Kalkī(n), the future *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, is the last and the tenth in the traditional list of *avatāras*. The meaning of name Kalkī(n) has been much speculated upon as it is an 'etymological riddle'. It appears in two forms, Kalkī and Kalkin and both of these are said to derive from Kalka meaning 'dirt, sin', which it is hard to believe. In the Viṣṇava ideology it is, however, understood to mean one who "has sin" i.e. "has come to put an end to sin, a Kalka-Vināśana. Though this interpretation suits the position Kalkī occupies, it does not explain satisfactorily the word formation. After making some important observations regarding the probable connections of the word with the Dravidian terms Kalai and Kala meaning brightness, splendour, beauty, which are the chief characteristics attributed to the *avatāra* in Purāṇic stories, F. O. Schrader advances two alternative hypotheses regarding the origin of the term. One is the word *Karaka* in Sanskrit meaning white and white horse, which is as old as the *Atharva Veda*. Through a forced etymology the term *Karaka* becoming *Kakka* or *Kakki* in Prākrit later turned into Kalki or Kalkin, the Prākrit name of the *avatāra* pushing into oblivion at some stage the

2. Bhāratavācita Purāṇa, III.
3. IV, 38, 6-7.
Sanskpt name leading to a wrong interpretation. The name Kalkin is used by the Jains for a category of wicked kings of the Kali age ('Kali araśar' is used in the Valāvikiṇḍi grant of the early Šāṇṭiyas in the 8th century A.D.). The alternative hypothesis is that the incapability of explaining the earlier name Kalki, whether of Aryan or Dravidian origin has caused the formation of its etymologically transparent double.4

To Jean Przyluski, however, neither hypothesis of Schrader is acceptable. According to him, a non-Aryan root Kāl meaning dark, attested in Dravidian, has been borrowed by Indo-Aryan under different forms: Kāl, Kal, Kāl, and Kāl. He says that Kali, the name of the Yuga, maybe be connected with Kāl, 'dark, black' and also with Kāl understood as time, the destroyer and God of death. Further, there is a dualistic system in India, in which two series of notions oppose each others: white and black; pure and impure, auspicious and inauspicious, bright fortnight and dark fortnight, propitious God and terrible God especially the God of death. The concepts of the terrible God taking the shape of a black serpent and the propitious God assuming the form of a white horse conform to the principles of Indian dualism, a moral dualism, founded upon the oppositions mentioned above. Przyluski, therefore, explains the name by means of the non-Aryan root Kāl black, and agrees with Abegg that the records which picture Kalki as a destructive God with an animal shape come from South of

India, where the 'Dravidian' element is predominant.

It is significant that the name Kâpty is used in the hymns of Tirumangai Śiṅhâr, who describes the God as riding on a horse, having come to save the world.

... vâiyam kâkka
kâşympatiṁ kâtyai dara kântyâpâṇâ
kâsîyâlî sâl kâdânâlaiûttalâânâpântâ.

The tenth avatâra of Kâpty is also mentioned by Periyâlâr and Namâlâr, who like Tirumangai give the list of the traditional ten incarnations.

The Agni Purâna and other texts describe the occasion which would give rise to the avatâra of Viṣṇu as Kalki. It is said that when in the end of the Kaliyuga all sorts of inequities will spread over the whole of the earth, when Vedic practices will be given up when people will be cloaked by false religion, when the Mlecdas as kings will be killing their subjects, then Lord Viṣṇu will appear in this world as Kalkin, the son of Viṣṇuyaśas,

5. "From the Great Goddess to Kâla, IIC, Vol.14, 1938, pp.287-74;

It may be mentioned here that the name Kalkin(n) is found in Jaina literature and he is a nefarious being. Wicked kings named Kalkin and Upakalkin appear periodically during the periods of decline (âhâsana) - Ibid., p.271. With this may be compared the Jain ideas about Hayagriva, Infra, p.364.

6. Periyâ Tirumâli, II-5-3;
7. Tirumâli, IV-9-8; Periyâ Tirumâli, VIII-6-10.
8. ch.16, vv.5-11; Bhûjavatâ Purâna, III, 2.
9. 'Viṣṇuyaśas' means 'favour of Viṣṇu'.
great sage Yajñavalkya will be his priest. He will appear as an armed warrior mounted on a winged white horse bedecked with jewels and brandishing an invincible blazing sword of destruction. Again, the Vāraṇa-sadharma, good works and piety will be reestablished and Hari, after fulfilling his mission of restoration of Ahaṁ will ascend to heaven. The Kṛta yuga will commence once more. This concept of a future incarnation is no doubt inspired by the Bhagavat Upaniṣad wherein for the first time in the words of the God himself the idea of the Lord being born in various forms in this world for restoring virtue and destroying vice, is expressed. 10

Two varieties of the image of Kalkī are described by the Aṣṭi Purāṇa. One of them represents the God as two-armed, endowed with a bow and a quiver of arrows and the other shows the four armed deity riding on horseback and holding a sword, conch, wheel and arrow. 11 Both these varieties are spoken of by the Mahārāja Pāñcarātra, the two-armed, and four-armed figures of the God holding weapons in an almost identical order. 12 In the Viśnu-dharmottara, Kalkī is described as two-armed with a sword in his raised hand, riding on horseback in an angry mood. 13

11. Ch.49, 9: Dhammaśūpārvātaḥ kalkī prabhaśtha daśaka dhaka daśaka dhukṣaḥ / Ahaṁvāṣṭhaḥ kheśa ākṣaṇa sakra ṣaṁśāstabh !
12. J.N. Banerjee, JSA, XIV, p.34.
13. Khaṇḍadṛṣṭakarap kṛṣṇadhiṣṭhāṇaḥ mahābhājaḥ / Mahābhājadṛṣṭakarap kalkī dhvamyaḥ parākkīṭah !
One of the texts of the *Vaikhānasāgama* says that when the yuga draws to a close Viṣṇu will be born as Kalkī. With the sword and shield in his hands he will put an end to the Kaścheśa.¹⁴ There is another *Vaikhānasāgama* text which refers to two forms of Kalkī, one of which should be horse-faced and the other with the face of man. His four hands should carry sakra, jangha, khadga and khaptaka and he should be represented as fierce looking. His kartukahāra should be like an ordinary four-armed Viṣṇu image. It is doubtful if all the varieties mentioned above are illustrated in plastic or pictorial form. The two-armed image on horseback with a sword in the raised right hand and the left holding the reins of the prancing horse is known. Separate figures of this avatāra are, according to J.N. Banerjea, unknown.¹⁵ This is probably true only of the North, for in the South there are quite a few sculptural representations known, though they are of the late medieval period (Fig. 132).

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14. Ms. No. D. 5367, NGMIL:

> Xacanta samayā viṣṇuh kalkināma bhavisyanti /
> khadgesa khaptaka hastaseFH alocchātādi saṃhanīyatāt //
> bhinnājana nibbanam raktavāsānam saṃrakalavat
> antarānapālaka keśidieñhātāt munāttaṇāt //

15. Kalkināma madyamanām āsātālamitamāvākarana mukhamāyamārākaran Āturbhumiṣa sakraśaḥkhaḥsaranām khaḍgakhaṭakahāraṃ saṃmargamāṇīnāṃ


16. JI60A., XIV, p.34.
Fig. 96

-- Balarāma in the Govardhana panel -- Mahabalipuram
Pallava -- 7th c. A.D.

97

-- Kṛṣṇa Lifting Govardhana (Figure of Nappinnai
to his left) -- Mahābalipuram -- Pallava --
7th c. A.D.
Fig. 105  — Copikāvastrapaharapa — Tirukkurungudi —
Pāṇḍya — late 13th c. A.D.

106  — Copikāvastrapaharapa — Tanjavūr — Cōla —
     11th C.A.D.
Fig. 107 — Madanagopāla — Śrīvaikupṭham — Pāṇḍya —

late 13th C. A.D.

108 — Kṛṣṇa stealing butter — Madhurāntakam — Cōla

11th C. A.D.
Fig. 111 — Vēppaikkūta — Kāndiyūr — late Cōla

12th c. A.D.

112 — Vēppaikkūta — Šeṭhagarāmanallūr — Pāṇḍya

-13th c. A.D.
Fig. 118 — Vatapatrasāyi — Oṃḍiṣyajātaḥ — Cōla —

11th C. A.D.

119 — Vatapatrasāyi — bronze — Kīlaṅgūr — Cōla

11th c. A.D.
Fig.122 -- Rājagopala, Rukmini and Satyabhāma -- Cōla -- 11th C. A.D.

Fig.123 -- Rājagopala, Rukmini and Satyabhāma --
Vilanagar -- Cōla -- 11th C.A.D.
Fig 131  --  M.dan.gopāla - Alaagarkoyil - 16th C. A.D.

132  --  Kalki - Tadikkombu - 14th C. A.D.