

Critique

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Rest of The Malayali in The Afternoon



Lijo Jose Pellissery's *Nankapal Neraththu Mayakam* delves deep into the psyche of the modern-day Malayali, exposing their intricate inner workings in a manner universally relatable. The movie emerges as a critique of the contemporary Malayalam mindset, shedding light on the subconscious of the Malayali. It imparts distinctive insights to the Malayali populace, apart from the general lesson of expressing the illusion of the human mind that longs to leave the stable status quo and reach somewhere.

Recognizing its global appeal, *Nankapal Neraththu Mayakam* initially acquaints a worldwide audience with both

Malayalam and Tamil. The film transcends being merely a Malayalam film, extending its narrative to encompass Tamil culture and its people. It intertwines the stories of Malayalis and Tamils, effectively presenting itself as a dual linguistic and cultural piece. Originating from the Malayali psyche, the film's foundation is rooted in Tamil influences, showcasing the deep-seated affinity Malayalis hold towards Tamil. This connection has persisted through time, dating back to historical instances where Malayalis were present in the Tamil landscape. Presently, this inclination towards Tamil culture manifests in the works of artists like

Lijo Jose, Harish, Mammooty, as well as esteemed figures such as John Abraham and Attur Ravivarma.



This film portrays the two-day journey of a group of Malayalis on a pilgrimage to Velankanni in Tamil Nadu, seeking a connection with their God. However, this spiritual quest also symbolizes their journey in understanding life's struggles. The depiction of Malayalees finding their God in Tamil Nadu reflects the inclinations ingrained in the Malayalam psyche. The filmmaker metamorphoses this religious pilgrimage into an odyssey in pursuit of the existential struggles faced by the modern-day Malayali. This transformation is achieved through the character of James, who, despite not overtly professing profound faith in God, embodies the quintessence of the contemporary Malayali's life challenges. James, representing the collective consciousness of Malayalis, symbolizes the unconscious desire of the modern Malayali to adopt elements of Tamil culture. He embodies the suppressed emotions and struggles of the middle-class Malayali, who, over time, has shed their intrinsic goodness and now embodies traits of selfishness and self-aggrandizement. Notably, the film portrays the pilgrimage of dramatists, highlighting the theatrical nature

of life. The phrase 'Natakame ulakam' (The world is drama) not only signifies the relationship between drama, the world, and life but also introduces the idea of Malayalis assuming roles, effectively turning life into a performance. In the film, the Tamil inclinations of the Malayalam culture are symbolically passed on to James, the dramatist, signifying a migration of these inclinations to a different individual. This transition serves as a metaphor, illustrating how Malayalis awaken from their slumber to the allure of Tamil culture and its profound impact.

We perceive a blend of mistrust, stinginess, avarice, self-interest, egotism, and a propensity for gossip within the drama ensemble of the Malayali pilgrims. During his siesta, James departs from this group, making his way to his native village. There, he finds solace in the presence of a caring father and mother, blossoms, precious pearls, gentle cows, and loyal dogs. James transforms, revealing a newfound allure. In a moment of conviction, James asserts his roots to those attempting to persuade him to return to Kerala, affirming his belongingness to this village. Through this hallucinatory narrative of James, the filmmaker poignantly illustrates the subconscious desires and yearnings of the Malayali to revisit their hometowns in Tamil Nadu.

We witness an authentic and humanly connected world within the simplicity and genuine aspects of life in the Tamil villages, far removed from the superficiality of the Malayali existence. It is precisely this world that James is striving to rediscover, a world he has lost touch with. In this particular scene, the audience is presented with a confessional

moment, offering a glimpse into the burdened conscience of the guilt-ridden middle-class Malayali. Tamilians affinity for the language, their treatment of women and the marginalized, as well as the mutual trust, all take on new and profound meanings when viewed in light of the devaluation of middle-class Malayali life. This devaluation is perceptible not only in the film's initial sequences but also in the lived reality of the audience and the filmmaker. Yet, it's essential to acknowledge that there might be distinct historical factors behind the awakening of the Malayali consciousness at this juncture. This awakening coincides with a time when laborers ('pandis') who once came to Kerala seeking work opportunities are now thriving in their own villages. They have transitioned from mere laborers to successful individuals engaged in superior production activities, surpassing Kerala in various economic domains. The reflection of this external reality serves as a catalyst, infusing life into our artistic hearts and fueling our imagination, propelling us to explore deeper themes and ideas

The filmmaker adeptly immerses into the intricate tapestry of Tamil culture and modern life. The screenplay and portrayal within the film are consistently captivating, showcasing a keen understanding of how poetry, songs, films, and divinity are intricately interwoven into the vibrant essence of this culture.

*'Irukkum iṭattai viṭṭu illāta iṭam tēṭi
eṅkankō alaiṅṭrāl ṅāṅataṅkamē*

avarkaḷ ētum aṛiyātaṭi ṅāṅataṅkamē'

(Where does roam about, leaving the sitting place and looking for the non-existent place? Oh, wise one, who knows nothing?)

Later the features that surpass the wonder of the song are revealed in the movie.

'Drowsy?

Confusion?

Trouble in the mind?

Shake on existence?



The eminent Malayali actor has brilliantly embodied the essence of the Malayali psyche, as described earlier, in a manner unparalleled. With finesse, he transitions from the demeanor of a middle-class Malayali to an ordinary Tamil village farmer, a feat beyond even Mammooty's discernment. This film stands as a testament to Mammooty's prowess, captivating even those who perceive acting as natural looks, expressions, and gestures, showcasing the artistry of acting and leaving audiences in awe of his seamless transformations.

Nan Pagalnerathu Mayakkum signifies a significant milestone in the trajectory of screenwriter Harish and filmmaker Lijo Jose Pellissery, charting new heights and garnering well-deserved acclaim.

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