BETWEEN REALITY AND FANTASY: ANALYSING MAGICAL REALISM IN

NANPAKAL NERATHU MAYAKKAM

Project submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of BACHELOR OF ARTS in English Language and Literature

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project titled "Between Reality and Fantasy: Analysing Magical Realism in *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam*" work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Ms. Vinitha John, Assistant Professor, Department of English.

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this project entitled "Between Reality and Fantasy: Analysing Magical Realism in *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam*" by Niveditha Pramod is a record of bona fide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

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The project titled "Between Reality and Fantasy: Analysing Magical Realism in *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam*" deals with the theory magical realism in contrast with the film *Nanpakal Nerath Mayakkam*. The theory of Magical realism deals with a portion of literary genre that blends together the elements of realism and unrealism. In such surrealistic stories, fantastical elements are presented in a normalised manner and no explanations or justifications of the element is executed creating a sense of wonder and mystery and blurring the lines between fantasy and reality. This project is a great example for the representation of unrealistic elements in a much natural way blurring out the unrealistic aspects. The project consists of two chapters and also include an introduction and a conclusion. The first chapter is the theoretical explanation of magical realism and its elements written with the support of theorists such as Gabriel García Márquez, Wendy.B Faris and Isabel Allende. The second chapter highlights this theory through the film *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam* and gives an in-depth recognition of the application of these elements.

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Niveditha Pramod

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Introduction

Magical realism is a literary genre that frequently takes place in a typical world and combines magical aspects with reality. It began in Latin American literature and has since spread around the world. Magical realism redefines the difference between the exceptional and the ordinary by presenting magical happenings in a matter of fact manner. Magical realism easily merges magical components into reality, in contrast to classic fantasy, where they are frequently explained or reside in a different universe. One of the key aspects of magical realism is its exploration of the unbelievable in the ordinary. Authors add layers of significance and symbolisms to their stories by highlighting social, political or cultural themes with magical components. This genre asks readers to consider the nature of reality and borders between the supernatural and the natural.

The movie, *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam* is a beautiful movie directed by Lijo Jose Pellissery. The film mainly showcases a typical malayalee family trip. It also presents how a local colony in Tamil Nadu looks like. The movie is about James and his family and friends returning after their trip to Velakanni. On their way back home, things start getting strange. After a short nap in the bus, James starts behaving strangely. This is the point where magical realism takes place. After the nap, James starts showing the characteristics of Sundaram. James starts talking and walking like Sundaram. He barges into Sundaram's house by claiming that he is Sundaram. The people of the village said that Sundaram had passed away years ago and that James is exhibiting Sundarams habits and characteristics. The background story of Sundaram is unclear and vague. The transformation of James to Sundaram is not explained in the story. We don't know if James was being possessed by Sundaram's spirits. The movie also shows unnatural movement of clouds to show the shift in characters of James and Sundaram. Another element of the movie is the duality of the protagonist. After his transformation, he becomes an entirely different person. The way he interacted and

communicated with the people around him changed. Sundaram's and James's characters were completely different from each other.

This project analyses the various elements of magical realism, through the film and bringings out its magical and real elements. The main objective of the project is to exhibit the concept of magical realism. The film stands out from typical magical realism due to its honest depiction of human feelings and hardships. While magical realism sometimes uses imaginative aspects to reveal the deeper realities of reality, this film explores the complex nature of human relationships without resorting to over magic. Instead it emphasises the strange and irregular parts of daily life, drawing attention to how strange and unexpected human behaviour can be.

The project is divided into two chapters, the first chapter is of a theoretical background. It provides a detailed description of magical realism and also mentions the view of different authors on this concept. The second chapter begins with a brief analysis of the movie *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakam* and also gives a detailed description on the elements of magical realism present in the film. The two chapters together offer a sharp departure from classical magical realism by anchoring its narrative in the genuine and unvarnished world of human emotions and connections.

Chapter 1

Diving into the theory of Magical Realism

Realism is a term that originated from the word 'real'. It is a way of life where objectivity is given more importance than subjectivity. Having faith in the reality of truth and the objects that we can recognize are two kinds of definitions of realism. Truth and reality should be pursued particularly in art and literature. Realism includes beliefs in the real happenings and their different perceptions rejecting the idea of illusions. It's a search for factual truth. One of the main reasons for these different views on realism is the fact that knowledge is always evolving and so is the concept of truth. In the nineteenth century literary realism originated in France as an artistic movement. During that period romanticism was considered extra and detached from reality. Realist writers through their works on realism rooted the concept in France.

There are different types of realism, one of which is social realism that focuses on the lives and living conditions of the impoverished. Socialist realism on the other hand celebrates the working class and their struggle against oppression. The next type of realism is natural realism that investigates the idea that science can provide explanations to all occurrences whether it be social or environmental. Psychological realism is where characters voice out their social or political concerns. One of the most unique and distinctive types of realism is magical realism. It merges the real and the imaginary thus creating a world of fantasy and reality. Magic elements appear real and are considered normal when used to produce this type.

Magical realism is a genre that blends mythical aspects into the ordinary world. Magical realism emerged in Latin American literature. It allows readers to step into a world in which the unusual is accepted as usual rather than as a unique event. Unlike classical, where magical aspects are often divided in different realms, magical realism blends magical elements into people's

everyday lives. The unique style of storytelling challenges conventional norms, blurring the lines between the ordinary and the supernatural.

Within literature the concept of magic is often associated with the extraordinary. Magical realism is frequently used to make social and political statements. The coexistence of magical or supernatural aspects with the ordinary world is an essential feature of magical realism. Despite typical fantasy genres, which commonly creates an entirely different world in which magic exists, magical realism inserts wondrous aspects into the popular environment of day to day life.

The term "Magical Realism" has become popular since the 1980's and has become common and somewhat absurd. They appear to be made of words that contradict each other. Thus implying an unavoidable combination of these exclusive terms. It features the works of well-known writers like Gabriel García Márquez. The school of magical realism can be used as a tool to narrate a story or as a technique to narrate the same based on a particular attitude towards reality. This school is more than just a technique, it is a way of living in an environment that is more complex and intricate as we can see. It combines reality with dreamlike occurrences, imaginary happenings and mythical elements. In this school of thought unrealistic elements appear real in the story and appear unreal only from the reader's perspective. Unlike other storytelling styles with unrealistic events magical realism and its events are portrayed as possible within the realm of reality.

Different genres with distinctive characteristics have emerged through the history of storytelling. We see that stories that include genres like romance, science fiction, fables, myths and fantasy all have their own unique characteristics that's different from magical realism. In magical realism there is a seamless blend between the real and the imaginary and a fusion of realistic with fictional that makes them appear realistic. Thus drawing the main feature which is the combination of the real and unreal. In magical realism the reality is mixed with the imaginary creating a reality

that does not have any relation with that of the original. These elements of imagery are very well portrayed and the reader accepts it as real and natural.

Gabriel García Márquez and Isabel Allende are some of the prominent authors who introduced magical realism into literature. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by García Márquez is a well-known example of magical realism. Magical elements are present throughout his stories. García Márquez creates an environment in which unreal elements become an important feature of the character's lives by presenting the strange incidents with the same direct style that he tells everyday occurrences. The attraction of the genre is its capability to blur the reality with supernatural elements. The boundary between reality and imagination is blurred, and this encourages the reader to reevaluate the way they see the world. The magical realism used in his novels serves two main purposes. Firstly, it makes us think critically about the craziness in our daily life. Secondly it introduces us to the Colombian traditions and culture around which novels are centred.

> It was an intricate stew of truths
>
> And mirages that convulsed the ghost
>
> Of José Arcadio Buendia with impatience
>
> And made him wander all through the house
>
> Even in broad daylight. (Gabriel García Márquez 112*)*

This quote from Gabriel García Márquez's encapsulates a key element of magical realism. The use of magical realism in the quote serves to emphasise the inner turmoil and restlessness of José even in death. It blurs the lines between the physical and the spiritual, enhancing the reader's understanding of the character's psychological state. This approach allows the author to explore complex themes such as memory, time, and the human condition in a way that transcends the constraints of conventional storytelling.

The House of Spirits is the first book written by Isabel Allende. This work played an important role in strengthening Allende's reputation as a master of magical realism. The story covers four generations of a single family. Many of the elements in the novel are based on Allende's own life. The characters in magical realist fictions experience unnatural elements and they accept the unbelievable by completely normalising it.

> She awoke from a long childhood
>
> In which she had always been protected
>
> And surrounded by attention and comforts,
>
> With no responsibilities. (Isabel Allende 193)

This quote from Isabel Allende's novel refers to the protagonist's dramatic transformation from a protected up bring to an awakening and the need to take on new responsibilities and tasks. Overall the quote captures a universal theme of transition from innocence to experience, marking a significant turning point in the character's journey.

In the book *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and Remystification Of Narratives* by Wendy B. Faris defines magical realism by identifying five different characteristics. She uses terms like the irreducible element; the phenomenal world; the merging realms; the unsettling doubt; and the disruptions of time, space, and identity. All five of these characteristics that Faris mentions can be found in Isabel Allende's book, *The House of the Spirits*.

The extraordinary and the real are blended together in the magical realism. The magical components are blended together with the material world. Talking animals and non-living objects might appear real in this kind of display. The rich sensory details, the unique background and imagery are distinctive features. The distinction between past and present becomes vague or non-existent. It also concludes with open-ended inviting the viewer's interpretation.

There are various elements that add to the key features of magical realism. These include the juxtaposition of a realistic setting with magical elements. Magical realism is set in a world of everyday happenings and that which is similar to our own, nulling the effect of magic elements and making it appear real and usual. The fusion of real and supernatural into the ordinary world confuses us with what is real and what is not real. The reality is brought out by setting it in a well familiar background rather than a far off fictional realm. Another feature that the author focuses on is reserving a few details of the characters and not explaining the magical elements that unfold in the story. Thus enhancing the quality of such events. But such an explanation does not create any confusion in the readers as they fail to see the unreal due to the seamless blend of real and magical. The technique of normalisation and the conversion of the supernatural as daily occurrences is an integral part of magical realism. These go unchallenged by the characters thus normalising magic. The different threads of reality are woven together with such unnatural elements to produce a fabric of daily life happenings in which the unreal go unnoticed or is accepted as the real.

The magic in the story is also enhanced by co-existing different time periods together. It depicts time as an eternal cycle and this interpretation of time can make the stories feel like dreams. This also helps the author in exploring themes like memories, fate and history. Magical realism offers hybridity by blending the opposites like past and present or death and life.

Metafiction is another feature that the authors use in magical realism. By drawing attention to its artificialness or by acknowledging the fact that it is a story, the reader is made more aware of the constructive reality thus making it more believable. Here the story acknowledges that it is a story. Through the use of allegory and mythical elements in a realistic setting, the writers can help produce the political or social issues in a more suggestive manner. In short, Magical realism is a form of narrative as well as a type of genre in literature. It questions our views of reality as it blends the real and the magical. By mixing these magical concepts in a realistic background, the writers find it easy

to introduce complex ideas in a much more engaging way. Magical realism is thus used to defamiliarize things that are familiar. It presents the ordinary in a much more impressive way. It also reminds us that reality isn't a fixed concept, rather it is something that can be changed and subjective. Magical realism provides a flexible understanding of reality by defying the conventional definitions. The integration of fantasy and its elements in everyday life defies the distinction between the real and imaginary, thus erasing the lines between the ordinary and the extraordinary. The features of magical realism vary in different stories.

The story narratives of magical realist fiction involve ambiguous story components, and the author creates an imaginary picture to unite the real and magical worlds. For example, the ambiguity of people's names, or the circumstances of time and place are confusing. In reality, one of the main elements of magical realism literature is this dual nature.

Another feature of magical realism is characterization. The writer of magical realist stories uses characterization to portray a sense of reality. Through the objectification of certain elements the writer tries to make imaginative elements appear real and believable. The characters in these stories often embody archetypes from the setting, showcasing the collective unconscious through their actions.

In magical realism, events take place as if they are happening in the real world. Because of this the audience accepts the characters and events that occur in the story. In fact, the phenomenon in these stories are not subjective and imaginative, but they are concrete and objective and the balance between magic and reality is felt. Here, the writer tries to explain unusual and strange events with a reality-based statement. The events and characters live in both real and supernatural worlds, but they do not get excited when moving from one world to another.

Magical realism incorporates national and local myths to create a bold effect, often revolving around extraordinary events and supernatural deities. These myths inspire individuals to imagine creatures beyond ordinary bounds, reflecting deep symbolism that can vaguely represent thoughts and criticisms of the political, social and economic climate. For example, the cow represents fertility in mythology and serves as a medium between humanity and earth. This symbolism is so potent that in Avesta's "Hymns", some clauses begin with oaths to cows. The integration of such myths into narratives adds layers of meaning, allowing writers to indirectly critique and reflect upon their communities, circumstances through fantastical narratives.

Another component of magical realism is metamorphosis, which involves a person's transition from higher to a lower position, a concept familiar to audiences due to its presence in ancient stories and myths. These narratives detail the miracles, creating a background that makes such transformations more readily accepted.

Thus, magical realism offers a captivating blend of reality and enchantment, weaving fantastical elements into daily life settings to develop a rich narrative tapestry. It serves as a strong tool for authors to explore complicated themes, such as culture, societal issues, and identity, by infusing them with magical elements that both enchant and challenge the reader's perceptions. Through integration of national and local myths, magical realism provides a platform for indirect critiques of political, economic and social contexts, adding layers of meaning to the narrative. The theme of metamorphosis, where characters undergo profound transformations, further enhances the genre's ability to convey deep psychological and philosophical insights. By blurring the lines between the ordinary and extraordinary, past and present, life and death, magical realism invites readers to contemplate the mysteries of existence and the boundaries of human experience. Ultimately, magical realism stands as a testament to the limitless possibilities of storytelling, offering a unique lens through which to view the world and our place within it.

Chapter 2

Magic and Realism in *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam*

The film *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam* directed by Lijo Jose Pellishery is the story of James (Mammootty). James is accompanied by a set of people all returning after a trip to Velankani. The group is led by James and the film is set in the background of a village in Tamilnadu. Some of the characters like Babukutty who is in a hurry to get back to his ration shop and the depressed passenger, all add into the urgency of the easy paced film.

The beginning of the film unfolds at a roadside motel. James anxiously waits for his friends and family to board the bus to Kerala. The early morning haze enhances the scenic backdrop, while ambient sounds of birds, engines and radio chatter compliments the cinematography. James knocks on doors and complaints loudly, mostly to himself about how everyone else ought to get moving. The bus heads out once everyone is aboard. They watch the TV monitor that's mounted over the driver's seat and fall asleep as they thread through the traffic. These tourists fall asleep without much dramatic incident, though there are some teasing hints of what's to come, such as a harsh prolonged cut to black screen as the bus doors lock and James yells, "Drive slowly okay? Around here, people come at you and hit you head-on!"(*Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam*00:11:03) Then the bus stops at a shop for them to drink tea. James makes a fuss at the shop saying that his tea is too sweet and that he hates Tamil food.

At some point, James asks the driver to pull over. He gets off the bus and wanders into a nearby village, singing to himself and soon rummaging through the kitchen of a startled family. James, who now goes by Sundaram, tells Poovally, the lady of the house, that she should've told him that they're running low on groceries. James then wakes everyone up by stealing the motor scooter and casually driving around the village, drinking tea and singing with the confused locals. Even though the locals didn't know James, they still talked to him and danced with him without making

things awkward. James was new to the village, but he seemed to know the village very well. He looked very familiar with the roads in the village and he talked to the locals as if he knew them very well. James seemed to know everybody by name, though it's unclear if he actually knows what he's talking about. Two groups tried to rein James in, one from the tourist and the other from Poovally's home, but nobody knew what actually was going on.

James was unconsciously becoming Sundaram. The way he walked, the way he talked were all identical to Sundaram's habits. When James took off with the scooter, James's friends ran behind him yelling at him to stop. But they lost him, and when they asked Sundaram's family, they said that James is following Sundaram's daily routine and told them that he'd come back in the evening. From this, we can see that Sundaram and his family were very close. As they were informed, James returned in the evening. The music in the background is also of great relevance to the story. The lines of the song asks whether all of this is real or a dream which all add to the magical elements in the story. The real and the magical is seen merged together in the scene where Sundaram tries to sell the milk but the real milkman had already delivered the milk and both of them appear in the screen together for a fraction of second indicating the blend of unrealistic magical attributes that is well blend within the daily course of events making it seem real. Later in the movie the other people question James family members whether he was ill earlier and there are no clear answers to the questions adding to the absurdity of the movie which is one of the main components of magical realism. James is seen unexpectedly in people's lives dancing and interrupting their daily course and mundane activities. What seems unreal is his familiarity with the life of Sundaram and that of the village. James has no connection with this village. His arrival seems very natural and his course of actions seems like a daily habit making him realise that he was actually a member from that village and that of the family of Sundaram. James also seems possessed with that of Sundarams soul and the family members of Poovally consider it as their son's last visit home. These instances add to the unrealistic attributes in the story. His true nature and purpose is questioned through his actions of

sudden presence like an uninvited dance partner cutting in during a midday nap or a labour dispute. His influence seems to be having a more profound impact on those whom he comes in contact with beyond a mere explanation of ghosts, gods, movies, songs and other treasured memories and experiences.

Napakal Nerathu Mayakam is a very unique film that offers a very unusual journey to Pellishery's memory palace. It is a complex film reminiscent of the works of Fellini and Tsai Ming-liang. The director explores his memories with a series of surreal images and poetic scenes. The director appreciates the sensual nuances that anchor his production in culturally particular foundations and get back to other influential modernists. This film thus creates a new wave in the Malayalam movie industry and showcases the creative talents of this group of filmmakers. There are many scenes in the movie that trace the unrealistic magical elements which in turn makes the movie a work on magical realism.

It is during the halfway mark of this film that magical realism unfolds. After a deep sleep that James takes, the two-worlds, the world of Sundaram and James, merge together. James leads his life as Sundaram. Thirukkural, a Tamilian poet, discusses birth and death by drawing similarities between sleeping and walking through his poem. For Thirukkural, sleep is to die and to wake up from sleep is birth. This verse is being read out to James just like a magical spell being administered. Magical realism is brought out in James's state of being alive and dead at the same time. He is alive as Sundaram but dead as James and is not able to identify his wife and son. Mammootty is seen abandoning his own self as James and taking up the muscle memory of Sundaram. There is a tone of simplicity in the film which is brought about by the characters, the background setting, the audio, and the visuals. This simplicity is merged with the dream-like magical reality. The duality of characters is also well depicted through many scenes. One of which includes the scene where he is drunk and delivers a dialogue in a red and green background switching roles. In the movie initially, James

shows distaste for the extra amount of sugar in the tea that he orders. But later we can also see the same person adding extra sugar just like how Sundaram used to do. Thus, elements like these show the complete transformation of James into Sundaram mentally after a nap. Elements like these are not real and thus shows the characteristics of magical realism. The blend of mundane elements and surroundings along with the mystical elements of change in character and course of behaviour qualifies *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam* as a story in the genre of magical realism. In the story, we don't know what happened to Sundaram. But it is obvious that he won't dump his family and leave because through James' portrayal of Sundaram's character he seems attached to his family members especially his daughter Muthu. Sundaram most probably would have met an unfortunate end somewhere. The transformation of James to Sundaram might have been the last opportunity for him to say a proper goodbye to his family before he is pulled back into the netherworld.

The movie displays the inherent kindness and benevolence of humans especially in villages. The movie also portrays the various miracles of god. The movie makes the audience wonder whether it's all real or if it's just a dream; but the change in seats of the passengers in the bus in the end shows it wasn't a dream thus turning the whole plot magical. From the beginning to the end the film is authentic on its own. The sudden transformation of characters and the display of no confusion in the habitual action of Sundaram is a juxtaposition of reality and mystical elements. The filmmaking and videography also provide the mystical element by using beams of light in dark rooms adding to the whole mood of the film. It is mainly through duality that the film brings out the magical realism element. A film where people turn their fantasies into reality. The blind mother accepts James wholeheartedly and never questions his identity. This draws a parallelism to how we never question the logic of our dreams. The spiritual rebirth of Sundaram is the main feature of magical realism in the movie.

Fig.1. Blend of the magical and real elements.(*Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam* 00:21:38)

In the movie, a mix of magical elements and reality is well portrayed by blending the lives of James and Sundaram. The first half of the movie shows a bunch of travellers on their way back from Velankanni. Characters like Ashokan add to the reality of the plot as he rushes the passengers so that he can get home early and open his shop. It shows the natural urge of humans to meet their daily routines and a feeling of uneasiness when things get delayed or different. This same aspect is seen in James as Sundaram, following his daily habits without any confusions. Here the element of reality is brought within the display of daily habits and the element of magic is presented through the unreal shift of characters from James to Sundaram, both displayed by the same person. During the journey, after abruptly waking up from the sleep, he stops the driver and walks straight to the village as if it's his own. He seems very familiar with the places, even though he has no connection with the village and the people. Half of the story shows the life of James and his personality. It shows how he takes care of the family and how he manages the expenses and accommodation facilities throughout the trip. He is also seen taking good care of his family, especially his wife and son. All of these add to

the reality of a typical malayalam household. The villagers, though confused, normalise his behaviour and patiently wait for him to naturally go back to his former self. For the whole family, it was like their last encounter with Sundaram and thus they are seen normalising his presence. Here the life of James and its real elements is juxtaposed with the magical elements of Sundaram. It is after another nap that James realises his own self and gets back to the bus. The mix of both the worlds and their parallelism is drawn in the scene where the sky undergoes a sudden movement of the clouds and the sun and James wakes up from his nap coming back to his former self. This scene shows the two realms of reality and magical attributes of Sundaram and James. Even though the story is unrealistic with its display of James as Sundaram it is all very well normalised and his family members are fostered by the villagers until he returns back to his normal self. The movie is thus a play of both the real and the unreal.

Fig.2. Duality.(*Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam*00:55:12)

James, after his transformation to Sundaram, seemed to know everybody by name. He interacted with people as if he had known them way before, though it is unclear that the conversations he made with the locals made sense. The people at the toddy were also very friendly. He talked to them and danced with them. The scene at the toddy shows duality. The setting of the scene is very well executed. The scene shows Sundarm lip-syncing to the dialogues of a movie by shifting characters. This is also an element of magical realism as shifting of characters is impossible in real life. James's and Sundaram's personalities were completely different. At the beginning of the movie, we can see that James is presented as a caring husband who kept on complaining about the tiniest things. When they went to a motel to have their lunch he started complaining about the food and that the tea was loaded with sugar. He is shown as a responsible man with a great sense of humour. On the other hand, Sundaram is a calm and loving man, who's very much attached to his family, especially his daughter Muthu. The characteristics shown by James after his transformation were very similar to that of Sundaram. Even Sunadarm's blind mom accepted James as Sundaram. She accepted his true identity as Sundaram without even questioning him. For her, it was like her son returning to say his last goodbye. James was complaining about the excess amount of sugar present in his tea while Sundaram was requesting the shopkeeper for more sugar at the teashop. This shows the distinctive characteristics of James and Sundaram and how their contrasting features were mixed and beautifully executed without any absurdity.

Fig.3. Metafiction.(*Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam00:51:47)*

Metafiction focuses on the author's role in crafting the plot. It explores the impact fiction has on reality, reality on fiction and the reader's role in between. Here a fictional reader enters the story within a story while reading it and also the world portrayed by the characters becomes one with the real world. The flexible convention that makes it possible is magic. Metafiction is a kind of storytelling that points out that it is a fictional story. The story itself is aware that it is a story. In this movie we can see how it is a work of art. The passengers are also part of the theatre club activities and his life itself becomes like that of a drama produced with each of them as characters. The movie is like a stage that performs the life of James and the art of mixing the unreal but at the same time normalising it and making it seem real is all an important aspect of metafiction and interferes with that of magical realism. By acknowledging the artificiality of Sundaram's character in James the audience is made more aware of its constructed reality. This movie as a work of art and through its enhancements makes the magical elements more surreal and believable. The whole movie is thus seen as a work of art through its dreamlike realistic elements.

Fig.4. Hybridity.(*Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam00:37:10)*

Hybridity is another key feature of magical realism that enhances the feature of magical realism within this movie. The exploration of themes such as past and present along with that of life and death shows the distinctive parallelism drawn between events and characters. Hybridity is the blending of opposites and contradictions. The village was entirely a different place than that of James' life. But he is seen well accommodated and familiar with its surroundings and happenings. This shows a stark contrast in character of James from his original self. James was a Christian and was returning from a trip to Velankanni but after his transformation he takes a visit to the temple and becomes one with that of the village and the people. The past of Sundaram and his memories is brought into the present life of James as Sundaram. The movie also shows the past and present through the life of James and his identity change into Sundaram. James adheres to Sundarams daily

routines and exhibits his character very similar or in fact exactly like that of Sundaram. In the present

James' wife tries to take him back but he is not able to recognise his real family. He is composed

with the past memories of Sundaram in his present self and refuses to accept his true identity.

Hybridity is also brought within the elements of life and death. The death of Sundharam and the life

of James is well connected through a parallelism drawn between them. Through his sleep there is

rebirth in his character. James, as he wakes up from his sleep, assumes the character of Sundaram

and starts acting like him. Here we see the death of James as a character and the rebirth of Sundaram.

Sundharam is mentioned as lost years ago. He has never returned. The arrival of James was like

Sundarams last visit to his village. Later we see a rebirth into his own original self after another nap.

Thus the movie brings out the feature of hyper reality in magical realism through the elements of life

and death along with past and present.

Fig.5. Authorial reticence.(*Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam*00:39:05)

Another main feature that is very much evident in this movie is authorial reticence. It is a

technique wherein the writer or the producer purposefully omits the explanation of the unreal and

fictitious element in the story. For example, a ghost can be seen eating lunch and the audience would

normalise such behaviour without questioning them as they are well mixed with the real making it appear as a part of the real. In the movie *Nanpakal Nerath Mayakam* no explanation is given regarding the unusual elements such as the switch in character of James to Sundaram thus making it a work under magical realism. The narrator stays indifferent to these events as if nothing unreal has happened. The smooth display of the change in character and the events that unfolded later all erase the identity of James and impose the daily habits of Sundaram on him as if his soul became one with that of Sundaram. The story continues with a "logical precision" that makes the viewer accept the marvellous as real and ordinary. This kind of representation leaves the audience to piece together the events in the story as the producer leaves no explanation. Thus, making it a work of art that can be described according to each one's point of view.

Thus, the movie *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam* concludes by collaborating the magical elements with reality. The resolution of the story merges with the protagonist's emotions with fantastical elements, blurring the lines between reality and imagination. The fusion of magical and real elements helps in bringing thematic undercurrents of magical realism. The story celebrates the beauty and mystery of life, offering a poignant reflection on the nature of reality itself.

Conclusion

Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam by Lijo Jose Pellissery revolves around the lives of James and his family. James along with his family and friends were returning back home after their trip to Velankanni. James seemed to be very restless and impatient. After a short nap he impulsively asks the driver to stop the bus and gets off without saying a word to anyone. After that, James is seen barging into a random household as if he knows the people who live there. He interacted with the locals like he had known them for a very long time. Even though it was James's first time in the village, he seemed to know all the nooks and corners of the village. When he took off with a scooter, his actual family were confused and chased him by yelling his name but James was not bothered by this at all. It was like James had been possessed by a spirit. He was behaving entirely like a different person. The locals in the village said that he's showing the characteristics of Sundaram who passed away several years ago. The story of Sundaram and his cause of death is not clearly executed in the movie. The only thing observable about Sundaram was that he's completely different from James. Sundaram was a man with lots of positive energy. Unlike James, Sundaram was more of a jolly person. He was very friendly and easily approachable. In the movie, Sundaram is shown singing and dancing with the locals without any inhibitions. Sundaram was also very close to his family. He took care of his family very well. Seeing all of these sudden changes in James disappointed his actual son and wife. James couldn't recognise his family. He thought he was Sundaram and started adoring Sundaram's family leaving his actual family and friends speechless. They tried convincing that he was not Sundaram, but he stood there in disbelief. He kept on telling them that he was Sundaram. The next day, after his nap, James was back to his own self. He recognised his son and wife and his friends. His friends and family thanked the villagers for bearing with them and allowing them to spend a day with them. They also thanked them for taking care of James very well. Even though the villagers didn't know James, they treated him very well. They allowed James to stay with them.

After all the drama, James along with his friends and family resumed their way back home. This is how the movie comes to an end. The story doesn't reveal what actually happened to James.

The theoretical element present in the movie is magical realism. Through a blend of real and magical the movie portrays the life of James and Sundaram with much ease and perfection. It thus provides a beautiful description on the two realms of reality present in the movie. Another key feature that enhances the magical aspect is the duality portrayed throughout the film. James and his transformation to Sundaram is presented naturally without any disruption in the flow of the movie. Metafiction is also a prominent feature that makes the movie striking to the audience. The flexible convention that makes it possible is magic. Hybridity is brought within the contradictions made in the life of James and Sundaram both coming from different backgrounds. There is a mix of cultural beliefs along with the traditional aspects of Sundarams village . Their differences in lifestyle is merged with simplicity and dream-like magical reality. Here the movie omits the explanation of unrealistic elements thus bringing in the main feature of authorial reticence within the movie.

The movie provides a striking contrast to the traditional magical realism by basing its story in the raw and unadulterated realities of human emotions and relationships. While magical realism often uses fantastical elements to explore deeper truths, this film goes for a more realistic and gritty approach, focusing on the complexities and contradictions of human nature without the need for overtly magical elements. Through its portrayal of everyday life as surreal and unpredictable, the film challenges viewers to confront the darker, more enigmatic aspects of the human experience, creating a sense of heightened reality that is both compelling and thought-provoking.

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