

Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam as a Metaphorical Soundwalk: An Analysis

Husna Ameen

The article “Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam as a Metaphorical Soundwalk: An analysis” examines the 2022 Malayalam film directed by Lijo Jose Pellisery and scripted by S. Hareesh as a metaphorical soundwalk. Soundwalk, a vital concept in Sound studies, is listening to one’s surroundings while walking. In this context, the researcher intends to read the film as a soundwalk considering its diverse soundscape. The protagonist, James, drifts into a midday slumber during his journey from Velankanni, setting the stage for a unique sonic experience. The study employs soundscape analysis to dissect various sonic elements, highlighting the immersive nature of sound in film. By bridging film analysis with sound studies, the paper offers fresh perspectives on how sound influences our perception of space and storytelling. This interdisciplinary approach contributes to the scarcity of sound studies research in India, making the study significant for scholars of film studies seeking innovative methodologies and insights.

Keywords: Film Studies, Space, Sound Studies, Soundscape, Soundwalk

Introduction

Sound, a fundamental aspect of human existence, is technically referred to as a “mechanical radiant energy that is transmitted by longitudinal pressure waves in a material medium (such

as air) and is the objective cause of hearing” (Merriam-Webster). In simple terms, it is anything that can be heard or perceived audibly. Owing to the pivotal role it plays in our lives, a discipline has emerged recently within the field of Digital Humanities, exclusively for the deliberation on sound and its various nuances. Such discipline which accommodates sound recordings and sound researches enables the present researcher to ponder into the concept called Soundscapes. This helps the listener to understand the sonic uniqueness of a place just as he or she looks into a landscape. Hence, the present study attempts to study various sonic elements used in the film *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam* directed by Lijo Jose Pellissery and produced by Mammooty Kampany Films Pvt Ltd in association with Amen Movie Monastery, under the umbrella field of Sound Studies.

Soundscape is one of the significant notions in the field of Sound Studies. A Soundscape is the totality of all sounds heard in a certain locality. R. Murray Schafer, the most prominent figure in Soundscape studies, defines soundscape as “any acoustic field of study”. However, Schafer regarded the concept of soundscape as a total social concept which is strong enough to appreciate the sonic panorama of a selected community or society. Schafer implemented mainly two tools namely, ear cleaning and soundscape recording. These tools were utilized by him with a broader aim to enable his students to perceive their soundscapes in new ways and to make them improve their culture’s soundscapes to some extent (Schafer, 1994).

In the essay “The Soundscape” written by Murray Schafer, he opines thus:

The soundscape of the world is changing. Modern man is beginning to inhabit a world with an acoustic environment radically different from any he has hitherto known. These new sounds, which differ in quality and intensity from those of the past, have alerted many researchers to the dangers of an indiscriminate and imperialistic spread of more and larger sounds into every corner of man’s life (Schafer, 1994, p. 3).

With his “The New Soundscape”, Murray Schafer popularized the term soundwalk for studying the concept of soundscape. He and his colleagues walked in Vancouver and other five European villages

and recorded these walks. This was done to identify sounds in those selected places. The ecological concerns of Schafer could also be noticed in this study. “An excursion whose main purpose is listening the environment” – is the definition given by Westerkamp for soundwalk. She emphasized the flexibility and adaptability of soundwalk. Soundwalks may be conducted individually or in groups, in separate geographic situations either in a wider area or a more intimate and centered space. However, this method of sound walking was taken up by following researchers. Most of them adopted soundwalk with a view to either engage in the prevalent sounds around them or evaluate the urban soundscapes. They conducted soundwalks recorded or unrecorded, alone or in groups, for fulfilling their methodological objectives.

The rationale of choosing the selected area and topic is multifold. The current study regards the selected film in a unique and novel lens, which is not so deliberated in Film studies, thereby adding to the existing episteme of film studies. Furthermore, the analysis of various sonic elements in the film under the ambit of Sound studies contributes to the discourse of sound in films. Another major reason is the scarcity of deliberation of the said field in India. Almost all research in Sound studies is concentrated from Canada, USA, the UK and Germany, making the western world the hub of Sound Studies and Soundscape Studies. This reflection alerts the researcher to contemplate about the shortage of studies in this specific field in the Indian academia. This being the context, the present article “*Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam*” as a metaphorical Soundwalk: An analysis” turns out to be relevant.

Method

The methodology used for the present study is soundscape analysis, which is a component of Sound Studies. Sound Studies, being an interdisciplinary field does not have an exclusive methodology to its credit. Its methods touch upon acoustic design, urban ecology, sound design, cultural geography, history and anthropology of senses etc. The present article intends to dwell upon the handling of sound in the 2022 Lijo Jose Pellissery film *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam (NNM)*, stressing the notion of soundscapes, thereby attributing the film a

soundwalk effect.

For this purpose, the researcher watched the movie multiple times at Netflix, the OTT platform in which the aforesaid film is released after its first air in 2022 IFFK in December and theatrical release in January and following shows in February. In an attempt to enumerate and analyse various sounds utilized in the film, the researcher used a wireless headphone called Realme Wireless Neo for recognizing all loud and slow sounds. The name of the device is relevant since the researcher conducts the study in Sound studies, which gives due importance to sound reproduction technologies and other sound related apparatuses.

Results and Findings

As part of the present study, the researcher enlists and analyses various sonic elements in the film *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam* with a view to underscore the film as a soundwalk. Before the film starts, the screen displays an extended list of music directors, lyricists and singers. The music directors in the list are Ilayaraja, M. S. Baburaj, M. S. Viswanathan, T. K. Ramamoorthy, P. Parthasarathi, K. V. Mahadevan, Rajeswari Ram, Devarajan Swamikal etc. Lyricists displayed in the film are Kannadasan, P. Bhaskaran, M. K. Athmanandan, Bali and Sri Devaraja Swamigal. The songs used in the film are sung by K. J. Yesudas, K. P. Udayabhanu, S. P. Balasubrahmanyam, T. M. Soundararaj, Sreenivas, P. Susheela, Sirikkazhi Govindaraj etc. Glancing through this long list of creators, it is evident that the film enables its audience to listen to various discrete Tamil songs from the past.

Mammootty, who acted as James, the protagonist of the film, in his chat with Ramesh Pisharadi and S. Hareesh in his own YouTube channel Mammootty Kampany opines that the background of the film includes all sounds, significant and insignificant, small and large, distant and close. Radio and TV sound, sounds from shops and voices of people seem to be the music of the whole film. Although the makers had to incur huge expense for obtaining the rights for the songs and dialogues used in the film, the biggest achievement, however, is that it got blended to each context of the film. The fun, emotion and happiness of the storyline is immersed with the aid of these background songs

and dialogues. The effort made by the makers to make it a distinct visual and sonic experience succeeded with the wholehearted appreciation from the audience (Mammooty Kampany, 2023).

In response to the interviewer's enquiry about whether the director had used the sound design as a retrospective device, Lijo Jose Pellissery clarifies that he intended to transform the existing soundscape into a musicscape, making it challenging to draw a distinction between the two. For instance, each grief-stricken scene in the film is punctuated with a gloomy musical piece or a dialogue from a distant or nearby TV or radio. The main goal of this technique is to give the audience an impression that no artificial music is employed to complement the scenario. He also asserts the collaborative effort of the whole team to blend the familiar sounds of advertisements, songs and movies heard from a typical Tamilnadu village into the film so as to bring about that distinct visual and sonic experience (Jose, 08:47-11:37). Consequently, the venture put forward by the makers proved to be a success by offering a varied treat for film appreciators.

The title of the film is displayed with a musical touch. The music with which the title is showcased contains various textures of sounds taken from nature, noisy beginnings of old films and musical instruments. As a whole, the viewer could listen to various music scores from the film. The music score is preceded by a sonic bit of the old noisy movie player. This addition shows the film's connection to the old days. One could hear the sound of birds and dogs, sounds of a camera click, sounds of music played in a musical instrument etc. Subtle in its nature, the title music of the film is worthy to listen along with the visual cues provided by the film (Jose, 2022, 01:09-01:16).

A second long silence is offered just before the film starts to play. In that second, details pertaining to the film are shown on the screen. The film begins by showing the frame of a house. Sonically speaking, the film commences with sounds of birds, sounds of vehicles, sounds of church bells, sounds from various announcements etc (02:09-02:15). Soon after setting the stage, the first dialogue is heard, which is of actor Ashokan. He calls out names like Johnny, James, and Monayi, tapping at their doors with distinct tapping modulations clearly audible from his knocks. However different his knockings are, his

gestures point to his urgency to go. In between his dialogues and knockings, one of the passengers makes a noise, usually made when one is woken up. The sound of flowing water from the tap and the sound of washing and gargling are another peculiarity of the scene (00:03:21). Followed by the closing sound of the tap, the actor hums a song casually, which might be his routine humming.

After the mild sounds from the lodge, the viewer is transported to a much louder environment wherein he or she could listen to songs of birds, various announcements in Tamil, Hallelujah songs from the church, sounds of both small and heavy vehicles, sounds of people who are commuting to and fro, bits of old Tamil songs played in radio from various sites etc. Songs played on the radio include, *Palliveyil* and *Ennazhaku Ponnazhaku*. Then, the sound emanating from a loudspeaker, which advises everyone over there to take care of their belongings, could be heard (03:38-05:24). Later, some more urgent knocking from the part of Ashokan is heard in the scene. He insists that he needs to open his shop in the morning. In between all these dialogues, the film captures almost all sounds around the scene.

Now, the scene changes to the front of the bus. Short and long horns are heard from the bus which implies that they are impatiently waiting for someone to join. Sounds of someone talking and coughing could be heard amidst the dialogues of the bus passengers. Everyone complains about James, who always comes late. The coordinators ask other passengers to get into the bus. Chit-chat between the persons in the scene is beautified with the sounds of a couple who giggle and pass by the bus. Elsewhere, James tends to his wife who is wounded from a ritual in the church. Meanwhile, James complains about the unnecessary expenses made by his co-passengers, who are also his actors in his drama company, Saradhi Theatres.

The next scene displays the bus with passengers, where they talk with each other informally. Then, the scene shifts to the front office of the lodge wherein James settles the bill for their stay. The accountant asks about his reason for his late coming for which he replies well. James, Mammooty, yawns and the person who takes the money enquires whether he has not slept or not. As a reply, James says that he could not sleep well last night. Meanwhile, he comes

across a saying at the desk. He asks, “What is written here”? (09:45) The accountant replies that it is a saying from *Thirukkural* and its meaning goes thus: “Death is sinking into slumbers deep. Birth, again, is waking out of sleep” (09:50). James says that the title of the book, *Thirukkural*, is worthy to be the title of a play (00:10).

When he steps out from the lodge, he clearly hears voices of crying babies. The sound of getting into the bus is another sound present in the scene. As soon as he enters the bus, Ashokan expresses his dismay at his late arrival and as a reply, James retorts whether he would go and settle the lodge bills. The aforesaid scene is punctuated with various sounds from the bus. Later, James advises the bus driver to go slow and exclaims that it is a place where they would come and hit others. This remark shows his prejudicial attitude towards Tamilians. His dialogue is followed by the starting sound of the bus with its loud horn. The title of the film is shown again with an old Tamil song as its accompaniment. The song used is “*Irikkunnidathe vittu illatha idathe thedi/ Engengo alanjinrar njana thankame/ Avar ethethum ariyaredi njanathankame*” (11:09-13:04). The song is played for at least two minutes.

The engine sound of the bus is heard along with the song. In a hotel where they stop for food, the viewer could listen to a famous advertisement of Bournvita (14:15). Besides the ad, the sounds of the engines, people and the hotel are clearly heard. Another popular old Tamil song is being played in the film. Meanwhile, passengers share jokes in their respective places which add more charm to the film.

After their comic interludes, they move to a hotel which is filled with sounds of people coming in and out. It is in this minute that James expresses his disinterest in Tamil food. He harshly criticizes the taste of the food served over there (17:30). For his irritable behavior, James’ wife Sally advises him to tolerate. Meanwhile, an old Tamil song is being played in the background. When everyone enters the bus, one of the characters says to James that he had paid the bill for his fish fry by himself. As a reply, James exclaims that this should be practiced hereafter.

When the bus moves, a dialogue from a famous Mammootty film is heard in the music player. The name of the film was *Parampara*

wherein Mammootty plays a double role (18:21-19:02). James does not pay attention to the dialogues heard through the player. He sits disinterestedly and looks into the face of his wife and out of the window. After the dialogue, the people in the bus start whistling. The co-passengers ask Monayi to sing a song. He replies that he will sing if they also sing along with him. Their song “*Pokame Pokame Manjakkaattil pokame*” starts soon after the sounds of their coughs and laughter (19:27-20:00). It is like a ballad which people repeats after the main singer. Contrary to other passengers, James is vexed by the background score in the bus. His facial gestures evince his attitude towards the same. This could be viewed as one of the limitations of relying on sound solely.

Followed by James’ insistence to stop singing, the bus driver plays another Tamil song entitled *Panamiruntal manamiruntal* (20:20-20:30). James asks the driver to switch to any Malayalam songs for god’s sake (20:31). He then changes the song to an old Malayalam song “*Padan marannupoya mookanam bhikshakkaran*” (20:45). Irritable James counters the act and tells the driver to play a much older song, in an ironical way. The sounds of other vehicles in the road could be heard in the midst of his dialogues. The next song in the list has its meaning as thus: “I saw, I come, I saw...What do I say? Do I even have to say?” Followed by it, the Tamil song “*Iravan Irikkundrannal*” is played. In between the song, the sound of a train passing by could be heard.

After some Tamil songs which deal with identity and quest, the theme is now changed to nature. A Tamil song which portrays the beauty of nature is played (22:00). This happens when James asks the driver to stop the bus and gets out of the bus. The viewers could witness a beautiful corn field. Then, the scene shifts to a big tree. This scene is ornamented with sounds of various birds and animals in the village. Sounds of cuckoos, mynahs, sparrows, and many other birds embellish the scene (23:40-24:00). Attention is shifted to a local village shop where a radio is playing. A scene from an old Tamil movie is heard on the radio. Birds’ sounds are also present as a background score for the dialogues. Sounds of cows, bells, dialogues from films, advertisements from TV etc are other specialities of the scene (24:30).

James' co-passengers start to ask for him. None gets any answer. James walks into the village as if he used to be a resident of the place. He is taken to the sounds of cows, goats, cocks, hens etc. along with film dialogues aired from radio and TV. James opens the door and gets into a small house wherein one could see a blind mother and a lady. After sitting for some time, he calls the lady's name Poonkuzhali and asks her to sleep and he prepares coffee (30:12). As usual, the scene is punctuated with old Tamil film dialogues. He asks the reason for not filling the bottles. He makes sounds of taking and opening bottles from the kitchen. Meanwhile, a vessel falls into the floor and it creates sound. The father enquires whether someone is inside or not. As a reply, the blind mother laughs as if she has understood something. Again, he called for "Poonkuzhali ...". The interesting fact is that James is now speaking in Tamil, the language he dislikes the most. It is shown that his identity has changed to Sundaram, a milkman from a small Tamil Nadu village. After some one-sided dialogues with his (Sundaram) family, he decides to go to the society. A long stretch of silence could be heard in the scene. This shows the family's disbelief in what is happening over there. The thirtieth minute of the film is characterized by Sundaram taking away a scooter from the village and riding too far away. People start making a ruckus and run behind him by calling out thief.

James's aka Sundaram's scooter ride is fused with some suspenseful horse ride music from an old Tamil movie (32:25-33:00). This addition of the thrilling background score provides yet another sensation to the scene. People's screams are followed by Ashokan's asking for James to an old lady working with cow dung. The answer is a bit philosophical. At that time, James passes by in the scooter and the people in the village run behind him. Meanwhile, James enjoys his ride by humming the popular Tamil song "*Oottukum pattukkum thalagathi venam*" (34:14). People in the village question the co-passengers in the bus and the scene is filled with their interrogations and replies.

Later, the villagers take the people to Sundaram's house. A door is opened. A lady whispers and points to the wife of Sundaram and introduces her. A movie dialogue is being played in the backdrop.

She adds that she has a daughter too. The film scene also has a mother and a daughter. Moving to the next scene, devotional songs from the temple could be heard along with the chit-chats and quarrels between the people. Sounds of crows, cows and cocks dominate the scene. The co-passengers stayed in another house of a villager. Feeble sound of dogs is also heard. Dialogues between the women characters in the bus are yet another feature of the scene.

As James changes his attire, language and even, his real self, everyone out in the bus discusses the reason for this transformation among each other and with the villagers. Sounds of crying babies and bees could be heard in the scene. Contrary to the busy roads with sounds of vehicle and from buildings and shops, the sonic texture of the aforesaid village in the film is marked for its serene atmosphere with only so many sounds. The sounds prevalent over there include birds, bees, animals, cycles, scooters and people.

Considering the sounds used in the film, it is essential to look into the dialogues uttered by the characters. As it is so, language used in the film is also to be studied. James aka Sundaram visits a tea shop and shares some casual stories with the people over there. His story telling invigorates everyone and they enquire about the storyteller. There occurs a comic atmosphere with the dialogue of James aka Sundaram (43:34-46:13). The language and dialect used by James create a sense of perplexity in the viewers since they do not imply or give any evidence that he is not Sundaram. The dialogue delivery by Mammootti is obviously noteworthy. His shift from Malayalam, specifically Kottayam dialect to the rural Palani Tamil dialect, calls attention to a great extent.

When the still camera switches its shot to the household, one could listen to the movie dialogue between two ladies, the former expressing her grief at being betrayed by her husband and the latter motivating her to move on in her life. In the movie, the husband of the lady has gone behind some other woman which destroyed their marital life. In the film under study, that is, *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam*, the context indicates a somewhat similar case wherein James, the theatre owner has a wife at Kerala and now, he acts as the husband of another woman Poonkuzhali in this Tamil Nadu village.

Infuriated, a girl rushes into Sundaram's house and asks the residents about his father's bike. When listening to other dialogues of the villagers, the girl's sound is loud enough to ace the situation. As a reply, Sundaram's father desperately expresses his plight in not understanding the actions of the man who came there. Later, with the background score of some Tamil film, the characters in the bus chat with each other regarding their situation. The sound of a scooter comes nearby and they recognize James whom they have been venturing to find in that unknown village. Soon, everybody starts to scream and call out to catch him.

When the scene changes inside a house, sounds from TV gets louder. A long movie scene has been played in the TV. The dialogue is followed by claps and whistles of the viewers of TV. Sundaram calls out his daughter and advises her to study well. Sundaram tends to hum a Tamil song "*Paalkoduthu Pachaikili*" (57:48). Meantime, his co-passengers arrive and ask him to accompany them as it is too late and others are saying ill about him. However, the sounds of his relatives, friends and staff remain strange to him. He even remarks that what are they saying in Malayalam and he could not understand their language. When all of them scolds him, Sundaram becomes emotional and calls out the names of the people present there and asks whether he is the resident of the place or not. The sound of Mammooty, first, is filled with contempt and then, it turns to grief and pathos. Soon after, the villagers also insist him to go back since he is simply a traveler who came to visit the place. In no time, the scene shifts to strife and fight. This conflicting scene is followed by a long emotional dialogue by Sundaram accompanied by a strifeful movie scene (00:57:57-01:02:05). When listening to both the dialogues, it is difficult to distinguish between each other. The editor of the film has fixed and fused both body of sounds in such a way that one could not sketch the border.

After the advertisement of Bournvita which occurs twice in the film, the next advertisement happens to be that of washing powder Nirma (01:02:06-01:02:39). Another film dialogue which resembles the situation followed the ad.

When the movie begins, the people in the bus are returning from Velankanni church in the quest of spirituality. The songs played in the background also throw light to themes like identity, self, quest etc. On analyzing some emotional scenes in the movie, the film dialogues played in the backdrop carry the same notions or interests. When Sally and Poonkuzhali are shown in the film, a movie scene in which a lady's marital relationship is shattered is played. Similarly, when James takes the scooter and rides it and when villagers run behind him, an apt suspenseful horse-riding music score is added to sound the scene. When the characters are dumbstruck to handle the situation, the sounds in the background have contributed or even scaffolded them in tackling it. This is how the movie makers utilized old film songs and dialogues to suit the context of various scenes in the film. Here, sound acts as a support system, rather than being just an element to enhance the scene.

At night, sounds of crickets are heard along with the discussions of the villagers about Sundaram. Later, as usual, dialogues from TV could be heard in the background. These sounds constitute the real sonic scape of that particular place. Apart from the sounds of vehicles like cycles and scooters, the sound of a bus appears in the scene, a bus to Ernakulam in which some passengers from the group return home. Now, one could listen to the Tamil melody song "*Antha neelanadikkarayoram*" in the film (01:07:19). Walking sound in the road is followed by sounds of a person vomiting and sounds emanating from radio programs (01:07:20-01:08:00). At dawn, James aka Sundaram takes the scooter and goes with the milk. Sally, James' wife cries and others in the group consoles her. When James rides the scooter, he enters into a calmer atmosphere in which sounds of birds and brooming are heard. He converses with the villagers whether they need milk or not. They reject his proposal and say that they would take milk from the other man (01:12:01). After the quarrel by Sundaram's brother, child's cries and a peaceful conversation between Poonkuzhali and Sally could be heard. As earlier, film sounds are manipulated to fuse the situation. A grief-stricken music score is played after they decide to give a medicine to sedate James.

James, now Sundaram, comes across a construction site and enquires about it to the workers. They respond that it is a temple construction site. Apparently, sounds of instruments and equipment for the work are heard. In the midst of blue music, ladies in the house discuss giving the sedative drug to James. Poonkuzhali, Sundaram's wife, discloses her miserable condition to do the same to a person who resembles Sundaram in his sound, words and deeds. Later, a movie dialogue is played in the backdrop wherein a lady says that she could not stay there anymore without seeing her relatives. The other man replies that they are trying to find some way out to take her to her own place. In the film, the group of pilgrims and villagers are setting stage for James to depart. As discussed earlier, the dialogues go hand in hand with the condition of the characters in the film.

Followed by their plans to give the drug, the blind mother of Sundaram laughs and her sound is heard louder. This laughter creates a sort of mystery in the viewers. The song "*Mayakkama Kalakkama, Manadile Kuzhappama, Vaazhkile Nadukkama*" which sinks with the gist of the film is heard along with the riding sound of Sundaram's scooter (01:29:22). James, then, enters a salon and the sound of the barber and his instruments become a part of the soundscape of the film. As James understands that Mayil Swami is no more, a strange jerking sound is heard to trigger the context. The sound heard in the scene resembles that of the wobbling sound played when James woke up from his sleep in the bus (01:30:00-01:31:20).

The pitch variation in which James, Sundaram, expresses his grief in not being identified by none could be regarded as the most pressing point of the film. Sound of the character is filled with gloom and dismay. Variations in the dialogue delivery is also a major concern when one considers sound as a focal point in films. His act until he sleeps is fused with a suspenseful slow music score to inform the audience of the significance of the scene. When James wakes up, the noisy cassette or player sound which is played within the title music of the film is instilled so as to show that the normal state is reinstated (01:38:53). He, then, voluntarily walks into his folk and expresses his consent to return. The film ends with the song "*Veeduvare Uravu, veethivare manaivi*" along with the group of Keralites returning back

(01:41:12 - 01:43:12). Before the bus starts, the first shots of the village are again made to see or reiterated with the same sonic elements of birds and breeze. It is also significant to note that the sonic elements including nature sounds and sounds of TV and radio advertisements contribute to the overall development of the plot of the film.

After a thorough exploration of the sounds used in the film “*Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam*” directed by Lijo Jose Pellissery, it is thought-provoking to notice that the scenes and sounds shown at the beginning of the film are recurred towards the end of the film. This enables the researcher to contemplate on the concept of soundwalking wherein the sound student starts his walk from a specific point to reach another destination. He may also reach the starting point as well. In a soundwalk, the person involved in the walk records the sounds from the context so as to retrieve those sounds. Here, in this film, the makers have not used any separate background score for the film. Instead, they borrowed old Tamil songs and scenes with a view to offer the film a varied visual and sonic experience.

When the movie begins, the people in the bus walk to the bus and wait for James, the owner, to come. Then, after covering a short distance, James wakes up from his slumber and asks the driver to stop the bus. He walks into a remote Tamil nadu village and acts as a resident of that place. He walks as if he has been living there for years. The viewers are made to hear the sounds of the village, radio and TV sounds, sounds of vehicles, etc. These exploration of sounds in the film could be considered as a walk to one’s own past. James, the protagonist, himself is walking to some strange village so as to seek his identity or real self. After all the serious and comic events created by Sundaram, James walks back to the bus and returns home. Towards the end of the film, Mammooty along with his friends and relatives walk to reach the bus through the village. At that time too, the sound of a Tamil song is heard in the background. As it is so, the film under study *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam*, on enlisting and analyzing the overall body of sounds in the film could be perceived as a soundwalk.

Conclusion

The present paper intends to investigate various sounds used in the film “*Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam*” through the lens of soundwalking. Soundwalk is a methodology popularized by Schafer to identify the sound in one’s environment. For a soundwalk, the scholar travels with or without a recorder to capture the sounds present in his or her environment. The watching of the film could be considered as a walking along with listening to sounds in the film. The background score used in the film enables the viewer or audience to walk into the past and through the present times.

With the inducing of a plethora of distinctive sounds from cinema, the director persuades the spectator to listen to the environment or the backdrop of the film, which is often ignored. Moreover, the sounds employed in the film as background score do not distract the spectator from the actual storyline. As the environment is integral to the lives of living and non-living beings, the background music is crucial for a film to have that aesthetic effect. Here, the director uses old film songs and other mundane sounds as the film’s backdrop. In adding contextual film dialogues and songs, he had made the background score the most important chunk of the film without which the film would not be imagined. In this sense, it is observed that the 2023 Lijo Jose Pellissery film “*Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam*” or “*The Midday Slumber*” would be entitled as a soundwalk by itself and a soundwalk for the spectators to one’s own self, resulting in their contemplation about their identity and the significance of inclusivity. Overall, the topic “*Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam as a Metaphorical Soundwalk*” holds promise for offering fresh insights into the film’s audio-visual storytelling and contributing to the discourse on sound in cinema.

References

- Adams, M. D., Bruce, N., Davies, W., Cain, R., Jennings, P., Carlyle, A., Cusack, P., Hume, K., & Plack, C. (2008, April). Soundwalking as a methodology for understanding soundscapes [Conference session]. Institute of Acoustics Spring Conference 2008, University of Salford, Reading, UK. https://salfordrepository.worktribe.com/preview/1501904/Adams_etal_2008_Soundwalking_as_Methodology.pdf
- Adhithya., Sreenivasan, S., & Deepauk, M. (Hosts). (2023, March 05). Lijo Jose Pellissery's Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam [Audio podcast episode]. In *The Other Banana*. Spotify for Podcasters. https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/theotherbanana/episodes/Lijo_-Jose-Pellisserys-Nanpakal_-Nerath-Mayakkam-e1vsei1/a-a9ef7sr
- Ahmed, A. (2023). *Sounding spaces and walking spirits: Watching Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam*. Maktoob media. <https://maktoobmedia.com/more/film-and-tv/sounding-spaces-and-walking-spirits-watching-nanpakal-nerathu-mayakkam/>
- Akhilan, S. (2023). *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam (2022)*. IMDb website. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt15477504/>
- Behrendt, F. (2018). Sound walking. In M. Bull (Ed.), *The Routledge companion to sound studies* (pp. 249-257). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315722191-28>
- Berry, D. M. (2019). *What are the digital humanities?* The British Academy. <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/what-are-digital-humanities/>
- Bull, M. (2019). *The Routledge companion to sound studies*. Routledge.
- Bull, M., & Back, L. (2020). *The Auditory Culture Reader*. Routledge.
- Cage, J. (2023). *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam (2022) - Movie Review | Mammooty | Lijo Jose Pellissery* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yr638q0CKHs>
- Devan, A. (2023, March 12). Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam features in The New York Times' list of top five international movies. *Cinema Express*. <https://www.cinemaexpress.com/malayalam/news/2023/mar/12/nanpakal-nerathu-mayakkam-features-in-the-newyork-times-listicle-40954.html>
- Digital humanities*. (2023). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_humanities
- Jose, L. (Director). (2022). *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam* [In this Malayalam-Tamil drama, an irritable James wakes up on a bus believing he is Sundaram, a man who disappeared from a quiet village years ago.]. Mammooty Kampany.
- Lingold, M. C., Mueller, D., & Trettien, W. (2018). *Digital sound studies*. Duke University Press.
- Mammooty Kampany. (2023). *Chat with Lijo Jose Pellissery | Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam | Special Interview | Mammooty* [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZM83j091NzQ&t=10s>
- Mammooty Kampany. (2023). *Mammooty & S Hareesh in an Open Talk with Ramesh Pisharody | Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam Special* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbCGT0n4GgMhttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbCGT0n4GgM>
- Merriam-Webster. (2023). *Definition of sound*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sound>

- Merriam-Webster. (2023). *Definition of sound*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sound>
- Miles, K., & Segall, R. (2023). *Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam MOVIE REVIEW!!! | Mammootty | Lijo Jose Pellissery* [Video]. OUR STUPID REACTIONS! | YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzWca8ifMLg>
- Nair, S. (2023). *Mammootty gets off a bus; Goes down a rabbit hole*. Rediff. <https://www.rediff.com/movies/column/nanpakal-nerathu-mayakkam-mammootty-gets-off-a-bus-goes-down-a-rabbit-hole/20230317.htm>
- Nordquist, R. (2013). *Definition and Examples of Corpora in Linguistics*. ThoughtCo. <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-corpus-language-1689806>
- Pinch, T., & Bijsterveld, K. (2012). *The Oxford handbook of sound studies*. Oxford University Press.
- Schafer, R. M. (1994). *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Destiny Books.
- Sreenivasan, S. (2023). "A letter to Lijo Jose Pellissery". The Seventh Art. <https://theseventhart.info/2023/01/25/a-letter-to-lijo-jose-pellissery/>
- Sreenivasan, S. (2023). "Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam (2022) – Part 2". The Seventh Art. <https://theseventhart.info/2023/01/31/nanpakal-nerathu-mayakkam-2022-part-2/>
- Sterne, J. (2003). *The audible past: Cultural origins of sound reproduction*. Duke University Press.
- Sterne, J. (2012). *The Sound Studies Reader*. Routledge.
- Westerkamp, H. (2001). *Soundwalking*. Hildegard Westerkamp - Inside the Soundscape. https://www.hildegardwesterkamp.ca/writings/writingsby/?post_id=13&title=soundwalking

Husna Ameen

Research Scholar

All Saints' College

Thiruvananthapuram

Pin: 695007

India

Ph: +919497771473

Email: husnaameen92@gmail.com

ORCID: 0009-0009-5156-9401