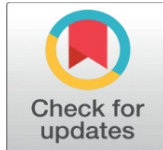


BETWEEN FRAMES AND DREAMS: PSYCHOANALYTIC REFLECTIONS ON WAKING LIFE AND CINEMA IN NANPAKAL NERATHU MAYAKKAM

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Received 29 March 2025

Accepted 21 April 2025

Published 25 April 2025

DOI [10.29121/granthaalayah.v13.i4.ISMER.2025.6053](https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v13.i4.ISMER.2025.6053)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

Dreams have been analysed in various fields like psychoanalysis and psychology. This article will explore how the conscious mind is affected by the dream and how it becomes the material for satisfying or fulfilling one's unconscious desire or innermost aspirations, which are often unnoticed and it investigates how it derives its material from reality and the day-to-day psychic encounters of the dreamer, consciously or unconsciously. Furthermore, the article will conduct an investigation into the relationship between dreams and waking life in psychoanalysis using Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam's cinematic approach. The main purpose of this article is to analyse the question: do physical states influence mental states? Do mental states influence physical states? If so, how? Additionally this article employs psychoanalytic film theory to inquire into how an openly ended film with its various narrative methods and visual techniques, creates a complex visual experience for the audience. This research makes an important contribution to the deeper discourse on psychoanalysis and cinema, by providing a framework that connects theoretical ideas with visual narratives. It emphasises film's efficacy as a medium for investigating into the intricate layers of the human mind as well as psychology.

Keywords: Dreams, Memory, Subconscious, Psychoanalysis, Mind-Body Dualism, Human Psyche, Film Studies



1. INTRODUCTION

What in actuality is a mind? A good deal of individuals, including the philosophers and intellectuals, hold the opinion that basically consciousness develops out of complex neurological processes and minds develop according to the physiological functioning of the brain. This viewpoint stresses how crucial it is to effectively understand the interaction between the human mind and body in order to fully grasp human experience and actions. Even so, the actual nature of mental processes still remains as an open and mysterious question which has still been investigated in a variety of disciplines. The human mind is like a very complex puzzle that consists of so many unexplored elements that we shall never understand. Like a dense forest with hidden paths, unexpected dangers, and forgotten places, our minds are full of buried feelings, unresolved conflicts, and unrealized potentials, all of which shape our thoughts and behaviours, often

without our awareness. Memories were commonly perceived as the literal, passive recordings of past experiences, and according to the well-known Canadian psychologist Endel Tulving, memory is a gift of nature, an ability for living organisms to retain and utilize acquired information or knowledge (Tulving,1995).

Our inner consciousness can be thought of as a place where we can make it possible for the impossible and relive those moments and experiences that only exist in our memory. For example, in old age, people often remember their childhood and things related to it very clearly, but recent memories fade away. This paradox highlights the selective and complicated workings of the mind and further theorizes how memory and consciousness interact.

In order to explore these complexities, this article relies on Sigmund Freud's Dream Theory and René Descartes' Mind-Body Dualism. Freud's Dream Theory postulates that dreams represent unfulfilled desires and suppressed thoughts; thereby, the mind functions beyond the limits of consciousness control, affecting behaviour and perception most significantly. For example, when a person loses a loved one and then dreams that person is still alive and they are interacting as if nothing has happened, Freud says the dream represents repressed grief and an unconscious desire to undo reality. The mind creates dreams, far beyond the conscious control of the individual, to fulfil unmet emotions which in turn affects how the individual copes with loss in reality.

Mind and body dualism is another key concept introduced by French philosopher Rene Descartes in which he illustrates the metaphysical stance that mind and body are two distinct substances, each with a different essential nature Mehta (2011) which is further extended by Heil, that the human mind and body are two separate entities which may coexist yet function as one and anything we in everyday life would count as a state of mind—a sensation, an image, an emotion, a belief, a desire; Descartes regards it as a mode of thought, a way of thinking (Heil (1998), p. 20). The movie Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam significantly supports my argument regarding its depiction of a protagonist James whose mind and body operate as two distinct entities yet are interwoven. The narrative provides a reflection on Descartes' dualism since it narrates the physical and mental journey of a man who, inadvertently, adopts the life and behaviour of another person during an afternoon slumber. While the body's condition remains unchanged, the protagonist's mind appears to occupy another reality, thereby exemplifying the notion that mind and body constitute two distinct substances.

2. WHY DO DREAMS MATTER?

It is nearly impossible to adequately describe a dream, and no specific method in dream research does justice to the context of the dream. But for Freud in some ways, dreams serve as an access point into our innermost desires and aspirations, which may be submerged or hidden in the unexplored realms of our minds that we have repressed or even ignored. Dreams regarding our loved deceased ones, can act as a great instance for how those particular dreams are an expression of one's unresolved emotions, it might be a manifestation of our deepest longings to feel connected to them or to relive happy moments together. Ancient people considered dreams as a harbinger of fate or forecasts from divine sources. History in the world of philosophy, literature, and science tells us that many discoveries are based on dreams. For instance, the very basic principle behind Robert Louis Stevenson's novel Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde came to him in a dream. Famous psychoanalyst Carl Jung said that all his best ideas sprang from his dreams. In a dream, the mind operates at a quicker pace, resulting in a feeling of a slower

passage of time. Like five minutes in the actual world equals an hour in the dream, and the people we encounter are the projections and manifestations of our subconscious.

According to the psychoanalytic paradigm, a dream is an expression of an individual's inner life. Therefore, sleep is a state whereby one's body is immobilized while the human mind becomes highly accurate. The Human mind organizes and explores thoughts in a different dimension, offering insights into subconscious desires, unresolved conflicts, or creative potential.

Reiser (1997) states that the networks of memory in a person are connected to the similar responses that are emotional or "affect". It is those emotions that create connections between related memories, making it easier for us to access them later and the emotions evoked and triggered during the day process overnight seem to combine to form what Clément (2008) calls "emotional or psychological scripts". These serve as plans or blueprints that shape the scenes and events in our dreams to form a complete narrative. Consequently, our dreams are not in any way coincidental or random; rather they result from these emotionally engaged representations that help us understand the psychological geography of our ordinary life.

3. A PSYCHOANALYTIC INTERPRETATION OF NANPAKAL NERATHU MAYAKKAM

The way we perceive the world is deeply shaped by cinema. With its numerous nuances of meaning established by the filmmakers, movies serve as an effective symbol where the audiences are free to interpret, connecting the dots or deciphering their layers of meaning according to their own perspectives. Various kinds of narrative fictions, notably films, capture viewer's attention through exhibiting various events with ambiguous and uncertain outcomes. Thus, they satisfy a fundamental curiosity, which is needed essentially for novelty, understanding and exploration. The emotion which responds to arguments concerning this issue is interest. Certain modern films, such as Shashank (2023) directed by Lijo Jose Pellissery seek to generate questions rather than providing direct answers, therefore involving the audience in the ongoing plot. They are not supposed to end right After the show. To put it another way, the movie begins in one's mind soon after the performance. These films start a new life within the audience's mind rather than ending after the end credits have rolled. Essentially, instead of just reaching a destination, experiencing a movie becomes a journey which lingers, prompting reflection and investigation.

"Death is sinking into slumbers deep; Birth again is waking up from sleep" (Kural 339). This verse from the Tamil text Thirukkural unites strongly with the film's framework and the underlying context of the hero's dream. This quote speaks of every sleep as a death and waking up as a rebirth which foreshadows what follows. The title Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam, which roughly translates like in an Afternoon Dream, accurately captures the movie since it feels like a dream in which illusion and reality coexist. Following a pilgrimage to Velankanni, James—played by Mammootty—travels with a Malayalam theatre group called Sarathy Theatres. Everything seems normal until James, half-asleep on the bus, wakes up abruptly, asks the driver to stop, and wanders inside a random Tamil town. Oddly though, he starts to live as Sundaram, a man who disappeared years ago. James seemed to have undergone a metamorphosis into a completely different person during that one afternoon sleep.

One of the most interesting moments in the film is when Sundaram's blind mother is the first person who recognizes James as her long-lost son. It's an irrational moment, just like dreams that defy the logic of reality. This dreamlike illogic is further emphasized by the fact that she spends almost the whole film watching television despite her blindness. It relates to a larger theme because, although in waking life we use rationality and reason, our unconscious does not do this. The dreams arising from the unconscious mind are often absurdly illogical as this moment in the film. The blind mother's identification of Sundaram and her act of watching television are two very different yet similar ways of functioning for the unconscious mind where emotions, memories, and even wishes create a perception of reality that sometimes makes no sense.

The true beauty of mainstream movies lies in its ability of allowing open-endings. Such movies are irritating to most people just because they do not show any clear or logical progression of events, or even when the ending is not wrapped up nicely. A narrative can be boring or puzzling by virtue of its deviation from the habitual way of unfolding that it imposes on the audience's cognition or by violating conventional norms of narrative structure. The interpretations of the peculiar incidents in Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam vary from James being possessed by Sundaram's spirit to exhibiting dissociative personality traits. Others contend that these occurrences correspond to nothing but a dream that he is having while dozing off on the bus. On a psychoanalytic level, the hero's dual existence provides an intense account of the conflict among the conscious ego as well as the hidden motives and desires, striving to separate the self apart within. James's dream is profoundly influenced by his previous encounter at a lodge, when he becomes intrigued by an excerpt regarding death and rebirth and considers it a worthy title for a drama which is said to be the essence of his dream, in which he realizes his desire to create a play based on the same subject matter. In dreams, thoughts and experiences don't appear as they are; they are compressed and relocated by the mind to create an apparently logical series. In other words, the material or source of any dream is compact and displaced, it is the psyche which forms a logical sequence. Descartes' idea that while both the mind and body seem to be distinct, they are inextricably connected which is validated through James's transition to Sundaram, in which his subconscious crafts a dream-like narrative influenced from the emotions he felt and the memories he recalled.

Apart from the plot and characters, what makes the movie and its meanings complex is the way it is presented through various editing techniques, which includes the narrative style, camera movements, background scores, lighting and so forth. Editing mostly requires an understanding of the intricate details between each shot. Between every single scene, every cut, and every sequence there is possibilities to obtain subjective interpretation. This approach aligns with the Auteur theory and encourages the study of a director's whole body of work in order to determine the recurrent themes, stylistic elements, and narrative techniques that make up their unique artistic fingerprint. Lijo Jose Pellissery with his mastery over long takes, immersive sound design, and minimal yet complex storytelling challenges the mainstream narrative forms through his films.

The cinematography techniques utilized in Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam, is mostly presented through still shots. The lack of camera movements or the immense operation of the still camera turned the screen into a kind of fixed stage as if we are seeing a theatre performing some kind of drama. It relied heavily on wide angles and fast pace point of view shots of characters completely abandoned. The fascinating shot of the blind mother under natural sunlight while the father is shot in the dark are intentionally composed to capture the clarity and uncertainty

they feel regarding Sundaram's identity. What becomes especially distinct or standout is how every scene is assisted with the background noise of either television songs or even iconic advertisements, almost to signify or mimic the natural score that usually asserts conversations in our daily life rather than a rousing background score perfectly placed to manipulate and elevate emotions. For example, the first few lines of a Tamil song in the background 'o foolish man, you leave the place you live in and you go in search of some place that is really not there', offer a kind of philosophy and effectively hints about the whole story that follows.

The dialogues serve as a subtext to the current situation of the characters. The extreme wide frames also convey the contrast of knowing everyone and yet remaining far from being known. The extreme shots depict how he is distant from reality.

The dream and his real life meet at a closest point in a particular scene where the camera captures Sundaram for the very first time with a close up shot having a mirror in his hand at a barbershop. This becomes a moment of revelation when the barber doesn't recognise him and is informed that the previous one passed away six months ago. This scene justifies the fact that all this is part of James' sleep as the shaking of the hand mirror is matched with the sound of the bus window where he sleeps in the bus. Just like how Sundaram borrowed the afternoon slumber of James without disturbing anyone, he chooses to leave his body in the same way implying Jame's rebirth.

4. CONCLUSION

Bringing it all together, the whole movie is a mirror of the timeless idea that everyone is merely performing on the stage of the world. In our progressions of study, we have looked at the relationship between the human mind and body, the significance and content of dreams, and how those concepts are reflected in cinema. Furthermore, through Auteur theory this paper critically evaluates the director's masterful utilization of the narrative and editing techniques with its ambiguous ending establishes an experience which is out of the ordinary. Movies used to stay even after the concept of "happily ever after," so there was hope and closure for a long time. However, in contemporary cinema, this is no longer the case as it instead reflects the complexity, uncertainty, and often unresolved issues of life-its changeability.

Such ambiguity usually makes people rewatch the movie. Each subsequent viewing uncovers nuances of meanings that are previously unnoticed. The massive conversations reflected in blogs, videos, and decoding theories about such films show how they stay long after their screening time, continuing to provoke interpretation and debate. These films challenge us to think, critique, and explore further and transcend time.

They remind us, in a way, that life is also open-ended. Like those films, our experiences never provide a neat conclusion. There is always something more to explore, another perspective or angle to consider. A movie with open endings or an ambiguous conclusion mirrors the fact that life never follows a clear-cut storyline and some things are way better when unsaid.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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