

## **Magical Realism in Urumi**

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**Abstract:** The most read author in Malayalam, Marquis and the Maconda village in his work are made their own by Malayalees. Marquis revealed through his writings, the possibilities of the writing technique of Magical Realism. It is the creative writing technique which opened new pastures of appreciation in literature, sculpture, painting, and cinema - the art of surprise and wonder. The technique of Magical Realism became the fertile land of creative expression and artistic narration in the colonized Third World Countries. It is not easy to depict Magical Realism in Movie. It is a challenge to the Directors how the reason of the spectator, under the impression that they watch the real on the screen, will receive the unexpected elements of fantasy and illusion. Therefore, the Magical Realist Movies in Malayalam have been released under the label 'experimental movie'. 'Urumi' released in 2011 is a Malayalam Movie which experimented the potentials and possibilities of Magical Realism. It is Santosh Sivan who filmed the story of Kelu Nair who had kept with him a golden Urumi to kill Vasco De Gama under the title 'Urumis'.

**Keywords:** Magical Realism, experimental movie, Post-expressionist technique

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"Heavy down pour which lasted for 4 years and 11 months.... The silence of words and the past erased by the plague of sleeplessness.... Also a room which reminds a Monday in March...." The magical power of these lines from the 'One Hundred Years of Solitude' by the renowned Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquis sabotages the flow of time.

The most read author in Malayalam, Marquis and the Maconda village in his work are made their own by Malayalees. The resemblance of Maconda with the geography of Kerala, the existence of the inhabitants of that village and the style and habit of that time which stretch into the 'This time' of the Malayalee – all these are surprising. Marquis revealed through his writings, the possibilities of the writing technique of Magical Realism. It is the creative writing technique which opened new pastures of appreciation in literature, sculpture, painting, and cinema - the art of surprise and wonder.

The narrative style of Magical Realism is one that brings face to face reality and fantasy by mixing folktales proverbs, dreams, past events with reality. It was Franz Roh, the art historian who used the term Magical Realism for the first time to refer to the Post-expressionist technique which evolved in the European Art after the First World War. Though it began as a European idea, it was Latin America which embraced Magical Realism. What made Latin America a land of several features and significances of creative writing is the migration of several European geniuses and artists to the American Continent in the context of the Second World War. The technique of Magical Realism became the fertile land of creative expression and artistic narration in the colonized Third World Countries. Great works of art ripened in that soil exploiting the suppressed customs, systems, culture and legends.

Magical Realism entered the film field in three ways. Nationalistic films based on the ignored legends, Films portraying the contemporary reality linking the world of fantasy with it, and the cinematization of realistic novels or writings. It is not easy to depict Magical Realism in Movies. It is a challenge to the Directors how the reason of the spectator, under the impression that they watch the real on the screen, will receive the unexpected elements of fantasy and illusion. Therefore, the Magical Realist Movies in Malayalam have been released under the label 'experimental movie'. 'Urumi' released in 2011 is a Malayalam Movie which experimented the potentials and possibilities of Magical Realism. It is Santosh Sivan who filmed the story of Kelu Nair who had kept with him a golden Urumi to kill Vasco De Gama under the title 'Urumi'.

The technique of Magical Realism always has been useful for the portrayal of the stories of the oppressed who had sunk into the bottom of history owing to the praises of the stories of upper class heroes.

While the Europeans wrote history stating that India was discovered by Vasco de Gama, the courage and self-esteem to proclaim that he discovered only the sea-route to India was shown by Indians only recently. In the European history, which praises Gama, the story of Kelu Nair who was bent upon destroying him never figures. Even in the minds of the Indians who have mugged up their history, the figure of a Kelu Nair who failed never appears. But, lots of KeluNairs sleep under this soil who had fought and failed against the Portuguese and the mercantile vultures. When the unwritten history of Kelu Nair was combined with the story of Vasco de Gama who had a place in history, the film 'Urumi' was born.

The opening of the movie is with a statement that history has a strange character of repetition. In this repetition many thing old, and many old people may be re-created as such. But, the agents of the Mining and Excavation Company called Nirvana come in search of Krishnadas (Prithwiraj) who lives in the journey from weekends to weekends unaware of all these things. His grandfather had given a piece of land on lease to an NGO. The period of lease was about to expire and Krishnadas was the legal heir to this land as he informed by the Agents. The company gives a dream after, an amount he can't even imagine, as price to this land rich in minerals. Krishnadas along with his friend Tarzan (Prabhu Deva) goes to the heritage property near the Kannadikkadu Forest Range with the intention of selling it to the company. But, unexpected people and unexpected things were awaiting him.

The moment they reached there, they had to encounter a seemingly mentally deranged girl who appeared all on a sudden asking them "whether they brought it?" On his response "what?", the girl got sore with him and disappeared suddenly murmuring something. Bhoomi, (VidyaBalan) was a woman running a school there for the Tribals (adivasis). She gave a lecture to Krishnadas and Tarzan on the environmental hazards and the future consequences the adivasis may have to face, if the land is taken over by the company. Anyhow they being disinterested in the place, were about to return. Suddenly their car was surrounded by gun men. They blind folded Krishnadas and Tarzan and took them to the cave of the Tribal Head Thankachen (Arya).

Thankachen who was in strange attires, form and expression, enquired Krishnadas whether he knew anything about his ancestors. He took a handful of soil from the cave and put it in his hand and Thankachen started narrating the story of his unknown ancestors. He led Krishnadas to the story of Kelu Nair who was waiting with his golden Urumi to destroy the cruel Portuguese Vasco de Gama, who was a barbarous killer of many, including his own father. He had come there under the pretext of buying Pepper and in course of time had conquered the Country, causing muting and fight among the rulers of local kingdoms. Kelu Nair who was waiting for a chance to take revenge on Gama, had his confident Vawali (Prabhu Deva) to help him in the dense forests.

Kelu Nair on hearing that Vasco De Gama comes in person to hang the fighter called Balihasan at the ArackalDesam destroyed by the Portuguese, with the blessings of the Chirackal, he proceeds to ArackalDesam to conquer Gama alive and bring him to Chirackal. But he came to know that Gama did not turn up. Instead it was his son Esthavo Gama who had come there. Anyway, Kelu Nair defeated Estava, imprisoned him and returned along with Vawali to Chirackal. Kelu realizes that the soldiers sent by King of Chirakkal had the secret agenda of abducting the women of Arackkal Palace to Chirakkal, and killing Kelu and his team instead of capturing Gama. He, therefore, kills the fighters of Chirakkal who tried to stab him from behind. Kelu meets there for the first time Arakkal Aisha, who was an excellent fighter and had an unparalleled control and flexibility of body. Avoiding the fighters who were the trusted followers of ChenicheryKurup, the foul strategist of Chirackal, Kelu and Kawali return to Chirakkal with Esthavo, through the way to Kannadikkadu.

They decided to stay inside the Temple of Makkam Tara at night. Kelu and Vawali had a divine vision of Makkam Tara (VidyaBalan). Makkam Tara advised Kelu to accept the position of the chief of Army at Chirakkal. She revealed to him also the path to cross the Kannadikkadu. Kelu Nair who reached Chirakkal with Esthavo as the captive was raised to the position of the Chief of Army. Kelu Nair identified the women of Arakkal who were in the inner chamber there, at Chirakkal. Kelu set free Estava and caused a clash. Under the pretext of this clash, he saved the women of Arackkal. Aisha falls in love with Kelu. Vawali, who captures Estava again, is honoured by the King.

Bala is a Naga Damsel and the Princess of Chirakkal. She feels sexually attracted to Vawali who had saved her from danger earlier also. She promises him to show the place where the Naga tattooed on her body sleeps, on his victorious return from the battle field.

Kelu forms a local army to confront the Portuguese Army. For this he gives training to the villagers including the workers in the paddy fields. Along with Kelu and Vawali, Arakkal Aisha also joins as a trainer of the Army. Meanwhile, trapped by ChenicheryKurup, BhanuVikraman, the nephew of the King of Chirakkal, causes the death of the Chirakkal King at the guns of the Portuguese Army. Chenichery wanted to join hands with the Portuguese and mint profit through trade. BhanuVikraman was his puppet, and he became the ruler of Chirakkal.

Chenicheri who set free Estavo tries to destroy Kelu and his local army using the Portuguese Army. But at the initial stages the local army of Kelu and Aisha defeats the opponents. When failure became a regular phenomenon for the Portuguese Army, Vasco De Gama decided to lead his army in person, in order to destroy Kelu and his followers. Kelu goes to the battlefield promising Kelu that he would return to Aisha, who was pregnant, then.

Kelu succeeded in going near Vasco Da Gama breaking through the Portuguese Army in order to kill him but Gama shot him down. The foreigners who came here after Gama looted this land for 400 years. Later the Natives themselves turned out to be the exploiters looting their land. Thankachen ends his story narrating all these. Krishnadas recognizes that all those who appeared in the story are hidden in this genes.

Nirvana is the New Generation form of the Portuguese. He refuses to sign the treaty realizing this truth. The Urumi given to him by Thankachan is received by Krishnadas as a successor of Kelu. The mentally deranged girl took the Urumi from him and stretched it. Only she sees the fulfillment of the promise given to Aisha by Kelu, that he would return to her. She sees Kelu who twirls his Urumi using the eyes which passed through different generations.

Globalization has opened the path to new Gamas. Hence the land, its culture and Nature will be destroyed. This is what this movie picturises. This film gives as a gift to the spectators the shock and surprise caused seeing the unchanging face of exploiters even if the times change. ChenicherryKurup becomes a state Minister who aids the exploiters under the pretext of development.

Estavo Gama is the senior official of the Mining Company. Bhumi was the advisor of Krishnadas while Kelu who has a similar face of Krishnadas receives advice from Makkam Tara whose face is similar to Bhumi. Urumi succeeds in presenting spatio- temporal and existential crisis to the spectator through Magical Realist narrative style.

The vision given to Kelu by Makkam Tara, the divinity attributed by the Tribals to the Golden Urumi, the mentally deranged girl who is the reincarnation of Arackal Aisha, her vision of Kelu which happens only when she stretches out the Urumi- all these are examples of the Magical that is the Magical Realist elements found in the movie. The Magical Realist plot structure which causes wonder and shock, which allows inexplicability to remain, leads the spectator in several scenes to the midst of reality and fantasy.

'The Hindu Daily' commented that Urumi is a turning point in the history of Malayalam Cinema. Certain elements of melodrama needed for a commercial movie, and some allegations against the songs of Deepak Dev have been pointed out by Film Critics. Yet the film succeeded in introducing the new path of Magical Realism to Malayalam Cinema. And the role played by the film Urumi to unravel the exploitative face of globalization and to give a revolutionary reinterpretation to the historical story is really surprising.

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