

## Analysis of the Transformation of the Protagonist in Sherman Alexie's *Flight* through the Lens of Magical Realism

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### ABSTRACT

The current study looks at the narrative mode magical realism of Sherman Alexie's novel *Flight*. It is a mix of realistic narrative and naturalistic techniques with surreal elements of dream and fantasy. The study has focused on the character of Zits (Michael) who is also the protagonist of the novel. Zits. His original name is Michael but he is nicknamed as Zits because of his skin disease. The present study used qualitative content analysis as a tool of research. The study used Postmodernism as a theoretical framework focusing on the significance of using magical realism as a narrative technique in the novel. The technique of magical realism was needed for portrayal of Zits' psychological transformational journeys. He was always involved in gruesome retaliations against the society. He even hated his father, who was an American-Indian, until he embarked on the psychological transformational journeys which made him realize that forgiveness is preferable than vengeance since it is the only option for him to find peace of mind and not via revenge or by retaliations. This finally leads him to accept his foster parents who physically and morally mistreated him in his childhood. The technique of magical realism helped the novelist build a world-view he wanted the readers to experience. The study revealed that the technique of magical realism was helpful to the novelist to portray the transformation of the character of Zits. It revealed how the transformed identities of an emotionally wounded male Indian orphan assisted him in considering the evilness of colonialism, racism and violence. It aided him in seeing the need of mending those wounds after realizing empathy, forgiveness, compassion and exploring reconciliation with others as realistic paths out of grieves and sufferings. It's easy to express hopes after all the hardships in the form of shames and destructive ideas.

### KEYWORDS

Magical Realism, transformations, identity, Flight, Modernism, Postmodernism

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### INTRODUCTION

The current study was an effort to look at the narrative mode of Sherman Alexie's novel *Flight*. Its major goal was to examine the technique of magical realism that has been widely used in the novel. Magical realism is a term used to describe a style in which magical or unreal aspects are depicted as a natural component of a normal or ordinary setting (Terian, 2021). Magical realism, according to Strecher (1999), occurs when a highly detailed, realistic scene is invaded by something too bizarre to accept. The term "magical realism" was first connected with Latin American literature, specifically with authors like Marquez (1927-2014) and Allende (1942- ). The magical aspects are placed into a realistic setting in order to gain a better knowledge of reality. These mystical aspects are presented in a straightforward and matter-of-fact manner, and are explained and accepted as everyday occurrences (Hart, 1989).

In 1940s, Cuban novelists first applied the phrase, "magical realism" to literature to describe their works (Flores, 1995). Fantastical happenings are depicted in a realistic tone in magical realism. It gives contemporary social meaning to traditional tales and mythology. Writers do not create new universes; instead, they illuminate the magical components that already exist (Barros, 2010). The supernatural realm combines with the natural and familiar world in the binary universe of magical realism. In such compositions, the narrator is unconcerned and doesn't explain the incredible events, and the story moves along with logical accuracy as if nothing exceptional took place (Alabi, 2021). Because magical happenings are presented as commonplace occurrences, the reader accepts the fantastic happenings as normal and commonplace. As a result, the supernatural happenings would be dismissed as false testimony by the readers (Sheikhzade, 2018). Many well-known authors have used this technique in their works, including Tutuola (1920-1997), Marquez (1927-2014), Head (1937-1986), Allende (1942- ), Rushdie (1947- ) and Duiker (1974-2005).

Magical Realism is solely the representation of two worlds: reality and fantasy; the natural and supernatural. It is normalizing the abnormal to create a third world on the part of the reader. Magical Realism " ... mingles realistic portrayals of ordinary events and characters with elements of fantasy and myth, creating a rich, frequently disquieting world that is at once familiar and dreamlike" (Younas, 2020, p. 44). The ordinary objects in our everyday lives might be seen as unusual and wonderful. As a result, it blurs the line between realism and fantasy, imbuing them with mythical, folkloric depths and



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inferences. The word "magic" does not mean enchantment or sorcery, as its name implies. Instead, magic is a necessary component of the supernatural, eerie, odd and uncanny world, all of which have some connection to the mundane, terrestrial, and corporeal world. Realism, on the other hand, requires a work of fiction, to "resolve to remain close to the outlines of concrete reality" (Childs & Fowler, 2006, p. 118). As a result of the social or personal shortcomings, the grotesque is considered a contrastive component of realism. This states that both magic and realism are defined by blending realistic and magical components to create a unique perspective that all readers may appreciate.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The study focused on analyzing the device of magical realism in *Flight* by Sherman Alexie. Alexie used the technique of magical realism to portray different transformational journeys of the protagonist, Zits, in the novel. The use of this technique helped us in comprehending the different transformational journeys of the protagonist, Zits, in the novel. In the novel, there are different transformational journeys of Zits that have been highlighted. All these different transformational journeys were associated to ideologies (hidden identities) of Zits (the protagonist of the novel) portrayed by reflecting the protagonist's thoughts. The characterization of the protagonist's thoughts about his ideologies was shaped by social orders, and his respective changing position was disclosed through magical realism technique. The analysis of the technique revealed that how the transformed identities of an emotionally wounded male Indian orphan assisted him in considering the evilness of colonialism, racism and violence. It aided him in seeing the need of mending those wounds after realizing empathy, forgiveness, compassion and exploring reconciliation with others as realistic paths out of grieves and sufferings. It is easy to express hopes after all the hardships in the form of shames and destructive ideas.

The battling issues of shame, acne, alcoholism, racism, identity, history, hate and revenge are comprehended after realizing his true personality. The Indian trauma was forgiven to realize his self-worth after the considerable mental and physical abuses. The embarrassment, rage, bitterness, lack of resentment, hate and revenge on part of perpetrators, presented by using the technique of magical realism. The complex has a relation to the different transformational journeys of the protagonist, purposefully portrayed through magical realism. The flow of inner thoughts and outer actions were best depicted through this technique understanding that some issues like racism could be easily dealt with than other complex issues like love.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Magical realism has attracted many readers and intellectual around the globe from last few decades. Magical realism became an effective mode of narration that critique the flaws of society. Writers of different background use this mode of narration to engage themselves in the modern literary world with the aim to value and secure their culture and tradition. The words magic and realism combine to form magical realism. The term "realism" refers to an ideology incorporated by the literary movement in the early nineteenth century, particularly in prose, with pioneers such as Balzac (1799-1850) in France, Elliot (1819-1880) in England, and Howells (1837-1920) in America (Hart & Hart, 2021). It was used in prose that had portrayed characters, events, situations and setting like daily life in a fabulous that is logical and convincing because it is based on common sense.

The term magical realism is applied to works that were totally different to its definition due to the various views of different critics. On the one hand, the success of the works produced in this field by post-colonial writers establishes it as a subgenre of post-colonialism; on the other hand, its emergence at the same time as postmodern literature and the common characteristics it shares with this movement establishes it as a postmodernism subgenre (Mejia, 2021). Regardless of how difficult it may appear to define this phrase precisely; it can be said that magical realism is a distinct genre that incorporates elements of other literary trends while maintaining its own distinct qualities. Magical realism, which is used in a variety of fictions and ideologies, causes reviewers to stutter between perplexity, juxtaposition, and contradiction (Chanady, 2019). Magic realism incorporates some literary realism methods with nonfictional writing skills such as biography and history (Warnes & Sasser, 2020). In current literary world, magical realism is an effective and appealing mode because it is used by many writers throughout the globe of different backgrounds; it blends reality and fantasy that portrays things and situations in marvelous realistic and fantastic way. The six features of magical realist literature are: Hybridity, Authorial Reticence, Plentitude, Antinomy, Metafiction, Defamiliarization and Intertextuality (Yahya, 2017), along other major components of magical realism like ambiguity, symbol/myth, folk tales, metamorphosis and dreams (Rajabi, Azizi, & Akbari, 2020). Magic realist writers validate their norms and culture by utilizing folklores and myths from the native culture and society. Magical realism can also be seen as a representation of lost history of native people; creating self-identification on the face of western dominant colonial narratives (Aljohani, 2016). The most noticeable characteristics of the works having magical realism are: characters transform into different things and shapes, slaves are saved and helped by dead, and things are presented in different time spaces in the same narrative. Humans have lost traditional values and our relation with nature and animals. These values and relations have been weakened by modern rational and technologies. Such works have political contexts because of themes such as myth, identity, reasoning, reality and progress. The writers strive to find indigenous identities and values in this rational and progressive world (Thamarana, 2015). If we carefully and intensively examine the whole scenario of magical realism it looks a political stance that is the result of imperialism. After reading magical realist novels, the characters experience phenomenal

situations. They experience extraordinary situations and are left in the middle of fantasy and reality: these supernatural happenings are perceived as real or ordinary (Utari, 2016). Magical realism became an effective source condemnation against various dominances such as social, political, traditional and linguistic. It has attracted many writers to portray problems of the respective race or nation as it is a ludicrous and effective way to highlight these issues. Ahmad, Afsar and Masood (2012) found that Marquez had effectively used magical realism as a source of protest. Marquez has portrayed the ways (steps) of the hegemonic through which they hold back the others. It has been founded that identity crises among African slaves, is the cause of hegemonic class behavior and attitude. Some writers used it for the reconciliation of the culture and the mysterious nature of their culture (Ambarcioglu, 2014). Its main aim was and is to revolt against the hegemonic society which discriminate and degrade the others (less privileged or colonized). It is a confrontation that aim to raise voice for the oppressed of society; that's why it captured the attention of so many. As a piece of literature magical realism is used as an agenda to restore the forgotten culture of the indigenous. It is symbolic and metaphoric ways to convey reality. And that it is adaptable today because of its appealing nature (Chowdhary, 2020). The magical realist technique is utilized mostly by indigenous communities (Ananth, 2017). But Kantor (2018) says that magical realism not only deals with the burden of the past but also with global reality of the modern world.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study used qualitative content analysis approach as a tool of research. The themes in the data (novel as the text) were analyzed from the words and concepts in the text. The content was analyzed signifying the relevance of magical realism in as a narrative mode. The researchers analyzed and quantified the meaning and relationship among the concepts and their relation with the narrative mode by inferencing these concepts and themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The technique helped the researchers to identify the characteristics of the message in the selected text objectively and systematically by making inferences. The technique helped in identifying the intentions and focus of the characters from the communicative trends of the individuals (mostly protagonist) or the marginalized group. The behavioral and attitudinal responses of the marginalized group were described with this method. The selection of this particular mode of narration determined the emotional and psychological states of the individuals and the group. The interracial differences and patterns were easily revealed with this method. The content analysis was conceptual in nature rather than relational because it determined the existence and frequency of magical realism as significant literary aspect of the text.

The cultural insights about the marginalized group with valuable historical references were easily identified with the method selected. The magical aspect of reality hinted to the insight into the complexity of human thought and the need for new narrative technique to convey them in a magical way. The close reading of the text for the narrative mode and the realization at the end of each transformation in the form of new intensified experiences and perceptions were done in the present study (Krieken, 2018) suggesting the inner struggle of Zits. The secondary sources authenticated the findings of the present study utilizing the same or other research methods. The study used Postmodernism as a theoretical framework focusing on the significance of using magical realism as a narrative technique in the novel. Magical realism as a genre has been established within the post-modern movement (Duncan, 2015). The magical realism combines the fantastic with real in such ways that the magical element(s) grow out of the real organically fragmenting the world in post-modern sense (D'haen, 1995; Faris, 2004). In today's postmodern world (society), one's own realization is only possible through others' realization. But this realization is different from scientific understanding of narratives stating with help of original rules. This is realization is magical in nature, giving space and legitimation to magical in the world of reality to convey a particular new type of postmodern meaning of identities and other social issues. The new worldviews are constructed with the help of magical realism to portray postmodern tendencies in the globalized world. The contradictory perspectives are expressed by adopting such narratives for tales (Jameson, 1985). The textual analysis of the selected text was done in the light of postmodern theory. The text was searched for instances of magical realism and the significance of the same was highlighted throughout the text. The analysis was done for showing why erasure of boundaries was needed in the first place and how eclecticism was adopted in the story for depicting the social issues of the protagonist and other marginalized characters. Self-reflexiveness of the protagonist in every transformational journey was analyzed for its thematic significance. While the many magical transformational journeys were analyzed for multiplicity of the issue for marginalized individual and class. The redundancy of the haunting of figure of the father of the protagonist similarly was analyzed for a shelter among sunlight of hardship everywhere. The analysis of intertextuality of the text helped in establishing the links among the discontinuity of actions and events. The apparent dissolution of characters and narrative was analyzed for magical reality in the light of the postmodern perspectives.

### DATA ANALYSIS

Zits was an abandoned child and gone through many a storms. The example which has been discussed above shows the psychoanalytic dimensions; it is through Zits continuously flowing thoughts and consecutive river of consciousness such as his thinking, ideas, opinion, abuse, memory and most importantly through introspection, that he solves his problem that if he wants to rest in peace he should forgive others for their blunders in order to forgive himself (Alves & Feldman, 2019). The

five transformational journeys on which Zits embark is the solid example of Magic Realism while he is still standing in the bank. Magical realism works on many levels. The chief levels are physical and psychological.

Zits thought about the popular belief of peoples who thought that Crazy Horse was a bulletproof man. Thus, the novel commented on the fact; *“Soon, he will be killed. Not by a bullet. According to legend, Crazy Horse was bulletproof. Crazy Horse will be murdered by one of his old friends: by Little Big Man. Another Indian warrior will betray Crazy Horse. Little Big Man will hold Crazy Horse’s arms as a white soldier punches a bayonet into the strange one’s belly. A bayonet will kill Crazy Horse. Like the bayonet in my hand.”* (p. 77)

Crazy Horse was remembered as a revered man in American Indian history. The natives believed that Crazy Horse performed extraordinary tactics of war against the White people. The Indian magical realist history about Crazy Horse recorded that he was killed by one of his colleague Little Bighorn, who turned out to be a traitor.

Zits at another point was again in a dilemma, he was not sure whether to kill the soldier next to him. In one of his transformative magical realist journeys, Zits was unable to muster up courage to kill an innocent boy soldier. The scene created in the novel was such that, again it seemed to us if Zits was dreaming about some events in which he was assigned to kill innocent which was difficult for him. So, his transformation took place on mental level where he reached a realization that to kill someone was very difficult. Only those could kill who possessed certain bad experiences in them, happened to them in childhood could bring themselves to kill someone. And then Zits reminded himself of the bad things happened to him in one of the dark room, done to him by his foster father. Thus, Zits said,

*“Did they deserve to die because of my loneliness? Does this little white soldier deserve to die because one of his fellow soldiers slashed my throat? If I kill him, do I deserve to be killed by this white soldier’s family and friends? Is revenge a circle inside of a circle inside of a circle?”* (p. 77).

Zits finally alluded to the fact in the novel that his Indian father wanted him to take revenge. His father yelled at him. It wasn’t actually Zits’ father but Zits was in the body of a child who was thirteen and Indian and who was dumb because his throat was once slashed by white soldiers. The novel recorded the magical realist episode as,

*“My father yells at me in his language. He wants me to be a warrior. I’m only twelve or thirteen. This body is only twelve or thirteen. I am only a child. I stare at the white soldier in front of me. He’s probably eighteen. Or younger. He’s seventeen or sixteen or fifteen. He’s a child and I’m a child and I’m supposed to slash his throat”* (p. 78).

So, Zits finally closed his ideas and before he could move on a next magical realist journey he murdered another kid soldier. Through magic realist journey Zits was now a supposed murderer and he had realized that killing someone actually was a herculean task. A sane human would not do so.

Another journey that Zits underwent was when he became a tracker against his own people e.g., Indians. Zits thought that he had become a traitor to his own people but something deep inside would not let him overcome that dilemma. The reason was that Zits was still on a magic realist journey and he needed to explore himself further.

*“You see, I try to get lost. I try to lead the soldiers astray. But it doesn’t work that way”* (p. 85).

Zits referring to one of his magical realist journeys in the novel said that he had no control over his thoughts, memories and cognitions. He was in the grip of a body called Gus who was an old man. The old Gus was suffering from arthritis and so was Zits and he was trapped inside his body. Zits was not only against his Indian people but was also leading the whole lot of enemy soldiers to them. But partly Gus was also justified in his endeavor. The reason being for Gus was that he was an old man and did not identify himself with any faction but identified himself with the weak people and the oppressed. One of the innocent small girl was killed by Indians in a scuffle with White people. Being the victor or the subjugated didn’t mean that killing on each side was justified. So, Gus led the White enemies to an old distant camp to revenge upon Indians. But, again underlying this whole sensational story of little girl was lying a fact that again Gus as torn by his age failed to realize that revenge was nothing but an oppression. Eventually one group had to be stopped to stop the killing.

*“And Gus here, all on his own, went looking for the Indians who did it. And he found their camp on the Colorado River and he’s going to lead us there. And we are going to deliver unto them the swift and deadly blow of justice.”* (p. 85).

Now the question that came to the surface after these lines is again making us realize that Gus identified himself with the oppressed class and through magic realist transformation, Zits also saw each and every thing in Gus body from the

perspective of a detached man of human society. He eventually realized that it was not revenge but true justice. This justice was different from the justice of the character of the same name, 'Justice'. When Zits eventually submitted to Gus body, Zits wept along with Gus e.g.,

*"Gus's eyes water at the memory. My eyes water." (p. 86).*

The reason for crying was the tragic event of killing a small girl with arrows right around her stomach that too in front of her mother who was raped and killed too. The Indians killed the women and girls and stripped them naked but this small girl was the only one whom the Indians showed respect and didn't strip her naked.

*"There was the body of a little girl, blond, blue-eyed, pretty even in death. She was still wearing her little blue gingham dress. She was the only person still wearing her clothes. The Indians had shown her that much respect: They murdered her, but they didn't strip her naked. They let her die as an innocent. Three arrows in her stomach. She was still clutching a rag doll." (p. 86)*

Through this magical realist journey Zits reached a realization that killing of any sort was bad so now he wanted Gus to throw his knife and to die and somehow also wanted him to stop or lose that war e.g.

*"I throw away my rifle. I don't want to use it. But I keep riding. I am unarmed. I think I want to die. I think I want Gus to die. I think I want to lose this fight." (p. 88).*

One thing that Zits learned from this transformation was that even if one was not an actual killer but sat and ate with those people who were bad made him a killer. In other words, just a verbal support and encouragement to a killer made the other party a killer.

*"I don't kill anybody. But I ride with killers, so that makes me a killer." (p. 90).* The pathetic situation in the novel also talked about justice killing which was okay but it would not gratify your ego just in case of the soldier from this very novel e.g. *"I see a soldier slam his horse into an old woman. She falls. The soldier spins his horse around and tramples her. He spins again and rides over her one more time." (p. 90).*

The same cruel unnamed soldier committed another heart rendering tragedy which the novel narrated in such lines e.g.

*"A soldier dismounts and chases down a woman and her little daughter. He shoots the woman in the back. She falls. The daughter drops to her knees beside her mother. Daughter wails. The soldier shoots at the daughter... But his gun jams. He pulls the trigger again. Nothing. So he grabs the barrel of his rifle, still so hot that it burns his hands. But he doesn't feel the pain, not yet, as he smashes the gun down on the girl's skull. He hits her again and again. Keeps hitting her until his rifle breaks in half." (pp. 90-91).*

Another incident that Zits witnessed was of a Bow boy who was saved by a white soldier. The Bow boy was the enemy of the white soldier but still the white soldier saved him and ran towards the faraway hills for his safety;

*"Without stopping, that white soldier reaches down and picks up Bow Boy. Cradles the child in one arm. And the white soldier keeps running. He's running toward the faraway hills. Toward those faraway trees. Toward cover. Toward safety. Carrying an Indian child, a white soldier is running with Indians. I can't believe it. It can't be true. But it is true." (p. 93)*

*"The tools of war. The tools of revenge. The tools of offense and defense. Of attack and protection. of good and evil." (p. 94).*

Zits said that all tools of offense and defense looked alike and thus were bad. Next it was shown that there were always people on both sides who wanted peace but were unable to bring peace. The novel thus said, *"Small Saint and Bow Boy are still on the horse. Small Saint has taken the reins and spins the pony back toward me." (p. 99)*

Soon Zits remembered that he was on a magical realist transformational journey e.g.

*"Are you okay, sir?" Small Saint asks me. "Define okay," I say. Small Saint smiles. He's missing half his teeth. I guess dental care wasn't a high priority in the nineteenth century." (pp. 99-100)*

As a result remembered that he was living in the 19 century in the magical eventful journey. In this transformational journey the last episode was when Irish Gus was killed by the soldiers e.g.

*"I close my eyes." (p. 106) Next when Zits opened his eyes he was at another place. He was in an aeroplane and was in the body of a pilot. "I open my eyes in an airplane: a small plane. There's enough room for two or three people, but I'm alone. I'm the pilot. I'm inside the body of the pilot" (p. 107).*

Next Zits was in the body of a pilot which was another transformational journey. His life inside the pilot was quite fascinating. But still he was a human being and he had many follies.

*"It's obvious that my mother loved my father. A few months after that photograph, my mother was in labor with me, and my father was leaving. By the time my mother held me, a newborn, in her arms, my father was already hundreds of miles away, never to return." (p. 109).*

These lines are about the incident when Zits mother was left by his father when Zits was still not born. He was inside the body of the pilot, Jimmy, but was still thinking of the incident when his father left his mother when she was giving birth to Zits in the hospital. So, it showed that he was missing his father because he didn't see his father's love which he wished throughout life. The name of the pilot was Jimmy and he had Ethiopian friend Abbad. He took the plane of Jimmy and used it for illegal activity. But it too turned out that Abbad was once abused like Zits. So, Zits empathized with him.

*"Jimmy, you are a fool," Abbad says. "You have a beautiful wife at home and you spend all your time with your airplane." "My airplane is more dependable," Jimmy says. "Ah, you Americans, you let your wives control your destiny. That is not our way" (p. 113).*

Zits was not only observing Jimmy when he cheated on his wife but also Zits witnessed Abbad who was a good man but forced by circumstances to do bad in American society.

Another cheating of Jimmy was upon his wife. He had a girlfriend Helda, who was not aware of the cheating as well. But Zits observed all these cheatings.

*"OKAY, SO I GUESS that Jimmy the pilot is a dirty liar and a cheat. My Indian father was a dirty liar and a cheat" (p. 118). "Linda," he says. Her name is Linda. A simple, pretty name. "Linda," he says again. She doesn't respond. She keeps weeping. (p. 123).*

This whole cheating was another transformation realized by Zits as a magical realist journey.

During the next journey, Zits was in the body of his father, who was a poor man, always living from hand to mouth. He asked people to give him respect but no one was willing to do that because he was an Indian. Pam and Paul wanted to help the old father of Zits. But Zits' father wanted respect not to be treated with sympathy.

*"It's all your fault," I say. "What?" Paul asks. "It's all your fault," I say again. "What's our fault?" "White people did this to Indians. You make us like this" (p. 136).*

Zits' father accused Pam and Paul for his predicament. Zits reached a realization that his father was justified in leaving him as a baby and also his mother. He could not provide clothes, food, shelter, etc. for them. Zits also saw as a witness that his father was a homeless man and no one was coming to help him. Everybody hated him because of his skin color.

*"What do you call a group of beaten bloody Indians, a murder of Indians? A herd of Indians? A bottle of Indians" (p. 140). "Nobody hears me I want some respect" (p. 141).*

Nobody was listening to Zits' father and he was shouting to the people. All Zits' father wanted was only respect and nothing more. Zits realized his father to be a good and humble man. He put aside all grievances against his father.

Next Zits talked about his being startled by a family photo in his pocket. Zits analyzed his own being that what he could do if he was in his father place. Because his father was poor, Indian as well as suffering from diseases and homelessness himself. As a result of his transformation, he reached to the conclusion that whatever his father did as an individual was normal, he was afraid he would fail before his only son, Zits. Therefore, he left not only his son but his wife too, the mother of Zits. Zits' father was analyzing his thoughts like Hamlet. He compared his situation to that of thinking Hamlet, who could not stand the test of time. Zits thought that he was also Hamlet because he was in the body of his father but could not do anything. He was only thinking like Hamlet and had no control over the body of his father.

*"It was father love and father shame and father rage that killed Hamlet. Imagine a new act. Imagine that Hamlet, after being poisoned by his own sword, wakes in the body of his father. Or, worse, inside the body of his incestuous Uncle Claudius? What would Hamlet do if he looked into the mirror and saw the face of the man who'd betrayed and murdered his father?" (p. 151).*

He saw that his father was in shame as being homeless, ill, without money, hunted by racism and also unable to support his only son and wife. When Zits saw as a witness all the scenario and read his father's thoughts, then he became matured to forgive his father in order to forgive himself.

*"All my life, I've been wanting to see my father, to meet him for the first time. I've wanted to ask him questions. To interrogate him. I stare at his face in the mirror. "Why did you leave me?" I ask. He doesn't answer. "Why do you have a photograph of me when I was five? Did my mother send it to you? Why did you want to carry a photograph of me but not me?" (p. 152).*

Zits knew that his father had left him but the whole scenario was different. His father was forced by the circumstances of the day he left his mother. The nurse in hospital at the time of Zits' birth quickly walked away, wondered briefly if she should call security, but then realized that the man (Zits' father) had enough problems. She knew he was just a weak man ashamed of his weakness. The last realization Zits felt was that his father never left him if Zits remembered his father in the hospital, it is because he had come to see his son and wife but he could not face them in such deplorable situation. The reason was just being homeless and underprivileged. Zits also analyzed the thought processes of his father when his father was a child and his grandfather was young. Zits knew from the thoughts reading that his grandfather was harsh on his father, which somehow was reflected in the personality of Zits' father.

After this journey, Zits was back into his original state. Zits' father closed his eyes and Zits closed his eyes inside his body and Zits was transported back to his present. He was in the same place inside the bank where he was standing in downtown Seattle.

*"I have two pistols in my coat, a paint gun and a 38 special. Yes, those guns. I'm supposed to pull them out and shoot everybody I see. Yes, I'm supposed to kill for Justice. I did it before: a long time ago, a little while ago, a second ago. I don't understand how time works anymore. There's that man again, the one who told me I wasn't real" (p. 157).*

Zits was solving his issue whether he actually was there or it was just a dream of a child. Zits was somehow confused but he turned out to be matured and the next thing he did was giving the gun to a good police man, Officer Dave.

*"I have returned to my body. And my ugly face. And my anger. And my loneliness. And then I think, Maybe I never left my body at all. Maybe I never left this bank. Maybe I've been standing here for hours, minutes, seconds, trying to decide what I should do" (p. 158).*

Zits also tested if the boy in the bank was real who was with his mother and he was loved by his mother which Zits wished to be loved by his mother like that.

*"She loves him. She sees me watching them and she smiles at me. Did my mother love me like that? I hope so. I wave at the little boy. He waves back" (p. 158).*

Zits hates that boy because he was so loved by his mother which Zits wished the same but wasn't love like that therefore he said,

*"I hate him for being loved so well." (p. 158).*

Zits wanted to be like that boy with his mother but his magic realist journey was over and he could not be him. So, he quitted the idea of being him or any other child,

*"I close my eyes and try to step inside his body. But it doesn't work. I cannot be him" (p. 158).*

This next story that Zits told was about his aunt, his mother's sister. Zits said that after the death of his mother, he started to live with his aunt, Aunt Zooney or Auntie Z. Zits' aunt was a very good lady; she was the first to adopt Zits. Zits' aunt had a boyfriend. His aunt lived with her boyfriend in an apartment. Her boyfriend was not a good man but she had been with him on many compromises. One day Zits aunt went to work and Zits was called by her boyfriend; the boyfriend did evil things to Zits. When Zits complained to his aunt, she was uncertain what to do. Anyway, finally Zits ran away from his aunt's boyfriend's apartment. Because of such tragedies, Zits became a bad boy, torn by circumstances.

*"Everybody was gone. My aunt was all I had. She lived in an apartment with her boyfriend. A man who smelled of onions and beer. A man who leaned over my bed in the middle of the night. A man who hurt me. I told Auntie Z. She slapped me. I told Auntie Z again. She slapped me again. I was six years old. I cried for*

*my mother. Like a lost dog, I howled all night. I could not stop crying. I missed my mother. My mommy. My mommy. My mommy. I cried for one week. Then two weeks. Then three weeks.*" (p. 160)

After this event Zits learned to stand for himself. He was abused and cried over and tied by her own poverty, his aunt wept too but she could not help him. So, the events hardened the heart of Zits. Zits became a stone, a rock, and no one was there to trust him,

*"Everybody knows you're a liar. Everybody knows you're a liar. Everybody knows you're a liar. Nobody loves you anymore. Nobody loves you anymore. Nobody loves you anymore. I learned how to stop crying. I learned how to hide inside of myself. I learned how to be somebody else. I learned how to be cold and numb."* (p. 161)

Officer Dave was a cop who helped Zits a lot and wanted him to be a good person of the society. The novel alluded to the fact that bad people are bad because the good society would not adopt them. Bad people should be treated with respect and honour like good people so that they become good citizens or people because they are not bad people from the start or by birth but the society makes them bad. The treatment comes not from doctors but from the good people of society. The bad people need compassion, empathy not sympathy. Finally, Officer Dave adopted Zits in order to make him a good person or citizen.

The last scene of the novel threw light on the magic realist journey that how Zits disappeared and reappeared within just a second. The event was rare but also believable due to some error. But it was the time when Zits disappeared to assume many transformations and he returned a matured boy,

*"On the video, my image disappears for a second. I'm gone. And then I reappear. "Whoa," Officer Dave says. "Did you see that?" The detective rewinds the tape. Presses PLAY. I'm there in the bank. Then I'm gone—poof. And then I reappear. "That's weird," Officer Dave says. "Aw, it's just a flaw in the tape," Eyeglasses says. "They reuse these tapes over and over. The quality goes down. They got weird bumps and cuts in them."* (p. 166)

Zits was adopted by Officer Dave's brother who was a fireman and didn't have any kid. The last line of the novel was very emotional. Zits told Robert and Mary that his real name was not Zits but Michael. He gave this name to himself because of the forty seven (47) zits which were on his face and because of these zits he was ashamed, violated and humiliated by the people and society. Now he was in a care of good people of the society, Robert and Mary, therefore he revealed his real name so that they might call him by his good and real name, "*Michael,*" I say. "*My real name is Michael. Please, call me Michael*" (p. 181). Zits was a good boy from within but he was forced by society and circumstances. He went through many magic realist journeys and eventually became a nice man. All his traumas ended when a psychologist read him thoroughly and suggested to Officer Dave that Zits should be adopted by someone so that he may become a good person of the society. Officer Dave did so himself by offering Zits to Robert and Mary. Robert was the brother of Zits and Mary was Robert's wife. The couple had no child and happily accepted Zits. Zits for the first time wanted to become a cop to help the poor kids like him in the future and help to adopt them and direct them the right path. The last part of the novel depicts that Zits was never a bad boy but the society made him so. When Zits tells Mary his name in the last line of the novel, he is in a way adopting a new identity of becoming Michael from Zits, the bad boy. Thus, the end of the novel is optimistic for the down trodden of the society.

## CONCLUSION

Magic Realism always tries to reveal the harsh realities of life by mixing up fantasy and reality. In traditional fiction, magic was utilized to escape from the dark sides of life. But, in magic realist fiction, the same magical atmosphere is used to delineate the very harshness of life. The harshness shown by magical realist fiction is such that it seems agreeable. As a result, magic realism is serving the purpose of a bridge between consciousness and unconsciousness, between realism and idealism and between fantasy and realism. Magic realism connects life with literature. The blending of literature with life is done for the purpose of blurring and minimizing the gap between reality and unreality. The phantasmagoric elements are tied with the real life to blur the differences between life and literature, as a result it seems acceptable to the masses. Magic realism is not just fantasy; it would be a misconception to think so. Magic realism is rather the combination of fantasy with reality. The motive behind combining fantasy with reality is not to move away from reality but rather to move toward reality. Magic realism is a counter technique on behalf of colonized nations against the colonizers. The Eurocentric technique was to devalue the colonized. Their culture was looked down upon, their language was banned, their education was subsumed by victor, their identity was crushed by them, and as a result writers from third world countries came up with magic realism to subvert the history of the colonizers with their folktales and stories of lost glory, which were remnants of their lost culture. The motive of magic realist writers is to dig out their old history and also save it from encroachment upon it by the colonizers. Consequently, the colonized writers could freely express themselves and also to find their identities. Thus, the natives or indigenous communities have

recreated and reinterpreted the history of the imperialists and had tried to tell their own narrative by mixing up fantasy and realism.

The novel talks about Zits as a magical realist character. His life has been damaged by many tragedies that he undertook. He goes on many magic realist journeys and finds out that he was wrong. He reaches a realization. The realization comes through many time travels. Each new magic realist travel teaches him something new. His personality is changing with each transformational journey until he fully gets matured and announces his real name Michael. Zits always used to complain about his father but has now understood through many travels in the bodies of people that every human being is weak and is walking in his own orbit to solve his issues. Meanwhile, if problems from outside enters life of the same individual he becomes infuriated. But, in such diverse circumstances the man would have to empathize with others, only then can he lean to appreciate life. Michael has not only found a cure for his acne but also his jealousy, feeling of ill-will, evil doings, grudge, pride and murderous thoughts have been cured. Love has conquered him. This transformation is on many levels. These levels include psychological, physical, social, mental and emotional levels. The magic realist mental development shows that how from a humble beginning, Zits develops into a grownup mature man who understands himself, his surroundings and his society and people around him.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings of the present study, it is recommended that the themes in the novel can be analyzed *viz-a-viz* its different literary aspects, e.g., narrative mode, sociocultural and political interpretation, etc. The analysis links the real with the non-real events in the form of different transformational journeys. This suggests the asymmetrical arrangement of the complexity of human life. This may be seen along with the social issues of varying nature and can be highlighted through the analysis of the way Alexie has used the technique of magical realism in the novel. The novel can also be researched from many other perspectives. The novel should be researched from the perspectives of other theoretical frameworks like modernism and stream of consciousness. Some other themes like marginalization of the native Indian communities can also be researched in future studies.

### Compliance with Ethical Standards:

It is declared that all authors don't have any conflict of interest. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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