
**A Study on the Magical and Mythical Presence of Siddhartha in O.V. Vijayan's
*The Saga of Dharmapuri***

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Abstract

This study examines the mythical and magical dimensions of the character Siddhartha in O.V. Vijayan's *The Saga of Dharmapuri*. Portrayed as a spiritual figure with supernatural abilities, Siddhartha serves as both a symbolic and narrative force within the dystopian realm of Dharmapuri—a fictional land that mirrors the socio-political turmoil of India during the Emergency era. Modeled after Gautama Buddha, Siddhartha is envisioned as a seeker of truth and an agent of enlightenment. His interactions with the people of Dharmapuri reflect the author's philosophical engagement with themes of ignorance, corruption, and karmic repetition. Through magical realism, Vijayan critiques authoritarianism and moral decay, with Siddhartha's mystical interventions offering moments of transcendence, albeit within a fundamentally flawed society. The character's redemptive mission not only drives the narrative but also underscores the futility of spiritual awakening in a world resistant to transformation.

Keywords: Siddhartha, Laavannya, karma, mendicant, wisdom

In O.V. Vijayan's literary oeuvre, *The Saga of Dharmapuri* stands out for its seamless integration of magical elements with mythological archetypes. Originally published in Malayalam as *Dharmapuraanam* (1977) and later translated into English (1985), the novel has been recognized as a seminal work of Indian magical realism. Vijayan masterfully employs this narrative mode to deliver a scathing political critique,

simultaneously crafting the text as a satirical commentary on India's postcolonial historical trajectory.

Siddhartha, the novel's central protagonist, serves as an avatar of enlightenment, deliberately modeled after Gautama Buddha. His presence anchors the narrative, which was conceived during India's Emergency period (1975-1977) - a historical context that significantly informs the novel's themes of authoritarianism and resistance. The delayed publication timeline itself reflects the political tensions of the era.

This study interrogates the mythological and magical dimensions of *The Saga of Dharmapuri*, positioning Vijayan's work as a cornerstone of Indian magical realism. The author deploys magical realism not merely as stylistic ornamentation but as a radical narrative strategy that defamiliarizes political reality. The novel's unflinching engagement with sexually explicit and scatological imagery constitutes a deliberate transgression of literary norms, serving to underscore the grotesquerie of power.

Vijayan constructs the fictional nation of Dharmapuri as an allegorical representation of India, governed by the absurdist tyranny of President Pippalaada - a name spontaneously generated by a worm emerging from his stomach. This bizarre christening epitomizes the novel's surreal critique of authoritarianism. The president's exclusive invitations to powerful nations for state rituals mirror real-world political sycophancy, while Vijayan's narrative voice maintains a consistently sardonic tone that amplifies the text's satirical edge.

Magical and mythological characters of *The Saga of Dharmapuri*

At the outset of *The Saga of Dharmapuri*, the reader is introduced to Kanchanamala, a blind girl imbued with magical qualities. She is a prophetic figure, consistently associated with a palm leaf inscribed with the Sanskrit syllables “*Ka, Kha, Ga, Gha.*” These sacred characters, written in a celestial script, are decipherable by all beings in Dharmapuri—humans, animals, and even plants. During an event known as the “baptismal night,” these beings express euphoric anticipation at the arrival of the long-awaited “night ages.” Vijayan’s use of non-linear narration allows the novel to oscillate between past and present, unfolding the personal histories of key characters without disrupting the story’s thematic flow. Despite being named *Shanthigramma*—literally the “village of peace”—the capital city of Dharmapuri ironically offers neither peace nor freedom to its inhabitants.

In confronting the political climate of his time, Vijayan uses mythical characters to navigate real-world dilemmas. The despotic ruler of Dharmapuri lives in comfort within a fortified palace while his citizens endure systemic oppression and suffering. Into this bleak landscape arrives a mysterious traveler—Siddhartha—rumored to be ancient yet appearing youthful. He is sustained by astonished peasants and artisans who offer him food and reverence. The people of Kapilavasthu claim Siddhartha as one of their own, asserting that their land has produced more sages and visionaries than any other. Some believe they have reached spiritual awareness independently, but Siddhartha's presence challenges this assumption.

Siddhartha's mystical aura manifests in subtle yet profound ways. For instance, dust vanishes from beneath his feet as he walks—an image rich in symbolic purity and transcendence. In one instance, he adopts the guise of a king to engage with the people, further highlighting his fluid identity. Despite being unaware of local legends, such as that of the celestial bird, Siddhartha shows a willingness to learn and integrate into the community. In a striking moment, after being struck in the face, the bleeding halts abruptly and he responds with a serene smile—a gesture that deepens the perception of his otherworldly power. The people of Dharmapuri marvel at his mystical capabilities, projecting onto him a spiritual significance born of desperation and reverence.

Vijayan's *Dharmapuri* thus operates as a powerful political allegory, offering a thinly veiled critique of India's parliamentary democracy and entrenched authoritarianism. Through layered narration and surrealist imagery, Vijayan weaves a scathing commentary on oppression and moral decay. Siddhartha becomes not only a beacon of potential enlightenment but also a mirror reflecting the spiritual and ethical failures of a nation lost in its own myths.

Siddhartha first encounters Kanchanamala, the blind daughter of Kanagalatha, who offers him a palm leaf inscribed with celestial script before vanishing into the shadows. Throughout the novel, Kanchanamala and the mysterious palm leaf reappear at critical junctures, serving as a recurring symbol of prophecy and lost innocence, before ultimately disappearing altogether. In a poignant moment, Siddhartha stops her and implores her to gaze into his eyes. Kanchanamala recalls that, except during wartime, she was never nourished in her mother's womb—a tragic metaphor for deprivation and trauma passed from generation to generation. She describes her early visions of death and decay—"dead orbs" and "sparrow eggs"—as

her first perceptions of the world. As Siddhartha gently cradles her in his hands, she dissolves like morning mist in the forest, symbolizing the fragile, transient nature of purity and truth in a corrupted world. Siddhartha's role here is both redemptive and symbolic: he releases her from her suffering, reflecting his broader mission to enlighten the people of Dharmapuri and liberate them from the grip of ignorance. His use of magical realism is not gratuitous but rather spiritually purposeful, directed toward awakening a morally bankrupt society.

Siddhartha is also present during one of the novel's most grotesque yet symbolically charged episodes—General Paraashara's arrival. The general, a fervent nationalist, proudly parades through the city carrying a jewel-encrusted receptacle containing the President's excrement, an act of grotesque sycophancy and blind militarism. His chest, adorned with medals, radiates false pride, and he marches with an air of self-congratulation. Siddhartha, with calm irony, questions him: "Do you find it difficult?"—referring to the weight of his medals and, by extension, the burden of moral corruption they represent. As Siddhartha begins to laugh, the procession and even the chariot descend into laughter, a moment of surreal deflation of power. Suddenly, the ground beneath Paraashara transforms into a marsh, swallowing him in the very muck he has come to symbolize. He is forced to crawl back home, humiliated and broken. In private, the general regresses to a childlike state—shedding his medals, standing naked before a mirror, and weeping. This regression is a moment of karmic reckoning. His fellow soldiers, repelled by the stench of betrayal and subservience, confront him. Only after he discards his attachments to power and purges his shame does the stench finally leave him. Vijayan masterfully uses magical realism here to critique blind nationalism, ego, and the psychological decay it breeds.

Another key figure in *The Saga of Dharmapuri* is Laavannya, a tragic heroine who becomes both witness and victim to the violent forces at work in the state. Accompanying Siddhartha on part of his journey, she is deeply influenced by his prophetic insight and spiritual vision. However, her own path is marked by brutal exploitation. Forced into sexual servitude by corrupt bureaucrats, Laavannya endures systemic abuse and humiliation. During her husband's unlawful detention, she observes a surreal phenomenon: a pair of Topaz-colored birds—speaking in human voices—descend from a tree. Initially mistaking them for owls, Laavannya's interpretation reveals the deep confusion and fear instilled by an oppressive regime that shrouds truth in mystery and terror.

Her suffering escalates when, in an appallingly dehumanizing act, a government official rapes her in front of her son, Sunanda, and then proceeds to assault the boy as well. This grotesque violence epitomizes the utter collapse of moral and familial structures. It is in this moment of despair that Siddhartha finds Laavannya and Sunanda crying on the riverbank. He heals them with sacred water, invoking the cosmic forces of the universe:

"...living waters," he said, "healing skies, immortal guardians of the universe! Take unto yourselves the pain of this son!"
(*The Saga of Dharmapuri*, p. 211)

This moment of spiritual cleansing highlights the redemptive potential of Siddhartha's magic, even amidst overwhelming darkness. Yet, as with many other moments in the novel, the healing is temporary, and the cycle of violence and ignorance continues—a theme that underpins Vijayan's pessimistic view of societal transformation.

Magical Realism as a Vehicle for Sociopolitical Critique

As a result of Siddhartha's miraculous healing power, symbolized by his transformative use of water, both Laavannya and her son Sunanda experience emotional relief and a temporary escape from their trauma. The water becomes a symbolic elixir, channeling Siddhartha's spiritual potency into a tangible force of renewal. Sunanda, overwhelmed by this sudden comfort, drifts into a deep sleep along the grassy riverbank, representing a return to innocence and peace. Although Laavannya finds herself momentarily free from the agony of her past, her maternal resolve to take her son to the "house of healing" underscores her continued commitment to his well-being.

Upon their arrival, however, they are met not with compassion but cruelty. The guard at the gate demands sexual favors from Laavannya and insists she strip naked to prove her innocence and loyalty to the imperial regime. In this disturbing moment, the narrative satirically exposes the grotesque extent of political and sexual oppression. When Siddhartha tries to intervene, the crowd—whipped into a frenzy—turns on him, accusing him of espionage and smuggling. To protect Siddhartha and gain access to the healing center, Laavannya is forced to sacrifice her dignity before the cheering crowd, a harrowing display of the exploitative power structures that Vijayan critiques.

Through such scenes, O.V. Vijayan employs magical realism to unveil a wide spectrum of moral degradation—bribery, corruption, infidelity, necrophilia, sadomasochism, and the commodification of human bodies. The house of healing, instead of being a sanctuary, is revealed as a macabre institution steeped in ritualized abuse. Upon entering, Siddhartha, Laavannya, and Sunanda are horrified to witness cadavers being transported toward a tunnel, where the staff engages in acts of necrophilia. The bodies of young women are preserved in a fresh state solely to satisfy these perverse desires. A professor from Nalanda University is even seen sitting atop the corpses for his amusement, suggesting that even institutions of higher learning are complicit in such moral decay. The sale of newly deceased bodies for financial gain further illustrates the grotesque marriage of death and capitalism in Dharmapuri. Laavannya soon realizes that they are trapped within the house of healing and can only leave by paying an exorbitant fee. It is within this space of despair that Siddhartha enacts another miraculous transformation. His spiritual eye opens on his forehead—radiating a powerful light of wisdom—which immobilizes and overwhelms the corrupt guard. Released from ignorance and shame, the guard falls to his knees and begs Siddhartha for baptism. In a moment of spiritual intimacy, Siddhartha responds, “*My prince, you have finally found me*” (*The Saga of Dharmapuri*, p. 234). One by one, other employees—security guards and medical staff—emerge to challenge Siddhartha, but a simple touch from him is enough to dispel their ignorance. After a prolonged silence in which all lie still, symbolically purged, Siddhartha unlocks the stone wall and leads Laavannya and Sunanda out of the institution. Despite the fantastical elements, Vijayan uses Siddhartha’s mystical powers to underscore the transformative potential of compassion, knowledge, and resistance against systemic evil.

The narrative later elevates Siddhartha further, as he performs a miraculous act of time travel. Through this temporal journey, he uncovers the historical origins of Dharmapuri and converses with a native son—an allegorical figure representing the land’s betrayed conscience. The native son expresses sorrow over his defeat in battle and the community’s abandonment of him. He shares that his wives were abducted by the white colonizer and are now held captive. Siddhartha, embodying both detachment and understanding, counsels the native son to endure the loss rather than seek vengeance, thus emphasizing the spiritual path over political retaliation.

“...Master, what do I call you? I do not yet know your name...”
“Call me Old Mendicant.”

“Oh, no,” the native son said tenderly, “*I shall call you Mendicant Father.*”
(*The Saga of Dharmapuri*, p. 213)

Through these episodes, Vijayan critiques not only political and institutional corruption but also deeper existential and cultural betrayals. Siddhartha, modeled after the Buddha yet reframed through magical realism, becomes a vehicle for awakening and redemption in a world plagued by violence, exploitation, and spiritual decay.

A defining feature of *The Saga of Dharmapuri* is its **non-linear narrative**, which fluidly transitions between the past and present. This technique—characteristic of **magical realism**—allows O.V. Vijayan to maintain a constant dialogue across time, connecting mythic prophecy, political allegory, and spiritual insight. The story’s temporal structure allows the past to seep into the present, revealing buried truths and ongoing cycles of oppression.

Previously, Siddhartha had encountered a native son of Dharmapuri, who, moved by their exchange, began to refer to Siddhartha as a *mendicant*. This naming signals both reverence and the recognition of Siddhartha’s spiritual calling. When Siddhartha later meets a homeless beggar, he utters a prophecy—declaring that a time will come when all people will have a home and the jungles will bloom with flowers. In this vision, the beggar is entrusted with a sacred role: to serve perpetually as a guide for others on the path to wisdom and enlightenment.

When the people of Dharmapuri implore Siddhartha to teach them about war, his cryptic response points to an inner revolution rather than external violence. He states that his pupil will instruct them about the “serpent that slumbers in the stems of their spines,” evoking the *kundalini*, a spiritual energy in yogic tradition. This esoteric imagery transforms the idea of warfare into a metaphor for self-awareness and spiritual awakening, reflecting Vijayan’s consistent use of mystical symbolism to challenge militarism and blind nationalism.

Siddhartha also reveals a concealed truth about Dharmapuri’s past: the city was once part of the Feringhee empire, a symbol of colonial and political corruption. Though the empire has since decayed, its legacy persists. The “native son,” now a mendicant, remains alive—bearing witness to the betrayal of his people and the falsehood of progress. Through Siddhartha’s supernatural vision and time-transcending abilities,

the dark, hidden history of Dharmapuri is unearthed. These revelations blur the boundaries between myth, prophecy, and historical critique.

Laavannya, overwhelmed by Siddhartha's divine aura and revelations, misinterprets his power and offers him her body, believing such submission to be an expression of gratitude or devotion. This moment underscores her internalized trauma and confusion, shaped by a society that reduces women to sexual currency. Meanwhile, those around Siddhartha are baffled by a strange symbol imprinted on his palm—believed to be a mark of divine wrath placed upon the destined redeemer. Unlike the other children of his generation, Siddhartha listens to prophecies instead of indulging in worldly distractions. Despite his teachers' ignorance of his cosmic knowledge—of ellipses, constellations, and multiple past lives—Siddhartha stands apart, destined for roles far beyond their comprehension.

Vijayan presents Siddhartha as an almost flawless figure, a mythic amalgam of Buddha, Christ, and revolutionary, whose rise threatens the dictatorial order and the hollow ideologies propping it up. As the people of Dharmapuri remain ensnared by absurd nationalism and irrational beliefs, Siddhartha's spiritual and political awakening emerges as a direct challenge to state power.

The novel begins with a prophecy voiced not by humans, but by the natural world—plants and animals responding to celestial signs. This aligns with the magical realist tradition, where nature itself is animate and prophetic. Even when Siddhartha reveals to Laavannya that the tremors in the heavens will reshape their world, she is unable to grasp the depth of his vision. His foresight includes surreal and symbolic images: a man reborn as a majestic beast, and a plant triumphing over the concrete towers of Dharmapuri. These visions merge ecological regeneration with the downfall of authoritarian civilization. For Siddhartha, such prophetic glimpses into cyclical rebirth and cosmic justice are tangible truths; for Laavannya, they remain inaccessible mysteries.

"Laavannya listened. The wind died down in the clouds and on the mountain. Now it swept within the layered earth. Beneath the earth, in the fires of the earth, the pipal seeds, and beyond the countless renewals of the womb, the seeds of man, cried out their

coming..."

— *The Saga of Dharmapuri*, p. 249

In this passage, Vijayan fuses myth and biology, evoking a cosmic womb in which future generations are gestating. The wind's descent into the earth mirrors the descent into collective memory and ancestral suffering. The reference to *pipal seeds*—sacred in Indian tradition—links fertility, resistance, and the hope of regeneration. Thus, the novel frames resistance not only as a political act but also as a spiritual and ecological inevitability.

O.V. Vijayan, in *The Saga of Dharmapuri*, demonstrates his diverse philosophical and psychological acumen by interrogating the factors that lead the human mind toward meaningless pleasures. Using magical realism as a narrative lens, he explores the psychological degeneration caused by materialism, authoritarian control, and moral decay. Through characters like Shubhraka, Vijayan lays bare the grotesque underpinnings of a society that has lost its ethical compass.

Shubhraka, a typical inhabitant of Dharmapuri, is introduced as a poverty-stricken, middle-aged man whose obsession with voyeurism reveals the extent of his moral disintegration. He harbors a perverse desire to see his wife, Neelolpala, naked in public—a desire that serves as a metaphor for patriarchal dominance, objectification, and the collapse of private sanctity in a state-controlled dystopia. When Dharmapuri officials visit Shubhraka to acquire cadavers to serve the macabre demands of the regime's economy, he readily offers his elderly parents as sacrificial commodities. When they are rejected, he even consents to give up his own child. This ghastly willingness to trade his entire family underscores how ideological propaganda and authoritarian governance distort basic human instincts into acts of betrayal disguised as patriotic duty.

Shubhraka's ultimate promise to give his own body after witnessing his wife in her "natural" state represents the commodification of human life, where love, dignity, and familial bonds are reduced to currency in a grotesque barter system. However, it is at this point that Siddhartha, accompanied by the General Paraashara, intervenes to prevent this institutionalized sacrifice. As Siddhartha places his hand on the naked Shubhraka and Neelolpala, a moment of metaphysical transformation occurs. Under the moonlight, surrounded by the river's serenity, the people begin to shed the stain of their ignorance. Through Siddhartha's touch, Shubhraka's voyeuristic desire is sublimated into a vision of purity—he is able to see his wife as she was in their youth, not through the lens of lust but through rediscovered love.

Siddhartha's prophetic vision allows him to foresee the death of Vaatasena. He perceives her tragic end—impaled on the spikes of the portcullis—yet Laavannya is unable to process or act upon the gravity of this vision. Her response is stoic detachment, possibly born of trauma and disillusionment. This emotional disconnect symbolizes the inability of Dharmapuri's citizens to confront the full weight of their complicity or suffering. When General Paraashara seeks Siddhartha's permission to take revenge, Siddhartha rejects violence, emphasizing non-retaliation and the presence of the divine in all beings. He directs Paraashara instead to reunite with Laavannya and Sunanda, affirming his commitment to a spiritual, non-violent philosophy even as war brews in the background.

Despite Siddhartha's guidance, Paraashara chooses to pursue military retaliation. Siddhartha later has a vision of a bloodied child, who begs him for help. The child's wounds become symbolic of the innocent lives harmed by the cycle of violence that continues despite Siddhartha's teachings. Upon learning that Laavannya and Sunanda have been abducted, and that Paraashara has returned to war, Siddhartha is heartbroken. His despair lies not in failure alone, but in the persistent refusal of humanity to embrace wisdom over war, compassion over control.

Siddhartha's lament reaches the ears of the goddess of the Jaahnavi river, who appears to him and narrates a mythical parable—another instance of magical realism seamlessly blending with political commentary. The river goddess's tale offers a cosmic context to human suffering, suggesting that truth and redemption lie not in retaliation but in metaphysical insight and surrender to the deeper rhythms of existence. Vijayan's fluid narrative style creates a philosophical continuum, enabling Siddhartha to oscillate between realms of thought, prophecy, and action.

In one of the most poignant sequences, Siddhartha tells Paraashara—now fully committed to war—that they will ultimately meet again on the same path. This sentiment is echoed by Priyamvada, the harlot, who too asserts her spiritual equality. These convergences suggest that all paths—whether sacred, profane, violent, or passive—ultimately merge in the pursuit of truth.

In his final meditative state, Siddhartha sits by the Jaahnavi River and embarks on a spiritual journey. He reaches an unknown location through the force of his meditation and spiritual power—a surreal multi-storey building, inhabited by officers and

soldiers. There, he confronts the faceless engines of war with the simple, yet profound question:

"Who causes war, and who profits from it?" (The Saga of Dharmapuri, p. 317)

This inquiry encapsulates the core of Vijayan's political critique. War, in *Dharmapuri*, is neither heroic nor redemptive—it is a mechanism of exploitation, serving the powerful while consuming the powerless. Siddhartha's voice—mystical, rebellious, and timeless—remains a moral anchor in a world disfigured by authoritarianism, greed, and spiritual decay.

Siddhartha as a Spiritual and Supernatural Force

Siddhartha's symbolic journey through the multi-storey building represents a metaphysical search for the root of war and violence. The futility of his inquiries on the lower floors—where each group deflects responsibility upward—mirrors the bureaucratic diffusion of accountability in totalitarian systems. When Siddhartha finally reaches the top, he encounters a genie with razor-sharp fangs, the guardian of the mystery of war. The genie, with eyes full of malice, becomes an embodiment of the monstrous nature of state-sponsored aggression, stripped of humanity and fed by cycles of inherited hatred.

Within the dome of the copula, Siddhartha perceives a darkening atmosphere, a hollow swirl, and a wild echoing wind—symbols that crystallize his philosophical realization. The void represents the fundamental emptiness of conflict, while the echo serves as a metaphor for karma, the cyclic and inescapable return of violence to its source. This revelation—that war is a self-propagating illusion fuelled by unfulfilled desires—brings Siddhartha out of his meditative trance. His return to the Jaahnavi riverbank signifies a restoration of inner clarity and spiritual alignment.

There, Siddhartha meets Paraashara again, who laments their military defeat and the capture of Laavannya and Sunandha. Siddhartha, however, responds with prophetic detachment, stating, *"defeat awaits the one that follows the seer"* (*The Saga of Dharmapuri*, p. 320). This declaration reflects the paradox of spiritual guidance in a world governed by material logic—that transcendental truth cannot protect one from the consequences of living in a violent and deluded society. He explains to Paraashara the inexorable nature of karma's vicious cycle, which offers insight but not necessarily liberation.

Despite achieving moments of awareness, Paraashara remains bound by vengeance. He is told that those they attempted to save would not allow him to return to their world of delusion. Siddhartha refers to this entrapment as *Leela*—a Sanskrit term often associated with divine play, fate, and the unfolding of cosmic drama. Here, Vijayan reconfigures *Leela* not as a joyous manifestation of divinity, but as a tragic theatre of human self-destruction.

The fates of Laavannya and Vaatasena underscore this tragic absurdity. Laavannya, who once sought transcendence through Siddhartha, ultimately succumbs to the very system of oppression she once questioned, dying brutally in prison. Her suffering is not just physical but existential, revealing the devastating cost of desire distorted by power. Vaatasena, gifted with magical powers to escape, chooses instead to remain, tragically ensnared by lust at the moment of liberation. His gaze, fixed on fleeting pleasure, strays from the “waning star”—a celestial metaphor for fading spiritual direction. Both deaths serve as metaphors for the spiritual annihilation of individuals who cannot transcend their impulses, even when salvation is within reach.

Meanwhile, President Pippalaada, a symbol of ignorant power, continues to rule, further emphasizing the permanence of foolish authority in the absence of collective awakening. Paraashara, despite glimpsing enlightenment, is ultimately drawn back into conflict, revealing the depth of karmic entrapment and emotional residue that enlightenment alone cannot dissolve.

In the final moments of his journey, Paraashara returns to Siddhartha, expressing grief and confusion. The tragedy lies in the fact that every character was given the chance to escape, to awaken, yet all ultimately returned to their starting point, illustrating the cyclical futility of transformation without sustained awareness. Enlightenment was accessible to all, but only Paraashara momentarily attained it—only to fall back into suffering.

His final act—embracing a moss-covered tree, believing it to be Siddhartha reincarnated—embodies the desperate longing for guidance in a world that resists change. This poignant image blurs the lines between spirituality and delusion, faith and madness. His death beneath a hanging magical weapon reflects the inescapability of karmic justice, even for those who briefly transcend it.

Siddhartha's silent departure, leaving only a glimmering wake in the river, emphasizes the impermanence of spiritual messiahs in a world unready to receive them. His presence lingers not in body, but in symbols—rivers, trees, echoes—awaiting those willing to listen.

Conclusion

In *The Saga of Dharmapuri*, O.V. Vijayan weaves a rich tapestry of magical realism, philosophical allegory, and political satire to critique the cyclical nature of human suffering, desire, and violence. Through the character of Siddhartha, the novel explores the spiritual quest for truth in a world deeply entrenched in ignorance and systemic cruelty. Each character—whether it be Laavannya, Paraashara, or Vaatasena—is presented with a moment of transcendence, yet most fail to escape the gravitational pull of their karmic attachments and base desires.

Vijayan uses fantastical motifs—genies, prophetic rivers, celestial omens—not as escapism, but as instruments to reveal deeper psychological and existential truths. War, as revealed in the haunting emptiness at the top of the building, is not driven by ideology alone but by an inner void, a spiritual dislocation that no external conquest can resolve. Even enlightenment, as Paraashara's fate shows, is fragile without transformation at the collective level.

Ultimately, *The Saga of Dharmapuri* presents a grim yet profound vision: that salvation is always near, yet rarely grasped; that the divine speaks in whispers through nature, prophecy, and silence, but few choose to listen. Siddhartha's journey is less a heroic quest and more a lamentation for the human condition—one in which even the illuminated are bound to return, again and again, to the very suffering they had hoped to transcend. In doing so, Vijayan delivers not only a scathing critique of modern society and political authoritarianism, but also a timeless meditation on the tragic patterns of human history and consciousness.

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