posthumanist notion that human identity is fundamentally related to technology. For example, Bhairava is heavily reliant on an AI vehicle, Bujji which assists him during combat and aids his judgment making it almost like an addition of himself. This dependence indicates a more profound integration of human will and artificial mind resulting in how technological advancement is now part of living in this type of universe.

Surrounded by futuristic devices that demonstrate his strength and identity, Yaskin, the villain of the movie, symbolizes a man who has advanced beyond humanity. AI systems structure his residence, the Complex, while an ever-present synthetic parrot serves as a clever monitoring device. The film's ideal future where machines mediate in all aspects including social and political powers is fueled by Yaskin's association with technology to illustrate his lack of humanity through baleful reigns.

The bounty hunters use modernized means of transportation and armaments to identify and locate the rebels, making it difficult to tell apart when human capabilities end and when those of machines begin? Their reliance on sophisticated gadgets for survival shows how much technology has permeated into our lives changing who we are and what we do. In this way, *Kalki 2898 AD* depicts an era characterized by symbiosis between men and machines in which the ancient notions of identity and domination are hazy.

In post-apocalyptic scenarios portrayed in the film where characters such as Bhairava, Yaskin, and bounty hunters depend on AI along with other technical instruments for survival and domination; it implies the absence of importance on the divide between human beings or machines. Rather this reflects an interplay of post humanist ideas about identity that point out how technology shapes power dynamics by control mechanisms while simultaneously allowing for dissent.

The Commodification of Female Bodies

Project K in *Kalki 2898 AD* by Yaskin is a nightmarish depiction of how capitalism takes control of women's reproductive labor, female bodies are merely resources with which life-extending serums are made. Yaskin's world is a transhumanist nightmare where fertility and reproduction are no longer organic functions, but rather processes subjected to the operations of machines and overseen by artificial intelligence, which is something that is familiar to the critique of Silvia Federici on women's reproductive labor in capitalism. Devoid of respect for the women's individuality within this regime, they instead are viewed as 'vessels' whose main purpose is to support Yaskin's Empire by reproduction. Women are thus impregnated without their consent, and through technology, are made to bear children solely for the purpose of extracting a serum that enhances Yaskin's lifespan.

Sumathi, who is first introduced as an assistant in the Complex, later ends up being pregnant which she had concealed earlier demonstrates both the marginalization and the potentiality of women under this regime. Project K casts the vision of result-oriented efficiency and excessive profit maximization where unproductive women (i.e. those who get pregnant and do not deliver within 120 days) are simply eliminated. Due to Yaskin's system, women are not respected as conscious human beings but rather treated as worthies who can be employed and thrown away at any time. In this regard, it bears similarity to the feminist analysis offered by Federici concerning the mechanisation and commercialisation of reproductive labour processes within capitalism in order to ensure regulation of bodies for the purpose of profits.

The film *Kalki 2898 AD* can be interpreted as a cautionary narrative on the capitalist pinching of women's reproductive labour, where Project K allegorically finds its relevance, as per the observations of Federici, who argues that capitalism restrains and commercializes reproduction. The film's focus on the tragedy of such a process on the notion of self-individual and self-will, is complemented by offering a possibility of struggle in the form of characters such as Sumathi who are against the system and fighting for their dignity.

Implications for Future Societies

The plot of *Kalki 2898 AD* predicts a wider temporal and spatial change in which the distinctions of human and machine, gender and sex, and taxonomies are blurred and contested. The film depicts a scenario unlike that of established structures, focusing on a society where people undergo modifications with help of technology. The narrative of commodified existence in the film corresponds with the coming fear of the loss of one's subjectivity to a machine-run society filled with artificial intelligence. The narrative of the film advances toward the realization of a society free from gender as well as humanity concerns, and to the extent, technology is concerned, allows other forms and mechanisms of evolution and defiance. As the control of technology over the physicality and the very essence of a person tightens, the defence of such imposed order through fluid and mixed identities comes to the fore in the plot of *Kalki 2898 AD*. Technological fears, or dissatisfaction with them, their way in capitalism, and uncertainty about the complete abandonment of the aristocratic ideas of humanity are expressed in the film.

Conclusion

Kalki 2898 AD can be understood as a deeper criticism of gender fluidity, the control of artificial intelligence, and the organization of society, using cyborg theory, posthumanism, and Marxist feminism as analytical frameworks. It can be seen as a prediction of the future social transformation that can happen in our society. By challenging the very idea of a binary system of gender and identity expectations. The narrative of Project K, technological domination in Yaskin's film, orients towards the exploitation of bodies and their reproductive capabilities under capitalist patriarchy, as presented in Haraway's essay where a cyborg is a warrior. Furthermore, Cary Wolfe's brand of posthumanism presents a useful understanding of the film's construction of human-machine boundaries as permeable; this is because technology takes control of its development and restructures identity and social relations within a posthuman society. Future research will situate these issues within the broad scope of speculative fiction's themes, particularly examining the thematic focus on understanding women in cyborg images in movies and how those images challenge and suggest new social orders. In this context, *Kalki 2898 AD* contributes greatly to the contemporary discussions regarding the future of humankind and its social systems as mediated by technology.

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