

**THE MALAYANS OF NORTH MALABAR
AND
THEIR *TEYYAM***

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis entitled **THE MALAYANS OF NORTH MALBAR AND THEIR TEYYAM** is a bonafide record based on intensive fieldwork and research carried out by **Sri. Damodaran. M.P** under my guidance and supervision and that no part of it has been presented any Degree, Diploma or Title.

Palayad

Date: 19/03/2007




Dr. B. ANANDA BHANU

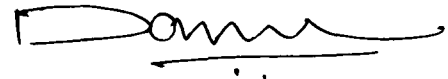
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DECLARATION

I, **Damodaran. M.P.**, hereby declare that this thesis has not previously formed the basis for award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship of other similar title or recognition.

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19th March 2007

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Damodaran', with a horizontal line underneath it.

DAMODARAN.M.P

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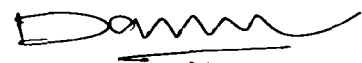
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PALAYAD

19th March 2007



DAMODARAN M.P

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Map - Kerala



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Chapter I

Introduction

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

India is well known for its cultural plurality, strange traditions and customs. Influence of myth, legend and rituals could be seen in every walk of life. In this case, Kerala, one of the southern states in India, is also not an exception. The northern part of Kerala known as, Malabar is very rich in rituals, lores and arts such as, *teyyam* (*thira* or *kōlam*), *kothamuriyāttam*, *vedanāttam*, *ōnathar*, *karkidakothi*, *kannerupāttu*, *manpāttu*, *seethakali*, *kūthu*, *poorakali*, *vadakkanpāttu*, *mappilapāttu*, *oppana*, *mārgamkali*, etc. Among this, *Teyyam*, popularly known as one form of the 'folk arts' of Kerala, is the most important and unique ritual performance, which attracts many a tourist from all over the world.

This thesis is intended to exemplify the social-cultural significance of *teyyam* with regards to one of its performers, Malayan. It seeks to present the basis of *teyyam*, as well and presumes a little knowledge about North Malabar, within the general framework of anthropology. This study is brought about by a realization that the anthropological approach to the study of human beings has much to offer to look at their relationship to the surrounding world. It is not intended to be a manual for anthropologists; rather, it is meant for a general interest too. At its best, the present study is an attempt to unravel the wonderful world of *teyyam* and its eco-cultural significance, and understand the life of its performer. By providing a window to the world of *teyyam* and its performer, as viewed through anthropology, it can help anybody to find the world a more interesting and more wonderful one, and to appreciate us, the world's people, for the differences that we exhibit.

The Problem

The present thesis, *the Malayans of North Malabar and their Teyyam* is an attempt to study the culture, the 'ethnography' of a Scheduled Caste group called, Malayan, and their marvelous ritual performance *teyyam*.

As a part and parcel of the society, the cross-section of the Malayans culture shows all elements and essentialities with all its differences. As a community, the Malayans keep continuing the identity and integrity, and as an individual the Malayan express each and every pulse of the society. Malayans are a specialized caste performing *teyyam*, magic and midwifery. The people are the masters of *teyyam* performance. Traditionally, only the members belonging to the 'low castes', including the Malayans, perform *teyyam*. 'Upper castes' never performs *teyyam*, but provides necessary facilities. The Brahmins, and the other castes and tribes said to come under the Hindu religion, believe and worship *teyyam* as a symbol of god.

The Malayans of North Malabar, forming an important caste among *teyyam* performers, stands was a segment of the socio-cultural milieu of the region in the past, and the same is true even at present. The *teyyam* performance exhibits extraordinary features of differing meanings against the ideas of cultural 'diffusion'. The historical existence of *teyyam*, its survival and continuity, through the ages, with more and more popularity and improvement, that are in sharp contrast to the philosophy of 'diffusion'. In the light of this formulation, *teyyam* and its social role demands an increasingly important attention and a very careful study. The present study is, therefore, a historical necessity because, the socio-cultural life and performance of Malayans need an analytical study. Further, their interactions with the other groups, and the categories of the society,

culture, and environment bring the portrait of North Malabar in totality.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- i. To study the present culture of Malayans and their cultural adaptation with respect to *teyyam*;
- ii. To problematize the various traditional and ritualistic practices at the time of *teyyam* performance;
- iii. To find out the social implications of the relationship between *teyyam* as a traditional performance, and the role of Malayan as a performer;
- iv. To analyse the interactions between Malayan and other *teyyam* performers; and
- v. To study the origin and evolution of *teyyam* in the Malayan society.

Operational Definitions

‘Malabar’ is an old concept. It referred to a geographical area comprising the northern part of the present Kerala State. According to Logan,

The name by which the district is known to Europeans is not in general use in the district itself, except among foreigners and English speaking Natives. The ordinary name is *Malayalam*, or, in its shorter form, *Malayan* (the hill country). The word *Malabar* is therefore probably, in part at least, of foreign origin; the first two syllables are almost

certainly the ordinary Dravidian word *male* (hill, mountain) and *bar* is probably the Arabic word *barr* (continent), or the Persian *bar* (country). From the time (AD 522-547) of Cosmas Indicopleustes down to the eleventh or twelfth century A.D, the word *Male* was applied to the coast by Arab navigators, and the sea faring population, who flocked thither subsequently for pepper and other spices, called it *Malibar, Manibar, Mulibar, Munibar, Malivar*. The early European travelers followed suit, and hence come the other forms in which the name has been written *Melibar* (Marco Polo), *Minibar, Milibar, Minubar, Melibaria, Malabaria*, etc. Malabar may therefore be taken to mean the hilly or mountainous country, a name well suited to its physical characteristics. (1951:1)

Malabar is composed of 'South Malabar' and 'North Malabar'. North Malabar was once an area consisting of the present Kasargod, Kannur and Wayanad districts and the northern parts of Kozhikode district.

The Malayan of North Malabar is one of the castes 'scheduled' by the Indian Constitution. They were socially and economically poor, and live by performing *teyyam*, and magic and midwifery in olden days. The people occupied a rather lower status in the social set up of North Malabar. The upper caste people considered them as 'polluting untouchables'. According to their myth of origin and belief, the *Malayans* had originated on the legendary hill, *Mahameru* from the sage *Aghastyan*. The people worship local as well as Hindu deities in the form of *teyyam*, and also believe in spirits and ancestor worship. Practice of *teyyam* and magic places them in a position, somewhat a 'middlemen' in between man and the supernatural.

Etymologically the term, *teyyam*, is a linguistic corruption of *daivam* (god). Through *teyyam* the people of North Malabar worship nature, spirits, ancestors and gods as their sacred deities. As a part of this unique worship, the devotees also arrange performances of *teyyam* deities, whenever needed. A performance consists of combinations of symbols and rituals on the basis of local myths. The society sanctions certain 'low caste' people to perform *teyyam*. Upper caste people never performed but worshipped it as their protector and savior. Usually, the performance is conducted in sacred centres such as, *kāvu* (sacred grove), *ara* (holy chamber), and even houses [eg: *kottil*, *padinjatta*, etc]. The performer is dressed in a peculiar manner by using attractive, colourful and magnificent attires. In this regard the performer make use of natural materials such as, tender coconut leaves, ixora flower, and planks of light and softwood and artificial materials like mirror, plastic beads, pearls, etc. The disguised performer exhibits certain rhythmic dance (*kalāsam*) and rituals according to the right and rules of *teyyam*. Male and female deities are performed in as many as three hundred to five hundred different forms. Females are the dominant ones at least in number.

Teyyam also relieves the tension of people by performing counseling and guidance. The possibility of conversation between deities and believers during *teyyam* makes a big difference in comparison with other modes of worship. It is through such practices and close-interactions with the believers that *teyyam* attains and maintains a socio-political significance.

Hypothesis

According to Theodorson and Theodorson, "a hypothesis is a tentative statement asserting a relationship between certain facts" (cit. Ahuja 2001:70). In the opinion of Peter H. Mann, "it is in putting

forward new ideas, derived from theoretical bases, that the hypothesis has its function” (1968:45). For Kerlinger, hypothesis is, “a conjectural statement of the relationship between two or more variables” (cit. Ahuja 2001:70). Based on these viewpoints, I have made an attempt to test two propositions in the present study.

First, on the context of theoretical formulation, ‘nature-man-spirit complex’, by Vidhyarthi (1963), which is backed by Sahay (1975), Mann (1978), etc., the *teyyam* is subjected to close study and analysed here. *Teyyam* has brought into existence by the mutual interaction between nature (the eco-systems) and culture (the performers and beneficiaries), and persists on ‘nature-man-spirit’ interaction.

By using the concept, ‘nature-man-spirit’ interaction, Vidhyarthi explored the interaction between man, their habitats, and the supernatural spirits. According to him, man interacts and depends on nature for survival and subsistence. And also, the spirits and the supernatural world are believed to guide man’s destiny. So, Upadhyay and Pandey write as,

Thus, Vidhyarthi evolved a methodological approach (Nature-Man-Spirit complex) to analyse the tribal way of life in terms of their ecological setting, social institutions and spirit world. (1997:451)

Further, I wish to quote the comments of Saheb, on the concept of Vidyrthi, regarding this interaction as being complex in nature:

He came to the conclusion that the sacred complex is formed as a three interrelated phenomena of sacred geography, sacred performance and sacred specialists. (2004:266)

Mann says that,

The cultural traits are conditioned by the environmental pressure, and later are the determinants of the same. At another times, it appears as a simple case of adjustment and adaptation. (cit. Vidhyarthi 1981)

Secondly, I have been trying to test one way or the other, the structural-interaction between the people laid on *teyyam*, the *religion* of North Malabar, a belief in intangible-mysterious powers in certain nature-objects and dead-souls, that controls every action of man, the heart of which has cemented the relationship between nature and culture, the 'nature-man-spirit' interaction.

Theoretical Justification of the Problem

The present study proposed both an ethnographic and structural-functional approach. This required a descriptive account of all socio-cultural institutions involving the Malayans so as to initiate further interpretation for developing theories. Characterizing anthropology as holistic means, it studies whole groups, societies or populations. An individual anthropologist may, and usually does deal with a particular aspect of the group, but s/he is always in the process of relating that aspect back to the whole. Anthropologists see human groups as bio-cultural structures, functioning as units.

The process of scientific analysis, by its very nature, usually involves breaking such units into smaller and smaller bits, in order to permit greater and greater concentration upon those bits. While anthropologists often conduct such intensive and concentrated analysis, they also put the bits and pieces back together synthesizing their data to look at it, not in itself but, as part of the whole structure and problematic sphere. In fact, it is a principle of

anthropology that one cannot understand a part of the structure, without trying to understand it as part of the whole. Studying various social institutions and also looking at them from an angle of interrelationships between elements within and across cultures have reaffirmed a full coverage of all the elements leading to social change.

Significance

The life of the people in North Malabar is not only linked with many traditions but also, closely tied up with *teyyam*. Most of the researchers on *teyyam* and folklorists who have worked in this field (Kurup: 1973, 1977; Chandera: 1978; Payyanad: 1979; Namboothiri: 1981, 1983, 1990; etc) considered *teyyam* as a form of 'folk art' or an 'art form', within the context of Folklorestics. Naturally, they give less importance to its socio-cultural significance and ramifications. There is a common feeling prevalent among people that *teyyam* is an independent, caste-based occupation of some particular groups. Such assumptions may also lead to the notion that other caste-groups are merely spectators to the performance of *teyyam*. This study, on the contrary, presupposes that all humans live in an environment that affects their lives, and environment includes not only the physical environment but also the socio-cultural environment. Therefore, *teyyam* can be taken as a ritual, which is a demand of the whole culture. It has been considered as a popular necessity.

Myths, rituals, and performances always have some survival values being the bases of culture. In countries like India, myths, rituals and performances continue to play a vital role in the life of a large part of the population. It is true that their ritual significance is slowly fading away as a result of the newly growing forces such as, politics, education and advancement in science and technologies. Still,

teyyam exists as a medium for the rituals to perpetuate. It has been a more popular cultural site in North Malabar witnessing the maintenance of myths, rituals and performances, depending on the distant past itself. It can thus be said that *teyyam* is an important and living part of the socio-cultural terrain, and therefore, it deserves serious attention.

The history of *teyyam* has hitherto been presented as part of certain big surveys of events. The concept of history as a universal story of dynasties has already been questioned from various quarters. In the case of *teyyam* also, the picture had by and large derived from such 'disinterested' versions of historical narratives. Such narrative strategies in the construction of history deal with dynasties of kings, their reforms and their heroic activities. The problem involved in that 'history' is that it binds a larger canvas called nation, and marginalizes the local ways of real life processes and their differences. History is to be treated as the story of life where a struggle for existence takes place. The site for such struggles is culture, i.e., a terrain where struggles occur. This culture is accessible through the various processes in the life cycle. By attempting to learn *teyyam* and its related life processes as forms of this version of culture, this study believes to construct an alternative history, anchoring more deeply in the life of the people of North Malabar.

Teyyam and its *tōttam pāttu* (chant) are generally studied as part of a larger aesthetic order. It is done with a notion of culture and aesthetics as some achieved categories and are having certain unique features. It is, of course, is not enough for providing any dependable piece of knowledge of the *teyyam* community. The real life conditions of the related communities have been sidestepped in such studies. The versions about *teyyam* and the life of its performers are provided

through studies that are considered as, 'authentic'. This is done always by the external agencies such as the cultural organs of the state. It also delegitimised the real life-stories of the communities, i.e., the versions of their history, deriving from their own lore and oral stories and *pattu* (song). This study contradicts such versions and tries to understand a history of the community even from those actively disarticulated cultural elements. It attempts to construct a history of the material life conditions of the people involved in the social activities. It is thus a contradiction both to the story of the 'great organizers' of *teyyam* and to the several superficial 'knowledge-imparting' accounts of *teyyam*. This thesis will certainly meet the researchers and readers interest both academic and otherwise. The researcher does not claim that he holds the key to the solutions for the persisting problems of Malayans in particular, and the Scheduled Castes in general. The findings should serve as an eye-opener. He only hopes, it would set a healthy trend to tackle the problems in the best interest of the society in a very significant manner.

Scope and Limitations

The present thesis deals with the descriptive and analytical study of Malayans' culture and their performance, *teyyam*. The ethnographic details of the people lay open the common factors of other people's culture also. The major social institutions and elements of right-de-passage of every human culture are more or less similar. *Teyyam* performance throws light on the social set up, and the popular beliefs of North Malabar. It exists as a better access to the knowledge of the social hierarchies like caste system, discriminations, and the interactions among groups and individuals. Hence the wide scope of a study of culture.

The present study has scope in one more sense. The researcher himself hails from the community chosen for the study. An insider's perspective can thus be a significant characteristic here. This may also stand in opposition to the studies conducted by the external organs, associations and individuals. Instead of depending on secondary data, extensive fieldwork and participant observation are done in the course of this research. This has contributed to the production of exact qualitative and quantitative details.

The present study has limitations too. The researcher being a member of the Malayan caste, the informants have tried to avoid questions. The lack of authoritative and knowledgeable informants in the Malayan community also posed problems.

There are some deliberate omissions in this investigation that I wish to draw to the attention of scholars who are working in the same field. I am not interested here to discuss the rituals of *teyyam* in a detailed manner, I have only briefly discussed the significance of some of the important rituals. This cannot be considered as a compromise or sacrifice, since the objectives of his study is in terms of social realms and structure. I have also avoided any attempt to compare the performance with similar ones. I have considered this matter very carefully, and then decided not to undertake any comparison. The real purpose of this study is not to discuss about what the people believe rather than what they actually are. In other words, it is both factual and actual in nature.

Area of Study

The study was confined to Kannur and Kasargod districts, since these two districts have the concentration of Malayan population. The area of the study is North Malabar, which is the northern tip of Kerala State, which shares its boundary with Karnataka State on the

north and east, Kozhikode and Wayanad districts on the south, and the Arabian Sea on the west.

The area lies in between 11° 40' and 12° 48' North latitude and between 74° 52' and 76° 07' East longitude. The altitude varies from 7 meters to approximately 400 meters, and spread to 5,029 sq. kms of land. The area consists of hills, valleys, rivers, estuaries, and seashores. Like the geographical variations, the people in these areas also show great variations. One can see tribes residing on hills, agriculturists on plains and fishermen on the seashores. Similarly, the area selected for this study, Kannur and Kasargod district shows a great cultural variation. Hence, the researcher considered this area as very ideal to undertake the present study, a scientific and anthropological study of the people, their culture and environment.

Rapport

The houses of the Malayan scattered hither and thither in three hundred villages have created problems to identify their residences. However, the help and co-operation extended by the village officials and local people have solved the problem. When I approached each and every house of the Malayans, they received me first with a lot of doubts but, when he explained to them the purpose of his visit, they co-operated and furnished a lot of information.

I took a lot of pains in collecting the necessary information from the respondents. Displaying much skill and patience, I succeeded in establishing friendly rapport with the Malayans, especially when some of the respondents were difficult to talk to initially. The experience, which I got from the very first attempt during my MA course, became an asset to the present study, and served me as an advantage in attempts to gather the essential information.

Both the urban and the rural people from the community responded in detail to his queries about their living conditions. Some of them even suggested urgent remedial measures to be taken up by the government for the improvement of the conditions of their community.

The study covers the life of the community, residing in many interior villages where it is difficult for a stranger to get even her/his basic necessities. However, under such circumstances the rural respondents were mostly hospitable. I am deeply indebted to the innumerable respondents of this study, who despite their own personal inconveniences came forward with all enthusiasm and spared quite a lot of their precious time, especially those who preferred to forgo their work and thus, their daily wages. As the length of each interview extended between one to two hours, it was really an appreciable gesture on the part of the respondent to have sat with me answering questions, which did not bring immediate relief to any of their problems. Most of them mistook my visit for an individual's work in the National Census programme. At first they viewed the objectives of the study with suspicion. Research of this type was new to them. I had thus to face listless difficulties to obtain the data. Even though I met several problems, the fieldwork has become a fascinating experience since many facts that are latent could be brought to light.

Methodology

Research is the combination of experience and reasoning. In the opinion of Whitney,

Scientific research is...honest, exhaustive, intelligent...
search for the facts, the true actualities, and their
unprejudiced analysis...(to find)...their meaning or

implications with reference to a given problem. Research is a state of mind-a friendly, welcoming attitude towards change. It is the problem-solving mind as contrasted to the let-well-enough-alone mind. It is the composer mind instead of the fiddler mind; it is the tomorrow mind, instead of the yesterday mind. (cit. Misra 1989:19)

Scientific research needs systematic planning and a careful and exhaustive investigation with an objective. According to Theodorson and Theodorson,

It is a systematic and objective attempt to study a problem for the purpose of deriving general principles. (cit. Ahuja, 2001:19)

Singleton and Straits have said that,

Scientific social research consists of the process of formulating and seeking answers to questions about the world. (cit. Ahuja, 2001:20)

So, the methodology of the present study is the procedure for obtaining knowledge based on observation and reasoning. It certainly includes description, explanation and justification of methods. The perspective of this study has been already explained above. It is that of an alternative history as opposed to the mainstream history, which ultimately ends up with judgments and conclusions, and always tries to do so from a differing value system. This is why this study focuses on direct talks with the very members of the community. Instead of making deciding conclusions about what is good for them from outside, this study explores what the Malayans themselves have to talk about their own conditions. The tools for the study are largely drawn from the theories and procedures of the discipline of anthropology, in order to follow the methods of a scientific research.

Method of Data Collection

Different anthropological methods of research have been used for the collection of data. I have made extensive use of the ethnographic and the structural-functional approaches. To study the various aspects of the Malayans life and their *teyyam* performance, scientific research methods such as, household survey, observation, interview, genealogy and case study have been employed.

Though the probability sampling remains as one of the best methods for selecting representative samples, simple random sampling was another method used in the present study. So, the investigator selected 51 sample villages through lottery method with a viewpoint of Misra, he opines that,

The random sampling is the only sample that contains reliable information about population. (1989: 42)

In this context, the following statement of Ahuja becomes meaningful:

A sample is a portion of people drawn from a larger population. It will be representative of the population only if it has same basic characteristics of the population from which it is drawn. (2001:155)

Extensive and intensive fieldwork was one of the important techniques adopted for data collection. Ahuja explains the field-study method as follows:

This is the method which involves direct study of field situations. Though this method has broken down the narrow walls of the traditional experimental laboratory in research on complex problems of humans relationships but

it permits the introduction of controls into the data collection. (2001:43)

The fieldworks for the present study were carried out from 1998 to 2006. The intensive fieldwork and 'watching with a purpose' were indispensable parts of this study. Gardner's explanation is worth quoting here:

Selection, provocation, recording and encoding of that set of behaviours and settings concerning organisms 'in situ' (naturalistic settings or familiar surroundings) which are consistent with empirical aims. (cit. Ahuja, 2001:238)

It was meant for the in-depth and direct study of field situation. Controlled observation and uncontrolled observation, both participant (the investigator being a part of the situation he is studying) and non-participant in nature were done for data collection. Here, for the present study, the researcher has the unique advantage, that is, he belongs to the same community, and as well the part of *teyyam* performance, which is the focus of the investigation. The insiders' perspective made available the data more valid, reliable and authentic. In most of the cases, it always brought alertness to the informants; he knows something, to keep the credibility while conducting the interviews and conversations. And it also helped to eliminate personal bias, that had the possibly of getting mixed with the information given by the informants during interviews.

Interview was another useful method. According to Bingham and Moore, interview is "a conversation with a purpose" (cit. Ahuja, 2001:221). As Misra (1989) believes, it helps a lot to formulate and crystallize the problems of study in this kind of exploratory research. The researcher has interviewed many informants, both male and

female, with greater flexibility. The employment of unstructured interview helped him to gather substantial data. In order to minimize errors, the information collected from the respondents was crosschecked with other respondents.

Case study method was also used in this study to understand the entire system of *teyyam* performance and the socio-cultural aspects of the Malayans community as well. Ahuja's words endorse the validity of this kind of study:

It is an intensive study of case which may be an individual, an institution, a system, a community, an organisation, an event or even the entire culture. (2001:261)

Detailed genealogical records have been prepared for every family by means of lengthy and repeated interviews conducted in an atmosphere conducive to the highest degree of mutual confidence and cooperation.

Written and printed documents were also used as secondary sources. The present study has also used information coming from the findings that are available in individual books written by scholars belonging to other disciplines. Articles from Journals, Periodicals and Newspapers were also used for data collection. No single science has a corner on the truth, and the work of all branches of knowledge is useful. The analyses of the previous accounts of *teyyam*, and the Malayans under study by anthropologists, and others helped the investigator in a first-hand understanding of their culture. All the information presented will be placed within an anthropological context, as viewed and interpreted by an anthropological perspective.

Recording and Analysis of Data

The data were recorded by writing down in the field notebook while collecting pieces of information through observation or interview, etc. Electronic aids such as, camera and tape recorders were also used for recording data.

The data, thus collected were analysed according to the objectives of this study. Both quantitative (statistical method) and qualitative (non-quantitative) methods were used. Tabulation, calculating averages and percentages, constructing diagrams, and charts were done for a thorough analysis of the data. Designing and redesigning were done through secondary analysis. Computational analysis was another means to proceed with the work.

Review of Literature

Any investigation needs reading to gather information. The present study has made use of some works, particularly on culture and performance.

How to Complete Your Research Successfully by Bell (1993) served as a source of reference. The description of different approaches, style and traditions, methods of data collection, analysis, presentation, report writing, insight into different ways of planning and conducting researches were examined closely.

The real value of folk literature as sociological data lies in its typical situation, relationships and attitudes. Folk literature of India provides certain typical pictures of social structure, and the life activities of man through numerous stories, legends and proverbs. Deva, a sociologist of international repute, in his book *Folk-Culture*

and Peasant Society in India (1989) has expressed the opinion that folk literature has a predominantly rural background.

Teyyam: An Analytical Study of the Folk Culture, Wisdom and Personality by Pallath (1995) deals with the ritual symbolism in the life of the Pulayas. The symbol-system of east and west upholds two different worlds-views, and the basic personality of the people. According to this book, the symbolic system shapes the worldview. This is done by a comparative study of the Hindu Pulayas and the Christian Pulayas. It is an attempt to describe a particular *teyyam* with respect to its symbolic aspects including, concept, definition, performing castes, attires, and performance of *teyyam*. This is an analytical study to explore the religious symbol system.

An article by Ramachandran, *Kothamurippattu* in *Desi Magazine*, 1988, describes the performance *Kothamuriattam* in brief. Another article entitled, *Origin and History of Teyyam* in *Desi Magazine*, 1989 by the same author furnishes opinions on *teyyam* and its origin. He describes the various steps involved in *teyyam* such as, *töttam*, *vellattam*, and *teyyam* performance. The attire of *teyyam* is also discussed in brief. This article gives a clear outline of the *teyyam* performance.

Nature-Man-Spirit Complex in Tribal India, edited by Vidyarthi (1981), presents the 'nature-man-sprit' concept of Mann, Steward, Vidyarthi and other scholars. The book contains eleven essays, which are empirical studies of different tribal communities in India. The articles provide a deep insight into the tribal life and culture. Cultural ecology in association with spirits, forms the soul of this book. It also explains the intimate relationship and interaction between social organization, religious complex and ecological conditions. The authors of the articles also discuss well about the adaptation as a

part of cultural ecology. The triangular link between nature, man and spirit assumes new forms, reformulating the concerned socio-economic and cultural network.

Ethnographic Report of Seven Scheduled Caste of Kerala by Bindu (1991) presents a brief but descriptive account of the Malayan's ethnography along with that of the other six communities. According to the author, magic, *teyyam* and medicines are the caste-based occupations of these people. Some details of the magic such as, *ennamanthram*, *balikala*, and *charadumanthram* are discussed in detail along with some magical chants and formulae. This report does not discuss about the history, and the origin of the people.

In the MA Dissertation entitled, *The Eco-Cultural Adaptation among the Kurichchans of Kannavam*, Damodaran (1995) argues that the whole life of Kurichchan in Kannavam is woven by their daily interactions with the environment. He observes that the ecology plays an important role in shaping the culture of the people. Consequently, the people living in Kannavam Reserve Forest make use of it to fulfill all needs. The forests supplies raw materials for construction of house, food in the form of animals, fish and birds, and bark and leaves in place of cloth. The author concludes that the settlement pattern, social institutions, life-cycle rituals, and practice of ethno-medicine of the Kurichchan are emerged from the people's interactions with the environment.

Nomads in the Mysore City by Misra, Rajalakshmi and Vargese (1971) presents ethnographic details of a few nomads, who visit Mysore and the adjoining places every year. The people mentioned in the book show sharp cultural variations. All of them possess less material possession by virtue of their practice of nomadism. Some of them are engaged in ritualistic begging and fortune telling, while others sell

medicine to earn cash, goods and other materials like cloth, vessels etc. The authors of this book argue that these people do not like nomadic life, but at the same time, they also follow it because, the better alternatives are not available to them. It again establishes the link between nature and culture.

The book by Namboothiri, *Teyyam* (1998) explains almost all aspects of *teyyam* performance. The author looks *teyyam* as folklore and gives descriptions of its rituals and myths. He also gives short notes on some of *teyyam* performance. Other two books of the same author, *Vannanum Kenthron Pättum* (1982) and *Pulayarute Pättukal* (1983), present brief histories of the Vannan and the Pulayan. The author gives more attention to the songs of the Vannan and the Pulayan. The style is narrative and the approach is more or less folkloristic, even though, these books have some ethnographic details. In *Thottampättukal: Oru Padanam* (1990), another book by the same author, describes the important aspects of *teyyam* performance. The approach is folkloristic and style is narrative. This book is very much helpful for the students of *teyyam* and folklore.

Kurup, in his book *Arya- Dravida Ghatakangal Malabarile Nadankalayil* (Aryan-Dravidian Elements in Malabar Folklore, 1980) ascertains the socio-cultural importance of *teyyam* performance. The book describes different aspects of *teyyam* performance. The author analyses *teyyam* celebration and its link between Aryan and Dravidian elements based on the *Perumkaliyattam* at Ramavilyam Kazhakam, an important sacred center of *Teyyam*. The book is very much helpful to understand the basic aspects of *teyyam* performance.

Nadankala by Choondal (1979) elaborates many aspects of folklore. It describes the function and significance of folklore. *Karuthe Kalakal*

(1991), a study by the same author reflects the importance of folklore and ethno-arts of the tribes of Kerala.

Chilambitta Ormakal: Teyyakkarante Katha Teyyathinteyum (1997), written by Sreedharan, makes an attempt to familiarise the life experience and experiments of a *teyyam* performer Kannan Peruvannan. The book reveals the dual personality of a performer, as an ordinary man, and as a *teyyam* performer. The author consciously or unconsciously gives a heroic image to the performer. However, this book reflects the whole life of a *teyyam* performer.

Nambiar's *Keralathile Nadan Kalakal* (1989) is helpful like a guide to the study the folk arts of Kerala. He reviews the achievements and drawbacks of folklore studies in South India with special reference to Kerala. The author gives a detailed plan of investigation and research. Unlike many other books, this book describes various folk arts and throws new light and thought on folklore studies.

In addition to these works, the present study has also made use of *Kerala History* (Menon, 1967), ethnographic notes on the Malayan from *Caste and tribes of Southern India* (Thurston, 1909), *The Scheduled Caste* (Singh, 1996), *The Malabar Manual* (Logan, 1951) and *Dravidian Encyclopedia* Vol.II (Subramoniam ed. 1993).

Even though, the contributions on *teyyam* and its performance are only a very few, most of them are in Malayalam, they have helped me a lot to plan this study. More than that, all of them have given me valuable information, and insight on the research universe and focus. I found in all these materials that they give little importance to the social aspects of *teyyam* and further, the performers have not been given any attention. In that sense, the review of literature not only helped the present study in one sense, to make it possible to find the gaps and left outs but, also helped fill up these gaps.

Chapterization

This thesis has been divided into six chapters including an introduction, and conclusion. The first chapter introduces the framework of the study, which includes the problem, objectives, theoretical justification and methodology under taken for this study. A brief description of other areas of the study is also given in this chapter. The second chapter gives an ethnographic account of the Malayan of North Malabar. It has 20 sub-sections describing their environment, history, different social organizations, and activities. The third chapter discusses the wonderful world of *teyyam* and its existence. It is divided into 17 sub-sections. The fourth chapter unravels the basic components of *teyyam* and related aspects. The fifth chapter analyses the social structure of North Malabar. And the sixth chapter is the concluding chapter.

Chapter II

*Malayan: The God-
Man of North Malabar*

CHAPTER II

MALAYAN: THE GOD-MAN OF NORTH MALABAR

Ethnographic studies have great importance in the field of Anthropology today to understand the various life activities of man and his relationship with environment. To study culture in totality, this is the most effective tool for an ideal anthropologist. There is a common feeling is that it is an 'old traditional method', and therefore, it is irrelevant today. This is not true. Without a thorough knowledge of ethnography, understanding of human cultures becomes difficult. It is so since every action of man is woven through life experience. Hence, the study of ethnography is important for an anthropologist. Beattie says that,

The term 'ethnography' refers simply to descriptive accounts of human societies, usually of those simpler, smaller-scale societies which anthropologists have mostly studied. In this sense ethnography may be said to be the raw material of social anthropology. (1964:18,19)

The usefulness, and nature of ethnography is explained by Brown in the following words:

In anthropology, meaning by that the study of what are called the primitive backward peoples, the term ethnography applies to what is specially a mode of idiographic enquiry, the aim of which is to give acceptable accounts of such peoples and their social life. Ethnography differs from history in that the ethnographer derives his knowledge, or some major part of it, from direct observation of or contact with the people about whom he writes, and not, like the historian, from written records. [1952:2)

The present study is an attempt to understand the Malayan's cultural variability in its complexity, to develop a sense of the past, and of the role of that past in the present day lives of the society that is being studied. In fact, understanding a person's own society is the best way to understand that of others, and then by comparing all with each other. This chapter explores these aspects of the community's culture, basing on the household surveys, interviews, case studies, participant and non-participant observation done during the fieldwork.

Geographic Environment

The settlements of the Malayans are scattered far and wide all along the North Malabar, particularly in Kannur and Kasargod districts. The North Malabar is situated at the Northern tip of Kerala state, bounded by Karnataka state on the north and east, Kozhikode and Wayanad districts on the south, and the Arabian (Lakshadweep) Sea on the west.

Major parts of the area come under midland with numerous hills and valleys, and it presents an undulating surface ascending and merging into the slopes of Western Ghats on the eastern side. The area can be geographically divided into three regions namely, highland, midland and lowland. The high land region comprises mainly of mountains, and has the plantation like coffee, tea, cardamom and other spices. Trees like veety, teak etc. are also grown in plenty. Once the hillocks were covered with fairy dense jungle, but now are almost barren except a few patches like Reserve Forests. The midland lying between highlands and lowlands have wavy hills and dales. This is an area of agricultural activity. The comparatively narrow lowland includes river, deltas, and seashore. This region is known for coconut, paddy and tobacco cultivation.

There are a number of small gullies, streams and rivers. Out of the 44 rivers (*puzha*) in Kerala, as many as 20 are in this area. Mayyazhi (Mahe) *Puzha*, Valapattanam *Puzha*, Kuppam *Puzha*, Thejaswini *Puzha* and Chandragiri *Puzha* are the major rivers that flourish in the area. It is because of the peculiar topography, the rivers take their origin on the east and flow in the west direction causing the bulk of the rainwater, which is the only source of ground water-escape to sea through these rivers. Most of the rivers are unceasing and provide good scope for irrigation and controlling floods.

The area from east to west may be divided into four belts according to geological formations. The belts are oriented more or less north to south and consist of, (i) a high mountain belt made up of crystalline rocks of the Archean group, (ii) a broad belt of residual laterite, (iii) a narrow belt of Warkalli beds of Tertiary group, and (iv) the western most coastal belt of recent deposits. The most extensively occurring rock type is the Gneiss Quartz Magnetite. The Warkalli beds are considered to ravage in age from the upper Miocene to Pliocene. The coastal belt of recent deposits includes the entire marine, lacustrine and alluvial deposits of recent origin. In addition to this, lime shells, lignified woods, etc are found in the coastal area. The soil can be classified into sandy, laterite and hilly or forest soils. The sandy soil occurs as a narrow belt all along the coast on the western portions of Kanuur, Hosdrug, Taliparamba and Thalassery taluks and also in the narrow strip on the southwestern side of Kasargod taluk. The soil in the midland region of the district is laterite. And in the eastern part is hilly or forest soil. The soil is moderately deep, porous and well drained. The depth of the soil varies from one meter to four meters (*District Census Handbook*, 1965).

The climate is moist and pleasant throughout the year, with a cold spell in the monsoon seasons, and hot spell during March-May.

There are two rainy seasons, the South-West Monsoon (starting from June to the end of September) and the North-East (starting from November and ends in February). The annual average rainfall is 3438 mm. More than 80% of the annual average rainfall is received during the South-West Monsoon season. The daily average temperature is calculated to be 26° C (*District Handbook of Kerala*, 1997).

Flora and Fauna

The flora of this region is characteristically tropical due to ideal conditions like heavy rain, moderate temperature etc. Once the natural vegetation was thick but, largely diminished at present, and consists of different kinds of forests. Nowadays, mangrove, coconut, rubber, pepper, areca nut, jackfruit, cashew etc., are the major vegetations in addition to teak, rosewood, sandal, bamboo etc. The forest in this region is well known for its plenty and verity of flora. It includes varieties of grass, shrubs, creepers, climbers and timberwoods. The area is also rich in medicinal plants. Tapioca, rubber, palm, arecanut, beteleaves, pepper, cardamom, ginger, plantains, etc., supply income to the people, who largely give adequate care for these plants.

The natural fauna includes tiger, leopard, wolf, elephant, porcupine, sambar, wild dog, cat, pig, goat, buffalo, rabbit, monkey, squirrel, bat and a variety of reptiles such as, snake, lizard, ant eater, crocodile and turtle. The area is very rich in different species of birds like peacock, parrot, crow, cuckoo, wild fowl, duck, maina, crane, eagle etc. It is due to the frequent interference of man and diminishing forest force that the wild animals almost disappear. The important domesticated animals include goat, cow, cat and dog. Piggery is not common, and rearing of buffaloes becomes rarer day by day. Poultry are popular but, rearing of rabbits and ducks are very limited.

Variety of sharks, sardines, silver bellies, mackerel, narcine, etroplus, dolphins, wales, prawns, lobsters, molusca etc. nourish the fish fauna. Although hunting has disappeared, fishing both in backwater and sea is very common (*District Handbook of Kerala*, 1997).

History of the People

The Malayans form one of the important Scheduled Castes of North Malabar. Generally, the colour of the people is more or less brown-black. Hair is black and long. The size of the people is average. Their face is round to oval in shape with naturally depressed nasal bridge and wide nasal profile. The thickness of the lips varies from thin to medium. At present, these basic characteristics have changed a lot. The people are Dravidian and use Malayalam as their language and script. In the past, they had used a dialect, *kozha*, among themselves but, now it has been almost lost. Now, a few persons are multilingual. *Thaliyola* (palm leaves) were used instead of papers in the past. The people who were confined to certain pockets in North Malabar are today spread far and wide beyond Malabar.

Instead of maintaining any 'authentic' historical records of origin, the Malayans generally believe in myths and legends for tracing their past. They are of the opinion that the Malayans had originated from the hills. During *kanneru pattu* (a performance to expel evil eye) the Malayans used incantations. Five of them *Sathyaguruvachanam*, *Eriporidisham*, *Badravali* (*Badrabali*), *Anniyarasathram* and *Malamasathram* are concerned with their origin.

According to *Sathyaguruvachanam*, once God Siva was seized by *kanneru* (evil eye). Everybody tried their best to subdue but, all efforts turned in vain. Lastly, they decided to perform a *yagam* (sacrifice). After a long austerity at Mahameru (a holly hill) by

Agasthya Muni (a sage), two sperms of him gave birth to a female from the power of Lord Siva and a male from the power of Siva and Vishnu. The newborn Malayan was taught magic in several. After receiving blessings from Gods, the couple expelled the *kanneru* from Siva by performing *kanneru pāttu*.

Eriporidhosham narrates: Everyone was of the opinion that nothing was more beautiful than Siva. This created a desire in Siva to see his own beauty, and believed it be so after looking in a mirror, and affected by *kanneru*. To get rid of *kanneru*, all possibilities were tested but in vain. In the end, the Gods decided to conduct a *yagam* at Mahameru. Both *Mahabharatha Perumalayan* and *Mahabharatha Perumalayi* were taken origin from the *homakundam* (fire spot of *yagam*) along with five plants, i.e. *kanchi*, *kadugagni*, *karerinjhi*, *karinezuku* and *karinechchi* as a result of 21,000 years of meditation. Using these plants, the Malayan performed *kannerupāttu*, to expell Siva's *kanneru*. *Badrabali*, *Anniyarasasthram* and *Malamasasathram* narrate similar stories with slight variations.

According to another belief, the Malayans are the descendants of a legend Kurathi, who is referred to in *Nizhalkuttu*, a magical chant used during the performance of *Kannerupattu*. According to this story, her husband, Kuravan, killed once the Pandavas by using magic *Nizhalkuttu* by persuade of Duriyodana. After hearing the tragedy of Pandavas, the Kurathi stunned and fell unconscious because, the Pandavas were her brothers. Later she decided to go to the palace of her brothers, to see the dead bodies, as well as to rescue them. She went to the palace and performed some magic and rescued the brothers. It is also believed that the Malayans learned the basics of magic from this ancestor, the legend Kurathi.

In addition to these stories, the informants told the researcher that the forefathers of Malayan had migrated from Kalighat in Bengal to Tamil Nadu. According to them, *teyyam* performance is similar to that of *Kalipuja* (Kali worship) of Kalighat of Bengal. Later on from Tamil Nadu, the Malayans had migrated to Kerala. Of course, this cannot be proved historically since the legend is not authentic in nature. Majority of them believes in legends, which were transferred from generations to generations.

According to Thurston,

Their name, signifying hill-men, points their having been at one time a jungle tribe, but they have no means the dark complexion and debased physiognomy characteristic of the classes which still occupy that position. (1909: 436)

Singh says,

Malayan might have derived the name from the word malai, meaning hill, as they seem to have originally belonged to the hills. (1993: 893)

All the above inferences except two, argue that these people were residing on hills.

The term, 'Malayan' refers to one who resides on *mala* (hill). *Sathyaguruvachanam* says: "*mamalayil pirantha mulam malayanenna peru vannu*" (origin on the hill brought the name Malayan), and also revealed the reason why the people named Malayan. So, the people in North Malabar used the term 'Malayan' to refer the male, and 'Malayi' or 'Mali' to indicate the female.

Distribution

Table: II.1 Distribution of Population by Age and Sex

Sl. No	Age	Sex		Total	%
		Male	Female		
1	Below16	220	225	445	26.74
2	16-25	178	166	344	20.67
3	26-35	142	142	284	17.06
4	36-45	113	113	226	13.58
5	46-55	81	79	160	9.62
6	56-65	51	69	120	7.21
7	66-75	24	36	60	3.61
8	76-85	9	10	19	1.14
9	86 and above	4	2	6	0.36
Total		822	842	1664	100.00

The total number of households studied (for sample survey) was 325 with population of 1664, consisting 822 males, and 842 females (49.40% of the total population were males, and 50.60% were females). The females were slightly outnumbered. The age group shows (Table II.1) that the maximum number of Malayans falls under the age below 16 with 220 males and 225 females, forming a total of 445 persons, i.e. 26.74% of the total population. The age group 16-25 comes next with a population of 344 (20.67%). In contrast with the sex distribution of the total population the age groups numbered 2, 5 and 9, and the males outnumbered the females. In the age groups 1, 6, 7 and 8, the females outnumbered the males. The age groups of 3 and 4 show a balanced sex ratio. However, the data on age-sex composition show a healthy status of the group, i.e., more number of children as and when the age increases, the number of people becomes less.

Dress and Ornaments

Today, the dress of the Malayan is like that of any other modern people. During the feudal period, men covered only the portion from waist to just below the knee; a piece of white cloth was used for this purpose known as *mundu*. Later a piece of cloth called *veshthi* or *randām mundu* was used in addition to that *mundu*. It was placed in folded shape on the left shoulder. The females did not cover their upper part of the body, but used a long cloth like *veshthi* in a particular manner along with a *puda* of seven *mulam* (2.5 mts in length) from waist to below knee. The females use this additional cloth, the *veshthi*, to cover upper part, particularly the breasts.

The technology of making cloth was unknown to them. Purchase of clothes was not common among them. They received pieces of cloth as reward for their performance of *teyyam*, magic and midwifery from their patrons. The clothing pattern did not indicate any status in their society. Clothes were washed regularly and worn neatly.

Nowadays, they purchase dress and dress materials from the shops, the male wear *mundu* or *dhothi*, *lungi*, *veshthi*, *kuppāyam* (shirt), and even pants. The female wears *sāri*, blouse, *kuppāyam* (shirt), *pāvāda* (skirt), *churidhar*, *nighty*, etc. The boys use nicker or trouser (half pants), pants, *dhothi*, *lungi* and *kuppāyam* (shirt), while girls wear blouse, shirt, *middy*, *frock*, *pāvāda* (skirt) and *churidhār*.

In the remote past when the feudal system was very much in power, the Malayans were never allowed to wear ornaments other than *kāthilola* on ears, and iron rings and bangles on hands. Later on when the feudal power was weakened, these people slowly came to wear silver or golden ornaments similar to that of high caste people. The females used *kāsu*, *pavan* or *ponnu* made of gold on the neck and silver or golden *vala* (bangles) on the hands.

Table: II.2 Traditional and Modern Dress of Malayan

Sex	Dress	
	Traditional	Modern
Male	<p><i>Mundu</i> <i>Randām Mundu</i> <i>Veshti</i> <i>Konnam</i></p>	<p><i>Mundu</i> <i>Randām Mundu</i> <i>Veshti</i> Pants Shirt <i>Baniyan</i> <i>Jetty</i> Troussar (<i>Nicker</i>) <i>Lungi</i></p>
Female	<p><i>Puda</i> <i>Randām Mundu</i> <i>Veshti</i></p>	<p><i>Mundu</i> <i>Randām Mundu</i> <i>Veshti</i> <i>Kasavum-neriyathum</i> Skirt Pants Middy <i>Blouse</i> <i>Sari</i> <i>Chooridār</i> <i>Brassier</i> <i>Jetty</i> <i>Nighty</i> <i>Lungi</i></p>

Fingers were beautified with *mothiram* (finger ring) made of iron, silver or gold. *Nūlu* (black thread) or *murichūthi* made of silver or gold is used as waist string. Ears are pierced and used *kāthilola* (made of palm leaf or thin sheets of aluminum or lead) or *thakka* (wooden/golden/silver ear stud). *Thandavala* (copper ring), *kālhala* (silver ring) or *pādaswaram* (a silver ornament) were worn on the legs just above the ankle. These are enough indications to say that these

people also possess valuable ornaments in their own varied styles. Men use golden *kadukkan* in ears, and also wear finger rings and waist string. If he possesses *paniker āchāram* (honorific title), he wears golden bangle (which is given by the local ruler or, a reputed Brahmin) on the left hand.

Today, the females use all types of ornaments made of gold or silver such as, chains, necklaces, bangles, earrings and anklets, etc., without any hesitation. The males are not interested to wear *kadukkan* but like wearing finger rings, bracelets and chains made of gold. The *āchāraḱar* (honorific titleholder), wear *āchāravala* (golden bangle) on their left hands as before.

The Malayans, particularly men, use *chandanam* (sandal paste) and *basmam* (ash) for *kuri* (markings on forehead and other parts of the body). They also use *kalabham*, *sindoor*, *kumkumam*, etc. *Āchāraḱaran* must mark 101 markings, usually with ash, all over the upper part of the body (above waist) in a peculiar manner.

The males grow long hair and tie it into a knot behind the head *pinkuduma*, like Tamil Brahmins, as their traditional hairstyle. The females always grow their hair long and wavy and tie at the back of the head in a characteristic knot. Teeth are regularly cleaned. Bathing and washing are regarded as essential practices. Use of soap and shampoo for bath, and detergents and powders for washing is very common now.

Table : II.3 Traditional and Modern Ornaments of Malayan

Sex	Body or Part	Ornaments	
		Traditional	Modern
Male	Ear	<i>Kadukkan</i> (gold)	--
	Hand	<i>Āchāravala</i> (gold)	<i>Āchāravala</i> (gold)
	Finger	<i>Mothiram</i> (ring) (gold, silver, copper or iorn)	<i>Mothiram</i> (golden ring)
	Waist	<i>Thodaru</i> (silver)	--
	Neck	--	<i>Māla</i> (golden chain)
Female	Ear	<i>Kathilola</i> (Palm leaf/aluminium/led) <i>Thakka</i> (gold)	<i>Kammal, Lolack, Koodu, etc.</i> (golden stud)
	Hand	<i>Vala</i> (silver, copper/iorn bangle) <i>Thandavala</i> (silver, copper/iorn anklet)	<i>Vala</i> (bangle-gold) Bracelet (gold)
	Finger	<i>Mothiram</i> (ring) (gold, silver, copper or iorn)	<i>Mothiram</i> (gold ring)
	Waist	<i>Nūlu</i> (black thread) <i>Murichukuthhi</i> (silver/gold), <i>Aranjānam</i> (silver/gold)	<i>Aranjānam</i> (silver/gold string)
	Neck	<i>Kāsu</i> (copper or gold) <i>Ponnu</i> (gold) <i>Pavan</i> (gold) <i>Charadu</i> (black thread)	<i>Māla</i> (Chain) Necklase etc. (gold)
	Leg	<i>Kālthanda/Kālthala</i> (silver/copper)	<i>Pādasaram</i> (silver/gold)

Food Habits

Food is one of the basic needs for human existence. Rice is considered as staple food along with vegetables, pulses, fish and meat. They had taken to non-vegetarianism, but avoid eating beef. Leaves, shoots, fruits and seeds of various plants are used as vegetables. The people also consume both sea and fresh water fish in fresh and dried condition. The boiled rice gruel, known as *kanji* or, *choru* (cooked rice meal) and curries made of vegetables, fish or meat are consumed during lunch and supper. Fruits, nuts and tubers are also consumed. They also take tea or coffee in the evening, and in the morning. At present, food items are prepared with the help of advanced techniques, and they do not hesitate to take even beef.

Table: II.4 Usual Food - A Day intake of Malayan

Session	Time	Item
Breakfast	8 am to 10 am	Tea/Coffee/ <i>Pālumvellam</i> <i>Dosai/ Iddly/ Puttu/ Chapathi/</i> <i>Ada/ Uppumavu/ Aval/</i> <i>Kappa/ kizhangu/ etc.</i>
Lunch	12 am to 2 pm	<i>Choru</i> (Cooked Rice) or <i>Kanji</i> (Gruel) with Curries (veg or non-veg)
Tea	4 pm to 6 pm	Tea or Coffee
Supper	7.30 pm to 10 pm	<i>Choru</i> or <i>Kanji</i> With Curries (veg or non- veg)

Table : II.5 List of Commonly used Veg and Non-Veg Dishes of Malayan

Vegetable Dish	Non-Vegetable Dish
1. <i>Choru</i> (cooked rice)	1. <i>Meen char</i> (fish curry)
2. <i>Kanji</i> (gruel)	2. <i>Meen porivu</i> (roasted fish)
3. <i>Sambar</i> (side dish)	3. <i>Erachi</i> (meat) curry
4. <i>Pulissery</i> (side dish)	4. <i>Erachi</i> (meat) roast/fry
5. <i>Aviyal</i> (side dish)	5. Omlet
6. <i>Massala</i> curry (side dish)	6. Bull's Eye
7. <i>Varavu/Thorani</i> (side dish)	7. <i>Mutta varavu</i> (egg fry)
8. <i>Olan</i> (side dish)	8. <i>Mutta</i> (egg) curry
9. <i>Achar</i> (Pickle)	9. <i>Mutta</i> (egg) <i>masala</i> (curry)
10. <i>Ani Pachadi</i> (side dish)	10. <i>Biriyani</i>
11. <i>Inchi Pachadi</i> (side dish)	11. <i>Neaichoru</i> (ghee rice)
12. <i>Moleshyam</i> (side dish)	12. <i>Unaku char</i> (dry fish curry)
13. <i>Uppilittathu</i> (vegetables preserved in salt water)	13. <i>Unaku varavu</i> (dry fish fry)
14. <i>Rasam</i> (side dish)	14. <i>Elembaka char</i> (muscle curry)
15. <i>Moru / Thairu</i> (butter milk)	15. <i>Elembaka Varavu</i> (muscle fry)
16. <i>Pappatam</i> (pappat)	16. <i>Kallumakaya char</i> (muscle curry)
17. <i>Kondattam</i> (vegetables dried with salt)	17. <i>Kallumakaya Varavu</i> (muscle fry)
18. <i>Idly, Chappathi, Dossai, Ada, Puttu, Puri</i>	18. <i>Chemeen char</i> or <i>porivu</i> (curry or fry)

Of late, the habitat was suitable for minor hunting, especially bird-catching, fishing and gathering fruits, tubers, vegetations and minor forest produces. As a result of the change in habitat (from hills to plains), these people have modified their food habits as per the new environment. Although their habits changed, still they are engaged in bird catching and fishing, if an opportunity arises. The Malayans like

meat of fowl and fish, which is a remnant of his past culture. A large number of them consume alcoholic drinks. Smoking of *beedi* and cigarettes is also common among men. Malayans accept food and drinking water from Brahmins, Nairs, Nambiars, and Tiyyas, but not from the Pulayans, Vannans, Vēlans, Muslims, and Christians.

Health and Hygiene

The Malayans hardly give adequate attention to health. It is believed that health and disease are nowhere connected to man but supernatural. The people considered body strength and health as synonym. For them, disease is nothing but a state of weakness in body strength and disturbed mind.

The people mostly relate illness of any kind to certain sanctions. If the sanctions of their society are violated, it comes under the influence of evil spirits. It may be sorcery, breach of taboos, spirits intrusions, etc. The people also connect serious epidemics like small pox, cholera, plague, etc., to the violations of the sanctions given by the society. Otherwise, they think these epidemics should spread by the influence of evil spirits or, wrath of deities.

The principal occupation, *teyyam* performance and poverty further support their lazy attitude towards health and health matters. During *teyyam* seasons, the Malayans found it difficult to perform all daily routines. In these days they give full concentration to performing *teyyam*, which minimise even the scope for timely intake of food. The performers forced to keep themselves awake, when

continuous performances of *teyyam* became a necessity. And further, they drank alcohol, which is an inevitable offering material. All these affected their health. Now, even though the circumstances remain the same, the attitudes of the Malayans towards health and disease changed, and updated owing to education, awareness programmes, etc.

The people have their own knowledge of disease, and ways of healing, a system of ethnomedicine, which related to magic and indigenous system of diagnosis, and cure. Neighbors, even people of high castes, make use of this skill of Malayans, as a reliable medicine man, and some of them get very wide popularity in this field. Since the establishment of hospitals and other means of medical care, Malayans also utilize the facilities offered by both the modern and indigenous medical systems according to its merit. The children are given proper periodic preventive vaccinations. Majorities of them have a sound knowledge about family planning, and the females are resorting to permanent pregnancy preventive techniques.

The people lead a simple life, and the house and household goods show the same simplicity. The customary activities made them a kind of semi-nomadic life, not in its full sense. These activities and poverty are never motivating the people to give much patience on hygienic practices. The Malayans who live in rural area seldom have facilities for sanitation and drinking water but, those who are in urban or townships pay much more attention towards hygienic practices. In spite of these backdrops, the Malayans pay great

attention towards personal cleaning, and always wear cleanly washed cloths. It may be due to the frequent contact with outsiders or, of high self-consciousness.

Education

The Malayans have gained both formal and informal education. Through formal education they acquire school education. While informal education teaches them how to perform *teyyam*, magic and midwifery. A good performer must be a master over speech, spell, recital, dance etc. In consequence of learning by formal, and informal education, these people have become master of *teyyam*. Family and surroundings are the center of informal education. The little ones are encultured mainly by informal education through active participation and keen observation.

Unlike many others, the Malayan had a high awareness regarding the importance of basic education. The *teyyam* and magic were the main forces. The system of *ezhuthuveedu* (traditional schooling) made the people literate before the establishment of formal education. The Malayans had taught the high caste along with their children in his *ezhuthuveedu* on those days, despite the people of this area largely believing in purity and pollution.

The Malayan boys and girls are treated equally upto certain age. Elders never teach sex behaviour to them. They learn it indirectly from the behaviour of married couples in the family. The parents do not encourage any sort of sexual interactions before marriage. Their curiosity about sex is met with stories and imagination. Gradually the children become aware of sex when they grow up in the company of their elders. From the age of 10-12 years onwards there grows a

tendency of avoidance in sex-free mingling between brother and sister, and others.

The children are looked after with care, and the adults guided them whenever and wherever needed. The growing children accompany their parents. Men and women train boys and girls, respectively. From the age of four or so, they are expected to help their parents: the boys use to perform *veden* and *kothamuri*, which are the initial ritualistic activities of a boy. Afterwards he directly enters into the field of *teyyam*. Their participation and involvement have given them enough opportunity to observe each and every sphere of *teyyam* and magic. This informal education has perfected them in this field. It is done with the help and guidance of relatives and friends through lively experiences.

The women train the girls. Like boys they also become experts through participation and involvement in magic, midwifery, and household works. Before attaining maturity, before puberty, the girls also extend their help in *teyyam* performance like the boys. Practically, the Malayan gets training in typical life-style from the childhood itself. But recently this idea has been more or less replaced by the influence of modern trends by the inter-intra relationships.

Table : II.6 Educational Status of Malayans

Sl. No	Status	Schooling		Post Schooling		Total	%
		Male	Female	Male	Female		
1	LKG/UKG/ Etc	18	15	--	--	33	1.98
2	LP	67	62	65	89	283	17.01
3	UP	44	55	131	120	350	21.03
4	Secondary	52	59	228	228	567	34.07
5	Higher Secondary	24	26	109	88	247	14.84
6	Graduation	13	11	21	11	56	3.37
7	PG	3	--	2	4	9	0.54
Total		221	228	556	540	1545	--
8	Literate	--	--	3	16	19	1.14
9	Illiterates	--	--	4	2	6	0.36
10	Not Studied (Children)	44	50	--	--	94	5.65
Grand Total		265	278	563	558	1664	100

*Now studying – 221+228=449(26.98% of the sample population)

Table II.6 shows the literacy rate among the Malayans. Of the 1664 people in the sample, only 6 (0.36%) persons are illiterate. Incidentally, they are mentally retarded. Students are 449 in number (26.98% of sample population, 221 males and 228 females). As a matter of fact, among the school going children, the girls outnumber the boys. A thorough analysis reveals that 666 (40.02%) persons fall below secondary level. And 567 (34.07% out of 1664) persons received secondary education. 247 persons (14.84% of the total population) obtained higher secondary education. There are 9

persons in the sample, who could complete post graduation and above.

Knowledge and Tradition

Living in the area, the Malayans have developed a distinctive and unique life style of their own. They exploit the advantages and forsake the disadvantages. This is done generation after generation, and this is how tradition is being perpetuated. The old are respected and cared. They are never neglected because of their knowledge and experience.

The adoption of 'semi-nomadic' life helps them to explore and exploit the local environment. They have their settlement scattered all over North Malabar. This is not a spontaneous affair; rather there is deliberate force behind it. The practice of *teyyam*, magic and midwifery enforces them to do so. This clever act has given each and every family an equal chance to get earnings for their traditional practices. Due to incessant rain during monsoon, from May to October, it becomes impossible to perform *teyyam*. To overcome this, they seasoned the performance. In accordance with that the performances such as, *vedan* and *kothamuri* periodically visit houses, and receiving cash and kind during festive occasions, and vegetables in seasons. This made their lives an easy flow during the off-season of *teyyam*.

They are so much aware of their surroundings that they can adjust and explore the local facilities. For e.g. they find out *muriku* (a kind of softwood) and *kuruthola* (tender coconut leaves) are suitable for making *teyyam* attires and *manayola*, *chayilliam*, *manjal* (turmeric), *nuru* (lime) and *kari* (charcoal) for facial decorations. They have inherited this technology through generations, and over centuries

their knowledge in this field has improved considerably. They also readjust themselves to cope up with the changes occurred in the field of economic organizations, and social organization of this area.

Their method of communication is quite interesting. Although they speak Malayalam, the local language, they use *kozha*, a secret language of their own. But this secret language is almost extinct.

The learning and teaching of old tradition and practice such as, *teyyam*, magic and medicine and cure are actually a hereditary one. It is passed from father to son, through word of mouth. It is always in the family, but some times if anybody wishes to learn the traditional practices it is difficult for them, and it is purely depended on the willingness of the teacher. If there are no sons in the family, generally women are not taught *teyyam*, only the next kin men can be taught. Both men and women teach the secrets of magic, medicine, and cure to their sons and daughters. Only the daughters are taught midwifery.

To indicate the boundary of *cherujenamm* certain house stream, pathway or, other geographical markings are used. Earlier, they did not use any unit for linear measure. The distance is expressed by the number of days required for covering it by a person i.e. a day's walk or two days' walk with a night halt etc. They used units such as, *ungulam* (one inch), *maru* (50 cms), *adi* (one feet), *chan* (six inches), *thalachuttu* (22 inches), *kole* (3feets) and *vara* (12 inches) to measure length. Liquid is measured by *nazhi*, *edangazhi*, *kutty*, etc. *Palam* (a quarter of *rathal*) and *ratl* (arratel, four *Palam* or a pound of 12 ounces) was the unit for weight, and now, kilograms. The rice and paddy are also measured by using *para* (15 kgs), *nazhi* (250 gms), *edangazhi* (approximately 500 gms), *ser* (1.5 kgs) etc. They started using clothes, utensils, and iron implements after those were

introduced into this area. These are never purchased but, today bought from market.

Marriage

According to Mudrok, marriage is

A universal institution that involves residential cohabitation, economic co-operation and formation of the nuclear family. (1949)

This definition is followed in this thesis to describe the marriage of the Malayans.

Customarily, Malayans had a unique system of marriage. *Kettukalyanam* is the equivalent term used for marriage. They followed community endogamy, clan and lineage exogamy. The people had practiced child marriage, polygamy and junior sororate earlier. At present, adult marriage and monogamy are the norms. Marriage is contracted generally through negotiation. A number of marriages are of the preferential types, i.e. cross cousins marriage with father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter. Marriage by elopement is rare but, by exchange is present. They had no marriage symbols in the past but, now *thali*, a gold chain with a leaf like locket, *mothiram* (golden finger ring), and *sindoor* (vermilion) are used to show the marital status. Actually there is no payment regarding Malayans marriage. The society neither practice dowry or bride price. But on the same time, the Malayans continue rather a customary practice, giving some cash and cloth to the bride's mother and brother, known as *ardhakannam*, *vattipannam* and *ammapuda*. The couple usually lives with groom's parents. Neo-local residence is preferred. Divorce is permissible however, its frequency is less. The society permits remarriage of widows and widowers.

In the past, the marriage ceremony used to last for seven days but, later it was limited to three days, and now it is performed just in a day. Marriage ceremonies take place at the bride's place. The boy's family takes the initiative for the marriage. The people have belief that the male matures for marriage after seventeen years, and the female attains maturity after nine years.

Usually the parents arrange the marriage of their son when he crosses seventeen years. The father, and the brother-in-law or, the eldest men go in search of a suitable bride. When they come across a suitable alliance, the matter is discussed with the elder members of the girl's family at her residence. The girl's party has to be pleased with the proposal. Then the families approach an astrologer to find out the feasibility and compatibility of the proposal. A day is fixed to conduct *nischayam* (betrothal).

On the day of *nischayam*, the father along with the mother, brothers, sisters, and four to five relatives (such as uncle, aunt, sister's husband, brother's wife, etc.) of the boy go to the girl's house and finalize the marriage date, time and other related matters. This is called *nischayikkal*. The betrothal party brings with them a few customary gifts of *vettilla kettu* (not less than 10 bundles of betel leaves), five *pukayila kettu* (bundles of tobacco) and 100 *adakka* (areca nut). The party is received with a warm welcome, and enters the house after washing their feet. They are given *murukkan* (to chew betel leaves, pieces of areca nut, piece of tobacco and lime). Tea and sweets are served. Immediately after the tea, both parties discuss and finalize the date and time of marriage. Items to be included in the marriage feast, and the number of persons expected for the function is also decided. The members are served with non-vegetarian food along with sweets.

On the day of marriage, the groom's party starts towards the bride's house, soon after the arrival of relatives and friends except the mother. They carry bridal dress (a *manthrakodi* and *veshthi* for bride, and a *kasavupudava* for her mother) and ornaments for the bride. They reach the bride's house between 5 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. After washing their feet, they enter the courtyard. The youngest brother or, the sister of the bride cleans the feet of the groom and *mūnaman* (usually a cross cousin or friend of the groom), and gets cash or, rarely a gold or silver ring. At this time mother of the bride receives the groom with *vilakkum talikayum* (a lightened oil lamp in a vase), and throws rice over the boy three times by uttering *vannu, vannu, vannu* (*vannu* means arrived). The boy is steered and seated in *padinjatta* (central room), the blessing *arirthirikkal/arinurikkal* (offering raw rice over the head) follows. This is done by the mother of the bride, and then is followed by her father, uncle, brothers and sisters, and other elders, in order of seniority. Then the groom enters the *pandal* (decorated courtyard under a temporary roof erected in poles) and sits. Betel leaves, tobacco, areca nut and lime to chew, and juice to drink are served to the invitees.

Just after the drinks (usually *jeerakavellam*-boiled water with cumin seed) the bride is guided to the *pandal*. The sister-in-law, aunt, and some other female kin accompany the bride up to the courtyard. The bride in new clothes and ornaments given by her father, comes and stands by her father's side. The groom gives *ardhakannam* to the eldest brother of the bride. It is nothing but a customary practice by which the groom was given a fixed amount of cash, and now-a-days Rs.13/- and 25 paise is given to the brother, who is considered as half of the bride. The girl stands in front of the groom in such a way that she faces the east. The boy ties a *thali* (marriage badge) around the neck of the bride. The ritual is called, *thalikettal*. At this juncture, the *mūnaman* makes the announcement that 'the boy of a

particular clan marries the girl of another clan'. The bride's father gives the right hand of his daughter in the right hand of the groom like *panigrahanam*. Then the couple along with *mūnaman* sits on a black and white piece of clothes (spread one above the other) on the floor of the courtyard. Bride's mother gives the couple *appavum maduravum* (consists of salt, *pazham* and sugar) in a *kodiyila* (tip of the plantain leaf). After receiving *ammapuda* (a new white cloth) and *vattipannam* (Rs.1/- as wage for bearing the bride in her abdomen) from the groom, bride's mother blesses the couple by performing *arithirikkal/arinurikkal*, in which a pinch of rice is thrown over the head. Others follow the ritual as per their seniority and position.

Thereafter, the guests offer cash or gifts, known as *yoghyam*, according to their status toward the marriage expenditure. The bride's brother receives gifts for in behalf of her family, and the groom receives for his family. The amount received is recorded and announced, soon. This is repaid, when the later conducts similar ceremonies. A feast is served, is followed by offering of areca nuts and betel leaves. Some of the gusts perform music and dance till morning. *Thekken kali*, *kinnam kali*, and *pāttu* are some of the item performed.

Ramayanam pāttu is used in *theakkan kali*. Only males perform *theakkan kali*. Females perform *kinnam kali*. Musical instruments such as, harmonium and *chenda* (drum) are also used. People sing songs. The boy's party is usually accompanied by a *Nagaswara sangam* (a musical instrumental team), consisting of a *Nagaswaram* (windpipe), *sruthi* (a kind of pipe), *kaimany* (small sized cymbal) and *thaghil* (kettledrum). At times, the bride's party also arranges their own *Nagaswara sangham*.

On the next morning, the invitees take *kuluthinte unnu* (two curries and cooked rice), and chewing betel and other ingredients follows this. This time the married girl takes bath in a nearby river or, pond. The ornaments and clothes are replaced with new ones brought by the husband's party. Then the girl sings one or two songs before the guests gathered in the *pandal*. The friends and relatives of both sides sing songs. It continues till midday. The guests, are served a *samarpusadya* (grand feast). This grand feast is comprised by *choru* (boiled rice), and side dishes including, *achār* (pickle), *puli inchi* (a special preparation), *kumbalanga pachadi* (made of pumpkin with curd), *meen* curry (fish), *irachi* curry (meat). *Pappadam* (pappat), *pazham* (banana), two kinds of *upperi* (chips and sweetened chips), *parippu pradhaman* (a sort of sweet made of kernel of peas), and *adapradhaman* (a sort of sweet made of rice flour cake) are also served. Soon after the *samarppusadya* and chewing betel leaves, the couple and the *mūnaman* receive blessings once again, and the boy's party then returns with his wife and relatives.

At the entrance, the boy's younger sister or niece welcomes them. She washes the feet of the couple and gets a reward (cash or gold) in return. The boy's mother ceremoniously welcomes the new couple in the same way, as the mother of the girl who had received the groom before the *thalikettu*. The couple receives blessings from the elders. A group of relatives and friends of the wife accompany them. This is called *pennukuttipoval*. In the night a non-vegetarian feast is served. Again dance and music (usually *theakkan kali*, *kinnam kali* and *pāttu*) are performed. In the morning, all of them take *kuluthinte unnu* and, followed by a *samarpu sadya* at midday. Here also the invitees are served non-vegetarian food. Immediately after the meal, the guests return to their houses, and the new couple begins their life together.

Munnalporukkal is the very next ritual in continuation of the marriage. According to this custom, the new couple, *mūnaman*, husband's mother, sister and friends visit the wife's house on the next day or, within a week after the marriage. In the past, the party stayed there for three days. The party takes chewing articles and sweets along with them as gift to the girl's family. They are treated with a feast at the wife's residence. Wife's parents present *kara appam* and *pazham* to the party. The guests take food and drinks, and enjoy a lot. Unlike the other events in the life-cycle, marriage is the most important and bright. This is the general picture of a Malayan's marriage. At present, due to socio-economic changes, people are not very keen to observe all the rituals and ceremonies, which were customarily performed by the ancestors of the Malayans.

The analysis of marital status of the sample survey shows (table II.7) that 458 (27.52% of sample population) of males and 376 (22.59% of sample population) of females (50.12% of the female population) are unmarried. 355 (21.33%) males and 350 (21.03%) females [means 705 (42.36%) of the sample population] are married. Of the 1664 persons, 445 (26.74%) are in the age group of 0-15 (below sixteen), and all of them are unmarried. It reveals the fact that today the Malayans do not practice child marriage as before. The table also reveals that the tendency for divorce is less, i.e., 17 (1.02%).

Table: II. 7 Age, Sex and Marital Status of the Malayan

Sl No	Age	Unmarried		Married		Divorced		Widowed		Total	%
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
1	0-15	220	225	-	-	-	-	-	-	445	26.74
2	16-25	175	115	2	51	1	-	-	-	344	20.67
3	26-35	54	16	87	116	1	4	-	6	284	17.06
4	36-45	7	9	104	89	2	2	-	13	226	13.58
5	46-55	-	2	79	55	-	3	2	19	160	9.62
6	56-65	2	8	47	30	-	1	2	30	120	7.21
7	66-75	-	1	23	8	-	2	1	25	60	3.61
8	76-85	-	-	9	1	-	1	-	9	19	1.14
8	86 & above	-	-	4	-	-	1	-	2	6	0.36
Total		458	376	355	350	4	12	5	104	1664	100
%		27.52	22.59	21.33	21.03	0.24	0.72	0.30	6.25		

Family

According to William Neuton Stephens,

The family in general is a group based on marriage and marriage contract, including recognition of the rights and duties of parenthood, common residence for husband, wife and children and reciprocal economic obligations between husband and wife. (1963)

Taravādu was the term used equivalent to refer to the family of the Malayan. This was used to identify a large number of people deemed to be the members of a joint family, related by blood. They can also trace their origin from an ancestor. In due course, the people preferred nuclear family to joint family. The concept of their family is now narrowed down into a single household, *vedu*. The nature of the family is conjugal, as it consists of husband, wife and their unmarried children, who all live in a house. They share a common kitchen and work for the maintenance of the family. The sons soon after the marriage establish their own nuclear family.

Table: II.8 Size of the Households

Sl. No.	Size	No. of house hold/s	%
1.	Small (1 to 4 members)	176	54.15
2.	Medium (5-9)	136	41.85
3.	Large (10 & above)	13	4.00
Total		325	100

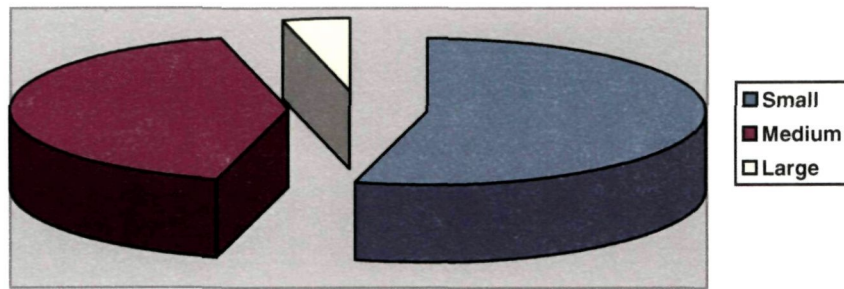


Figure: II.1 Pie Chart-Size of the Households

The table II.8 shows that 176 (54.15%) of the houses are under the small sized category (this category had 1 to 4 persons). And 136 (41.85%) of them fall under the medium size (had 5 to 9 persons) and 13 (4.00%) of them lies under the large size (had 10 or more persons). This confirmed that these people prefer small families, i.e. nuclear families.

Father is the head of the family. He conducts all activities with the assistance of other members. This power is passed on to the eldest son after his death. Even though the females enjoy only less power compared to males, they contribute to the family income. The boys grow up under the care and control of their father, and the girls under the care and control of the mother.

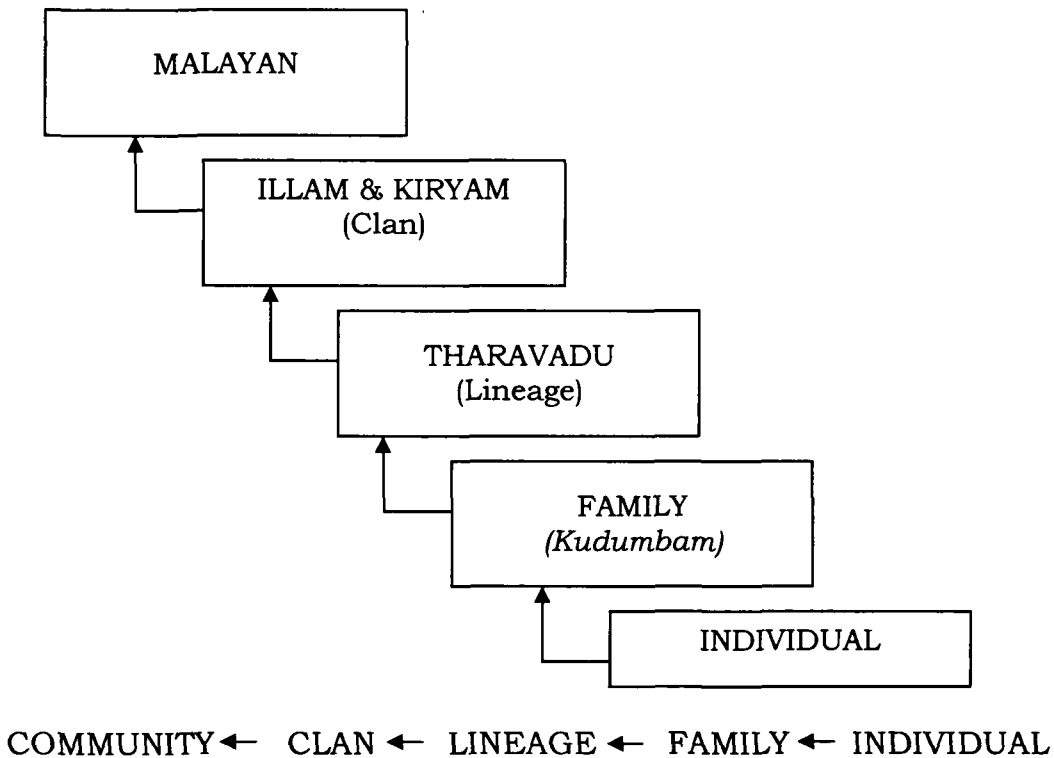


Figure : II.2 The Social Structure of Malayan

Today the family is considered as the smallest unit of Malayan's social structure. Like family, *taravādu* has a chief called, *taravattumūppan*. The name of their *taravādu* is the same as the name of their settlement. All lineages are arranged under nine exogamous clans. This includes an *illam* and 8 *kiryams*. Unlike lineage, clan has no chief.

Among the members of the *illam*, there is a superiority feeling. The whole community believes that *Kallyat illam* is most superior, but at the same time they are not aware of its reason. The clans are spread all over in North Malabar. In the course of time it has lost all its significance. In continuance of modern trends in life activities, the basic components of social structure have lost their influence over the people, particularly of the clan and lineage.

Table: II.9 List of Clans

Sl. No.	Name of Clan
1.	<i>Kallyat Illam</i>
2.	<i>Kottukudy</i>
3.	<i>Palam Kiriam</i>
4.	<i>Uthrani Kiriam</i>
5.	<i>Chenni Kiriam</i>
6.	<i>Veluppan Kiriam</i>
7.	<i>Pullanji Kiriam</i>
8.	<i>Thenam Kiriam</i>
9.	<i>Pana Kiriam</i>

The Malayans domestic system, the family, follows the ascending and descending genealogical lines through the males only. This patrilineage or patriclan makes them ideally suited to be co-resident domestic groups and to hold joint interests in persons and property. Because of the practice of exogamy, both sexes cannot remain co-resident beyond their child-hood.

The property of the Malayans can be divided in to two namely, familial and personal properties. The mode of inheritance depends on the type of property. The *jenmam* right to do the traditional performances and subsistence is considered as familial. Every one in a particular family has equal right to enjoy the service-return facilities. The Malayans are very simple people. Their simplicity is seen in all the aspects of their material life. It only includes a few clothes, dress, ornaments, utensils, and some iron household implements, etc., and they are all very simple. In the past, they lived in small huts. Every family had its own residential house, and very limited material objects.

The existence of nuclear family and even individual ownership patterns were associated with market and trade economy, that did not allow many old values. The ownership of land and market economy, along with the tendency of 'nuclearisation' of the family enforces the Malayans often to claim for individual properties. Sex is the criterion for inheriting properties. The right of inheritance extends only to the males, and not to the females. The son inherits the properties, either familial or, personal by heredity. Thus, the basis of right and ownership of property is consanguineal.

Adoption is present among the Malayans. If a couple does not have a child, they often adopt a child from their own community. It is a private, as well as a public affair. No special ceremony is done for this. The adopted child enjoys all the same rights, and privileges as one's own child.

For example, Kokkanisseri, and Korom *taravadus* adopted children years ago from Kurumathur, and Knavur/Kinnanoor *taravadus*, when they lacked male children. Through these adopted boys, the above mentioned *taravadus* managed to continue their generations. The adopted boys and their succeeding generations enjoyed all privileges irrespective of the fact that they were born in a different family.

Kinship

According to Murdock, kinship is,

A structured system of relationships, in which individuals are bound one to another by complex interlocking and ramifying ties. (1960:92)

Kinship bond, either consanguineally or affinally relates the members of the Malayan community, closely or, distantly. The terminology shows no differences between terms of reference and terms of address.

The connection between persons by blood or marriage is kinship in the case of the Malayans. These ties are referred or addressed through certain specific kinship terms. It is not static. It undergoes changes in tune with their environment. For example, earlier the people used the word, *Appan* to refer to father, today some of them address father as *Achchan*. Others largely use this term throughout Kerala. Some kinship terms are given in table II.10.

Table: II.10 Kinship Terms of Reference & Address

Sl.No	Kin (Relationship)	Terms & Reference	Terms & Address
1.	Father	<i>Appan</i>	<i>Appa</i>
2.	F's younger B.	<i>Ilayappan</i>	<i>Ilayappa</i>
3.	F's elder B.	<i>Veliyappan</i>	<i>Veliyappa</i>
4.	F's F.	<i>Appappan</i>	<i>Appappa</i>
5.	F's M.	<i>Appamma</i>	<i>Appammae</i>
6.	F's elder B's Wife	<i>Veliyamma</i>	<i>Veliyammae</i>
7.	F's younger B's Wife	<i>Ilayamma</i>	<i>Ilayammae</i>
8.	F's elder Z.	<i>Muthamma</i>	<i>Muthammae</i>
9.	F's younger Z.	<i>Ilayamma</i>	<i>Ilayammae</i>
10.	F's elder Z's H.	<i>Muthappan</i>	<i>Muthappa</i>
11.	F's younger Z's H.	<i>Ilayappan</i>	<i>Ilayappa</i>
12.	F's B's Son	<i>Yettan / Aniyan</i>	<i>Yetta/Aniya</i>
13.	F's B's D.	<i>Pengal</i>	<i>Pengalae</i>
14.	F's Z's Son	<i>Machuniyan</i>	<i>Machuniya</i>
15.	F's Z's D.	<i>Machunichi</i>	<i>Machunichee</i>
16.	Mother	<i>Amma</i>	<i>Ammae</i>
17.	M's elder B.	<i>Veliyammaman</i>	<i>Ammama</i>
18.	M's younger B.	<i>Cheriyamman</i>	<i>Ammama</i>

19.	M's F.	<i>Achappan</i>	<i>Achappa</i>
20.	M's M.	<i>Ammamma</i>	<i>Ammammae</i>
21.	M's elder B's Wife	<i>Valiyammai</i>	<i>Ammayi</i>
22.	M's younger B's Wife	<i>Cheriyammai</i>	<i>Ammayi</i>
23.	M's elder Z.	<i>Veliyamma</i>	<i>Veliyammae</i>
24.	M's younger Z.	<i>Ilayamma</i>	<i>Ilayammae</i>
25.	M's elder Z's H.	<i>Veliyappan</i>	<i>Veliyappa</i>
26.	M's younger Z's H.	<i>Ilayappan</i>	<i>Ilayappa</i>
27.	M's B's Son	<i>Machuniyan</i>	<i>Machuniya</i>
28.	M's B's D.	<i>Machunichi</i>	<i>Machunichee</i>
29.	M's Z's Son	<i>Yettan/ Aniyam</i>	<i>Yetta/ Aniya</i>
30.	M's Z's D.	<i>Pengal</i>	<i>Pengalae</i>
31.	Wife	<i>Ole</i>	<i>Olea</i>
32.	W's B.	<i>Aliyan</i>	<i>Aliya</i>
33.	W's F.	<i>Appan/ Ammaman</i>	<i>Appa/ Ammama</i>
34.	W's Z.	<i>Yechi/ Aniyathi</i>	<i>Yechee/ Aniyathee</i>
35.	W's M.	<i>Amma/ Ammayi</i>	<i>Amme/ Ammayee</i>
36.	Brother	<i>Yettan/ Aniyam</i>	<i>Yetta/ Aniya</i>
37.	Elder Brother	<i>Yettan</i>	<i>Yetta</i>
38.	Younger B.	<i>Aniyam</i>	<i>Aniya</i>
39.	Elder B's Wife	<i>Yettathiamma</i>	<i>Yettathiammae</i>
40.	Younger B's Wife	<i>Aniyathi</i>	<i>Aniyathee</i>
41.	B's Son	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Monae</i>
42.	B's D.	<i>Mol</i>	<i>Molae</i>
43.	Sister	<i>Pengal</i>	<i>Pengale</i>
44.	Elder Sister	<i>Yechi/ Aniyathi</i>	<i>Yechee/ Aniyathee</i>
45.	Younger Z.	<i>Aniyathi</i>	<i>Aniyathee</i>
46.	Z's Husband	<i>Aliyan</i>	<i>Aliya</i>
47.	Z's Son	<i>Marumon</i>	<i>Marumonae</i>
48.	Z's D.	<i>Marumol</i>	<i>Marumolae</i>
49.	Son	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Monae</i>
50.	Son's Wife	<i>Monte Ole</i>	<i>Molae/ Montolae</i>
51.	Daughter	<i>Mol</i>	<i>Molae</i>
52.	D's Husband	<i>Marumon</i>	<i>Marumonae</i>

* F-Father, M-Mother, B-Brother, Z-Sister, W-Wife, D-Daughter, H-Husband.

Careful studies of the above tabulated kinship terms that are used by the Malayans show close similarity to the Tamil usages. For examples the terms no. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 are Tamil words. The word *Veliyamma* (no.6 and 23), which refers to father's elder brother's wife, father's elder sister or, mother's elder sister is a corruption of the Tamil word, *Valiyamma* where the adjective *vali* means, 'strength', hence, superiority (i.e., seniority).

The analysis of their kinship terms collected reveals 67.60% classificatory and 32.40% are denotive terms. Denotive terms are not prevalent in ego's second ascending generation and second descending generation. In ego's generations and first ascending generation a few denotive terms are used for some particular relatives only. In the first ascending generation, four relations are identified by denotive terms, i.e., *appan* for father, *amma* for mother, *ammaman* for mother's brother and *ammayi* for mother's brother's wife. Other relationships are identified by classificatory terms.

In ego's generation the Malayans uses denotive terms such as, *ole* (wife), *puruvan* (husband), *yettan* (elder brother), *aniyan* (younger brother), *yechi* (elder sister), *aniyathi* (younger sister) and *ettathi amma* (elder brother's wife). Apart from these denotive terms, some classificatory terms also are used in this generation. These terms are used for mother's brother's son, and father's sister's son as, *machuniyan*, and wife's brother and sister's husband as, *aliyan*.

The second and first descending generations use classificatory terms. Son's son and daughter's son have a common term *mon*, and the term *mole* refers to the son's daughter, and daughter's daughter.

Table : II.11 Important Kin Relationships of Five Generations of Malayan

Generation	Kin terms
Second Ascending generation	F's F, F's M, M's F, M's M
First Ascending generation	F, F's B, F's Z, M, M's B, M's Z, F's B's W, M's B's W, F's Z's H, M's Z's H, W's F, W's M, H's F, H's M
Ego's generation	H, W, B, Z, F's B's S, M's B's S, F's Z's S, M's S's S, F's B's D, M's B's D, F's Z's D, M's Z's D, H's B, H's Z, W's B, W's Z, B's W, S's H.
First Descending Generation	S, D, S's W, D's H, Niece, Nephew
Second Descending Generation	S's S, D's S, S's D, D's D, S's S's W, D's S's W, S's D's H, D's D's H.

The kin terms obey the criterion of sex differentiation. It also indicates a dichotomy in the criterion of affinity. Common terms are used for both the affinal and consanguineal kin. The common terms like *valiyamma* and *elayamma* are used to refer to both the father's and mother's elder and younger sisters. The term *mōn* (son) is used to refer to ego's son, son's son, brother's son, brother's son's son, daughter's son and daughter's son's son. Deviation is also found. Different terms are used to differentiate consanguineal and affinal relatives (eg. one's own elder brother and younger brother is indicated by *yettan* and *aniyan* respectively, but a different kin term *aliyan* is used for one's wife's elder brother and younger brother).

Members of a particular generation have particular terms. The term *appan* and *amma* are used to denote the father and mother, respectively by the members of the ego's generation. The kin term for

brother, sister, husband and wife hold the same rule. Exceptions are there, the terms *mōn* (son) and *mole* (daughter) are used both in the first and second descending generations. In most cases, the Malayans use different terms to distinguish age differentiation of kin. The kin term, *ettan* is used to denote elder brother, but *aniyan* is used to refer younger brother. Similarly, elder sister is *yechi* and younger sister is referred as *aniyathi*. But in a few cases, rule of relative age difference is not followed. For example, no separate kin term is present to refer one's wife's elder and younger brother, and younger and elder sister's husbands have a single term *aliyan*. The kinship terms of the Malayans show criterion of collatorality. In some cases deviation is also noticed. They used two separate terms to distinguish elder brother (*yettan*) from younger brother (*aniyan*). Identically, they make distinction between elder and younger sister by using different kin terms, *yechi* and *aniyathi* respectively. Sometimes, the criterion of collatorality fails. Terminologically they do not differentiate between the elder and younger brother-in-laws. The term, *aliyan* is used to refer both elder and younger brother-in-laws. The father and father-in-laws have a common term, *appan*. The mother and mother-in-law are referred to by a common kin term, *amma*. The kinship terminology of the Malayans follows bifurcation in some cases. The elder brothers of father, and of father-in-law are indicated by the term, *veliyappan* or *mūthappan*. And the younger brother of father, and father-in-law is indicated by a single term, *ilayappan*. Similarly, the son's son and daughter's son have a single kinship term, *mon*. Son's daughter and daughter's daughter also have a common term, *mol*. Deviation from the rule of bifurcation is also noticed. They are the kin term, *machuniyan*, to refer the son of father's sister, and mother's brother. It is the case of daughter of father's sister, and mother's brother, where these kin are denoted by a common term, *machunichi*. Son's daughter and daughter's

daughter, and son's son and daughter's son also have a common term, *mole* and *mon*, respectively. The kinship terminology of Malayans has accepted the criterion of polarity. In case of the wife's brother (*aliyan*), sister's husband (*aliyan*), son of father's sister, and mother's brother (*Machuniyan*), and daughter of father's sister, and mother's brother (*machunichi*), whether elder or younger, a single term is used to denote both the elder and the younger kin. The single term, *mon* is used to indicate both the elder and younger son. In the case of younger and elder daughter, a single kin term, *mol* is used. But it is seen that the kinship terminology of Malayans some times do not recognize rule of polarity, and in certain cases specific terms are used to distinguish different elder and younger relatives. For example, they use distinct term *yettan* (elder brother), *aniyan* (younger brother), *yechi* (elder sister) and *aniyathi* (younger sister). The speaker's sex does not play any role in the kinship terms, and both men and women speakers use the same term to denote a particular kin. A male or female, to denote their elder brother uses the term, *yettan*. To a man or woman, their younger brother is *aniyan*. The criterion of decedence is not found in the Malayans kinship terminologies. They do not have two sets of kin terms, one for the living, and the other for the dead.

Parallel cousins are terminologically merged with ego's brothers and sisters. This pattern of kinship incorporates the marriage alliances based on cross-cousin marriages.

The kinship terminology of Malayans indicates distinct terms of reference for the husband and wife, *puruvan* and *ole* respectively. But practically these terms are not uttered. Instead of these terms the people use teknonymy, so the husband refers his wife as the mother of his son or daughter, and the wife refers her husband as the father of her child.

The whole society is divisible into a number of groups known as, clans (*illam* and *kiriyam*; table: II.9). These clans have specific names but, have not any recognized head or, ritual significance. In that sense, the clan is nothing but a social group larger than family, the members of which are believed they were related to each other by blood. Marriage is not permitted between the boys and the girls of the same clan, hence, it can be said as exogamous in nature.

Avoidance is persisting among some of the relatives. The society trusts in the avoidance between a person and his elder brother's wife. Avoidance is also present between the father-in-law and daughter-in-law, and also between mother-in-law and son-in-law. These relatives are not allowed to sleep together in the same bed. Marriage or, any sort of sexual relation, and joking relation between these kin are strictly prohibited. On the other hand, joking relationship is present among different relatives. This kind of relationship is very much in between the grand parents, and the grand children. It is often seen that the same relationship is present between co-brothers and co-sister-in-laws. Joking relationship also persists between either sexes of cross cousins, and later, marriage is permissible.

Religion

Religion is a universal and unique phenomenon in every human society. It is considered as something, which is supernatural and suprasensory. "The belief in spiritual beings" is considered by Tylor (1903), as the very religion of the primitive people. According to Malinowski,

Both magic and religion arise and function in emotional stress, crisis of life, lacunae in important pursuits, death and initiation into tribal mysteries unhappy love and unsatisfied hate. (1948:67)

Brown had another opinion about religion. I quote:

Everywhere an expression in one form or another of a sense of dependence on a power outside ourselves, a power of which we may speak of as a spiritual or moral powers.

(cit. D'Sousza 2005:96)

Now-a-days, the Malayan's belief system is a mixture of Hinduism, and the belief in supernatural powers, and thus in the existence of soul, ghost and spirit. They worship local deities, and animals in the form of *teyyam*, and also treat some of the trees and groves as sacred. Thus, the religion of Malayan is a mixture of animism, animatism, nature-worship, and polytheism (Hinduism).

Every Malayan *taravādu* has its own deity, *teyyam*. The people worship these *teyyams* daily by putting a lamp in front of the weapons, which represents the respective deity. All the members of the *tharavadu* used to come on special occasions, and on important days, and give offerings to the *teyyams*. It is a customary activity. Like any other caste Hindus in this area, the Malayans, according to their wealth and capacities, also organizes *teyyam* performance either calendrical or, whenever an opportunity arises. The *taravattumūppan*, once who has played a double role as a political as well as a religious authority, still plays a major role and has the rights to perform various rituals during religious functions, particularly on the occasion of *teyyam* performance.

Ancestor worship is another important aspect of the religion of the Malayans. Whenever an opportunity arises, the people never waste the chance to remember their ancestors. The Malayans have a belief according to which the dead ancestors, like the deities, are capable of creating good and bad effects. So, the people treat the dead spirits as similar to the deities. Naturally, these dead ancestors are

transfigured into *teyyams*, which are symbolically represented and worshiped as *kudiveeran teyyam* and *karnon teyyam*. More than that, on four new moon days of a year, in the months of *Karkkidakam*, *Thulam*, *Kmubham* and *Medam*, the Malayans remember the dead, and give offerings (*meethu*) to the spirits. They also give offerings to the ancestors yearly, on the death anniversary.

As a matter of fact, the worship of local deities and ancestors shows that animism and animistic beliefs are the core of Malayan's belief-system, and this reveals the fact that these people have a pre-Aryan origin. The *teyyam* (hero worship, animal and nature worship, ancestor worship, etc.) and its associated beliefs also suggest that they are typical Pre Dravidian/Dravidian people.

Uchaveli is a traditional as well as a unique magic performance executed by the Malayans. During *uchaveli*, the Malayan (performer) has to pierce his hand, and the oozing blood is smeared on the face. The action of piercing hand is a glimpse of earlier bloody sacrifice, may be a human sacrifice, which certainly points again the fact that the Malayan have very primitive traditions-an indigenous one.

The sun worship was also seen among them. The people salute the sun in every morning by throwing little waters upward and praising. Malayans give the sun god a primary position, and according to a *munpasthanam* (a spell during *teyyam* performance): '*kizhakkudichu padinjarasthamikunna eeswaran munpu...*' means they give first place to the 'east-rising west-dawning' sun god. The worship of the sun is also a part of primitive belief-system. We must not therefore expect to find out the evolution of religion, but try to trace its characters.

Teyyam performance and magic are being considered as the most important and key positions. The practice of *teyyam* and magic by

the Malayans convey that they are the traditional 'middle-men' between man and the supernatural. In all societies people give a kind of respect to the 'mediators' or 'religious specialists'. So, we can assume that once the Malayans had a dominant position in the society, but later on were reduced to a low caste in the religious hierarchy, and became 'untouchables' after the Aryan invasion, and the impact of the principle of *chaturvarnam* and Hinduism. The performance of *teyyam* and magic by the Malayans, even in the house of a Brahmin clearly establishes the fact that they had a better status once, which underlines the above said arguments.

The Malayans are placed among the untouchable *Sudras* (or *Panchamas*). The society never allows any means of learning to the *Sudras* (and *Panchamas*). Usually the *Sudras* (or *Panchamas*) had no right to education, if anybody tries to learn, he got severe and cruel punishments such as, poring the boiled lead into his ears. In such unfavourable situation the *Sudras* (or *Panchamas*) remained illiterates. But surprisingly, even if the *Sudras* (or *Panchamas*) were kept away from the learning process, these 'polluting untouchables', the Malayans, had their own means of learning through *ezhuthuveedu* (giving basic knowledge in reading and writing-traditional schooling). The young ones acquire knowledge not only in the local language but, also learn Sanskrit *slogams*, prayers and *puranic* stories. This fact also clearly establishes the fact that once they enjoyed a higher status.

After the imposition of Hinduism, change in religious set up is not reported. However, many inter-religious marriages are reported but, they keep their religious identity and admit their children as Malayans. It is done to protect their identity, and to let the Scheduled Caste enjoy the privileges given by the Indian Constitution.

Political Organization

According to Brown, a political system is “that part of the total organization” (cit. Mair 1972:112). For Schapera,

The organization of public activities and the taking of decisions on behalf of the whole community are also political activities. (cit. Mair 1972:112)

Consequently, the main function of the traditional political system of the Malayans is to maintain solidarity, peace, justice, law and order among people. In the past, *samudhayasangham* or *kurisangham* (traditional caste council) had all powers for maintaining law and order in the society. The council had a *pattolakaran* (equal to secretary), *pattikakaran* (joint secretary) and other members. Females were not included. *Sangham* was the supreme authority and the *taravādu* served as a lower constituency. Knowledgeable and respectable men are selected as the leaders of the *sangham*. The council members are treated like the ordinary members of the community, and they are not endowed with any special privilege but, are shown respect and obedience by the members of the caste.

The functions of the council may be categorized under developmental and judiciary wings. In the developmental work, the council plays the role of a negotiator between the sacred centres, and the government, and the Malayans for their well being. The judiciary wing looks after the arbitration and settlement of social offences like divorce, adultery, disputes (between *taravādu*, families and individuals, e.g. illegal entry into other’s territory [*jenmam*] for performance), out casting, etc.

Whenever a dispute happens, the *taravattumūppan*, and the members of that *taravādu* discuss the matter, and if no solution

emerges to take any action against a personal or, familial issues, the *taravattum ppan* informs the council accordingly. After that a meeting is arranged, generally in that particular *tarav du* of the incident or, in other suitable home. The punishment, sometimes, is limited to imposition of fine only. And sometimes, it resulted in out-casting too, if the crime was severe. The plaintiff gets compensation, either in cash or kind or both, which is decided by the council. Some times, the *sangham* too failed to find a solution, and in such occasions the plaintiff went directly to Panchayat or, other means of justice.

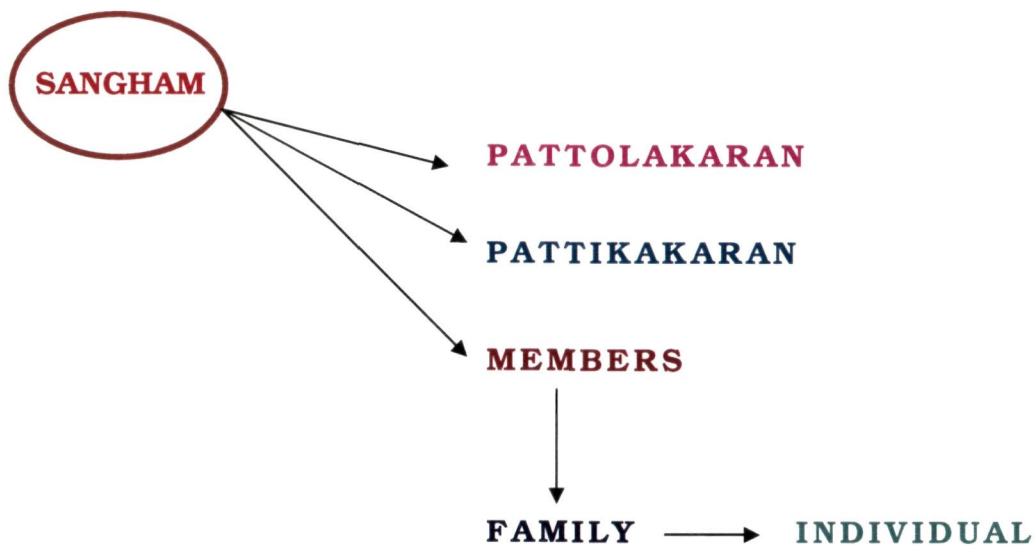


Figure: II.3 Structure of Traditional Caste Council

The community councils used to adjudicate and settle disputes within the community, but now those councils have largely become defunct. Today the *sangham* is known as *Uthara Kerala Malayan Samudhayodharana Sangham*, and it mainly concentrates on welfare programmes, and the people make use of other modern means of justice and law and order. At present, North Malabar is highly engaged in party politics, and the Malayans cannot stand away from

it. So, after independence, they were drawn into the fold of national politics. Nowadays, they too become part and parcel of the present day politics; many of them work for various political parties at from the local level to the district and so on. Today, among them there are members of local administrative bodies, and even occupy the posts of Panchayat President, Vice-President, Member of District Panchayat, etc.

Economic Organization

Hoebel and Weaver defined economic organization as,

The human behavior by which goods are produced, allocated and distributed, used and consumed. (1959)

Apart from satisfying basic needs, man everywhere satisfy certain social needs-materials for rites of passage, religious performance and other aspects of community. The effective satisfaction of the basic needs as well as the social needs dictate human beings to make efforts and organize work and relation. They are equally dependent on mutual understanding and organized group effort; the sum total of such human activities is the economic organization. Firth has the opinion,

That broad sphere of human activity concerned with resources, their limitations and uses, and the organization whereby they are brought in a rational way into relation with human wants. (cit. Mair 1972:161)

Unlike in the case of many others, the traditional economy of the Malayans primarily revolves around service, i.e., performances of *teyyam*, magic, and midwifery. So, it comes very near or similar to that of 'Jajmani-System' (Wiser 1936, Lewis 1958), which was once

prevalent in the rural villages of India. Mandelbaum points out that, “cash or barter transactions have long been integral elements of village economy” (1970:162). According to Wisner,

Under this system, each caste group within a village is expected to give certain standardized services to the families of the other castes. (cit. Lewis 1958:56)

But now, the economy is modified, and it is in accordance with modern trends. Customarily, the division of labour was based on sex and age. This means that both sexes specialized in their work. Earlier the females also contributed to their household income. Actually, men earned more than women but, the mis-management and consumption of alcohol did by them reduced bulk of their income. The sons shared the property equally after the death of the father. Females had no right over family property. After India’s independence, this has been changed as per constitution.

Table: II.12 Source of Income by Sex

Sl. No.	Source	Sex				Total	%
		M	%	F	%		
1	<i>Teyyam</i>	469	57.05	0	0	469	12.57
2	Pension	8	0.97	17	2.02	25	1.50
3	Coolie	66	8.01	45	5.34	111	6.67
4	Government or other employment	173	21.05	134	15.91	307	18.45
5	Agri/Live stock/ Etc.	19	2.31	12	1.43	31	1.86
6	Unemployed	324	39.42	657	78.03	981	58.95

The economy of the area is a mixed one. Industrialization and urbanisation processes are rather slow. Agriculture is not a main vocation for most of the people, either as owner-cultivator or, as labourer. The people have a very large scope for occupational mobility. Due to economic diversification traditional occupations are not prevalent, except *teyyam* performance.

The people depend directly or, indirectly on different sources of earning. The details of the various sources that supplemented the household income are discussed in the following pages.

Table II.13 Traditional Activities of the Malayan in a Year

Month		Activities	
English	Malayalam		
Aug-Sept	<i>Chingam</i>	Collection – rice on <i>Onam</i> day by men and midday-meal on <i>Onam</i> and <i>Puttari</i> by females	Collection - <i>katta</i> at the time of reaping.
Sept-Oct	<i>Kanni</i>	--	Teyyam Performance
Oct-Nov	<i>Thulam</i>	<i>Kothamuriyāttam</i>	
Nov-Dec	<i>Vrischikam</i>		
Dec-Jan	<i>Dhanu</i>	--	
Jan-Feb	<i>Makaram</i>	--	
Feb-March	<i>Kumbam</i>	--	
Mar-April	<i>Meenam</i>	Collection-midday meal on <i>Pooram</i> by women and vegetables by men and women.	
April-May	<i>Medam</i>	Collection-rice by men and midday meal by women on <i>Vishu</i> , and rice seeds by men at the time of sowing.	
May-June	<i>Edavam</i>	--	
June-July	<i>Midhunam</i>	--	
July-August	<i>Karkidakam</i>	<i>Vedanāttam</i>	

* In olden days, the period from *Karkidakam* to *Vrischikam* was considered as the peak season for fishing. Whenever he gets leisure the Malayan goes for minor games and catching birds.

PRIMARY SOURCES OF INCOME

Teyyam Performance

A major source of income for the Malayans is from *teyyam* performance. It provides them with the most necessary goods such as, rice, coconut and materials like clothes. In addition, they get cash as offerings and wages. Of the 469 (12.57%) males in the sample (table: II.12) earn their income from *teyyam*. The labour options in the field of *teyyam* include *teyyam kettal* (performance), *anniyarapanni* (green room labour), *vadhyam* or *chendakottal* (drumming) and *aniyalamariyal* (making of attire). One can engage in any one of them or, in all of them mentioned above, as per his expertise and skill. Females usually do not extend their assistance but, helps the males in associated activities during *teyyam* performance.

Coolie

The low level of education among the Malayans leads to the lack of big job opportunities. This is the main reason for choosing coolie as their vocation. Among the Malayans, 111 (6.67%) of the sample (table: II.12) population make their living as coolie. In spite of demands for increase in wages, regarding *teyyam* performance, they are paid low, and thus forced to work as daily wage earners. Under this category a good number of them are employed in construction work.

Government and other Employment

Although majority of the people has received formal education, only 307 (18.45%) persons could find employment (table: II.12). As a matter of fact, this is mainly due to the implementation of

reservation (one of the constitutional safeguards for Scheduled Castes in employment). Most of them are under the Class IV servants category. In addition, a few of them could work under Self-Employment Schemes.

Pension

The number of persons depending on their pension for livelihood is negligible. Only 25 (1.50%) of them receive pension. All of them are aged 60 and above. While all females get *Vardhakya* pension (old age pension) or *Vidhava* pension (widow pension), 3 males get *avasakalakara* pension (retired artist pension).

Agriculture and Livestock

Traditionally the Malayan is not interested in agriculture, livestock, etc. This study also clarifies this reality. Only 31 (1.86%) of the sample population are engaged in agriculture and livestock management (table: II.12). However, many of them like to rear fowls as before.

Even though the Malayans depend on non-conventional economic resources, the traditional practice, *teyyam* performance, which is the one that still provides material and income for their subsistence.

SUPPLEMENTARY SOURCES OF INCOME

***Mantram* (Magic)**

Till today, the Hindus, the Muslims, and the Christians in this area approached the Malayans for traditional healing. The Malayans cured their pains and listened to their complaints. They were freed through their magical powers. In return as rewards, they gave gifts in the form of cash or kind. In many occasions the researcher himself

witnessed people from the distant villages, as well as from other States came and got the service of Malayans to get rid of misfortunes, evil-eye, spirit possession, black-magic, etc. The people have no distinction between white and black magic, and which included as *manthravadam*, *kannerupattu*, *tachchumanthram*, *ennamanthram*, *charadujapikkal*, *japichuthal*, *balikkala*, *thakidu* and *urukkuezhuthu*. The magic and its know-how are passed on from generation to generation.

***Manthravādam* (magic performance)**

It is a kind of occultism performed by the Malayan. Whenever a sick person approaches the magician, he performs suitable traditional practices with or without the aid of chants, squares, circles, triangles, sacrificial fire etc. It is generally believed that the Malayan possesses a commanding power over their gods and spirits, particularly on *Panchmurthis* (*Kuttichathan*, *Gulikan*, *Kurathy*, *Pottan*, *Bhairavan*, etc). Fowl is sacrificed. It is known as *kuruthi*, or *gurusi* (pseudo-blood, a mixture of turmeric powder and lime dissolved in water) is used in place of blood sacrifice. There are different kinds of magico-religious performance known as *uzhinju kalayal*, *sandhikarmam*, *adakkam*, *kudothram*, *vasyam*, etc. Usually *manthravadam* is done after sunset. The magician gets *ari* (rice), *thenga* (coconut), *yenna* (oil), *aval* (flattened rice), *malar* (fried paddy) *kodimundu* (new cloth), one or more *kozhi* (fowl), etc. and cash. Usually, females are not involved at any stage of *manthravadam*. But rarely, the locals consider a few females of the Malayans as experts in *manthravadam*.

***Kannerupattu* (magic-performance to expell evil eye)**

As discussed earlier, the Malayans believe that, they were created to avoid *kanneru* (evil eye) from lord Siva. According to legends, since

centuries Malayans have been conducting *kannerupattu* to get rid of the evil eye from the people. Usually a couple but, rarely more than two persons are employed to do it. *Uchchaveli* or *ninnaveli* (a variety of *kannerupattu*) were performed in the past followed by human (?) sacrifice. During *kannerupattu* special magico-religious chants like *anniyarasasthram*, *malamasasthram*, *sathyaguruvachanam*, *thiruvaranmulasasthram*, etc. are done accompanied by *chenda* (drum) and *kaimany* (small cymbal). It lasts for a whole day. Malayans get in return some reward in the form of both cash and kind. Since this performance is expensive (usually one series of performance lasts a full day, and it requires many costly items), ordinary people do not conduct it.

***Thachumanthram* (short magic-performance for expelling evil eye)**

This is a short form of *kannerupattu*. Usually a single person, a male or, a female performs it. It extends up to two to three hours. Since it is less expensive, common people make use of it to drive away evil eye. The performer gets cash and goods like rice, coconut, flattened rice, and fried paddy.

***Yennamanthram* (magic-chanting over oil)**

This is also performed to drive away *kanneru*. Magico-religious chants are made at the time of recitation. Both men and women are employed in it. The performance lasts for more than twelve hours. It is practiced in the southern part of North Malabar. The performer gets rewards such as, rice, clothes, and cash.

***Charadujapikal* (magic-blowing on thread)**

It is a process by which a thread through magico-religious spells is transformed into a powerful object. The individual for whom it is

made wears the thread. Red, yellow, black or, white coloured threads are used. It is used to remove evil eye, fear etc. Both male and female individuals can perform *charadujapikal* (chanting on thread). The performer gets additional income.

Japichuthal (magic-blowing)

A single male or a female does it. The magician blows air all over the body of the sick person. Usually it is conducted to get rid of *kanneru* (evil eye), fear etc. *Japichuthal* helps the performer to earn some extra cash.

Balikala (a magic-performance)

To remove the possession of evil spirits and *kanneru* of pregnant women, Malayan performs this magico-religious act, also known as *pinniyozhikkal*. The figure of *Kuttichathan*, *Gandharvan* or, *Bhadrakali* (spirits) is drawn on the floor with white, black, yellow and red powder. The performance lasts for the whole night. The performer gets cash in addition to rice, *nellu* (paddy) coconut, *thuni* (clothes) etc.

Thakidu and Uruku (drawing magic-formulas on metal sheets)

Thakidezhuthu and *urukezhuthu* make the Malayan earn some cash. Generally males are engaged in it. Varieties of magical square, triangle and circle etc., are drawn on copper, silver or led sheets, and are treated to magical spells. These sheets are either tide to the body or, kept in the house to get rid of threats or problems on account of black magic, spirits, etc.

Periodical Collection of Paddy, Rice, etc.

On certain auspicious occasions, men visit houses of the upper castes (except the houses of lower-polluting castes, Muslims and Christians) from where they get rice, seed, etc. Rice (*ari*) is obtained twice a year on the day of *Vishu* and *Onam* celebrations. Paddy seed (*vithu*) received just before sowing, and *katta* (sheaf of paddy) just after reap or, harvest in the field itself. As a matter of fact it is not a ritualistic begging, but it is a reward in return for their service extended by virtue of *teyyam* performance, magic and midwifery. But today, the cultivation of paddy in this region has decreased and, therefore, most of the people have lost their customary opportunity to acquire supplementary income.

Collection of Vegetables and Mid-day Meal

During the vegetable season, the female members are offered vegetables from the field, and even from houses. At the time of the festivals of *Onam*, *Vishu* and *Puthari*, females go house after house to receive mid-day meals and the other consumer goods permitted by custom. Now these practises are also in decline and many of them already stopped this customary practice.

Fishing (*Meenpidutham*)

In the ancient times, the inland fishing (*meenpidutham*) had a share in their economy. Men had this skill but, it was not their profession. The area where they lived in had sufficient inland fishing facility so, the people exploited the opportunity. The technology employed was simple. They used some indigenous devices like *choondal* (pole and line), *kuthoodu* (trap), etc. The change in economy forced them to buy fish from market; of course, they still go for fishing whenever an opportunity arises or, as a liesure time activity.

Hunting (*Nayattu*) and Bird catching (*Pakshipidutham*)

In the past, men had engaged in small games especially, bird catching. Thus, they used to add meat in their diet by this activity. They used some simple *keni* (trap) and *thettuvillu* (a specially designed bow for shooting small stones) to catch small animals [eg: *kottan* (squirrel), *muyal* (rabbit), etc.], and birds [eg: *kaka* (crow), *kocha* (crane), *kattukozhi* (wild fowl), *pravu* (pegeon), etc.]. The immigration of people from the plains, urban growth and deforestation have made this game impossible but, still catching birds in remote areas is found as a leisure time activity.

Ethnomedicine (*Vaidhyam*)

The Malayans have his own medical system. They are experts in magic and medicines. She/he extends her/his service as a 'medicine man' to her or his own people, and also to the people of other castes, and those who are living near by them, and those who are living at distant places. People even from other states approach Malayans for treatment, and medicine. The people use locally available plants or, parts of plants, and animals or, its parts for making medicines. A frog, *Rana rana* is used to make medicine, *neyi* (ghee), and this *neyi* is given to the children who are suffering from *muttal* (astma). The meat of crow is used for *urses* (piles). *Mannira* (earthworm) is also used to prepare medicine for *muttal*. The Malayans believe that the meat of *chooral amma* (a sp. of turtle), *udumbu* (a sp. of reptile), etc are best for strength and health. By this practice, as a medicine man, the practioner get some cash or kind for their service, which supplies additional income to the family. The introduction of modern medicines has made this folk medicine less important.

Table: II.14 List of a Few Plants used as Medicine

Plants/Parts	Common Name	Botanical Name	Use
<i>Erikku</i>	Madar	Calotropis procera	Abortion, speed up the labour pain
<i>Karimuthellu</i>	Gingelly sp.	Geophila repens	Eosnophilia
<i>Karutha ummathan</i>	Thorn apple	Datura innoxia (violot)	-do-
<i>Vayachulli</i>	-	Hygrophylla spinosa	Apply on oedma
<i>Keezharnelli</i>	-	Phyllanthus fraternus	Jaundice
<i>Plathady</i>	Fungus	Polypus sp.	Mumps
<i>Ayamodakam</i>	Ajwan	Carum copticum	Mixed & made into an electuary used as medicine after delivery
<i>Uluva</i>	Fenugreek	Trigonella foenum-graceum	
<i>Kaduku</i>	Mustard	Brassica guncea	
<i>Amukkuram</i>	-	Withania somnifera	
<i>Chukku</i>	Ginger	Zingiber officinale	
<i>Jeerakam</i>	Cumin	Cuminum cyminum	
<i>Batham</i>	Almond	Terminalia cattappa	
<i>Ulli</i>	Onion	Allium cepa	
<i>Kurumulaku</i>	Pepper	Piper nigrum	
<i>Manjal</i>	Turmeric	Curcuma longa	
<i>Thengin pookala</i>	Coconut Inflo'cense	Cocos nucifera	
<i>Yellenna</i>	Gingelly oil	--	
<i>Thippally</i>	-	Piper longum	

Midwifery (*Peredukal*)

Until a decade ago the females had contributed to their household income by midwifery. They also used herbal medicines during labour (*peru*). About 13 kgs of *nellu* (unhusked paddy), 500 ml of *vellichenna* (coconut oil), one *pudava* (long cloth) and one *veshetti* (shawl) were also given as wage for their service. Rich people used to give gold rings to the Mali, who assists others as a midwife in childbirth. At present, the people of this area go to the nearby hospital during childbirth, and the Malayans too are not an exception.

***Kannoku* (Consoling the Mourners)**

It is a custom of the Malayan, the Vannan, and the Tiyya communities to practise the day of *telikkal* (a ritual usually conducted on the third or, fifth day of death). They visit the house of the deceased to console the mourners. Later this visit has turned into a “customary practice” for the former, and earned him a small amount. This practice is not in vogue now.

***Vedan Pattu* (A seasonal Performance)**

To avoid miseries and ills, the *vedan* visits from house to house. The *vedan* dresses like a *teyyam* but, it is not actually a *teyyam*. Usually a boy, aged between four to twelve, disguises as *vedan*, believed to be Siva. Accompanied by a man, who sings *kiratham katha*, which narrates the legendary story of the dispute between Lord Siva and Arjuna, with the help of a *chenda* (drum), and a woman carries the gifts given by the people. This calendrical performance is done during the month of *Karkidakam* (July-August). Once, this practice was common through out North Malabar.

Kothamuri Pattu (A Seasonal Performance)

Like *vedan*, *kothamuri pattu* is a seasonal performance. A small boy disguise into a hobbyhorse appearance, which is known as *kothamuri* (the people believed *kothamuri* as legend Godhavari, a holy cow), accompanied by two *paniyans* (comedians), a *kurikkal* (master of the party) and one or, two women to carry gifts, like rice and paddy. During the months of *Thulam* and *Vrischikam* (Oct-Dec), the party visits from house to house to bring prosperity among the people. This performance is now restricted only to the remote areas of North Malabar.

In addition to the above sources, the practices of *Malayankettu*, *porattu*, *paniyan*, etc. provide additional financial benefits to this people in some areas.

These are too many options and sources of supplementary income for Malayans in the recent past. The new trends in the society, at present, do not encourage such practices, and accordingly most of the supplementary income sources of Malayan had stopped because, its ideal set-ups were lost. In sharp contrast to the other sources of income, magic remains a source and supplies additional income to the family.

Settlement Pattern

In the distant past, they did not own land. Land belonged to either a lord or, a sacred centre or temple. However, the society assigned pieces of land to the Malayans. Like other aboriginals, they might have been a hill-dwellers, who later on migrated to the plains due to the spread of *teyyam*. As Loftus-Tottenham writes, "their name, signifying hill-men, points to their having been at one time a jungle tribe . . ." (cit. Thurston 1909:436). The specialization in midwifery

and magic also forced them to lead a settled life. They settled in between *Korapuzha* in the south, and *Kumbala* in the north in North Malabar.

Traditionally, the habitat of the Malayan was territorially divided into smaller regions called, *swaroopam*. There were five *swaroopams* namely, *Kolaswaroopam*, *Chuzhaliswaroopam*, *Neriyottuswaroopam*, *Thekkankuttiswaroopam*, and *Halladaswaroopam*. Later, these five *swaroopams* were re-divided into, *Kolaswaroopam*, *Chuzhaliswaroopam*, *Neriyottuswaroopam*, *Thekkankuttiswaroopam*, *Vadakkankuttiswaroopam*, *Pazhutheduthaswaroopam*, and *Halladaswaroopam*. Although the settlements are spread far and wide in North Malabar, the whole population is divided into smaller groups. They occupied the *swaroopams* (territorial division). Due to lack of population, a single settlement is reduced to a household or, a cluster of a few households, spread within a short distance.

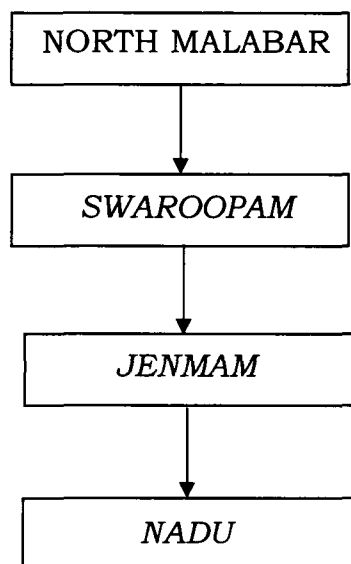


Figure: II. 4 Territorial Divisions

Swaroopam, the territorial division is further divided into *Jenmam*. It identifies a particular territory and gives an identity to the

inhabitants, the Malayans, moving in that territory. The *jenmam* rite of Malayans is known as *cherujenmam*. Usually *jenmam* is a synonym for territorial division, *nadu*, and each *jenmam* occupy a *taravādu* (family), which had a leader, called *taravattumūppan*. His authority is still supreme only in the field of *teyyam* but, he has lost his authority in other socio-political spheres. The member of a *taravadu* in a *jenmam* (*cherujenmam*) is known as, *cherujenmi* and it is obtained by birth. A *jenmam* may have one or more *nadu* usually a very small geographical area. The *swaroopam*, *nadu* and *jenmam* are clearly demarcated by natural objects like, stones, rivers, channels, lanes, etc., or, by houses. Each *jenmam* has a name and the *taravādu* and its inhabitants are known by the same name. The house of the Malayan is called as, *kuppadu*, which is similar to that of small hut. It lacks any means of primary facilities including, latrine and drinking water but, the condition is improving now. The developmental activities of the State Government, particularly the De-centralised Peoples' Planning, *Janakeeyasuthranam*, helped the Malayans to improve their house, and other domestic conditions.

Table: II.15 House types and their Estimated Cost

Sl. No	Types of House/s	Estimated Cost of Houses				No. of House/s	%
		Below Rs 25000	Between Rs 25000-50000	Between 50000-75000	Rs 75000 & above		
1	Thatched	19	--	--	--	19	5.85
2	Tiled	124	72	29	17	242	74.46
3	Concrete	--	1	4	49	54	16.62
4	Rented	2	4	1	--	7	2.1.5
5	Govt. Qu'ters	--	3	--	--	3	0.92
Total		145	80	34	66	325	100
%		44.62	24.62	10.46	20.31	--	--

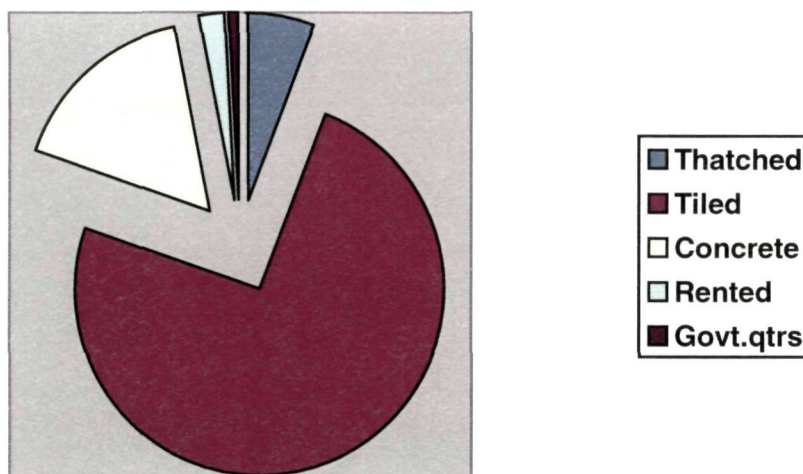


Figure : II.5 Pie Chart-House Types of Malayan

Most of the houses of the Malayans are simple and less furnished. 5.85% of houses are still thatched and are in miserable condition. The floor is plastered with cow dung, and the wall is made of palm leaves, bamboo poles and mud cakes. The roof is made of bamboo, areca nut and palm stems. Over this roof, dried palm leaves are placed in a peculiar fashion, and sometimes the roof is thatched with dried grass.

It is found that 242 (74.46%) houses have tiled roofs, and 124 of them are small houses, constructed by using locally available bricks and laterite. The floor is plastered either with cow dung or cement. It usually has two to three rooms. 72 houses are of average sized, which were constructed by using laterite, and they have more than three rooms. The floor, and the walls are plastered. Many of the houses were constructed with the financial help of the Government agencies.

The people now prefer to have concrete houses but, the relatively high cost of construction is a barrier before them. Hence, they continue to build only tiled houses. As a matter of fact, many of them have modified their old thatched houses to tiled ones.

The number of multi-roomed modern houses is 49, and they are constructed with laterite. The wall and the floor are plastered with cement, and they are fairly furnished. Some of the modern houses have television, and refrigerators. Only 7 families live in rented houses since, they moved outside their territory to find resources for their living.

Of the 325 households (table: II.16), 268 (82.46%) of them have their own land, and 48 (14.77%) have joint possession. It means 316 (97.23%) families own land. Out of 325, only 9 (2.77%) families do not have own land. And, 7 families reside in rented houses (table: II.15) but, they also possess land in their native places.

Table: II.16 Land Ownership

Ownership	Household/s		Total	%
	Kannur	Kasargod		
Own	138	130	268	82.46
<i>Tharavadu/</i> Family	22	26	48	14.77
Landless	03	06	09	02.77
Total	163	162	325	100

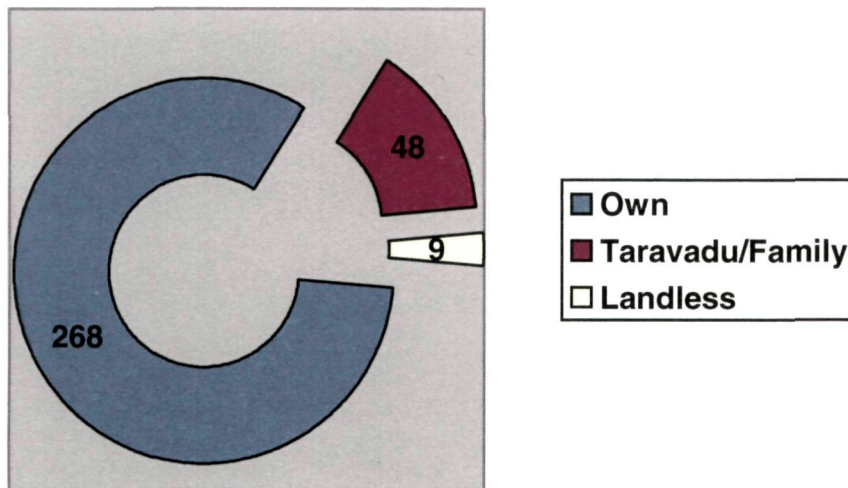


Figure : II.6 Doughnut Chart-Land Ownership of Malayan

Traditionally, all *tarav du* of Malayans had their own deities, *teyyams*, and also other forms. These deities are worshiped in sacred spots either at their houses or, at the nearby special spots like, *tara*, *palliara*, *m dam*, etc. People assembled in these sacred centres and performed *teyyam* at regular intervals. At present, majority of them is unable to keep up this old practice because of many reasons. Lack of economic resources is the major hurdle.

In general, the present settlement pattern has emerged as a result of their interaction with local environment. Once they were hill-dwellers, with limited technology and material possessions. Later, immigration to plains and valleys increased their thirst for material want. The new surroundings brought various changes in the techniques and methods of house construction. For example, in place of bamboo and leaves, mud bricks have emerged. The floor is well plastered with cement or, and even with mosaic and marbles. The roof is tiled or, concrete, instead of tatched one.

Life-Cycle Rituals

Gennep argued that,

In simple societies every change that could be thought of as a passage from one state to another was ritualised.

(cit. Mair 1972:233)

It is also called as, 'transition rituals', 'life-crisis rituals' or, 'passage rituals' (Mair 1972:233). Whatever may be the terms, it is accepted fact that each and every individual undergoes certain passing-points in life. The different phases of life-cycle of the Malayan is marked by the observance of different types of rites, rituals and prohibitions. In the life-cycle of Malayan the three important aspects are birth, marriage and death. Thus, the customs connected with these three rituals deserve more attention.

Pregnancy and Birth

They consider pregnancy as a natural or, biological phenomenon. They know there is a chance of *Keruppam* (pregnancy) if the husband and his wife come into intimate contact with each other. Conception occurring before marriage is forbidden. Pregnancy is confirmed by observing the cessation of menstruation, and the gradual physical changes. When the women understand that she is carrying, she breaks the news to her mother-in-law, to other elder females in the family or, to her husband.

Table : II.17 Life-Cycle of Malayan: Important Rituals and Ceremonies

Life-cycle	Ritual/ceremony
Birth/Delivery	<i>Kalppikkal</i>
	<i>Pungan</i>
	<i>Vachukodukkal</i>
	<i>Kalampattu/ Malayankettu</i>
	<i>Kalasattu</i>
	<i>Kannezhuthipottuthodal</i>
	<i>Irupathiyettam Pirannal</i>
Name Giving	<i>Peruvili</i>
Birth day	<i>Pirannal</i>
Ear Boring	<i>Kathukuthu</i>
Puberty	<i>Thirandukuli</i>
Initiation	<i>Thalappalivekal</i>
	First <i>Teyyam</i> performance
Marriage	<i>Nischayam</i>
	<i>Thalikettu</i>
	<i>Thekkankali/ Kinnamkali/ Pattu</i>
	<i>Sadhya</i>
	<i>Munnal porukkal</i>
Death	<i>Baliyidal</i>
	<i>Thelikkal/ Sanjayanam</i>
	<i>Athayuttu</i>
	<i>Nalpathonnu</i>
	<i>Chattham</i>

During the period of pregnancy, she requires to observe certain restrictions. After the 7th month of pregnancy, she is not allowed to visit temples since she is polluted, but, there are no such restrictions to visit any abode of *teyyam* or to see *teyyam* performance.

Customarily, the pregnant one gets blessings from *teyyam* because, the people believe that the blessing of *teyyam* avoid all problems and complications during labour period.

During pregnancy, generally, the women receive great care and love from everybody in the family. She continues to do the works as usual but, she is not allowed to do hard works, only light works. The people become much cautious regarding harmful spirits, and try to avoid them. They tie magical threads (*charadu*) to get rid of evil eye. *Kalampattu* and *thachumanthram* are also performed for this purpose, and it is believed that it would bring prosperity to the pregnant woman. The pregnant woman never goes out of the house during thunder and lightening, and solar or, lunar eclipse. The expectant insists to holds a piece of bamboo or, iron known as, *changatham* so as to protect the foetus from thunder and lightening and eclipse. She is not allowed to go nearby cemetery, the place where dead souls and evil spirits are wandering, since such visit will affect the baby physically or, mentally.

Besides the restrictions on movement, they observe certain prohibitions regarding taking of food, and of conjugal life. They think that during pregnancy sexual relation may be fatal. According to that, the husband and wife sleep separately. Pregnant woman is not given *pothirachi* (beef), *kappaka* (papaya), *muthira* (horse-gram), etc to eat. They think that these things may cause physical deficiency, hot and cold, and intoxication to both the mother and the fetus. Abortion is not prevalent among the Malayans.

There are a few more prohibitions against killing animals, and telling lies, and following these restrictions probably meant to keep the girl pure. Regarding dress, they observe no restrictions. Some special kinds of pre-delivery or pre-natal rituals such as, *kalpikal*, *pungan*,

vachchukodukal, *Malayankettu* and *kallampattu* are performed for the sake of the conceived, as well as the baby.

Pre-natal rituals (Pregnancy to delivery)

At the time of pregnancy, the Malayan performs the following pre-natal rituals. If it is the first pregnancy, these rituals are elaborately done.

***Kalpikal* (Fixing a date to conduct *Pungan*)**

It is performed on the seventh month of pregnancy at husband's house. In accordance with their tradition, an astrologer fixes an auspicious day and *muhurtham* (time) for *pungan* (pre-natal ritual) in the presence of the father of the pregnant woman, and other close relatives. For his service the astrologer is paid. A midday meal is served to the invitees. The night before the *kalpikal* ceremony, the women of the family should prepare the sweet namely, *karayappam*. The pregnant girl makes the first trip, and if the *appam* appears with tail, the people believe and predict that the child to be born will be a boy, and if the *appam* appeared without the tail, the newborn will be a girl.

***Pungan* (Pre-delivery ritual)**

A day is fixed for this ritual. The woman takes a purificatory bath early in the morning. The wife's father and close relatives bring with them some sweets, *appam* (*karayappam* or *unniyappam*, sweets prepared on rice flour), *pazham* (a variety of plantain fruit) and provisions. This is known as *eduthupidichuvarika* (bring them on head load). In due course the pregnant woman is seated on a white and black cloth (one above the other) spread before a *nilavilaku* (lighted oil lamp) in *padinjatta* (central room). A *thalika* (plate) with a

folded white cloth and a handful of rice is placed above it. When the auspicious time arrives, the mother-in-law or an elderly woman among the relatives of the husband dresses the pregnant woman with a new white *pudava* (cloth). The whole act is known as *kodiyuduppikal*. Then she performs *arithirikal*, dropping a pinch of rice three times on the head of her daughter-in-law. According to their seniority others also repeat *arithirikal* one by one. After this function, the woman eats *chakarachoru* (a sweet dish), *pazham* (banana) and *thengapulu* (sliced coconut) in plantain leaf.

A delicious meal is arranged and served. Banana and *pappadam* are must. Fish is usually used to prepare curry but meat is avoided. In an auspicious time, the relatives take the pregnant woman along with them. At that time, the mother-in-law places rice (1.25 *edangazhi* equivalent to 1.25 kgs) into the tucking of the cloth at the pregnant women's waist along with some money. The eldest member of the women's party pays half of the day's expenditure if they are unable to provide the customary provisions.

While when she reaches her house, she is received with a *nilavilaku* (lighted oil lamp), and then guided to the central room, *padinjattakam*. The mother waves a red *gurusi* (turmeric powder and quick lime dissolved in water) around the head, and all over the body of her pregnant daughter, to expel evil spirits from her. This liquid, *gurusi*, is then thrown on the north side of the house. She stays for a few months in her parental house, and only after delivery, returns to her husband's house.

***Vechukodukal* (Ritual feeding)**

The husband's relatives visit his wife's house soon after *pungan*, usually after two weeks in the same month, or otherwise, it will be done in the ninth month. The approaching party brings sweets,

banana, rice and other raw materials for preparing curry in the wife's house. This is known as *eduthuttivaruka*. The woman's relatives receive them and offer a meal. Then a feast is prepared using rice and the other materials brought by the husband's party. The pregnant woman also consumes this full meal in the central room (*padinjattakam*). To feed the pregnant woman is the aim of this function. For the second and subsequent delivery *pungan* is not conducted, and only ritualistic feeding *vechukodukkal* alone is performed.

Kallampattu and Malayankettu (Magic-performances)

In different areas, the Malayans perform either *Malayankettu* or *Kallampattu* during the seventh month of pregnancy to shield the pregnant from evil spirits and evil eye. Among these two, *Kallampattu* is more widespread. During the performance, an image of the *Gandharvan* is drawn on the courtyard under a *pandal* (temporary roof). An oil lamp is placed at the centre and offerings such as, *aval* (flattened rice), *malar* (fried rice), *thenga* (coconut), *ari* (rice), *nellu* (unhusked rice), etc are placed separately on plantain leaves. In addition to the *nilavilaku*, four *thukuvilaku* (hanging lamp) are also hanged. The decorated courtyard is called *kallam*. The pregnant woman comes to the *kallam* with a new earthen pot, and women in odd number (5,7,9 or 11) accompany her. The group goes around the *Gandharvan kallam* three times and returns to the room. The pregnant woman alone stands on the *kallam*, with *pookula* (inflorescence of coconut) in hand. She adorns *mulakachcha* (breast cloth), *pudava* (new cloth) and full ornaments. During *kallampattu*, Malayan uses various traditional songs like *Balivijayam*, *Nalacharitham*, *Pudayozhiyalpattu*, *Santhangopalam*, *Polichupattu*, etc. Both men and women sing songs. This function starts at night (8 pm or 9 pm), and continues till the next morning. The invitees, and

close relatives witness the whole ritual. The invitees are treated with a good meal. The performers are given *dhakshina* (gift) in return. The performance is called *kallampāttu* because, the singing (*pāttu*) and performance is performed in front of a magico-religious *kallam* (drawn image). *Malayankettu*, a similar performance, also performed for the same purpose.

It is also a common thing, that the pregnant girl should tie *karuthanulu* (magical black tread), *uruku* (magical metal sheets) around the neck, wrist or, waist to ward off the affliction from evil spirits and evil eye.

Post-natal rituals (From delivery to death)

Delivery (*Peru*)

When the pregnant woman feels labour pain (*pettunovu* or *ittunovu*), she informs her mother (or husband's mother) or other elderly woman. In the absence of such persons, she informs her husband. The woman is shifted to the labour room, *kombiriya* that is situated by the side of the kitchen (*adukala*). Usually, the expectant mother is shifted in advance, just before the delivery. Male members are not allowed to enter the labour room (*kombiriya*). An experienced midwife (*Pettichi* or *Vayattatti*), usually the mother of the expectant, nurses the delivery. In case of delay in childbirth, the midwife uses herbal medicines, as well as other learnt methods to speed up the delivery. If the newborn is a male a sound is produced three times by beating a *mattal* (coconut stalk) on the ground, and if the baby is a girl, sound is produced by striking a *kinnam* (small circular bronze vessel). At this time, the midwife cuts the *pokle* (umbilical cord) with a blade or, a sharpend bamboo or an iron. The *changatham* (placenta) is wrapped in a *pāla* (spate of areca nut tree), and is buried in the sand at the north side of the house in an old ertthern

pot. The time and date of birth is recorded according to the custom. Nowadays, the time and date is recorded according to the watch, and the calendar. The mid-wife clears the newborn in lukewarm water, after applying coconut oil all over its body. The midwife, and not a close kin, takes the towel that used to wipes the child. Then *kalasattu* is performed. Soon after the birth, husband's family is informed. The birth of a child is treated as a usual event. All members of the family and close kins take particular care about the mother even from the day of her conception.

After the delivery, the mother and the newborn will stay in *kombiriya* for 27 days. On the 27th day the *thottil* (cradle) is hanged. This ritual is also a family function, and is known as, *thottilthukal*. After that the child is shifted to the cradle of cloth, bamboo, cane or wood, which is kept for months or, even years.

If the mother expires in labour, the baby is not considered as an ill omen. Abnormal baby is also never hated. In the case of twins (*erattakal*), the Malayans believe that homogenous twins bring prosperity, and heterogeneous twins bring unhappiness. There is preference for boys. Infanticide is not prevalent among the Malayans.

During lactation period, the mother chooses certain special food items that increase the production of milk. Nowadays, tinned baby food, instead of mother's milk is also used. The mother also observes certain restrictions in respect of food. She does not eat some fish like, *mathi* (sardine) and *iyla* (mackerel), and *paranghi* (chilly) and *thenga* (coconut). This restriction appears to be very meaningful. The above mentioned fish contains more fish oil, and also the coconut. The oil will demand more work on the part of the liver since it has to

produce bile in order to digest the fat or oil. In the same way, the coconut also contains oil, and this will also demand more work on the part of liver forcing it to produce bile. Chilly, on the other hand, will induce the production of acid, and acidity also will create problem to the mother. Hence, all these things are not permitted for consumption.

The baby is allowed mother's breast feeding for 4 to 5 years. Thereafter weaning is enforced by smearing the juice obtained from the leaf of *kaipa* (bitter gourd) or, *kanjiram* (*Nuxvomica*), etc., on nipples. After weaning, the baby is fed on general food, gradually. In case of Mother's death or if she is unable to feed the child with her milk, anyone, usually a mother of her family or relative, wets the baby.

In earlier days, adoption was prevalent. In the case of impotency or barrenness a couple/family may adopt a child. The child will get every right like a son or, daughter. Many such cases are reported. For example, centuries ago Korome *taravādu* and Kokkanissery *taravādu* adopted children from Knnavur/Kinanoor and Kurumathur *taravādus*, respectively.

Kalasattu (Swabbling the tongue of the baby)

The baby is given first liquid during this ceremony. Tender coconut water, *elaneervellam* or, *karikuvellam*, is ritually poured into the mouth of baby by using gold ornament like, locket or finger ring. Otherwise, leaf of *thulasi* (holly basil) is used, instead of metals. The midwife chants *kalasattumanthram* (spells) during this time. Usually, this ritual is performed either by the mother of the pregnant girl or, an attendant/midwife. It will be purely a family function to which neither relatives nor friends are invited. Then the child is returned to its mother. The midwife takes the baby out of the room

and shows it to other members. She is given presents by each one and, also gets some gifts for her service as a midwife. The child is returned to its mother. She gives milk (*mulakodukal*) from the right breast first, followed by the left. The midwife receives 11 kg unhusked rice, half a litter of coconut oil, the tender coconut used for *kalasattu*, clothes and cash.

The husband's family is informed within two days after delivery. The messenger is given gift and food. The husband's party arrives with ornaments and cloth, according to their status soon after getting the information.

The baby is given bath on the fourth, and the seventh days, initially, and then daily. The mother also takes bath in hot water. It is known as *pathachukuli* or, *varikuli*. It continues till the sixteenth day. From the sixteenth day onwards they bathe in warm water called, *kachikuli*. Herbal medicines and turmeric are mixed in the water. From the 40th day, *athu* (a cleanser) made of bark of mango tree for colouring the skin is used.

The people were not taking medicines before delivery in the past but, they consumed various natural materials either in single or in combination as medicines after procreation.

Irupathiyettam Pirannāl (28th day after birth)

On this day, the father of the child, with his relatives, comes to his wife's house with rice, provisions, cloths, and ornaments for the child. *Abharanamaniyikkal* (wearing of ornaments), *nulukettal* (tying the waist-string) *kannezhuthippottuthodal* (application of collyrium, and marking on forehead and cheek) are the functions performed on this day. The father of the child sits on white and black cloth, spread

behind a lighted lamp. The grand mother or, an elderly woman gives the child to him. In the meantime, she is given cloth, money at times, and gold ornaments. The father of the child applies collyria (*mashū*), gives boiled milk (*pal*) of cow with sugar (*panjasara*), banana (*pazham*), and boiled rice (*choru*) to the baby. He also adorns the baby with ornaments such as, *aranjanam* or *nūlu* (waist-string), *māla* (gold chain), *padasaram* or, *kalthala* (anklets), *mothiram* (finger ring) etc. Afterwards, the elders do *arithirikkal* (throwing rice) on the head of the baby. The child is returned to the mother immediately after the function. A delicious feast, without meat or fish, is served to the invitees; *payasam* (a sort of sweet dish made of rice) is a must. On this day, the *mdavu* (a vessel made of copper or clay, used to boil water for bathing the mother and the baby) is turned upside down. It means that, the ritual bath (*pathachukuli/kachikuli*) has come to an end. People generally consider that the 28th, 40th, 60th or, 90th days after childbirth are good for the man to take his wife and child back to his house. The grand mother of the child (Fa'sMo) receives the baby, ceremoniously. A lighted oil lamp, *niranazhi* (a peculiar placement of raw paddy and rice in two local measures), clothes and rice are kept arranged in traditional manner at the centre room (*padinjatta*) of the house. In order to drive away evil spirit, *karuppu* (black) and *choppu* (red) *gurusi* are waved around the child, and then poured on the ground, that is, on the south and north sides of the house, respectively.

Peruvili (Name-giving ceremony)

Naturally, naming ceremony is done on the same day (28th day) after birth or, on another day, along with rice feeding ceremony, at the age of one, two or, three years. The father, and rarely the grand father (F'sF), takes the baby on his lap, and calls the child with the selected name, (*peru*), and milk is given. On those days too, the invited guests

are served with food. Today, for name giving, most of them go on a pilgrimage to nearby temples, especially to Guruvayoor, Mookambika or Parassinikkadavu temples.

Birthday (*Pirannāl*)

This is celebrated according to the child's birth star, and month. When the star come on, the day is regarded as the birthday. An oil lamp is lighted in the morning, and kept until the evening in the central room. There is custom of giving midday meal to invitees and relatives, who attend the function. It is still being practised by most of them.

Tonsuring Ceremony (*Mudimurikal*)

After completing the age of one year, people observe hair cutting ceremony but, nowadays it is not done ceremoniously. The children are taken straight to a hair cutting shop, and the shaving of hair is done.

Ear-boring (*kathukuthumangalam*)

According to Malayans, the ideal age for the ear-boring ceremony for a child is 3, 5, 7 or, 9 years of age. Malayans conduct ear-boring ceremony not elaborately. The function is performed in the father's house. In the past, ear-boring was done for a girl and a boy. Actually a *Thattan* (traditional goldsmith of the area) does the piercing with a sharp silver needle called, *vellislaka*. Soon after the boring, an ornament made of either wood or, metal is put on. Later, an ornament made of gold, silver, lead or aluminum would replace it. These people seldom pierce their nose. The *Thattan* (goldsmith) is given rice and provisions for making curry, in addition to cash. A feast is served to the invitees after the ceremony. Today, the people

make use of regional medical practitioners for ear-boring, leaving any scope for a ceremony. The practice ear-boring a male child has disappeared from the society.

Puberty (*thirandukalyanam*)

They arrange for a puberty ceremony, called *panthal mangalam*, *thirandukalyanam*, *thirandukuli* or, *vayassariyikkal*. This is considered as an important event in the life of a girl. The girl is isolated in a room by the side of the kitchen, but not in any special room. During menstruation, women are forbidden to touch anything. It is believed that such a touch is inauspicious, and polluted them.

The relatives prepare *chakkarachoru* (a kind of sweet made of rice with palm sugar), *aripodi* (rice flour), *thengapullu* (slices of coconut) and *chakkara* (palm sugar). It is served to the girl. The girl is assisted by an *innangathi* (a woman not related through blood). She also prepares bed for the secluded girl. This is known as *thiratikuttal*. The girl is not supposed to see others for seven days. It is believed that she is impure, and causes pollution if seen by others. Male members are strictly prohibited even to see her.

On the 8th day, in the morning, the secluded girl is taken to a ceremonial bath in flowing water. It is called, *thirandukuli*. Five to ten women such as, *nathunmār* (sisters-in-laws) and other close relatives accompany her. After the bath, the girl is put on new clothes, and decorates the forehead, chest and hands by *ilakkuri* (markings made of rice flour paste and mixture of turmeric and lime). Then the women, who accompanied her, stand in two rows, holding a *melappu* (canopy), and also make a voice, known as *kurava*. Then the girl sits facing east on a *palaka* (wooden plank), and an elderly woman, and other close relatives (only women) throw rice on the head (*arithirikkal*), and also present cash and ornaments to the girl. A

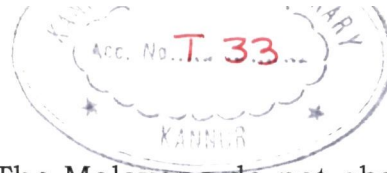
feast including *pappadam* (papat), *pazham* (banana) and *payasam* (sweet dish) are served at the end of the function. A feast of non-vegetarian food is usually offered to the people. Nowadays, no importance is given to this day, and the related ceremony. The number of days to be spent in isolation too has come down from 7 to 3 or, nil.

Initiation ceremony (*Thalapalivekkal*)

Only boys undergo initiation. It is related to *teyyam* performance. The day when a boy performs *teyyam* at the first time, close relatives are invited, and the elders offer their blessings. The important function of this day is the *talapalivekkal* (tying *talapali*, a peculiarly designed ornament of silver or, bronze) and is considered as the symbol of their *gurukaranavanmar* (preceptors and forefathers). It is tied around the forehead). The father or, grandfather of the boy performs this function. After *teyyam* performance, the invitees are treated to a feast. On the occasion of performing *ottakōlam* or, *thichāmundi* first time by a man, a similar ceremony is also observed.

Marriage (*Kettukalyanam* or *Mangalam*)

Once the people had a unique system of marriage as said earlier. The marriage function was marked with a nice feast and entertainments. *Kettukalyanam* or, *mangalam* were the terms used for marriage. The people practised child marriage in the past. Most of the marriages were arranged through negotiations. Cross-cousin marriages, marriages with mother's brother's daughter, and father's sister's daughter, were also practised. Divorce was permissible, and the remarriage of widow or, widower was not a rare case. Modern education and continuing interaction with others have brought a lot of changes in the field of marriage. So, the people have modified their marriage functions too in accordance with new trends. Now, it is a



simple form of wedding ceremony. The Malayans do not observe any kind of first night ceremony.

Death (*maranam*)

The disposing of the dead, and the death related rituals are treated as important social functions like that are related to birth, and marriage. Just after the death, relatives and friends of the deceased are informed. All the kin, both affinal and consanguine, who live in the village or, in the neighbouring villages will bring *pattu* (white cloth) while coming to the home of the deceased. The dead body is shifted into *padinjatta* for paying homage. The body is placed having the head towards south, and legs towards north. The body is covered with white cloth. On the side of the head, lighted oil lamp is kept. A coconut is cut into two equal halves; one half is put near the head, and the other near the leg with lighted wicks. As soon as the relatives and friends arrive, the corpse is given a bath, laying it on a plantain leaf, with hot and plain water, kept arranged in the middle of the courtyard. New clothes are put on the dead body. If he was an *acharakkaran*, 101 markings are drawn on the body, and the *kachu* (an honorary loincloth) is tied around the waist. The hair is combed as usual. Gold ornaments are removed. The body is then taken to *padinjattakam* for the relatives to pay their last prayer. Customarily, the close relatives put new red cloth (*pattu*) or, white cloth on the face of the corpse. This has known as *mughathidal* (covering the face with their cloths). The close kin, especially women and children, wail loudly. In the mean time, men prepare a kind of ladder-like structure, made by using bamboo, coconut leaves etc, and which is called *thandumpadalum* (stretcher). The body is taken out into the *thandumpadalum*, and placed in the middle of the courtyard. The corpse is wrapped in new cloths (white at first, and then followed by red). It is tied to the stretcher. Four men, two at the head, and two at

the leg, carry the stretcher to the burial ground. While taking the body out of the house, the women's wail reaches the peak.

The eldest son or, an elder male, leads the corpse with a lighted *chuttu* (a torch made of dried coconut leaves), while carrying a *pudu kalam* (fresh earthen pot) in his hands. Relatives and friends follow the dead body, except the females. Women had no role in the funeral ceremony except putting the last offerings. On the other hand, they usually narrate the main events in the life of the deceased over hours immediately after his death.

Traditionally, burial was the method of disposal. The people used either public or, own graveyard or, their own piece of land for disposal. The body was kept in such a way that its head comes towards south. The eldest son went around the burial pit three times, and dropped handful of soil into the pit over the dead body three times, and then others repeated the same act. Then the burial pit was covered with soil, and at the end, toddy was served.

Nowadays, they cremate the body instead of burying it in a pit. The eldest son has the right to light the pyre first, and then the younger ones follow. The persons, who follow the dead body, are served with *kallu* (toddy) or, *rak* (arak). All those who attend the disposal return after fixing a day for *sanchayanam* or, *thelikal* (a ceremonious ritual performance). Then they bathe in pond or, river. Relatives and friends of the deceased person may stay in the house for one or, two days. Within three to 13 days after death, *baliyidal* (sacrifice) is observed. The ritual *thelikal* is performed to remove *pula* (death pollution). This is observed generally on the third, fifth or, twelfth day of the disposal. The members of the family, and the kins have to observe pollution for twelve days. The members of the family, and the kins of the dead do not shave or, scalp hair. Now pollution lasts for

three days. Performing *thelikkal*, pollution is removed by sprinkling tender coconut water on the body, around the house, and the utensils by an *ennangan* (a male not related through blood). A feast is arranged for the invitees. They prepare a curry made of fish, and usually, dried shark is a must. During the period of *baliyidal*, they avoid meat and fish. Like others in this area, these people believe in the soul's survival after death.

Ancestor worship has given great importance in the life of the Malayans, and they pray to them whenever they face problems. *Baliyidal* (sacrifice) is a kind of offering or, sacrifice to the spirit of the dead person. It begins on the next day immediately after the dispossal. For performing this ceremony, a *balikkalam* (ground) is prepared on the southern side of the courtyard, and there fixed a *kariku* (tender coconut). The *balikkalam* is smeared with *chanakam* (cow dung). Things like coconut scrapings, boiled rice, water, and *karukapullu* (a kind of grass) are necessary items for the function. After taking a ritual bath, the children (both sexes) of the diseased, and other close male and female kins perform the offering in the morning. The eldest son gives the offerings first and then his brothers and sisters performing the same according to their seniority. The offerings are placed in a plantain leaf in front of a lighted oil lamp. At the time of sacrifice, every one silently prays to the spirit of the dead person. After the offering, all of them withdraw from the *balikkalam* until the crows eat the offerings. It marks the end of the ritual. This is due to a general belief that the spirit of the dead comes in the form of *balikaka* (crow) for accepting offerings. *Baliyidal* is repeated every day till *telikal*, which is performed on the 12th day after the death of the person. The *pindam* (lump) is flowed in a small stream, river or, channel on the 12th day or, the day of *telikal*. Afterthis, the close kins take bath, and get rid off the death pollution by sprinkling *elaneer vellam* (tender coconut water) on the

body, and everywhere in the house. A feast with dried fish curry is served at the mid-day.

On the 12th day, *athayuttu* is performed. At night they offer the meal to the soul of the deceased. After 10 or, 15 minutes, the offered food items are distributed among the close kins. These guests are served with a meal, and meat and fish is a must. On the 13th day, a midday feast is served to the guests, who offer cash to meet the expenditure of this ceremony. After the feast, the guests leave the house. In past, when the death was due to an epidemic, the body was buried, and no ritual was conducted because, they treated such deaths as unnatural, as was caused by the wrath of god. In the case of stillbirth the body was buried.

Mourning period is generally 41 days for male, and 40 days for females. In the night of the final day of mourning, a ritual known as *nalpathonnu*, is held. Relatives living in distant villages are invited by a messenger to attend the ceremony. Relatives gather a few days before making arrangements for the function. Each invited family brings rice, vegetables and provision. Tea is offered to the guests, and liquor is also served. The eldest son holds equal halves of a coconut in each hand, keeping the wicks lit inside. A shawl is put on his head like a veil, and he goes up to the gate, makes some noise, walks backwards, and puts the coconuts into a pit in the *balimula* (southwest corner) of *padinjatta*. The pit is closed. A lighted oil lamp is placed at the center of *padinjatta*, and a *palaka* (designed wooden plank) is also placed before the oil lamp. A meal is arranged as an offering to the spirit in a plantain leaf, and this function is called *meethuvekkal*. *Meethuvekkal* (arranging meal as an offering to the spirit) is the main event on the 40th day ritual. The relatives assemble in the room and drop pinch of rice into the lamp soon after

contemplation. All of them come out of the room keeping the room partially closed. A meal is served to the invitees.

On four new moon days of a year, in the months of *Karkkidakam*, *Thulam*, *Kumbham* and *Medam*, the Malayans remember the dead and give offerings (*meethu*) to the spirits. The Malayans also give similar offerings on the death anniversary, called *chatham* (the day on which the person died). In early days, these people observed the death rituals according to the traditional rules but, at present, the death ceremonies and anniversaries are not celebrated elaborately.

Status of Women

According to Renjini,

The position of women has been different from society to society and from time to time. There was a period in Indian history when women were accorded equal status with men. [2000:30]

The Malayans do not discriminate children, and treat them differently, only when a child advances in its age, discrimination is taken place in differing aspects of its life. For example, discrimination takes place in distribution of labour. However, obviously the role of women in the field of *teyyam* performance is very limited.

The entire household works are done by the women, including collection of firewood, fetching water, cleaning utensils, washing clothes, and preparing and serving food. Child rearing is another important task for the females. It is seen that the young girls take care of their juniors in the absence of senior members. During decision making in running the family, the males seek the opinion of the female members even if men head the households. Sometimes,

the elder women are considered as the head in the absence of a suitable man.

In the sphere of marriage, the arranged marriage is the prevalent one; the girls have no business to choose her life partner. After marriage a woman hardly remains in her parental setup. Afterwards, she has no right over parental properties. Sex is the criterion for inheriting property. The right of inheritance is not equally shared and enjoyed by every one. It only goes to the male members. But on the contrary, the women gain possession in her husband's residence. In some extent, women tolerate the misbehaviour of the husband. Divorce is permissible, and does not cause any disadvantage to the women. Even repeated divorces do not lower the status of a woman.

The females of Malayans have no political status. They never get appointed neither as office bearers nor as ordinary members. In comparison with the political setup, they had a quite better position in the religious status. They actively take part in religious activities but, a few restrictions are imposed during pregnancy, and at the period of menstruation.

In the sphere of economy, apparently, Malayan women are enjoyed more or equal status with men. Women are considered as valuable economic asset because of their direct pursuit in subsistence economy. Beside the household duty, they also spend much of their time in midwifery and magic. In usual circumstances, the females have no business during the *teyyam* performance but, in rare occasion they assist the males in different ways such as, chanting, drumming and torching the light. They also help the males in performing important magic, i.e., *kannerupattu*, *ennamanthram*, etc. The females accompany the males, when they go for seasonal

performance of *vedanattam*, and *kothamuriyattam* for carrying the gifts, i.e., rice, paddy etc.

The observation and analysis of the past domestic life of the Malayans reveal the underlying factor for the prevalence of patrilineage, patrilocality and patriarchy of their society was that co-operation among men was more crucial than among women. The performances of *teyyam* badly needed men, who were more effective in hand-to-hand combat than women.

Role of a Woman

The woman of Malayan society has to do specific roles in day to day life. She must play a dual role in the society. The important and primary role of a woman is to behave like a member of the family such as, wife, mother, daughter, sister, and a breadwinner of the family, and on the other hand she has to perform significant social roles such as, midwife and magic woman.

As a wife

She should do their household works like cooking, fetching water, collecting firewood, washing cloths, cleaning and sweeping the home, watering plants, etc. She always stands aside with her husband during all critical situations. More than that, she takes care of his parents and relatives and, also fulfills his biological need.

As a mother

The Malayan woman, as a mother, takes care of her children and socializes them. The child gets first hand information about the basic things on the world, culture, tradition, etc from the mother. She also encourages the children in life hazards or, all kinds of difficulties.

As a daughter

At an early age the girl start helping her mother in household chores. Whenever needed, she should extend her services in the absence of her mother. It is a usual phenomenon that the eldest daughter takes care of the juniors in the absence of her mother and father.

As a sister

As a sister, she has to perform quite an insignificant role. She just helps their brothers by extending her service in washing cloths, fetching water, cleaning dishes, and sweeping their room. And sometimes she also should plays the role of a mother in her absence. Usually, it is very hard to get her service as a sister soon after her marriage, since the Malayans are patriarchal.

As a bread winner

This is also an important role of Mali, the female member of the Malayan caste. She earns less but save more than the men, by extending her skills in magic and midwifery. In dry and off-seasons, the men find difficult to earn the essential things but, the females contribute to the family throughout the year. Thus, practically she turns as the main breadwinner of the family.

As a performer

In the past she successfully played the role of a midwife, and as well as a magic-woman. Until a decade ago, the woman had extended her service to the people as a local-midwife. She also used herbal medicines during labour. Now this traditional practice has almost disappeared, since the people go to the nearby hospitals for labour attendent, and the Malayans too are not an exception.

She also extends her service to the society as a magic woman since she has the skill in certain magics like, *kannerupattu*, *tachchumanthram*, *ennamanthram*, *charadujapikkal*, *japichuthal*, etc. Even today, many people believe and approach her to do these magical remedies to expell evil eye, misfortune, problems created by sorcery, etc.

In total, the females of Malayan society enjoy a better status in comparison with others, even though their society is patriarchal and patrilineal. The family relationships are so strong and, the women strongly protect and support the males, and therefore, they are not shadows of males.

Acharam (Honorific Title)

Table II.18 Number of Acharam/Honorific Title Holders

Sl. No.	Ācharam	Number of Holders in		Total
		Kannur	Kasargod	
1	<i>Panikker</i>	87	30	117
2	<i>Perumalayan or other Double honours</i>	5	2	7
Total		92	32	124

The Malayans use the title *panikker*. It has been a title, and usually an award of honour for their skill in *teyyam* performance. The title was awarded by *thampuran* or, other *nāduvazhi* (local ruler), *tantri* (Brahmin) etc, as per the suggestion of the local people. The left hand is adorned with a bangle made of gold, *ācharavala*, as a symbol of this *ācharam* or, title. In addition to this, the *taravattumūppan*

received a double honour or, *ācharam*, known as, *perumalayan*, *vākka*, *muthudon*, *halladon*, *parappēn*, *padathron*, *kōdon* etc (in different areas). A *kachchu* (loincloth) and *churika* (double-edged sword) are the symbols of the titleholder. The table II.18 shows that, 124 of *teyyam* performers possess *ācharams* (out of 822 males), which indicates that 15.09 percent of the male population holds titles. Among them 117 have got the title, *panikker*, and only 7 received double honours.

Celebrations, Festivals and the Art

The Malayans celebrate all the festivals of the Hindus. The celebrations include *Ōnam*, *Vishu*, *Pūram*, and *Puthari*. The people are born artists. Their *teyyam* itself is considered as one of the most enchanting and beautiful artistic forms in the world. Its amazing headgear, facial drawings, costumes and wearing, *tōttam* chants, dance and drumming reflect high artistic value. Moreover, *kalampāttu*, *kothamuriyāttam* and *vedanāttam* have high artistic touch. The people are excellent singers, dancers and actors.

The features of the Malayan's society and culture discussed above with special reference to their social institutions, life-cycle rituals, and practices clearly re-establish the fact that the Malayans were a primitive group and have many 'Dravidian elements', other than that of the 'Caste Hindus', in their culture. This is, in short, the way of the life of the Malayans in North Malabar. They can still be considered as an ideal simple 'social group' who are characterized by some salient features like (i) cultural identity, (ii) less developed technology, (iii) service-return based economy, (iv) less segmented society, (v) endogamous society, and (vi) communal solidarity. With this general background it will be quite relevant to discuss the degree of change noticed. Since human society is dynamic, change is

inevitable, change is a slow process, no doubt, but some external forces sometimes accelerate the pace. In the present case, the change is accelerated by the modern innovations and the subsequent changes in the environment and the social reforms in touch with the impact of modern administration. Change is apparent not only in their material equipment or economy but in their belief also. And, all is due to the interaction between the Malayan, the man and his *teyyam*, the culture, and the nature, or, 'nature-man interaction'.

Photo : II.1 The Malayans



“How can I go...?” A Marriage Scene



“Future rests on us...!” The Children



“How much gap...?” three Generations



“This is My Kingdom...!” A Malayan Male

**Photo: II.2 “Our way of learning” –
Informal Education**



A Boy is Playing on Chenda



He Learning the trick of Grinding!



We Playing Teyyam!

Photo: II.3 “Manthravadam...”- Our kind of Magic..!

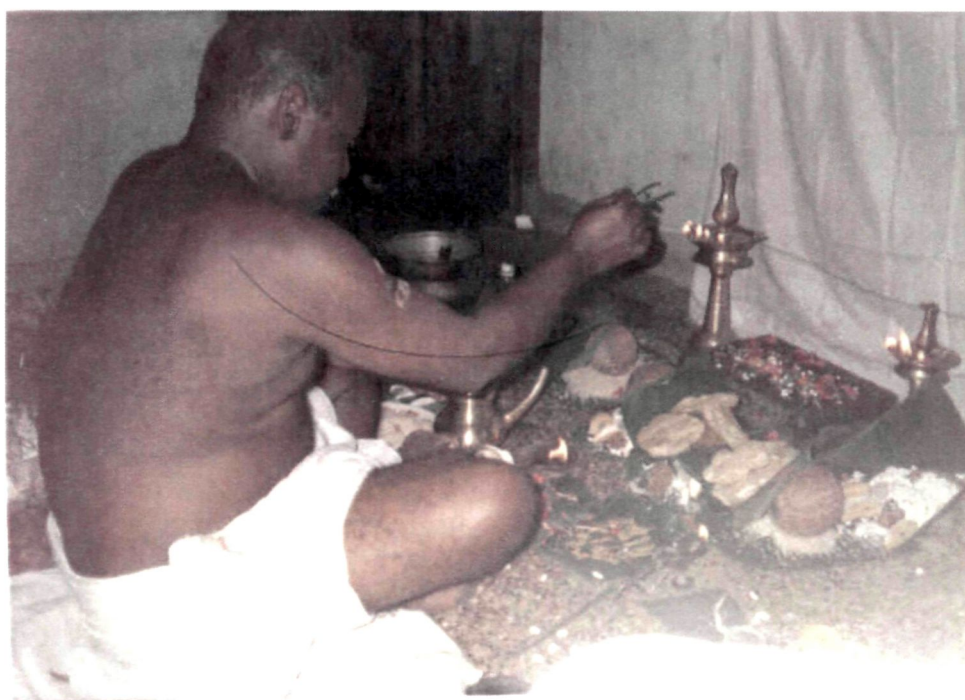


Photo: II.4 Vedan & Kothamuri



Vedan



Kothamuri



Kothamuri & Panniyans

Chapter III

*Jeyyam: The God of
North Malabar*

CHAPTER III

TEYYAM: THE GOD OF NORTH MALABAR

The very word, *teyyam* can bring forth to the interior of a listener an enchanting and beautiful picture. Nevertheless, in the case of the people of North Malabar, the word has more than one meaning. According to them, *teyyam* is everything. Truly, they believe, that it is present, past, and future. More than that, *teyyam* is culture, society, and environment. The people perform *teyyam* as an indispensable part of their religion, politics, and magic, and observe it as their guide, protector, and preceptor. They believe that *teyyam* possesses great power, which is at once inhuman and divine. Its rage brings destruction, and its fondness gives prosperity. Hence, they consider it as their creator and destroyer. It also preserves a vivid picture of the bygone past. The myth, ritual, and the whole performance itself, throw some light on the religious, cultural, and the environmental inter-relationships. The once relevant stratigraphic sequence, and service relationships, have been still present and remain ceaselessly in *teyyam*. This is maintained through observing various customs and practices, worship and performance of deities that are present in various sacred centres.

This indigenous, traditional ritual performance of North Malabar, *teyyam*, is famous for its colourful and magnificent attire (costumes and wearing), including attractive and amazing headgear, and excellent facial writing. Unlike many other rituals, it has a high socio-political significance in the multicastrate village life of Kerala, and it is highly conditioned by myth. This was the one and the only means of worship in this area, linked directly or indirectly with their deities. These are worshipped and performed as *teyyam*. All

taravādus worship one or more *teyyam* as their family god. As the symbolic representations of deities, *teyyam* are worshipped in natural settings, i.e. specially designed sacred centres. The performance is either calendrical or, set according to the desire of the organizers. Various rituals are incorporated with the performance, starting from the beginning to the end. More than this, *teyyam* is also notable for its deeds. This includes dance, music, literature, eloquence, facial writing, engraving, and carving. It is impossible to see the above said aspects in such a combination anywhere in any field all around the world. Essentially *teyyam* brings into life a network of social relationship. These networks of relationships necessarily have performer, organizer, spectator, and belief system of people, and sacred centres in inborn surroundings. During the execution of *teyyam*, these active meshes have their own specific roles to play. According to tradition, the performers perform it, organizers organize it and make arrangements for its performance. The pious spectators who watch and get relief by the force of their customized belief system. The sacred centre or the place of worship, thus, ties together the man with his culture, and the nature.

All the Hindu castes of North Malabar worship and believe in their deities of whose form *teyyam* takes the form. Although the so-called 'high' and 'low' caste people believe in *teyyam*, there are nearly ten communities who execute the actual performance of *teyyam* in this area, the area I have selected for the present study. The castes that perform *teyyam* include the Malayan, Vannan, Vēlan, Pulayan, Anjutan, Munnutan, Mavilan, Chingathan, Kopalan, and Karimpalan. Surprisingly all these communities belong to Scheduled Castes, according to the caste-classification of the Indian Constitution. Malayan and Vannan are the two important and major castes among these untouchables, and through out North Malabar they are the chief performers of *teyyam*. All other communities

concentrate in some areas, which are situated mostly in remote places. The Pulayas perform *teyyam* only in their own centres, and for their own sake. Generally speaking, they do not perform for others. The other striking feature of *teyyam* is that the high caste Hindus never perform *teyyam*, but only make arrangements for its performance, and pays their devotion to it.

The people are directly depending on the belief system that is embodied in *teyyam* because, they do not have any other alternative. This is the only tradition of North Malabar, which is neither 'little' nor 'great'. The prevailing Sanskritised temple and gods are recent intrusions. Thereafter, assimilation of *teyyam* into the Hindu culture was prominent. Nowadays, the people of North Malabar worship both the Hindu gods and *teyyam*. According to Robert Redfield,

In a civilization there is a great tradition of the reflective few, and there is a little tradition of the largely unreflective many. The great tradition is cultivated in schools or temples; the little tradition works itself out and keeps itself going in the lives of the unlettered in their village communities. (1960:41,42,43)

But this is not applicable in the case of North Malabar, and the *teyyam* performance. Here *teyyam* gets primary and foremost attention, and then only follows the worship of Sanskrit gods. This is so because, the people contemplate *teyyam* as a part of their day-to-day life. The universalized worship of Sanskrit gods that is prevalent in India, taken in comparison with localized *teyyam* performance is not linked to the daily life in such a manner as *teyyam* is. *Teyyam* has become the part of a great tradition, and it is rightly called as little tradition because, it is the part of local worship, i.e., *teyyam* is little and great tradition.

It is very difficult to trace the origin and evolution of *teyyam* because of the absence of reliable history of the remote past. Even then, since the establishment, *teyyam* encompasses different stages of illusion. I make an attempt to describe the distinct stages of progress in the following pages, with respect to the centre of worship and attire. *Teyyam* possess the great impressiveness in the multi-caste village setup of North Malabar. It establishes solidarity, peace, harmony and integration among the people. This conceded performance has to do various social, political, cultural, psychological, economic, ceremonial, and religious functions.

By and large, the people extensively exploit local environment. Most of the materials necessary for the performance are directly gathered from the local resources. The richness of flora and the green forest naturally gives this area a green background. To coincide with this natural background, the people consciously give wonderful colour combination to their performance.

The myth, ritual and performance are all symbolic representations of life-experiences of the people. Through the centuries, performance showed greater flexibility and adaptability whenever and wherever changes occurred. This dynamic nature has made *teyyam* to perpetuate in North Malabar. It has great survival value even with the limited technology and knowledge of the primitive people, who believe that the divine power of *teyyam* can get rid of all misfortunes. Having understood its tidy influence over the society, the exploiters subdued *teyyam* for their vested interests. The approach of folklorists further strengthened these exploitations.

What is Teyyam?

According to Kurup,

The *Teyyam* or *Teyyattam* is a popular cult in Malabar which has become an inseparable part of the religion of the village folk. As a living cult with centuries-old tradition, ritual and custom it embraces almost all castes, classes and divisions of Hindu community in this region. The term *Teyyattam* denotes the dance of god and the term *Teyyam* is a corrupt form of *Deivam* or god. The ritual aspects and the artistic forms of this folk-dance fulfill the religious aspirations and aesthetic imagination of the common people. (1977:5)

For Pallath *teyyam* is,

A form of worship consisting of a special combination of symbols, rituals and art forms particularly the dance through which the ghosts, good and the evil spirits, in its manifestation of sub human, animate and inanimate beings, ancestor spirits of legendary figures of great valour, extra ordinary powers, and endowments, and gods and goddesses: Shiva, Sakthi, Vishnu are appeased and honoured. This is done by dressing up in the intended form of their effigy (*Kōlam*) and performing artistically according to prescribed rites and rituals, developed through folk traditions with the accompaniment of vocal and instrumental music. The dance is incorporated into a ritual offering which is done by another group of ritual experts known as *tantri* (priests). (1995:60)

Formulation of a fit definition of *teyyam* is not an easy task. In this regard, various features have to be considered. Primarily a first hand knowledge on the socio-cultural significance of *teyyam* in the plural

society of North Malabar is necessary. This traditional religious ritual of the Hindu society is a consensual stand between man and environment. As a social etiquette the people ensue *teyyam* as their style of worship, which is observed through unshakeable and patterned symbols. The entire action of *teyyam* has reflected, grappled and palpitated the glister of life of the bygone days. Indeed, because of the trust in the divine power of *teyyam*, the disciples of this performance firmly believe that their survival and existence is conceded on this.

Analyzing the whole movement in the *teyyam* performance is the only dependable method we can adopt to trace its origin and history of evolution. The so-called 'reliable' and 'authentic' written documents on this topic are absent. It is precisely this absence that gives the construction of the history of *teyyam* a space in the culture of the communities of its performers. It is the same feature that adds to the construction its most notable difficulty.

The first traces of *teyyam* came into existence not as an accident but, as a natural development. It emerged out of day-to-day experience. We can say that it existed through 'nature-man interaction', which made possible the very existance of man in the given space, North Malabar.

According to Hudson and Smith,

Territoriality is a subset of resource-defense strategies and resource defense is in turn an aspect of substance strategies...we have argued that, territoriality in humans is at least in part an adaptive response to environmental factors. (cit. Dyson 1998:110)

This applies even to *teyyam*.

Fear, anxiety and other similar mental states were given importance in those days while facing critical conditions. The then knowledge and science were unable to give proper explanations to the cause and effect of experienced phenomena, and events in the real life. This led the people of those days into a state of helplessness in relation to many of their productive endeavours. The outcome of such a situation was a natural struggle. To escape from these, or, minimize stress and strain, man imputes to them extra-ordinary powers. So, the idea of *teyyam* comes very close to that of *animism*, *manaism*, *fetishism* or, the worship of material objects supposed to have innate power.

Based on such beliefs, in order to overcome difficulties posed before a person, his mind and body also responds in the form of a 'trance' produced by the 'energy' during the psychic repressions. Consciously or, unconsciously, when the trance was repeated on similar occasions, it got established so that the trance was considered helpful to overcome certain crises. Slowly and steadily, the trance occurring on certain occasions or, during crises, coupled with the 'beliefs', it was gradually transformed into 'dance', i.e., the performance.

In lieu with the movement of culture, the 'beliefs' gave rise to the custom of 'worship'. The impact of environment and culture laid the foundation for this worship system. Later on, these beliefs, and the custom of worship, being absorbed into a system, turned into an enduring practice, in accordance with man's aesthetic taste. It then came to be known as, *teyyam*. Or, in other words, the mutual interaction between belief and dance, gave shape to *teyyam*, backed by myth, and rituals. Further, the whole system came to be

organised to stand on 'nature-man-spirit interaction'. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

A careful study of its movements and action will show that there are three distinct phases in the evolution of *teyyam*. They can be noticed in a line of simple to complex. In the first phase, *teyyam* had its first trace. The second phase saw the development of scientific reasoning. The spreading and universalisation of *teyyam* took place in this phase, along with the serious and noticeable change in the processes of life. Moreover, the *teyyam* dance was performed in defined rhythms, and according to the notes played in various musical instruments. Attractive attire also came into use. Magical spells, chants, *töttam pättau*, and other rituals were also organized in this phase. In the third and final phase, just after the invasion of the Aryans, the 'Aryanisation' of *teyyam* was done. The whole performance was absorbed into the Hindu religion without any change in its basic structure. The introduction of the Hindu deities into *teyyam* performance was one of the most important changes of this period.

Even though the basic structure of *teyyam* remained unchanged, minor changes have occurred. Once the whole population blindly believed in its divine powers, and worshipped it with great dignity. In the past, it was considered truly as a part of life. Recently, after changes have taken place in the belief-system, and the worldview of the people, *teyyam* came to be elaborately performed, and yet, has slowly started to loosen its hold over the population. This clearly indicates that *teyyam* had evolved from a primitive base, and does not have a recent origin but, a remote, very remote, origin. A glance at the past activities of the primitive people which present themselves during a performance, at the development of various elements like the *teyyam* attire, the sacred centers and the manners of worship

compells us to draw this conclusion. This kind of history is accessible only if *teyyam* and its elements are studied as a cultural text, and not an independent one, having a free stand of its own, that makes its presence through constant social interactions.

Functions of Teyyam

Teyyam has to do certain functions for the common good of the society. Earlier, it had social, psychological and economic significance. Later on after the 'Hinduisation', in a multi-caste and pluralistic society, it had more elaborate duties to perform including, political, religious, communicative and ceremonial, in addition to socio-economic and psychological functions.

Teyyam is a concrete situation rather than a mental abstraction. It was the primitive man's reaction to the concrete, qualitative and multidimensional life experiences. It has both conscious and unconscious motivations that are applicable to the individual, community, society or, to the whole humanity, sharing complexes of universal import. *Teyyam* has made all effort to combine every piece of the society together in order to make solidarity and integrity.

Socio-Cultural Function

One of the important and relevant functions of *teyyam* is to bring integrity and solidarity among the people. This is obtained through the union of the members of society. Through this opportunity of group interactions, the members get a chance to see each other and share their experiences with relatives and friends, at least once in a year. In this sense, *teyyam* binds together the members of the society, providing a feeling with a belonging and co-operation. The belief in different deities and their joint performance in great

harmony insist on the importance of unity and integration. Thus, *teyyam* exhibits social integration through social relations.

Teyyam also serves as a critique of the socio-cultural discriminations of society, and provides instruments for socio-cultural protests and criticism. *Teyyams* like *Pottan*, *Vishnumūrthi*, and *Kuttichatan* directly attack social oppressions and exploitations. The license to criticize discriminations and concessions for breaking social control and norms, in the forms such as, 'untouchability' and 'pollution' give the oppressed some 'equality' that brings social equilibrium. For centuries, this social etiquette, transmitted from generations to generations, not only perpetuates the culture, but maintains its identity too.

Political Function

The belief in possession of divine and supernatural power of *teyyam* enforces the people to observe the law and order very strictly, and to accomplish their duties. Consciously, they were not willing to commit any mistake or misconduct, because of the fear of the wrath of their deity. Later on, it has been transformed into a kind of political power over the people's desires.

Teyyam regulates the social life of North Malabar. It helps to maintain rule and norms according to which it guides and establishes a network of relations amongst the society. To make every member of the society follow the rules, standards, and the norms, there must subsist integration, harmony, and solidarity among the members.

The local rulers of North Malabar, *tampurāns* or *nāduvāzhis*, used *teyyam* performance and the sacred centres for implementing their laws and orders among the people. It existed in lieu with the

establishment of 'Hinduization'. The Sanskritised Hindu temple known as, *kshetram* had been placed on top of the hierarchies of political institutions but, just below the local administration.

Religious Function

In the remote past, the religious function of *teyyam* was very limited. Primarily, it was aimed to bring peace and social equilibrium in the society. It was the symbolic expression of social relations and status, describing the spiritual reality, and values of the community. It was concerned with social welfare and cohesion. Later on, under the process of 'Hinduization', heredity being the criterion for the determination of caste, the society was stratified into different sects. Therefore, *teyyam* is necessarily designed to carry on stratigraphic sequence among the people. In this sectarian society, everyone is connected with *teyyam* performance, and has been assigned particular roles. Though it maintains the mutual interaction between various castes, it keeps possession of social hierarchy and segmentary system. However, *teyyam* binds the people together on one hand, and is also successful in maintaining the superior and inferior feelings of the society on the other hand.

The *teyyam* provides comfort and reassurance that come from having some way to explain and encounter with the troubles and uncertainties of living. It may be justified and sanctioned as rituals, values, and customs. The residue of the bygone past in the form of ritual and myth, which concerns individual needs and social equilibrium, has been considered as adaptive and adjustive responses to social and physical environment as well. In fact, all societies function adequately only if necessary needs are to be satisfied. This is directly linked with their belief-system. Hence, in

the case of North Malabar, *teyyam* functions adequately, and often satisfies the social drives through worship and performance.

Psychological Function

Teyyam is obviously represented as a symbol of objects and images of daily life. It comes out of 'collective and personal unconsciousness'. This mechanism also reveals the psychic repression. At the time of blessing, *teyyam* listens to problems and complaints rose by the devotees, and suggest practical and invaluable solutions to overcome their difficulties. Through this traditional kind of guidance and counseling mechanism, *teyyam* re-establishes self-confidence, motivation, and enough courage in the mind of the people to face the life's hazards.

The whole world of performance itself has given relief to the celebrant, their relatives and friends by accomplishing social integration and solidarity. The performance brings healing into psychological discomfort, anxiety, and fear. Moreover, the performers too get satisfaction and recognition while performing *teyyam*.

Economic Function

The sacred structure is determined by the economy of every one. In a high- stratified society, all sects possess certain special economic system for their survival. As the result of the impact of the concepts of high and low, the inferior caste has been prompted to engage service-return based economy. *Teyyam* performance too witnesses a service-return based system of economy. The performers serve the society accordingly, and in return, they get economic benefits. A close look at this service-return system essentially reveals the upper caste people's lust to sustain the feelings of the society.

Communicative Function

Teyyam does not exist for any kind of entertainment and aesthetic interest, but as survival value. These symbols have conveyed the people's philosophy and world-view. However, *teyyam* manifests the hidden past and enables the people for apperception over the bad impact of anti-social and immoral activities. The myths of *Pottan teyyam*, *Vishnumūrthi*, and *Karimkuttichatan* express the message of protest-measures against certain social discriminations.

Ceremonial Function

Ceremonials take diverse forms in different societies. They may be ritual observances, fasting and drinking, singing and dancing, pageantry and fancy dress, and so on. *Teyyam* is performed over a number of days or months, which gives the people a chance to celebrate and enjoy over a number of days.

Attire of Teyyam

At the very sight of *teyyam* itself, everyone feels that it is an existing piece of performance. Largely, this is accomplished due to the presence of colourful and beautiful make-up and decorations on the head, face, and all over the body of the performer. The elaborate decoration of *teyyam* is done mainly above the chest, hands and just below the navel including the legs. The Malayan use cheap and easily obtainable materials in the surroundings for make-up and decoration. This includes *kuruthola* or *olatiri* (tender leaves of coconut), *muriku* (a kind of soft and light wood plant), *ari* (rice), *manjal* (turmeric), *nuru* (lime), *mashi* or *kari* (charcoal), *adaka* (arecanut), *odu* (bronze - bell-metal), etc. The decorations on various parts of body are distinct.

The performers use the term *aniyalam* to refer attire and wearing. It can be further divided into *mudi* (headgear), *talachamayam* (head decoration), *mughapala* (mask), hand decoration, *kakaru* (bronze ornaments used in legs), and specially designed colourful dressings.

The *aniyalam* is of two types, temporary and permanent. The temporary ones made by tender coconut leaves (*kuruthola*). It is used for a single performance. The re-usable, permanent *aniyalams* are made up of planks of light softwood (*muriku*), cloth (*thuni*), *odu* (bronze), *velli* (silver), and even *sornam* (gold). Coating coloured glittering papers, mirrors etc., beautify the engraved and designed wood planks.

The Malayans make use of *pelika* or *peleya* (a traditional basket made of cane) to preserve or store, and to transport permanent *aniyalams*. They buy *peleya* from the Vēlans, a *teyyam* performing caste, who make cane and bamboo products like, *kuta* (basket), *muram* (winnoing fan), *totil* (cradle), etc.

Head Decoration

Talachamayam is the word appropriately used by *teyyam* performers in place of head decoration. Certain performances of *teyyams* use different kinds of *mudi* (headgear) in addition to *talachamayam*. The *mudi* is circular or triangular, and its size ranges from small to very huge. The performers use natural as well as artificial materials to make *mudi* and *talachamayam*. The natural materials includes tender coconut leaves, arecanut stem, bamboo, bough of coconut, planks of light and soft wood and artificial materials like red cloth, coloured glittering papers and mirror. The people simply collect natural materials from the surroundings, and artificial materials are purchased from the market.

The headdresses are of different sizes and shapes, and it must have differently designed pieces. *Kondal* made of cloth, *talapali* made of bronze and silver, *talapu* and *talatanda* of *chekippu* (ixora flower), and different *katu* made of coconut leaves, soft wood, bronze or silver, are included in the important pieces of headdress.

Kondal

This is made of cloth and worn on the head. The function of *kondal* helps the other pieces of head decorations to fix firmly on the head. Over this, the performers wear all other pieces of *talachamayam*.

Talapali

The most important and essential piece of *aniyalam* is *talapali*. The performers told me that it symbolically represent the 21 *gurukaranavanmars* (ancestors). This piece of *talachamayam* is made off specially designed 21 silver or bronze pieces fixed in cloth. At the time of performance, it was tied around the forehead. The performers must obeisance the holy *talapali* before tying it on the head. A slogan is prevalent among them regarding *talapali* runs like this: “*guruthwamilathvanu talapali urakila*”, which means, *talapali* will not stay in the proper place during performance if the performer lacks good character and behaviour.

Vellipola

It is also used along with *talapali*, and made of artificial beads of silver whitish colour.

Talapu and Talatanda

Talapu or *talatanda* is made of ixora flowers, arranged in a peculiar fashion by using *vaikol* (straw of paddy), and *vazhanaru* (thread

obtained from plantain). The small sized one is called, *talapu* and the large one is called, *talatanda*. This is fixed just above *talapali*. In most cases, *talapu* or *talatanda* is beautified by *velipu* (artificial silver flower).

Kathu

The Malayans use various types of pseudo ears called *kathu* for different *teyyams*. They use *kuttykathu*, *olakathu*, *pekathu*, and *thekan kathu*. The *kuttykathu* is made of plank of softwood (*muriku*) and is beautified by coating *takidu* (glittering paper). *Teyyam Rakhachāmundi* use *kuttykatu*. *Olakathu* is also made of plank of *muriku*, and beautified by glittering papers. Some times, they use *olakatu* with bronze fittings. *Teyyams* like, *Bairavan*, *Kudiveeran*, *Karimkuttichatan*, *Pukuttichatan*, *Uchakuttichatan*, and *Karuval* use *olakathu*. *Pekathu* is made up of tender coconut leaves. Unlike the other forms of *kathu*, *pekathu* is used only for a single performance. *Pottan teyyam*, *Pulamaruthan*, *Pulachamandi*, and *Gulikan* use *pekathu*. *Madayilchāmundi* use *thekan kathu*, which is made up of silver or, bronze.

Chuyipu

This piece of *talachamayam* is made up of *muriku*. Glittering papers, and pieces of mirrors beautify it. *Chuyipu* is placed just above the *kathu*. *Vishnumūrthi* and *Madayilchāmundi teyyam* use *chuyipu*.

Chenimalar

A specially designed bronze or, silver ornament is used for head decoration. It is placed just above the ear of the performer. All *teyyams* use *chenimalar*.

Facial Decoration

The Malayan uses some traditional mode of techniques and methods, primarily to beautify the face of the performer and secondly, to give identity for their *teyyams*.

Using of masks, pseudo eyes, fangs, moustache and beards are common. Facial writings also have significance among the facial decoration. Sometimes, the performers use pseudo faces of different creatures on certain occasions during the performance.

Facial writing (*mughathezhuthu*)

The Malayan uses the term *mughathezhuthu* to denote facial writings. They have been using different *mughathezhuthu* for different *teyyams*. The intention behind the facial writing is to express the meaning of myth. The pictorial and, symbolic representation of the face with coloured designs makes every *teyyam* distinct from others. Yellow, orange, red, black, and white colours are used as basic colours for facial writing. For making these colours, in olden days, people made use of natural materials like turmeric powder and *manayola* for yellow (*manja*) colour, and *chayiliam* for red (*chopu*), and a mixture of *manayola* and *chayiliam* for orange colour. Rice powder paste is used to depict white (*vella*). Combinations of charcoal (which is obtained from the flame of an oil lamp, in a small earthen pot called, *mayodu* or *mashiyodu*), and coconut oil are used for black colour (*mashi-Kajal*). Nowadays, Malayans buy their colouring materials from the market whenever they are needed.

All designs of *mughathezhuthu* have their own basic structures. The basic forms cannot be changed. But everybody has been given the liberty to change the thickness of lines, length, breadth, area, volume

and other minor areas according to the writer's desire and skill. *Koyipu* or *kozhipushpam*, *thepumkurium*, *sangumvalum*, *badrachotta*, *anchupulli*, *churulezhuthu*, *pullezhuthu*, *anachuvad*, *nathumkannu*, *prakezhuthu*, *narikurichezhuthu*, *nagamthathezhuthu*, etc. are some of the basic patterns of facial writing. The patterns are mostly borrowed from the features of animals, and plants. The name itself reflects the shape and design of its structure. *Koyipu* is the local term used to denote the comb of the cock. The *koyipu* design of *Vishnumurthi* is patterned after the local name of cock's comb. This pattern of writing is considered as the most refined and complex among *mughathezhuthu*. *Sangumvalum* (*sangu*: shell, *valu*: tail) means shell and tail. *Churulezhuthu* is patterned as spiral shape. *Anachuvad* is named after elephant feet.

The facial writing is given distinction and identity in each *teyyam*. In the face of *Vishnumūrthi*, the Malayan writes *koyipu*. *Thepumkuriyum* is for *Madayilchāmundi*, *badrachotta* for *Rakthachāmundi*, *anachuvad* for *Uchakuttichathan*, *sangumvalum* for *Karuval*, *Panchuruli*, *Raktheswari*, and *Uchitta*.

Mostly, the facial writings too have expressed high degree of modification. In early days, the Malayan had used simple forms of writings such as, *thepu* (smearing) and *badrachotta* (filled circles) which were totally devoid of refined lines. At this stage, they used natural materials for facial writings such as, *manjal* (turmeric) for yellow colour, *nuru* (quick lime) and turmeric for red colour, *kari* (charcoal) for black colour, and *arichanth* (rice flour paste) for white colour.

The use of strokes and lines indicates the second stage. Most refined forms of *mughathezhuthu* such as, *koyipu* and *sangumvalum* were evolved in this stage. Instead of turmeric and quicklime, the

Malayan used *manela* (for yellow colour) and *chayiliyam* (red colour) for colouring the face in this second stage.

The *Bairavan teyyam* of Payyanur region uses *thepu* design on the face, but the Malayans used *kurangirutham*, another form of *mughathezhuthu*, for the same *teyyam* in the Payangadi region. This is an ideal example that reveals the modification of facial writings.

Mughapala (Mask)

Pallath quotes Moore,

In Malinesia extending from New guinea to the Solomons and out to Fiji people make extensive use of masks...They have also been used for religious experience, as a powerful medium of mediating to the people the over-powering reality of the sacred world. Masks also used as a means of transformation. In the most general sense a mask is a disguise which covers the wearer and there by conceals or transforms his identity. (1995:68)

We find use of masks even in *teyyams*. *Pottan teyyam* and *Gulikan* wear facemask known as, *mughapala* lieu of *mughathzhuthu*. Generally, the masks are made of *pala* (spathe of the areca palm) or, cardboard by drawing certain patterns. Some times *Gulikan teyyam* uses *mugham* (designed bronze masks), instead of *mughapala*. *Madayilchāmundi* and *Vishnumūrthi* use a temporary mask called, *moghompidi* (designed face of pig) during some rituals.

Chandrakala (half-moon) and Trikannu (third eye)

Female goddesses and incarnations of Lord Siva use *chandrakala* made of silver, bronze or, gold. Nowadays, all the *teyyams* wear

chandrakala on their forehead. The informants said that *chandrakala* is used as a symbol of moon.

Trikannu is used by the incarnation of Siva. It is made of silver, gold or, bronze. It symbolically represents the third eye of Siva. The performer wears it on the forehead.

Poikannu and Olikannu (pseudo eyes)

Pseudo eye, *poikannu*, made of silver, bronze or, softwood also is used by *teyyams* like, *Uchakuttichathan*, *Karimkuttichathan*, *Pukuttichathan*, *Bairavan* etc., as their eyes. In southern part of North Malabar, *Karimkuttichathan* and *Kandakarnan* use *olikkannu* made of softwood.

Egiru (fang)

Egiru made of silver or, bronze is also adorned by some female *teyyams*. *Karuval* and *Kalakatu Raktheswary* use *egiru* (fang), as one of their ingredients of facial decoration.

Tadi (beared) and Meesa (moustach)

White and black artificial beard and moustache is used for certain *teyyam* performance. The Malayan uses *tadi* in place of beard and *meesa* in place of moustache during performance. The types of beard can be divided into *kuttytadi* and *balantadi* or *thukutadi*. *Balantadi* or *thukutadi* is an elongated one, and *kuttytadi* is short in nature. However, *Pukuttichathan* wears white *kuttytadi* and *meesa*, while *Karimkuttichathan* uses black *balantadi* and *meesa*. The white colour indicates old age, and the black, young age.

Mudi (head gear)

In addition to *talachamayam*, most of the *teyyams* use *mudi* (headgear). It is of different size and shape. The length of *mudi* ranges from small to very huge. The length of a huge *mudi* extends up to 10-15 metres. Different *teyyams* wear different kinds of *mudi*. The long and huge ones have simple structure, and the shape is almost triangular. Certain *teyyams* such as, *Kandakarnan*, *Kammadathamma*, and *Gulikan tira (Thekan Gulikan)* wear this kind of *mudi*. The average ones have circular, semicircular or, triangular shape, and are more refined in form. The *mudi* of *Karuval*, *Kalakattu Raktheswary*, *Uchitta*, *Bairavan*, *Uchakuttichathan*, *Pukuttichathan*, *Kudiveeran* etc., comes under this category. The most complicated and refined forms are small, and circular in shape. *Vishnumūrti*, *Madayilchāmundi*, and *Rakthachāmundi* wear this kind of headgear.

Generally, the Malayan uses natural materials such as, areca nut palm, bamboo, bough of coconut palm, red cloth, light and soft wood planks, and tender coconut leaves for making *mudi*. Except the red cloth, the other materials are cheap, and are easily available in North Malabar. Further, the Malayans largely exploit the local environment for obtaining *tiri* (tender coconut leaves), *muriku* (a kind of light and soft wood plant), *kāvungu* (areca nut palm), etc.

Pottan teyyam and *Gulikan* wear specially designed *koyola* as *mudi*, which is made up of tender coconut leaves. *Uchitta* and *Kuttichāttan* in and the adjacent places of Payyanur village of Kannur district also use *Topparam* and *sabari mudi*, made of tender coconut leaves. *Madayilchāmundi* uses *thalamalika* as its *mudi*, made of coconut leaves. All these are small and circular in shape.

Usually a single *teyyam* wears only one *mudi*. A few exceptions are also seen. *Kammadathamma*, *Neelamkaichāmundi*, and

Adurchāmundi use temporary headgear known as, *yetumudi* (additional *mudi*) in addition to the permanent one during certain stages of the ritual performance. It is removed after a short while.

My study on the headgear decorations of *teyyam* reveals the fact that it has undergone different stages of development. At first, the Malayan used natural materials, flowers and leaves that were easily and cheaply obtainable from his surroundings. The increased use of clothes has given a new dimension to the headgear. In the third and last stage of development, artificial materials like plastic, decorative papers, paints, etc. are used. Gold is also used.

Table: III.1 Developmental Stages of Headgear

Devl. Stages	Materials Used	
Stage I	Natural materials	<i>Ola</i> (Leaves) <i>Poo</i> (Flowers) <i>Maram</i> (Wood), etc.
Stage II	Cloths	<i>Thuni</i> <i>Pattu</i>
Stage III	Materials sold from market	Beeds Plastics Paper Paint, etc.

This development of *teyyam* headgear decoration may throw light on the shift, a syndrome, of human being's culture, 'self sufficiency to market and independence to dependence'.

Hand Decoration

In each hand, the Malayan adorns two kinds of *vala* (wooden bangles) namely, *tandavala* (three in number) on the upper arm and *munkaivala* (two in number) on the forearm. *Kadakam*, a wooden ornament is worn on the wrist. *Kaithanda*, made of ixora flower is worn on either side of *thandavala* and *munkaivala*, *kadakam* and *chudam*. A bronze ornament called, *chudam* is worn below *kadakam*. Sometimes, *chudam* is also made of silver. *Olanagham* or *nagham*, made of *kuruthola*, is also adorned by some *teyyams* like, *Vishnumūrthi*, *Pottan*, *Gulikan* etc. Female *teyyams* such as, *Madayilchāmundi*, *Rakthachāmundi*, and *Panchuruli* never use it. The Malayan uses pseudo fingernails of silver during the performance of *Vishnumūrthi teyyam*. They use the same term *nagham* to refer fingernails. All the above said pieces of hand decorations are worn over *kaikudu*, a cloth covering of hand.

Leg decoration (Kakaru)

On the legs, the Malayan wears three kinds of ornaments namely, *patumpadam*, *chilambu*, and *manikayla* made of bronze. They use the term *kakaru* to refer these ornaments. *Patumpadam*, a specially designed ornament is worn just above the jingling anklet, *chilambu*. *Manikayla*, an ornament with strings of jingling bells, is adorned above the *patumpadam*, and below the knee.

Body Decoration

From neck to the waist the Malayan performer uses different forms of body decorations. On the neck, the *teyyam* of Malayan wears *kazhuthilkettu*, *charattumala*, *powam*, and *vanamala*. *Kazhuthilkettu* and *carattumala* are made up of softwood, and beautified by glittering paper. *Powam* is a special kind of necklace. The *vanamala*

(garland) is made by a combination of differently coloured decorative papers, one by one in a peculiar fashion.

All the *teyyams*, however, do not use the above-mentioned ornaments. *Teyyams* such as, *Vishnumūrthi*, and *Madayilchāmundi* wear all of them. *Pottan teyyam*, and *Gulikan* never use *powam*, *charattumala*, and garlands. They only use *kazhuthilkettu*. Instead of other forms of body decoration, *Pottan teyyam*, *Gulikan*, *Uchakutty* and *Pukuttichathan*, *Bairavan* etc., smear white coloured *arichanthu* (rice flour made into a paste with water) all over the exposed body between the neck and the waist. But *Bairavan*, in southern part of north Malabar, wears *aiaram*, a specially designed body decoration, which covers the whole body from the neck to the waist. While *marum-mulayum* is used as the pseudo breast for the performance of *Uchitta* in the Payyanur region, and *aiaram* is used in Thalassery area.

Using of pseudo breast is also prevalent. *Marum-mulayum*, *molaru* or *kuthumula*, pseudo bosom of woman, made of softwood is used by female *teyyams*. *Uchitta*, *Karuval*, and *kalakatu Raktheswary* use *marum-mulayum*, while *Madayilchāmundi*, *Rakthachāmundi*, *Muvalamkuzhichāmundi*, and *Panchuruli* use *molaru*. During the performance of *Kurathi teyyam* the Malayan wears symbolic breasts by using designed coconut shells called, *kuthumula*. In some big centres of worship the performers used to wear pseudo bosoms made of bronze, which was offered by devotees in return of remedy received by the respective *teyyams*.

Karimkuttichathan appears with black *pulli* (dot) on the chest and abdomen. On the chest of *Vishnumūrthi*, and *Gulikan teyyam* the Malayan symbolically draws *sreevalsam* and *sulam*, respectively with *mashi* (charcoal).

The wearing in waist and loin region varies from *teyyam* to *teyyam*. These include *porathattu*, *aroda*, *chatta*, *arakettu*, and *aduku*. *Purathattu* is big and circular in form, and is worn on the dorsal (back) side of the performer, fixed on the waist. This is basically made of carved tender coconut leaves, and beautified by *pakkam* (made of softwood) and *peelithazha* (made by the feather of peacock). Female *teyyams* such as, *Madayilchāmundi*, *Rakthachāmundi*, *Muvalamkuzhichāmundi*, *Panchuruli* and *kavidiyanganath Raktheswary* have been using *purathattu*. Male *teyyam* never uses *purathattu*. *Arakettu* is made of softwood planks. *Madayilchāmundi*, *Rakthachāmundi*, *Muvalamkuzhichāmundi* etc., wear *arakettu*. *Aroda* or *arayuda* is also worn by female *teyyams*. It is made of *kuruthola*. *Raktheswary*, *Karuval*, and *Uchitta* wear *aroda*. The male *teyyam*, *Vishnumūrthi* and its version *Ottakōlam*, wear *aroda*. The informers told me that *Vishnumūrthi* is the only male *teyyam* that wears *aroda*. *Karimkuttichāthan* wears *chatta* on the waist. It is made of soft wood and *chopu pāttu* (red cloth). *Aduku* is another kind of wearing made of specially engraved softwood. *Bairavan*, *Pukuty*, *Uchakuttichathan*, and *Kudiveeran teyyam* use this kind of *aniyalam*.

Dress (uduppu)

Kuruthola (tender coconut leaves) and *chopu pattu* (red cloth) are extensively used in different styles and forms as the dress of *teyyam*. *Oli* made of *kuruthola* is used by *Pottan teyyam*, *Pulamarutan*, *Pulachāmundi*, *Gulikan*, *Thekan Gulikan*, *Vishnumūrthi*, and *Ottakōlam*. In the case of *teyyam*, who wears clothes as dress, certain peculiar kind of pattern in wearing is prevalent. *Oli*, *Chuttum kettum*, *vithanathara*, and *velimban* are included in this style of wearing. The *tōttam* of *teyyam* uses *chuttumkettum*. *Muthappan* and *Uchitta* in the northern sides of Kasaragod district use *chuttumkettum*. *Karimkuttichathan* wears *vithanathara*, and others

such as, *Muvalamkuzhichamundi*, *Panchuruli*, *Kavidiyanganath Raktheswary*, *Kalakattu Raktheswary*, *Bairavan*, *Pukutty*, and *Uchakuttichathan*, and *Kudiveeran* wear *velimban* as their dress.

Madayilchāmundi and *Rakthachāmundi* wear either *oli* or, *velimban* in accordance with their importance of worship. *Uchitta* in southern parts uses *oli*, and that in northern side wears *chuttumkettum*. The style of wearing, and the materials used to make dress reveals certain stages in the development of *teyyam*. In the beginning when the people were 'primitive' and dependent on nature, they used coconut leaves as their dress. In the next stage of development, the Malayans used plain clothes as their *teyyam* dress. It was only in the subsequent period folded-clothes were introduced.

Table: III.2 Developmental Stages of Teyyam Dress

Devl. Stages	Materials Used	Pattern or Style of Wearing	Examples of Teyyam
Ist Stage	Coconut leaves	<i>Oli</i>	<i>Pottan teyyam</i> <i>Vishnumurthi</i> <i>Gulikan</i> , etc.
IInd Stage	Cloth	<i>Chuttum Kettum</i>	<i>Tottam of teyyams</i> , <i>Muthappan</i> <i>Uchitta</i> , etc.
IIIrd Stage	Folded Cloth	<i>Velimban</i>	<i>Bairavan</i> <i>Kudiveeran</i> <i>Uchakuttichathan</i> <i>Pukuttichathan</i> , etc.

Typology of Teyyam

Teyyam performance is directly linked to the worldview, and the belief-system of the people. More than 300 to 500 different forms of

teyyams are performed all over North Malabar. According to the informants, the number of *teyyam* is only *onnu kuraya nalpathu*, meaning one less than 40, i.e., basically the number is 39. A few others believe that there is only *onnurunalpathu teyyams*, that is 140 different forms. In this context, I would like to add that *teyyam* is an external manifestation of the inner nature. Durant Drake's words are meaningful in this context:

This disposition of the heart and will, through which man comes to care for the highest things and to live in gentleness and inward calm above the surface aspects and accidents of life, we call it its inner nature, spiritually; when it is embodied in outward forms and institutions and spread among the whole communities.

(cit. Mahapatra 1985:3,4)

The ultimate aim of *teyyam* performance is to raise the life of man, and the nature of society to a higher and noble level. Since, *teyyam* is an ancient form, it also depicts the elements of animism, animatism and nature worship. We can classify *teyyam* on the symbolic basis of sex, and according to the myth of origin and *tōttam pāttu* in particular. We can classify *teyyam* on the basis of sex into *annteyyam* (male), and *pennteyyam* (female). The females, also known as *ammateyyam*, are the dominant ones, at least in number.

The two general divisions have several classes in terms of myth of origin, and *tōttam pāttu*. Accordingly, there are five categories namely, God and Goddess, Ancestors, Hero and Heroine, Spirit and Devils, and Nature and Animals.

Table: III.3 List of Male and Female Teyyams Performed by Malayan

Sex	
Male	Female
<i>POTTAN TEYYAM</i>	<i>MADAYILCHĀMUNDI</i>
<i>VISHNUMŪRTHI</i>	<i>RAKTHACHĀMUNDI</i>
<i>OTTAKŌLAM</i>	<i>MUVALAMKUZHICHĀMUNDI</i>
<i>BAIRAVAN</i>	<i>KALAKATTURAKTHESWARY</i>
<i>KARIMKUTTICHATHAN</i>	<i>KAVADIYANGANATH-</i>
<i>PUKUTTICHATHAN</i>	<i>RAKTHESWARY</i>
<i>UCHAKUTTYCHATHAN</i>	<i>KRUVALAMMA</i>
<i>KANDAKARNAN</i>	<i>UCHITTA</i>
<i>GULIKAN</i>	<i>PULACHAMUNDI</i>
<i>THEKANGULIKAN</i>	<i>KAMMADATHAMMA</i>
<i>PULAMARUTHAN</i>	<i>ADURCHĀMUNDI</i>
<i>MUTHAPPAN</i>	<i>VASURIMALA</i>
<i>KUDIVEERAN</i>	<i>ERICHUDALA</i>
<i>PATTAR</i>	<i>KURATI</i>
<i>KULI TEYYAM</i>	<i>PANCHURULI</i>
	<i>NEELAMKAICHĀMUNDI</i>

God and Goddess

A large number of Malayan's *teyyam* falls under this class. Gods and goddesses of the Hindu mythology, as well as local deities, are worshiped through this form. Incarnations of Goddess *Parvathi*, and Lord *Vishnu* and *Siva* are worshiped as *teyyam*. *Madayilchāmundi*, *Rakthachāmundi*, *Vishnumūrthi*, *Pottan teyyam*, and *Bairavan* are some examples.

Ancestors

The people of North Malabar are also practitioners of ancestor worship, and they do believe in soul and immortality. Chakravarthy opines that,

We mean, not an existence in any form losing the personal point of view, but a personal immortality in which the present focus of consciousness is retained and the existence here gets is a real continuation of the personality which was in the process of being shaped and moulded in a definite manner on this earth. (cit. Mahapatra 1985:33)

This view can be taken to endorse the belief of the people of North Malabar. Among the people of this area, a common belief is prevalent, according to which, “getting success in all actions of man must need the blessing of ancestors.” Therefore, ancestor worship in the form of *teyyam* is not rare. For example, the people of North Malabar worship their dead ancestors’ souls by performing *Kudiveeran teyyam*.

Spirit

The worship of spirits and dead souls of those who had unnatural deaths is familiar in *teyyam* performance. The invisible and super human powers and evil spirits, and ghosts are also worshiped through *teyyam* performance. *Erichudala* is a versification of cemetery ghost. The dead soul of unnatural death is performed by *Kuli teyyam*. *Pattar* is performed after the immature death of a *pattar* (a high caste person) by wrath of a *teyyam*. *Kandakarnan* and *Pulamaruthan*, who are the versions of the assistants to God Siva, are worshiped as *teyyam* through performce at many sacred centres.

Nature and Animals

In the past, human beings worshipped the nature and animals. They worshipped stones, hills, trees, forests and animals. People believed that these were the abodes of super-human powers. In this connection, they attributed sacredness to groves, and preserved the *kāvu* (grove) as sacred. Animal worship is an inevitable part of *teyyam* performance, and it is indicated by the symbolic representations of tiger, lion, leopard, pig, snake, etc. Basically *teyyams* such as, *Vishnumūrthi* and *Madayilchāmundi* fall under this category, and these *teyyams* represent the worship of tiger/leopard, and pig, respectively.

Heroes and Heroines

Most of the human societies all round the world practise hero worship. It is an ancient custom. It was one of the important characteristics of the 'primitive' culture. Heroes showed extraordinary courage, and power and were honoured through worship and tales. The heroes, who fought against inhuman activities, social injustices and improper behaviour were respected, remembered and worshipped through *teyyam*. The same is true even at present. *Karimkuttichathan*, *Uchitta*, and *Muthappan* are some examples. *Pottan teyyam*, and *Vishnumūrthi* also come under this category. *Vishnumūrthi* communicates a tale of its rage against feudalism, while *Pottan teyyam* tells a story of a Pulayan's brave fight against 'untouchability' and 'pollution'.

We can also classify *teyyam* into two broad categories namely, local deities and deities of Hindu pantheon, as per the believe-system and religious feelings.

Table: III.4 List of Local Deities and Hindu Deities Performed by Malayan

Local Deity	Hindu deity
POTTAN TEYYAM	
MUVALAMKUZHICHĀMUNDI	
KARIMKUTTICHATHAN	
PUKUTTICHATHAN	
UCHAKUTTYCHATHAN	MADAYILCHĀMUNDI
GULIKAN	
THEKANGULIKAN	RAKTHACHĀMUNDI
PULAMARUTHAN	
NEELAMKAICHĀMUNDI	VISHNUMŪRTHI
ERICHUDALA	
KURATI	OTTAKŌLAM
KALAKATTURAKTHESWARY	
KAVADIYANGANATH-	BAIRAVAN
RAKTHESWARY	
KRUVALAMMA	KANDAKARNAN
UCHITTA	
PULACHAMUNDI	VASURIMALA
KAMMADATHAMMA	
ADURCHĀMUNDI	PANCHURULI
MUTHAPPAN	
KUDIVEERAN	
PATTAR	
KULI TEYYAM	

Kalagam (Dance)

According to Kishore Jadav,

Dance may be very ancient and they may have grown out of creative inspiration, and they continue to sprout from the imagination of individuals and groups, people of all classes who sense the traditions and the aspirations of their environment. In the Indian sub-continent, such forms have survived whose origins can be traced back to pre-historic times and places. The buoyant tenacity with which the dance forms have continued. (1998:11,12)

His view can be taken as a proof for the *teyyam* antiquity as well as the imaginative nature of those, who were responsible of the origin and development of *teyyam*. The people of North Malabar use the term *kalasam* or *āttam* in place of dance. *Kalasam* or *āttam* is an integral part of *teyyam*. The performers still continue old forms of *Kalasam*. Various forms of *teyyam* are performed, executing different foot works, on different occasions of performance. Among them, *vilāttam*, *eduthekalāsam*, *asurāttam*, *thekanāttam*, and *kudiyāttam* are famous. The assistants play specific rhythms (*talam*) on drums. The performance does not allow making changes in these basic rhythms.

Use of Musical Instruments

During *teyyam* performance, a variety of musical instruments are employed. *Chenda* (drum), *thudi* (drum), *thakil* (drum), *madhalam* (drum), *cherangalam* (gong), *elathalam* (cymbal), *kombu* (conch), and *cheenikkuzhal* (pipe) are the most frequently used musical instruments. Out of these, the Malayan uses *chenda* (drum), *thakil* (drum), *elathalam* (cymbal), and *cheenikkuzhal* (short pipe).

The *chenda*, *cheenikkuzhal* and *elathalam* are the most popular instruments. They make use of two kinds of *chenda* namely, *valanthala chenda* and *edanthala chenda*. The steps of dancing are performed in accordance with the beatings on the drum. The drummer plays notes on *valanthala chenda*, and it is accompanied by *edanthala chenda*. It gives these notes certain rhythms. *Thakil* is a large sized *edanthala chenda*. Usually, it is not used everywhere. It is used only in big and important sacred centres. The *elathalam* is used along with *chenda*, and *cheenikkuzhal*, and which is not so essential but, enrich the atmosphere. At least two drums, a *valanthala* and an *edanthala chenda* are very essential for a performance. Sometimes,

in a *perumkaliyāttam* the number of *chendas* exceeds ten. Blowing of pipe was also essential in the past but, the lack of blowing experts now limits the use of *cheenikuzhal* only to certain important occasion. The drummer is called *chendakkaran* or *vadyakkaran*, and the interesting fact is that even the other musicians who play *kuzhal*, *thakil* and *elathalam* are also called as, *vadyakkar/chendakkar*.

In *teyyam* performance, both instrumental and vocal music are very essential. Different forms of *talam* (rhythm) are used, during the performance of *kalasam*, on instruments such as, drum, pipe and cymbal. The music produced by these instruments creates a tempting atmosphere during performance. *Tōttam pāttu* (chant), the vocal music, also gives *teyyam* a chanting effect.

Weapons (Ayudham)

Commonly the weapons are considered as symbols of protection as well as distinction. The weapons are treated as an integral part of *teyyam* because, the people believe that they represent their deities who are considered as both the creator and the destroyer. Stones, weapons etc., are not taken as mere symbols of deities. They believe that the deities dwell or, rather are embodied, so that the weapons are regarded as symbols of respective deities.

Various kinds of weapons are used during *teyyam* performance. *Churika* (double-edged sword), *pallival* (sword), *kathi* (sickle), *sulam* (trident), *villu* (bow), *ambu* (arrow), *chural* (cane stick), etc are some examples. Each *teyyam* has its own principal weapon. Moreover, the weapon indicates the character of *teyyam*. The war and hunting deities (eg. *Vishnumūrthi*, and *Muthappan*) take bow and arrows. The village deities possess swords, as a reflection of their protective function (eg. *Madayilchāmundi*, and *Rakthachāmundi*). The agrarian deities (eg. *Kurathi* and *Pottan teyyam*) take sickles as their weapons.

Offerings (*Muthircha*)

The people of North Malabar use the locally available materials as their items of offering. Traditionally, the offering includes *ari* (rice), *nellu* (paddy), *aval* (flakes of rice), *malar* (fried rice), *pazham* (ripe plantain fruit), *thenga* (coconut), *elaneer* (tender coconut), *vellam* (water), *unaku* (dried fish), *irachi* (meat), and *kalesam* (toddy and arrack or other liquor).

Various norms and rules are observed in the case of offerings. The arrangement of offerings inside the sanctum sanctorum before the sacred objects is called *muthircha*. The offerings are placed in two rows on separate *kodeela* (a piece of plantain leaf). In a row, half kg of rice, 250gm of *aval* and 50gm of *malar* are placed on separate *kodeelas* namely, *arikkodeela* and *malarkodeela*. This is repeated in the second row also. A *thenga* (coconut) is placed on the *arikkodeela* (leaf with rice), and one *elaneer* (tender coconut) is placed on each *malarkodeela* (plantain leaf with *aval* and *malar*). A *niranazhi* (1 kg of paddy and 0.25 kg of rice are arranged in a peculiar fashion in two vessels, one above the other), and *cherupazaham* (ripe plantain fruit) is also offered. Water is placed in *kindi* (a vessel). *Kalesam* (both arrack and toddy), and *gursi* (of red or black) are considered as unavoidable offerings in the case of *Pottan teyyam*. Soon after the completion of *thudangal*, *töttam* and *teyyam*, the second row of offerings along with *niranazhi* is given to the performers. And it will replace new ones.

The people also arrange offerings on the courtyard on the northern side (*vadakken bagham*). The offerings are arranged in a splendidly designed structure called, *kaliyambally* made of *vazhapola* (stem of plantain) and it is fixed by *kothiri* (a half-meter long stick with flame at the tip). An *arikkodeela*, *malarkodeela* and one *kodeela* each of

naithyachoru (boiled rice) and *pancha* (mixture of five boiled grain), coconut, tender coconut and ripe fruit of plantain, are offered in *kaliyambally*. A *niranazhi*, *gurusi* (red or black), and *kalesam* (both arrack and toddy) are offered. *Kaliyambally* is offered only during *teyyam*. The performers take all the items placed in *kaliyambally* after the performance. Fowl is also sacrificed.

The devotees offer cash during the period of *kurikodukkal*. They give according to their ability. This offering too goes to the performer. If the devotees offer gold or silver, usually it goes to the wealth of the sacred centre. Some times, the devotee offer *kallu* (toddy) or *raku* (arrack), *pal* (milk), *karikku* (tender coconut), *ari* (rice), *puda* or *mundu* (cloth), *kozhi* (fowl), *ādu* (goat), *vilakku* (lamp) and *āyudham* (weapon). The people also offer the symbols of *thottilum kunjiyum* (cradle and child), *kannu* (eyes) etc.

Sacred Centres

A traveller is able to see various sacred centres (*Sthanam*) of *teyyam* throughout North Malabar. Some are similar in appearance, and some vary in size, shape and structure. Among them, *kāvu*, *palliyara*, and *taravādu* have special mention. The primitive people depended on nature, very much, and that healthy relationship between nature and man resulted in the emergence of sacred centres. In that period, man had close contact with local surroundings particularly, with hills, forests and trees. The custom of worshipping Nature, due to their love for it, gave a ground to observe certain natural objects such as the hills and the forests, as the abode of deities. This attitude laid down the foundation for the emergence of symbolic sacred centres in the form of *kāvu*. The centres are considered to be the centre of the world. In such centres the men/devotees come in direct contact with his sacred deity. The

specially arranged objects like stone or heap of stones, and weapons, symbolically represent the presence of deities. And through performance of *teyyam* he can pay homage, as well as see the respective deities he worships. The sacred centre, *kāvu*, has trees in plenty, and the people honour the trees by offering food, shelter and protection to them. Here, I reminded the following words of Eliade,

The tree can of course, become a symbol of universe, and in that form we find it in more developed civilizations, but to a primitive religious mind, the tree is the universe and it is so because it reproduces and as it were, sums it up as well as 'symbolizing' it. (cit. Pallath 1995:133,134)

In these centres, stones or weapons are supposed to represent the presence of local deities, which are placed in such a manner under certain trees. Usually, the trees like *kara* (a thorny shrub), *kanjiram* (*Strychnos nux vomica*), *champakam* (Cempakam tree), *alu* (*Ficus bengalensis*), *arayalu* (*Ficus religiosa*), *pala* (*Alstonia scholaris*), *puli* (*Tamarindus indica*), *pilavu* (*Artocarpus integrifolia*) etc., are considered as holy ones.

Anthropologically speaking, the preservation of sacred groves demonstrates a latent motif, the conservation of nature. It comes through the custom of worshipping deities, who are supposed to be present in the *kāvu*. The village forests of this area unfold the dimensions of the activities of the 'primitive' people. They understand and interpret the importance of maintaining environmental equilibrium. Therefore, their customs and rituals have, indeed, high degree of survival value. So, the words of Freeman, who studied on the *kāvu* in Kerala, can be quoted here:

Physically, the kavu is a piece of garden or forestland, but currently what defines it is that it is dedicated for the exclusive use of particular deities. In this capacity, the groves usually adjoin or are a short distance from an associated structural temple or shrine, though sometimes the structure may be within the kavu itself, and in such case there need be no connection with structures beyond the grove's confines. (cit. Kalam 2001:18)

The people, later on, started to worship in new centres, where the deities were installed under a single tree. Parallel to the emergence of this kind of sacred centres, the sacredness of stones and heap of stones has given way to establish *tara* (elevated platform) in the form of new kind of centres of worship. Along with these new trends, the people also worshipped their deities in houses, and in *taravādus*. Such worship-spots or rooms are known as, *kottil*. Soon after the assimilation of *teyyam* into the Hindu belief system, many of their worship-spots have been converted into 'temples', commonly called as, *palliyara* (permanent holy chamber of *teyyam* constructed according to the Sanskritised architectural model). The chamberisation of *kāvu*, *tara*, *kottil*, and other sacred centers to *palliyara* has been a continuing process.

Table: III.5 Evolution of Sacred Centres

Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV
<i>Kāvu</i> (Grove)	<i>Maram</i> (Tree)	<i>Kottil</i> (Room)	<i>Palliyara/ Ara</i> (Holy chamber)
<i>Kallu</i> (Stone)	<i>Tara</i> (Platform)		

A close observation and study of the sacred centres reveal the visible difference between various centers. This difference, in fact, shows the

evolutionary phases of progress. As said earlier, people considered the groves, stones, and heap of stones as sacred centres. This reflects cohesion between nature and culture. The planting of a tree, and the construction of *tara*, as sacred centres has taken place in the second phase. This was done during the conversional stage, from that of wandering life to semi-settled one. In the third phase, along with the social stratification by caste and creed, people placed their deities in special rooms (*kottil*). This appeared in tune with their altered life style, the style of settled life. The construction of holy chamber, *palliyara/ara*, as architectural models of Sanskritized temples, had been prevalent in the fourth stage of evolution. The high castes sensibly encouraged the construction of *palliyara* to legitimate their political interests. The general direction of such an activity was believed to take the norms of the Vedic spirits, and ultimately kindle and serve them.

Each sacred centre will have either a single deity or, a chief deity in the group of some sub-deities. A sub-deity of a sacred centre may be the chief deity of another centre. Usually, a sacred place will have only one centre. However, exceptions are also there. Instances are there for sacred places having more than one sacred centre, where the main deity is found at one spot, and the sub-deities at other spots. The *teyyakkazhakam* occupies a high position over other sacred centres. A *kazhakam* has some rights over the lower centres. In connection with a performance at the *kazhakam*, the lower centres have to perform some rituals. *Kalavaraniakkal* is such a custom, in which small sacred centres supply food items to prepare festive feast.

After the introduction of caste system, the sacred centres were divided. And as the result, each caste has its own sacred place. The sacred centre of the Pulayan is called, *Köttam*. The Vaniya communities conduct and worship their *teyyams* in *Muchilodu*. The

people who belong to the Maniyani caste worship in *Kannangadu*. Other castes separately worship their own deities at various centres such as, *palliyara*, *ara*, *sthanam*, *k vu*, and *kottil*. The Brahmins have their deities in *mantrasala*.

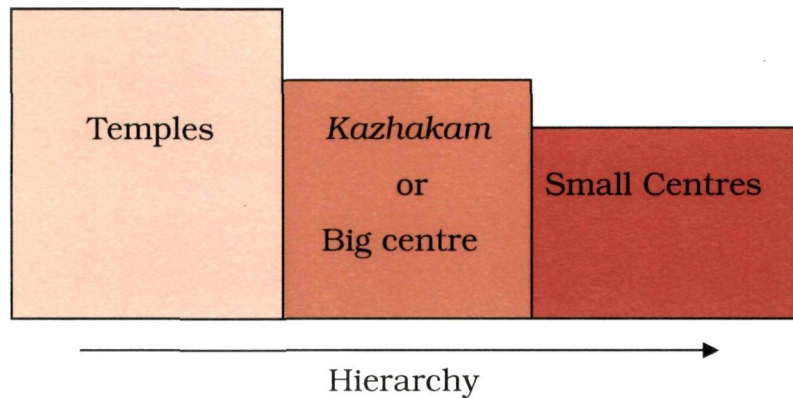


Figure III.1 Hierarchy of Sacred Centers

Teyya kazhakam and the big centres of worship are placed under temples. Small centres like, sacred groves (*k vu*), and all other centres of *teyyam*, are placed at the lowest level of this political set up. By introducing this system, the high caste people cleverly seize the power and control over the low castes. Under such a favourable situation the upper classes create boundaries around themselves in order to consolidate their sectarian advantages.

Ecology of Teyyam

According to Jullian H. Steward,

Not all features of a given habitat, ecology, are relevant to a given socio cultural system, nor all systemic elements, i.e. religion, politics, technology, and kinship, etc are equally affected by man-habitat interaction.

(cit. Upadhyay and Pandey 1955:76)

So also in the case of *teyyam*, ecology plays a vital role. As said earlier, the interaction network between human beings and environment produces *teyyam*. The habitat, and culture of the people of North Malabar depended heavily on environment for their survival. The interaction gave shape to new institutions and adaptations that were necessary for different situations. This kind of dependence on environment, at present, has effects on all aspects of socio-cultural sphere. The dependence, in fact, emerges as an interlocking system. In the past, the people looked upon the surroundings as their natural environment, and started depending on it. This enforced the growth of certain features that moulded the society, and culture. Obviously, this dependency syndrome does not allow them to destroy nature but, forces to preserve it. The environment acts as a multifaceted resource, and contributes to the subsistence and survival. This had led to nature-worship, offering the deities a chance to reside and perform in every nook and corner. In this regard, they come forward to preserve *kāvu* as the traditional sacred centre of *teyyam* performance. In addition, the stories about practices like hunting, gathering, pastoralism and agriculture definitely reveal the degree of subsistence and survival. For example, the *tottam pattu* of *kuttychathan teyyam* runs like this, “*ezhala kaliyundalo Kalakaderku, akali maiponae kayariduvonae*” (a Brahmin known as *Kalakadar* have seven cattle-shed full of cattle, and these cattle are grassed by him, *Kuttychathan*). This lay open the then prevalent pastoralism.

The environment also offers enough materials for *teyyam* performance. The people exploit their local surroundings for this purpose. All the costumes, attires and other items, including those of offerings, are copious and cheap. Moreover, the greenish atmosphere of North Malabar has given beauty and attraction to the *teyyam* performance. The increasing influence of the market changed the

traditional set up of environment exploitation. The interaction patterns will remain as much the same but, the scale of dependence on nature diminishes. Thus, the bond between nature and human beings, nature-man interaction, becomes feeble day by day. This alteration in socio-cultural milieu necessarily and essentially shifts the people's perspective on nature in general, and sacred centers (*kāvu*) in particular.

Looking into the life and culture of North Malabar, the world of spirits is found to have a very close interaction with man, his social structure, and the natural environments. It has long been established that ecology plays a vital role in conditioning the culture of a given area, and that the geographical situation of a locale goes a long way in shaping the needs, customs, behaviour and thoughts of the people. Redfield opines that,

Both man and nature are the twin-agents of the perennial revolution that shapes and reshapes the face of the earth.

(1955)

Vidyarthi's concept of 'nature-man-spirit complex' (1963), provides a sharp tool in understanding and describing the cultural matrix of North Malabar, particularly *teyyam* and its allied field. Morab in his essay points out that Vidyarthi develops the 'nature-man-spirit complex',

Precisely, the concept states that Nature, i.e., forest economy, *khallu* (shifting) cultivation, Man (social system), and Spirit (gossaiyan) all form a complex and are mutually interrelated with each other. (cit. Vidyarthi 1981:127)

Accordingly, the present study discovered that every movement of *teyyam* performance was profoundly influenced by nature, on the one hand, and spirit, on the other.

North Malabar experiences three main seasons in a year, the cold, rainy, and the hot. The pond, gullies, channels, rivers, and dales act as best reservoirs of water. The Monsoon renders good supply of water. The area consists of hilly uplands, valleys, forests and rivers. Most of the mountainous regions are covered with a thick forest. The forests provide in abundance with food, fuel, materials for building houses, medicines, and so on. Therefore, in past, the economy of the people pivots around the forests.

Inspite of restriction on hunting and gathering, they are still considering the forests to be their own, since they have been living away and around it, and are associated with it for generations. For them, *kadu* (forest) is not only the source of food, drink, house building materials etc., but also the abode of their patron spirits. Such is the attachment of the people towards the forest that they preserve a 'part of the forest', sacred grove, *kavu* in some places, and assign it to be the abode of their local deity, *teyyam*. Under no circumstances is such grove to be cut by any body. In this regard, the following words of Kalam are enlightening:

The usual refrain is that sacred groves have been preserved on behalf of gods/goddesses/deities and for generations people have restrained themselves from denuding these forest patches. Such restraints have been exercised due to the fear of the wrath of the concerned god/goddess/deity. Hence sacred groves have remained, more often than not, in virgin, climax forms without human interventions.

(2001:12)

The society of North Malabar is highly organized into family, clan, caste and religion, and though the functioning units have exhibited a close relationship between man and man, and the supernatural, through a set of symbolic actions, and rituals associated with belief.

It is noted that besides its normal social function the family forges a link with the supernatural at every turning point in the life of its individual members, and also during the different phases of socio-economic efforts. Such liaison is established through the performance of *teyyam* or, appropriate rituals. The individual, family, clan, caste and religion or, the whole societies of North Malabar seeks the protection of the spirit world from drought, crop failure, misfortune and epidemic etc., through worship and performance of *teyyam* with a sense of liability and guilty. The people are very god-fearing and every moment of their lives is guided and controlled by supernatural powers; i.e., 'spirits', worshiped in the form of *teyyam*.

Demonstrating the close association between nature and man, the movements of the people is strictly controlled. Even though it has lost its significance, the caste people permit only members of the same group or 'upper caste' to enter their houses. The members of 'low castes' are never permitted to visit the sacred places of the 'upper caste'. Moreover, the people of the 'low caste' are not permitted to touch the 'upper caste' people. The society forces the people to obey the 'purity' and 'pollution' rules. They believe that the violation of these rules and practices will earn the rage of the super natural. It seems that these spirits play a major role in deciding the life and destiny of the people.

This further helps the cohesion of the caste members through the involvement of the supernatural, and helps to maintain the society its caste feelings. In contrast with this pattern of interaction, the North Malabar society exhibits a high level of interaction within the family, clan and community. In the family there is a close interaction based on blood, mutual affection and respect. The children are loved, nourished and protected by their parents, who consider them to be

supernatural blessings. The relationships are of two ways, usually of consanguinial, and affinal.

Marriages are contracted through different methods. Within the process of contracting the marriage, nature and spirits play a dominant role at different levels. The interaction is observed through the maintenance of social and spiritual discipline, brought through the marriage regulations. The rules and regulations of the marriage contribute for the socio-political, as well as the religious cohesion through a great degree of interaction between the members. Every body believes that all these interactions are always under the watchful eye of the supernatural, the god (local deities), and ancestral spirits (*guru karanavanmar*), who will take offence as soon as the normative code of conduct is broken, and inflict supernatural punishment. Such involvements of the spirit-supernatural, at the level of the social order have been responsible in stabilizing the society and maintaining its traditions.

As soon as a woman comes to know that she is conceived, she observes certain taboos, which are based on some superstitions. She is not allowed to visit the burial ground, or to come out during evening and night because, the inborn may be harmed by the evil spirits, who would be wandering at such places, and during the late evening. It is believed that pregnant woman should keep an iron or, bamboo piece during thunder and lightening to avoid any harm to the inborn. She also uses sacred threads, *uruku* or *thakidu* to avoid evil eye. Some times, the people perform *kenthronpattu*, *ennamanthram*, *thachumantram*, *pulluvan pattu*, and *kalathilariyum pattu* to expel evil eye or, other bad things from both the pregnant woman and the child in the womb. At the time of delivery, the local midwife, traditionally the females of Malayan, Mali use few magic and medicine to ease the labour pains and safe delivery.

The children grow freely, and without any inhibition. When they attain the stage of adolescence, sexual awareness develops. At this stage, her elders take care of the girl. Thereafter, the girl has to live and behave according to the norms of the society. There is no approval for pre-marital, as well as extra-marital sex relations, but in practice, these relations exist unhindered in the society. The society considers extra-marital sex relations very seriously, and gives penalty to the offenders.

There is a common belief prevalent among the people that diseases, ailments and death are due to evil spirits or, due to the wrath of deities. But at the same time, the society recognizes the natural death. The death causes pollution. The relative of the deceased person, take ritual bath (purificatory bath) on a fixed day, *thelikal*, and symbolically *balichoru* (food) is given to the dead soul. Afterwards, every year a ritual *chatham* is observed in which they call back the deceased soul, and arrange a ritual feast to the soul. Moreover, they also arrange feast to the deceased soul in four *karuthavavu* or *amavasi* (new moon day) every year.

The belief of the people is that supernatural powers wield profound influence on their lives and, by controlling and directing their day-to-day affairs. They believe that misfortunes, ailments, accidents, diseases, unnatural death, abortion and failure in hunting, gathering, fishing and cultivation or, other socio-economic pursuits are due to some evil spirits or, wrath of the deities. They consider these supernatural powers to be either benevolent or, malevolent. The malevolent spirits cause harm and trouble. These are several in numbers. For example, *mari* (an evil spirit) is responsible for many misfortunes such as, disease, poverty, and low yield. According to the information gathered from the locale people, *mari* is able to spread serious epidemic like, small pox, fever, jaundice etc. The local

deity *Gulikan* is some times responsible for fever, temperature and unnatural falls from trees or other objects that lead to fracture. *Karukalaki* and *pillathini* (two evil spirits) harm the foetus and its influence, cause abortion. The people also consider *kooli*, *pretham*, *yekshi*, and other similar souls of unnatural deaths cause evil acts or, disaster.

Benevolent powers are regarded as being useful and kind. The people seek their assistance for welfare, fortune and prosperity in every walk of life. It is believed the worship of deity, *Vishnumurthi*, brings prosperity and fortune, and success in hunting and battle. The *varavili* and *tottampattu* of this *teyyam* expresses its ability:

*Varika venam vishnumurthiyakum paradevathe
anghathinum, padakum, kuttathinum, kurikum, nanyattu
vettakum, narivilikum, aghampadikum, swaropathinum
munnayudham cholli valathu kayal seshippettu nirupicha
karyangale sadhichukoduppan azhunnalli varikavennam
vishnumurthiyakum paredevatha.*

(*Varavili of Vishnumurthi teyyam*)

The informants told me that the same deity also protects the people in all calamities, especially during the outbreak of epidemic like, small pox. In similar occasions, the people observe and worship their 'protector', *Vishnumurthi*. According to the local tradition, the performance of *Ottakolam* (different form of *Vishnumurthi*) or *Paradevatha* (*Vishnumurthi*), along with a special ritual *marimatal* is considered the only way to drive away the evil spirit such as, *mari*. In the past, *Pottan teyyam* is performed before the sowing of *punam krishi* (shifting cultivation). This is due to the common belief that the performance pleases the deity that leads to a good yield, and gives protection to the field from the destruction of animals or any other disaster.

The people are always conscious to keep the ancestor spirits pleased and favorable by suitable offerings, and sacrifices on several occasions. Otherwise, they know any negligence in the worship may lead to a great danger. Moreover, the people performs certain rituals with suitable offerings to appease the supernaturals to get their favour, and try to please them to attain success at the time of every new activity, in social, economic or, any other field.

The forgoing study of man, nature and spirits of North Malabar clearly tells us that on a number of occasions, humans interact, on one hand with nature, and on the other, with spirits. The sacred performance needs ritual functionaries, who do various performances, and who are considered as, 'sacred specialists'. The ritual process of contacting and offering in a particular manner has been formulated in respect to each deity or, spirit. Collectively the worship, performance, and offering exercise a complex situation that needed a middleman. The people successfully surmounted operational difficulties of approachability, by assigning certain persons the task of establishing liaison with the spirit through their divine *teyyam* performance. It may be observed that the life of a person in North Malabar has been traditionally dependent upon the forest for subsistence, developed a belief system in harmony with their ecological settings.

Taken as a whole, all aspects of life and culture reflect in adequate measure the interdependence of man, nature and spirits on one another. Thus 'Nature-Man-Spirit Complex', the 'Sacred Complex', gets prominently reflected in the life and culture of North Malabar. Here, in the 'Nature-Man-Spirit Complex', *teyyam* plays a dominant role, since, the people believe and worship the supernatural power in the form of *teyyam*, and its divine performance. Thus, however, the study of the supernatural world, *teyyam* and its performance, not

only reflects the interaction of man with the spirit, but also shows the interaction of man with nature. This fact gets substantiated when the deities associated with their forest-based, agriculture nourished economic life. The economic system creates specific situations when the people need help and interference of spirits. The forest, hills and sacred grove, *kavu* are believed to be the abode of spirits and deities, and their sacred performance need certain fruits, nuts, leaves, pulses, flowers etc., which are locally available in plenty. At present, there is evidence to prove that the 'Sacred Complex', *teyyam* and its performance, wields a profound influence in regulating 'man-nature' and 'man-spirit' relationships. It has been exposed to certain modern forces of change and innovation, which in turn have affected the working of the traditional 'Sacred Complex', in the life and culture, and weakened their interrelations, as discussed later in this thesis. But at the same time, on the contrary, *teyyam* performance also exhibits a high degree of flexibility and dynamism, which gives it an extraordinary capacity to 'readjust' with the modern change and get 'modified' to cope with day-to-day life situations, the adaptability.

Symbols in *Teyyam*

As a magico-religious performance, *teyyam* conveys many symbols through its myth and rituals. Whitehead says,

Symbols and signs are the language of all civilizations. One cannot think without symbols. (cit. Mahapatra 1985)

The same is true even with *teyyam*. These symbols are sufficient to express the religious feelings and experiences through myths, rituals, and performances.

Teyyam uses symbols in plenty. The symbol in *teyyam* is the medium to express the mixing of the old cultural values and their present life in the feelings and experience of the people. According to Fawcett,

Symbols are not created but born out of life. They do not come into being as result of man's creative imagination. The symbols of darkness, light and water for example were given to man with his existence in the world. Symbols appear to be built into man's experience. As such man's symbol making capacity is universal and certain symbols too are universal. (cit. Pallath 1995:12)

In *teyyam* we observe such a universal nature of symbolism. The people of North Malabar worship their deities symbolically through *teyyam* performance. Each *teyyam* represents their respective deity. The *mudi* (the headgear), facial decoration, body decoration, weapons, offering and sacrifice, and the whole performance of *teyyam* express symbolic meanings. Usually, the *mudi* produces an image which is huge and which can therefore show the sense of the divine. Some of the *teyyam mudi* reflect certain aspects of myth. For example, the long and huge keel-shaped headgear of *Kolaswaroopathil thayi* has been inspired to remember that she reached North Malabar by ship. The multi-fold, and peculiarly designed headgear of *Vayanattu Kulavan* symbolically reminds the people of its myth. In general, the headgears and head decorations have been used for exaggeration. *Thalapali*, the most important *aniyalam* (attire) comprises of 21 pieces of specially designed silver or, bronze, which represent the forefathers of Malayan.

The facial drawing, *mughathezhuthu*, contains many symbols. They are mostly borrowed from the features of animals, flowers, etc. The names of facial drawings themselves reveal the nature and shape of

the design. *Kozhipushpam*, a kind of drawing reveals *kozhi* (fowl), and *pushpam* (flower). *Sangum valum* means shell, and tail. *Kurangirutham* indicates the manner in which a *kurangu* (monkey) sits. Facial decoration includes *poikannu* (pseudo eye), *meesa* (moustache), *thadi* (beard) and *egiru* (fang or, tusk). Pseudo eyes are used to increase the frightfulness of *teyyam*. In the case of *Vayanattu Kulavan*, and *Muchilottu Bagavathi*, according to the myth of both *teyyams*, pseudo eyes are used in place of natural eyes, because of the supposed damage of natural eyes. White and black moustaches and beards are used to indicate the age. *Egiru* is the symbol of fang that is used to give dreadfulness and fancy.

The body decoration also communicates certain meanings. The artificial bosoms symbolically represent the feminine character of particular *teyyam*. In some cases, the make-up on chest and abdomen reveals their myth. For example, the body markings of *Karimkuttichathan* represent the scars of bruise that it had received from the beating of his master. *Teyyams* like *Pulikandan*, *Pulimaruthan*, and *Puliyorukannan* use *unnam* (raw cotton) pasted on the body that indicates its animal relation. *Pulurkali* and also *Pullikaringali* use body markings that also indicate the spots of leopards. In the case of *Kandanar Kelan*, the performer paints two winding serpents on the abdomen and chest, which are mentioned in the *tōttam pāttu*. The *teyyam* of *Vishnumūrthi*, *Bali* and *Puliteyyams*, wear silver nails, according to their nature and form.

At the time of performance, *teyyam* handles many types of weapons. This act is of great importance. The importance is assumed because of a common belief that the deities are living through the sign (the sign system of weapons) of the respective weapon. Each weapon, in this sense, conveys the presence of a deity. The devotees find the weapons as the symbol of protection and security.

The important items of offering are coconut, rice and toddy. The offerings such as, coconut, rice, fried paddy, flakes of rice, paddy, ripe banana, betel leaves and ripe areca nut represent the significance of a predominant agrarian life of the past. The offering of toddy reminds the 'primitive' culture. Giving cash to *teyyam* tells something about the money economy. It also reflects the conventional practice, 'to pay for everything'. *Kuri kodukal* (giving *prasadam*) shows the pleasing of god over the devotees, who believe that their desires will be fulfilled soon.

Fowl sacrifice is inevitable. The age-old concept of blood oblation to the god is for pleasing the deity, and to receive blessing. This kind of blood sacrifice is also pointing towards the human sacrifice. This confirms the presence of *Thenga Kallu* (similar to a sacrificial stone, nowadays this is used to break coconut during the performance). It is situated in front of the sacred centre. The human sacrifice was practised because the 'primitive' man thought that the 'noblest sacrifice' would surely make their deity happier.

Fire, lamp, and water are also symbolic. Whenever an auspicious occasion arises in the field of *teyyam* performance, people use a lighted oil lamp. According to the importance the lamp, it symbolizes the clear mind of the deities. It also reflects the clean mind of the devotees. Fire has its importance throughout the history of *teyyam* performance. Rituals like *melerikaikolal*, *meleri chāttam*, and *theechavittal* are associated with respective *teyyams*. *Madayilchāmundi* and *Kundora Chāmundi* use *chuttu* (lighted coconut-leaf torch) while dancing. The *teyyam Kandakarnan* uses fire sticks all over its long headgear and around waist. *Pottan teyyam* and *Ottakōlam* jumps into *meleri* (heap of fire) several times. Almost all *teyyams* kick fire during *urachil* (possession). All the above said rituals and practices show that the use of fire is essential in *teyyam*

performance. So the importance of fire in *teyyam* performance indicates its close relationship with human culture. The fire is used for the preparation of food and also for protection. Basically mastery over fire is considered as super human and divine. Hence, the performers are trying to handle fire while performing.

Water is also very essential during *teyyam* performance. It has a purificatory function. The sacred centre is purified with water before the commencement of the performance. The performers take a bath or, wash face, legs, and hands before the performance. Water is offered in a *kindi*, a small bronze vessel with a snout on its side. Usually it is used for washing the hands and legs of the performer during the performance. In *teyyam* performance, water symbolizes purity that expels pollution.

The whole performance is rich in symbols. The manifestation and expression of belief (animism, animatism and nature worship), the economic progress of life from that of a gathering community to that of the settled, the cultural evolution from the 'primitive' to the modernized, and the assimilation of these aspects by Hinduism highlights every side of the development of *teyyam* performance. We can acknowledge many symbols even in a slight movement of *teyyam*.

Assimilation by Hinduism

Teyyam is 'primitive' in origin and pre-Dravidian in nature. Still it became their religion, life and science. The people worshipped their local deities through the image of *teyyam*. In the course of time, this old belief system had undergone many socio-cultural changes. Among them the important one is the invasion of the Aryans that brought Hinduism into this region. In the light of a 'suitable' and 'proper' understanding of the pulse of the local people, *teyyam*

performance was absorbed into the Hindu tradition without any basic change. The *teyyam* has been 'Sanskritised' one-way or other. As a matter of fact, the assimilation made easy the introduction of *tantrik* rights into *teyyam*. With the support of religious power over the subdued, segmented society, the Brahmins placed themselves in between deities and *teyyam*. With this significant change, the Brahmins controlled the performance, as a super performer. They formulated new rules and regulations. According to this trend, the unsettled, wandering deities were forcefully installed in fixed places by the act of what is called, *prathishta*. Formerly, *teyyam* was roaming everywhere. Certain trees, groves, forests etc., were considered as the ideal places for them. The people worshipped their deities in these ideal centres. But later on, especially after the introduction of *prathishta thantram*, these sacred centres had been automatically transformed into holy chambers called, *palliyara*, looking similar to that of small Sanskritic temple. The super imposition of myth and the deconstruction of myth and rituals occur in the performance. *Vishnumūrthi* displays two myths: one draws a sympathetic life story of one *Palenthayi Kannan*, who met with a tragic end under feudal power. The legendary myth of Lord Vishnu's incarnation, *Narasimham*, is super imposed over the first one. According to the common belief, *Gulikan teyyam* is considered as the local god of death. But after "Hinduisation" the myth of *Gulikan* was identified as the myth of *Kalan*, the Hindu god of death. All the female *teyyams* are redefined and worshipped as different incarnations of *Parvathi*. In short, from what has been stated so far it is clear that there is an increasing tendency to seek *teyyam* in the light of the Hindu belief system. It does not matter whether a *teyyam* has its own independent legend and myth.

The Upper Castes and the Teyyam

All the Hindu castes of North Malabar worship *teyyam*. The villagers are divided into segments by caste. The whole function of *teyyam* performance is controlled by the upper castes. They hold all the key positions in the organization level. The low caste performer only performs *teyyam* according to the rules and norms framed by the upper caste. The local ruler, *nāduvazhi* or *tampuran* was considered as the supreme authority. Under him the *tantri* (priest) played a significant role by giving orders to the performance. He can either introduce a new ritual or change an earlier one. Through this, nowadays, the *tantri* catches the supreme position over *teyyam* performance and control it.

Table: III.6 Hierarchy of Teyyam Officials

Status	Varna / Caste
<i>Nāduvazhi</i>	<i>Kshatriya</i>
<i>Tantri</i>	<i>Brahmin</i>
<i>Kōyma</i>	<i>Poduval</i>
<i>Uralanmar</i>	<i>Nair</i>
Celebrant/s	Caste/s
<i>Kalesakaran</i>	<i>Tiyya</i>
Performer	Low caste/s

The *Kōyma* (representative of the ruler) is placed below *tantri*, who looks after the rules and regulations framed by the *tantri* with the help of *uralanmar* (village council). The celebrant makes necessary arrangements and the performer performs *teyyam*.

Among the celebrants, there are specialists. *Velichappadu/komaram*, *anthithiriyar*, *thathyakkaran*, *notirikunon*, *valyakar*, *achan*, *kuttayi*, *kayatukar* etc., are to perform certain

duties. The *velichapadu* or *komaram* is the oracle, who has to perform rituals on important occasions. The oracle of the communities like Thiya, Kollan, Asari and Musari are known as *velichappadan*. And of Vaniya and Maniyāni are called *komaram*. Customarily an oracle is present only in big centers. All *teyyams* do not have oracles but, only a few important deities have oracles. *Anthithiriyān* is the man who lights the lamp at the sacred place on every evening. This official of Thiya caste is *thathyakaran*, who also hold *thathika* (holy umbrella), during celebrations. At the time of celebrations only *notirikkunnon* (one who observes abstinence) is allowed to enter inside the sanctum. He gives the *kodeela* and weapons to the performer. During the performance, he also arranges the offerings inside the sanctum. In big celebrations the *anthithiriyān* has this right. The selected eldest persons are called *achchanmar*. They give pieces of advice whenever the celebrants need during the celebration. The Nairs and Thiyas appoint *achchanmar* in their sacred centres. *Kuttayi* is a special group of persons (two to nine), who collect the *kalvara* (yearly share of families towards their sacred centre). Only Thiya caste has *kuttayi*. The custom of having *kuttayi* is related to the worship of *Vishnumūrthi*. A group of selected young ones, *Valiyakar*, assist the officials as, volunteers in sacred centres. Some sacred centres of Thiya caste of northern side select a few persons as, *kolkār* or *koyatukar*. They are appointed to protect the paddy fields from the cattle.

Another important *teyyam* official is the performer. The execution of *teyyam* is a group's effort. As per their skill and aptitude, each performer has to concentrate on different sphere such as, *teyyam kettal*, *tottam pattu*, *aniyarapani*, and *vadyam*. These specialists among the performers include *kolakaran*, *aniyarapanikaran*, and *vadyakaran*. One who performs and disguises into *teyyam* is called *teyyakaran*, *kolakaran* or *koladhari*. One who prepares the attires of

teyyam is called *aniyarapanikaran* (green room expert). The *vadyakaran* is an expert in drumming. And all performers spell the chant, *tottam pattu*.

Kalesakaran is unavoidable. By heredity a member of the Tiyya community is appointed as *kalesakaran* in a particular locality. He brings enough tender coconut leaves, leaf torch and liquor. Like the other officials of *teyyam* celebrators the *kalesakaran* is also present through out the performance.

The caste known as, Kanniyan has an important role. He is serving as a traditional astrologer and umbrella maker. The females of Vanathan served as the washerwoman to the upper caste celebrants. The female of Vannan, Vannathi, extends her service as a washerwoman to Thiyya during celebrations. The Kolan also gives his service by polishing the weapons of *teyyam* in the sacred center. In short, each and every caste of this area is linked directly or, indirectly with *teyyam* celebration.

Continuum

Although *teyyam* is binding together the members of the society in a feeling of belonging and co-operation, it also plays an important role in the cultural life of North Malabar. The myth, rituals and the whole performance itself show some glimpses of the past histories of man and his socio-cultural activities such as, practice of hunting-gathering, nomadism, pastoralism, and agriculture. The perpetuation of old tradition, social etiquette through *teyyam* performance bridges the gulf between the past and the present, and maintains a cultural continuity of this region between rural and urban areas. The sacred centres of *teyyam* function as a linking agent that binds the performance, the society and its culture. *Teyyam*, with its own

characteristics and functions, pursues the local traditions in the face of the fast changing social life. As Kishore Jadav says,

It is not entertainment or of particular aesthetic interest, but is accompaniment to other activities... Though rural in nature, it exists in cultures in which there is technically more sophisticated musical traditions and it is perpetuated and venerated as a spontaneous creation by ethnic, occupational or religious minorities. (1998:10)

Income and Expenditure

In the past, families, *taravādu*, clan or communities mostly observed *teyyam* celebration. They did not take any interest to raise income from *teyyam* performance. They celebrated *teyyam* as part of worship and religion. In the course of time, in tune with the increase in expenditure, this system of celebration faced financial problems. To solve the problem, the people began to hand over their responsibility to newly formed public committees. The changed social set up, and the demand for social equality also have strengthened this trend. They gathered income and other materials necessary for the celebration by mass collection of donations that generates the income surplus. The expenditure has also increased. At present, the small centres spend only a few thousands for celebrations, but in the eve of big celebrations such as, *perumkaliyāttam*, lakhs of rupees are spent for a single celebration.

Threat, Exploitation and Future

We are in the dawn of a millennium. Since his origin, man has been experiencing and has experimented a lot. The experiences from which he has learned through generations, it is so claimed, 'civilized' him from the stages of 'savagery' and 'barbarism'. Throughout the

line of evolution he had faced many hazards and difficult situations in life. It can be seen that these tendencies are prevalent in our society. Therefore, *teyyam* is not an abuse; it can still face and encounter many a threat and unscrupulous exploitations. The increasing influence of 'Brahmanism' i.e., *tantric* influence over *teyyam*, is to be considered as the most dangerous of all exploitations. Ever since the beginning of Hindu assimilation of *teyyam*, the Brahmins wanted to bring *teyyam* under their supervision. Naturally, the Dravidian customs and rituals, related to *teyyam* did not allow any interference, and instead, provided a resistance. But recently, the society has become more and more 'Hinduised', and has loosened the watertight compartments of Dravidian rituals. This slowly leads to a total surrender that gives the brahminical customs an opportunity to impose new *tantric* rites that are to be ritualized in the field of *teyyam*. Thus, the 'high' castes have got complete control over performance. Nowadays, the *tantri* will decide the item and the kinds of offering for *teyyam*. The people give toddy as a usual offering. Some *teyyams* like, *Pottan*, *Muthappan* and *Vayanattu Kulavan* must be offered toddy as an inevitable and essential commodity. Some of the *tantris*, of course, did not allow toddy to be offered to *teyyam*. This kind of imposition of power from the 'upper' castes has been disturbing the viability of *teyyam*. Through this active move they have been able to impel the society to accept their *tantric* rituals. It could ultimately produce an unavoidable series of processes to be mastered by the 'upper' caste people. As a result, the people attempted to 'imprison' the freely roving and unsettled *teyyam* deities by the act of *prathishta* (fix in a spot).

As a matter of fact, people accept *teyyam* as an inevitable and indispensable element of life. Understanding this influential significance of *teyyam*, the 'high' caste people make use of it to fulfil

their vested interests. They know well the fact that acquiring the control over *teyyam* will directly give them the power of social control. The performers are often directed to be obedient to the old customs and rituals related to *teyyam*.

Avoiding shirt, or cloth above waist is treated as an important feature. A *teyyam* performer is expected to be seen only without shirt wherever he goes. It has almost become a very commonplace expectation that has given currency by the 'upper' caste norms. The latter have the political intention of maintaining the performer as looking always 'not-yet, not-quite'. Moreover, there has been constant protest against the inter-caste marriages of the performers. If this community involves in inter-caste marriages, they cannot be socially maintained as an isolable caste, and can no longer be brought under control. Any group can be controlled only if its limits and boundaries are defined clearly. This applies to the community of *teyyam* performer, also as far as the dominant norms are concerned. Hence, the society protests against inter-caste marriages. It will eliminate all possible dissents, ranging from the major to the minutest ones, from the side of the performer.

When we turn to think of the future of *teyyam*, we can see, surprisingly, that it has a bright future. What *teyyam* did before is still done by it. Although its magico-religious significance is fading, the capability of bringing social solidarity, integration, and harmony among people induces a new dimension to this traditional performance. The living attitude of the people to festivals and celebrations has been accelerating the intensity of performance in this area. With this trend *teyyam* can enjoy a renaissance. The establishment and reconstruction of sacred centres confirm the future of *teyyam*. Today, the socio-cultural set up of North Malabar is not favourable for *teyyam* performance when compared to that of

the old days. As said earlier magico-religious significance of *teyyam* emerges not due to the advancement of education, science and technology. But surprisingly, the increasing frequency of *teyyam* performance, and the emergence of new sacred centres reveal a different reason. Nowadays, its attributed artistic value increases its divinity. Now the artistic skill and beauty seen in the facial writings, costumes and wearing, dance, music and *töttam pättau* of *teyyam*, is appreciated as part of aesthetic enjoyment. In the past, the devotees did not give any importance to the sphere of art; they only trained or channelled to look *teyyam* only through 'magico-religious eyes'. This change in the level of appreciation of the people turned the attention from 'institutionalised performance' to 'useful art', and made the people as 'audience', rather than 'devotees'. This is a kind of 'artistic adaptation', by which I mean, that in this changed society, due to the forces of science and technology, *teyyam* has become an institutionalized performance, and it automatically readjusts, accordingly.

According to Brown, an institution has:

Established norms of conduct of a particular form of social life it is usual to refer to as *institutions*. An institution is an established norm of conduct organised as such by a distinguishable social group or class of which therefore it is an institution. (1952:10)

The shift from 'traditional institutionalised performance', to 'ritual-useful art' has increased the establishment of more sacred centres and the frequency of performance. The political set up of this area is also playing an important role in protecting the performance. Pallath says that another important trend noticed in the *teyyam* ritual is the over- influence of politics (1995:90). The Communist Party is dominant here. Most important agrarian and social revolts, and

rebellions of Kerala had taken place in this area. The impact of these 'legendary' movements has brought faith in socialism in the minds of millions. The Congress and the Communist parties led the battle against social discriminations like untouchability and the evils like poverty. The Communist Party of India-Marxist, CPI (M) has been more successful in the grass root activities by virtue of its well-built party set up. Recently, we can notice changes in this political set up. The attempts of the Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) functionaries to increase their popularity and power in this region have led to rigorous controversies between them and the CPI (M). Under the banner of the 'Hindutva', both BJP and RSS, induces their agenda on the sacred centers, *teyyam* performing centres in particular. As a result of this, they force the people to strictly observe the rituals as before. In reality, this was a conscious move by the BJP, and the RSS to impose the Hindu cultural revivalism that is very essential for their survival and future. The protest from the CPI (M) is directed strongly against this trend. According to them, this kind of a back-walk is not favourable and totally unwanted. The revivalism will harm our present progress.

Meanwhile the conflict is still going on. As a result of this struggle, formerly both the CPI (M), and the BJP and RSS showed great interest in *teyyam* performance. By playing the Hindutva and nationalist cards the BJP-RSS movement hopes that channalising the thinking and activities of the society in accordance with the worn out elements of the past culture will help them to improve their popularity. While protesting the agenda of the communal and allied forces, the CPI (M) also has encouraged *teyyam* performance and denied the renaissance motion on the other hand. In this context, what I wish to state is that the political struggle for mastery between the CPI (M), and the BJP and RSS favours *teyyam* performance, extensively.

Although the future of *teyyam* has become splendid, it is also experiencing exploitation. The mass media play a vital role in exploiting *teyyam*, particularly the visual media like TV and the cinema. *Teyyam* is exploited cleverly in all the modes of popular interactions. As a matter of fact, the symbols of *teyyam* appear in advertisements, drama, dance, and TV serials, and even in cinema. Recently, a box-office hit in Malayalam, *Kaliyāttam*, has given one of the best examples. The symbols of *teyyam* are also used in public processions and public rallies. The Marxist party in particular uses extensively the symbols of *teyyam* for their public processions. According to Pallath,

For the Cannanore distric convention of the Marxist party, the main gate was designed in the form of the two head-gears of the thekken gulikan. Marxist party and Sastra Sahity Parishad make copious use of the *teyyam* symbols.

(1995: 90)

Further, the colour red, symbolically represents revolution and struggle. So, the extensive use of red colour in *teyyam* performance creates a positive attitude towards revolution and struggle in the unconscious minds of the people. The Marxists, especially, the people of the CPI (M) have traditionally taken 'red', as their symbol that is very much effective in attracting the people of this area.

Is it an Art?

Notwithstanding its socio-cultural significance, many a people simply say that *teyyam* is an artistic formation. It is only a wrong view of reality. It is true only in a narrow sense. We can say that man himself is an artistic creation hence, *teyyam* can also be taken as an artistic form. But it is not the whole thing about *teyyam*. It can be regarded as having artistic and aesthetic qualities. As a

phenomenon, it is more to do with life. In reality, it is much more than what art is. That is, *teyyam* tells about the most important aspects of human life.

With reference to the people of North Malabar we can say, that they are not given any attention to the aesthetic beauty of *teyyam* but obviously, belief in its divine power, and to see the symbolic representations of their respective deities. A serious and truthful analysis surely clear this doubt and reveals the fact that *teyyam* is not an 'art' but, an 'institution'. It is an institution as similar to any other social institutions like marriage, family, religion and politics. It is true that, *teyyam* possess rich aesthetic and artistic value. Even if the customs and rituals of the Hindu marriage-particularly those like the wearing of garland between the couples, the marriage songs, and the prosperous feast-are of high artistic touch, nobody will state that it is an art or lore. Nowadays, the 'folklorists' have an unfair haste to call 'any incident' as 'folklore' without any reasonable ground behind it. They blindly go after anything to place under their subject. In this manner, they will not hesitate to call in future a 'hereditary disease' of some members of a family a 'folklore'. In their line of thinking, *teyyam* is consciously and purposefully misplaced under folklore. More than an art or lore, *teyyam* is an organised system, which has multiple functions.

Brown explains about organisation as follows:

The concept is clearly closely related to the concept of social structure, but it is desirable not to treat the two terms as synonymous. A convenient use, which does not depart from common usage in English, is to define social structure as an arrangement of in institutionally controlled or defined relationships...and to use organisation as referring to an arrangement of activities. (1964: 11)

His comments on a system, on the basis of the view of Montesquieu is worth quoting here:

The theory of Montesquieu, however, is what we may call a theory of a social system, according to which all the features of social life are united into a coherent whole... It gives us reason to think that we can advance our understanding of human societies if we systematically the interconnections amongst features of social life.

(Brown 1964:6)

This is also true with *teyyam*, which is neither a private property nor an asset of any folk. It is the common wealth of this region. Beyond that, it is a well-established system of behaviour and activities. Therefore, we can say, it is an 'organisation'.

Further, since emergence, *teyyam* has considered as the heart of North Malabar's belief-system. We already had seen that it has systems of belief, and systems of relationship and action. Its soul has cemented in belief and has working on specific rules, values, norms, and manners similar to a well-established 'social organisation'. It naturally reveals the relationship between nature and culture, 'nature-man-spirit interaction'. Hence, we can say *teyyam* as 'the religion of North Malabar, a belief in intangible-mysterious powers in certain 'nature-objects' and 'dead-souls', that controls every actions of man'.

Photo: III.1 A Few from the Annteyyangal



Pottan teyyam



Vishnumurthi



Ottakolam



Bairanvan



Kandakarnan



Pookuttichathan



Gulikan



Karimkuttichathan



Photo: III. 2 Female Teyyams of Malayan



“What a colour combination..?” Rakthachamundi and Madayilchamundi



“More Chanting than the Nature..!” Uchitta Teyyam

Photo III.3 Sacred Centres of Teyyam



A Tree Centre

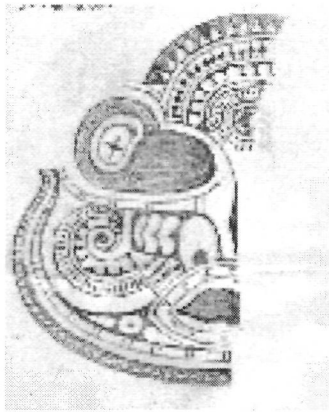


"A Pallyara" - Holly Chamber

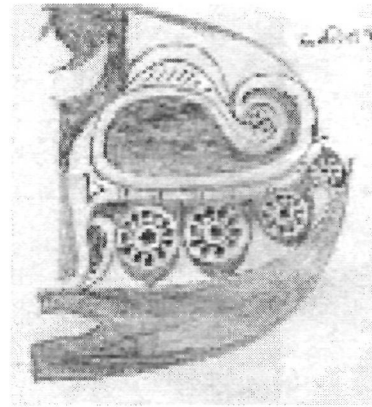


Teyyam and Devotees in a Kavu-Sacred Centre

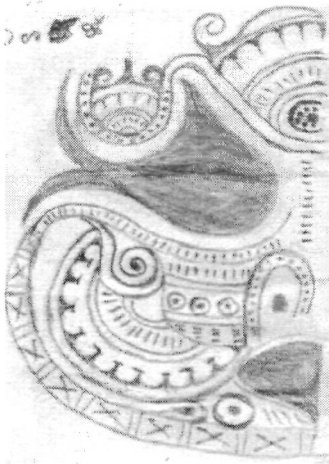
**Photo III.4 Few patterns of Facial-drawings:
*Mughathezhuthu***



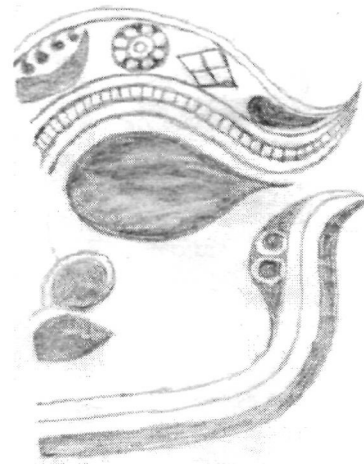
Kozhipuvu



Kunnidhalam



Kuttishangu



Teppu

Photo: III.5 Teyyams and Head-Gears



Kandakarnan



Bairavan



Pookuttichathan



Rakthachamundi



Karrinkuttichathan



Karrinkuttichathan

Photo: III. 6 Teyyams with Masks



Pottan teyyam with Mughapala



Vishnumurthi with Moghompidi



Gulikan with Mughapala



Madayilchamundi with Moghompidi

Photo III.7 Teyyam & Tottams with Weapons



Photo III.8 Tottam & Vellattam



Tottam of Vishnumurthi



Tottams: Madayilchamundi & Vishnumurthi



Vellattam of Kandakarnan

Photo: III.9 Teyyam & Fire



***“Meleri...touching the sky..?”
The Heap of Fire***



***Pottan teyyam Dancing
with Leaf- torches***



“Oh..! Terific..!!”Kandakarnan Teyyam with Fire-Sticks

Photo III.10 Teyyam Shapes in Anniyara



**“How much time it takes..?”
Painting on Face**



**Performer with
Mughathezhuthu**



**“Oh..! Tired..!!” Performers
taking rest**



**“Take care..!” Performer
wearing Dress**



**The Researcher before a
Performance**



**“Just a Minute..! We are
ready..!!”**

Photo III.11 Two Shots from *Teyyam* Centres



“Music of *Chenda*”. A Team of Drummers



“Waiting for...” Devotees and Drummers

Chapter IV

*Performance: The Pulse
of the People*

CHAPTER IV

PERFORMANCE: THE PULSE OF THE PEOPLE

The rituals and customs associated with the social and religious practices, and the concept of people's worldview form the basis of *teyyam* performance. They also partly function to provide psychic reassurance against external dangers of nature. The religious aspect is multidimensional, which has a network of interrelation with the religious hierarchy. This will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Besides worshipping the Hindu deities, there is a very ancient and indigenous mode of worship and performance, that is prevalent in North Malabar. It is quite distinguishable from those of the other parts of the country. This indigenous mode of worship, well known as, *teyyam*, concerns primarily with the traditional myth and rituals passed on to the succeeding generations through mouth and ear, and retained by memory. It has not blossomed for any kind of entertainment or, for particular aesthetic interests, but for certain other values. In this chapter, I shall try to unravel most importantly the three basic aspects of *teyyam*, myth, ritual and performance, along with other related aspects.

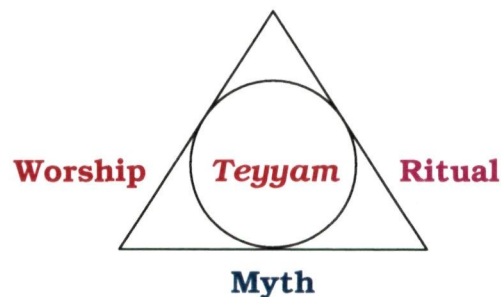


Figure: IV.1 Basic Components of Teyyam

Myth

According to Schniewind, myth is “the expression of unobservable realities in terms of observable phenomena” (cit. Leach 1970:54). For Levi Strauss myth is,

The unconscious nature of collective phenomena” (cit. Leach: 1970:), and “all the paradoxes conceived by the native mind, on the most diverse planes: geographic, economic, sociological, and even cosmological, are, when all is said and done, assimilated to that less obvious yet so real paradox. (cit. Leach 1970:55,58)

According to Freud, “...myths express unconscious wishes which are somehow inconsistent with conscious experience” (cit. Leach 1970:57). These views go well with the *teyyam* of North Malabar. And Kishore Jadav says,

The eternal quest of man to know the truth in the natural surroundings led him to invent myths in which the rudiments of history can be discerned. (1998: 17)

This eternal quest is the moving force behind *teyyam*. As shown in the diagram, *teyyam* is built on the three basic components-myth, ritual and performance. All *teyyams* have their own myth, sometimes more than one. Here in this chapter, an attempt is made to explain only four different *teyyams* of Malayan, i.e., *Pottan teyyam*, *Vishnumūrthi*, *Karimkuttichathan*, and *Madayilchāmundi*, because, each of them represents different regions and myths. These four *teyyams* also are considered as the most important and ideal *teyyams* performed by the Malayans. *Vishnumūrthi* represents the northern region of North Malabar, since it gets more importance and prominence in that region, particularly in Kasaragod district. *Pottan teyyam* and *Madayilchāmundi* represent the middle region, Payyanur

region, in which these *teyyams* are observed and performed in plenty rather than in other regions. *Karimkuttichathan* is in preference in the third, the southern region, so it represents the third region.

Pottan Teyyam

Once the mystic Brahmin scholar, Sankaracharya attempted to attain the highest state of knowledge *survajnappeedam* (throne of omniscience). As he was proceeding with his followers towards the throne through a field, he met one Pulaya (*chandala*, an untouchable low caste) man and woman, with children coming across. According to the local custom and practice, the Pulayan and his company must keep away from the way in which a member of a high caste, particularly a Brahmin, goes on. But in adverse, the Pulaya hero of this myth did not move away, from the way. By the repugnant act of the Pulayan, the great Brahmin scholar Sankaracharya got provoked and shouted:

Tettada Pulaya vegam
Kuttamallaykil ningal
Kattamillathe yundam
Mattarum tadukkayilla
Tellu tamasiyathe po
Mallu nee bhavikkenda
Vallathum paranjalippol
Thallinnu kalamundam
Varunnathu kandal doore
Maranju nilkkendum jathi
Paranjathu kettal polum
Kuranjonnu shankayille?

(*Tottam pattu of Pottan teyyam*)

(Get out of the way immediately
Otherwise you will face much sin
Nobody could prevent
Leave the place immediately
Not try to quarrel
You shall be treated to beating
If you speak anything)

While Sankaracharya was speaking thus, the Pulayan responded as:

*Tettuvanendu mulam
Tettalle paranjithappol
Kuttamatta sasthram
Athilithu kandittundo?
Anu pennennu randu jathiyallathe
Mattengaredo jathi varna
Bhethathe kalpichu chol?
Anthanarennum pinne
Anthoara jathiyennum
Enthoru bhethamullu
Chinthichal ishwarannu?
.....
Akaram thannil chedam
Cheythalulloru raktham
Aranarkkulla poleyalayo
Njangal meyyil?*

(Tottam pattu of Pottan
teyyam)

(Why do you ask us to
Slip down from the way?
It is a wrong question.
Did you see it in any philosophies?
Tell, who creates *jathis*
Other than that of male and female?
Think the god has no such distinctions
Like Brahmins and Non-Brahmins.

.....

Is a cut in the body produces-
Same blood in your wounds
As well as in our wounds)

After exchanging a long verbal dispute, Sankaracharya learnt a lesson from the disguised Pulayan. The latter demonstrated and proved that all humans are equal regarding the insubstantiality of high and low feeling. The wonder struck Sankaracharya understood that the Pulayan was not an ordinary man, and realized his mistakes. He fell at the feet of the disguised Siva and begged for pardon. To honour and remember the hero of this incident, and also to enact the irrationality of social discriminations, the people of North Malabar perform *Pottan teyyam* extensively in their sacred centres.

Vishnumurthi

Unlike *Pottan teyyam* and *Karimkuttichathan*, *Vishnumurthi*, otherwise known as *Paradevatha* has two myths, a lower and a higher one. The lower one is the basic myth, and the other is a super-imposed one.

Once upon a time, there lived, a boy of Thiyya caste (traditional toddy tapers and a polluting caste of North Malabar) named, Kannan. His duty was to look after the cows of a powerful high caste feudal family of Karuvattu Kuruppu at Nileshwaram (now a village in Kasaragod district). One day Kannan was eating a mango sitting upon the tree. The half-eaten mango fell on to the body of a girl, incidently the niece of Karuvattu Kuruppu, who was going in that way. The anguished girl went off and told her uncle about the indecent behaviour of their cowboy. The annoyed Kuruvattu Kuruppu decided to kill Kannan for his 'serious' crime. The frightened cowboy let off and fled. He reached a house known as Kolukoduppadi Veedu at Mangalapuram (now in Karnataka State), after covering the distance by walk in two days. He saw a sacred place. He was too tired and slept on the *tara* of the sacred center. An old lady who looked after the sacred place where Kannan slept saw the boy sleeping in her sacred centre. Having heard the sympathetic story of Kannan, she allowed him to live along with her. Years passed, Kannan became a young man and lived in great peace and harmony. He worshipped the deity *Paradevada* in the sacred centre with all devotion. One night in his sleep the deity asked him to return to his native place. Inspired by the deity, Kannan set out for Nileshwaram carrying an *olakkuda* (umbrella made of palm leaves) and *churika* (specially designed double-edged sword) of *Paradevada* in hands. The news spread like forest-fire. Hearing this news, Karuvattu Kuruppu set out to settle his old vengeance. In his search for Kannan, Karuvattu Kuruppu found him drinking water from *Kadalikkulam* (a pond) and brutishly killed him. Soon after the murder of Kannan, some of the cattle of Karuvattu Kuruppu met with premature death, and others suffered from diseases. Karuvattu Kuruppu and the members of his family suffered from psychological disorders. Later they came to know that all these happened because

of the wrath of *Paradevada*, who came along with Kannan. Finally, they found expiation. The *padinjatakam* (central room) of Kuruppu's house was given for the inhabitation of the deity and also agreed to worship the deity, and the dead soul of Kannan in the form of *teyyams* as, *Paradevada* (later known as *Vishnumūrthi*) and *Palenthayi Kannan teyyam* respectively.

The higher myth of *Vishnumūrthi* was composed on the legend of the fourth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, *Narasimhāvathara*. The Asura king Hiranya Kasipu was vindictive over the murder of his younger brother, Hiranyaksha by Lord Vishnu. He banned not merely the worship but, even uttering the name of Vishnu in his Kingdom. But the wise Prahlada, the son of Hiranya Kasipu, had great devotion for Vishnu. When he got a chance, Prahlada tried to teach his father the greatness of Vishnu but, could not succeed in changing his father's attitude. By understanding his son's rebellious mentality, Hiranya Kasipu attempted to kill him many times. At last, Vishnu killed the Asura king by appearing in half man-lion form, *Narasimham*. So, now a day, the people of North Malabar worshipped *Vishnumūrthi teyyam* as, one of the incarnations of *Vishnu*, *Narasimhāvathara*.

Karimkuttichathan

Kalakattu *illam* was very famous among the tantric Brahmin families in North Malabar. In a remote past, according to the *tottam pattu* of *Kuttychathan*, "*ezhala kaliyundente Kalakadarku*", the *illam* had seven *ala* (cattle shed) cattles. The head of the family, Kalakadan had given charge to a boy namely, *Chāthan* to look after his seven *ala* cattle. The boy took the cattle for grazing every morning, and returned in the evening. One day, the Kalakadan counted the number, and found that one of the cattle was missing. He asked the boy what had happened to his *chenkomban kala* (red horned ox).

Chāthan replied that he killed it when he was thirsty on Friday and fulfilled his drive. Hearing such irresponsible words, the *Kalakattachan* (*Chāthan* addressed Kalakadan as *achan*, which means, father or master) got angry and tied *Chāthan* to the railing of a cattle shed. By using a *chural* (cane stick) he beat *Chāthan* severely many times. In dissent against the harassment, *Chāthan* left the place (or was he murdered?). Later, he was worshipped and performed as *Karimkuttichāthan teyyam*. It is symbolic of the pathetic stories of similar incidents, experienced by those under miserable conditions.

Madayilchamundi

Once upon a time, at Payyanur *gramam*, a *panni* (pig) used to constantly destroy the cultivation. The cultivators faced serious loss. They tried to drive away the wild pig but, all effort ended in vain. As the pig's destructive activities increased *Vannādil* Poduval (a man of high caste), a good shooter, came forward to kill the pig. After many days of waiting in anticipation, one night, he saw it and shot it. At the very moment itself the pig disappeared. He followed its footsteps, and found the pig standing in front of a *mada* (cave). He fired again at it, but the bullet did not hurt the pig. The annoyed pig attacked and killed him. His wife, who was pregnant, followed him and the wild beast killed her too. The dead bodies were placed in the *meenakottil* (kitchen?) of the *Vannādil* house. The relatives tried to trace the cause of the death, and identified a goddess, who was in the form of a wild pig, committing these murders. The people gave offerings and agreed to worship the deity in the form of *teyyam* as, *Madayilchāmundi* to avoid further danger.

However, this story is not mentioned anywhere in *tōttam pāttu*, which reveals another myth. It is a super imposition of the Hindu

mythology. Once goddess Parvathi had to battle against two famous Asura brothers named, Sumbha and Nisumbha. In the battle, one of the Parvathi's incarnations, *Kāli* kills Chanda and Munda, the chief warriors of the Asura king. This pleased Parvathi, and she called *Kāli* as '*Chāmundi*'. According to the *tōttam pāttu*, *Chāmundi* is performed and worshiped as *Madayilchāmundi*.

Analysis of Myths

The myth of *Pottam teyyam* directly speaks of social oppression. It lays bare the struggle between the 'high' caste and 'low' caste, through the symbols of Sankaracharya, and the Pulaya. The essence of the tale is laid on the 'universal truth' that all human beings are equal. Now, let us take a view on the origin of the two symbols Sankaracharya and the Pulayan. Both had a common root.

Sankaracharya was considered as the human incarnation of Siva, and the Pulayan also as an incarnation of Siva. This did not happen in a mere accident. It happened out of great consciousness. Both incarnations of Siva were placed in opposite sides consciously to prove and underline the 'reality' that 'all humans are equal'. My observations on *Pottan teyyam*, over years reveal this fact.

The informants told me that in the past the practice of *punam krishi* (shifting cultivation) was very much present in the high ranges of North Malabar. Whenever the people cultivate in *punam* fields, they perform *Pottan teyyam* in the field itself for getting good yield, and protection. The people believe that the faith in *Pottan teyyam* will drive away all destructive wild beasts. The costumes, and other wearings including, the *mughapala* (mask) of *Pottan teyyam* essentially give it an appearance of wild beast. The mask reflects a face of a beast rather than a human being. The ritual *theepanakku* (lying in fire) during the performance also symbolically indicates the

glimpse of once prevalent 'slash and burn' cultivation. Thus, the appearance and performance indicate the nature-animal worship. How does the *tōttam pāttu* reveal another story of Siva and Sankaracharya? The answer is very simple: it happened along with the assimilation of Hinduism. The super-imposed Hinduised myth dominates over the original one. The same happened in almost all the *teyyam* myths.

Now we shall turn to analyse the tale of *Palenthayi Kannan*, which expresses the brutishness of feudalism. In a service-return based society, the 'high' caste people considered the 'low' caste people as their slaves. *Palenthayi Kannan* and *Karuvattu Kuruppu* represent the 'low' and the 'high' castes, respectively. The myth also lay open the fact that the society treats even unconsciously done mistakes, and even minute mistakes of the low castes as 'serious' and 'punitive'. Similarly, the ritual *chithravadhham* (also known as *hiranyavadham*) symbolically sketches the killing and consumption of prey. Another ritual performed during the performance, with *moghompidi* (a pig mask), is indicating its animal connection. According to the *tōttam pāttu*, soon after the murder of *Palenthayi Kannan*, *Vishnumūrthi* attacks the cattle of the villain. This also gives some clues to the fact that this deity inflicted destruction over cattle, pointing towards leopard worship. The appearance of the *teyyam* also indicates some facts to confirm this argument. *Vishnumūrthi* is considered as a male *teyyam*. But at the same time, it wears *aroda*, as specially designed *aniyalam*, which is worn only by the female *teyyams*. These peculiarities reveal that it is of neuter gender. Both male and female animals cause destruction over cattle. In this way, it is very clear that the worship of *Narasimha* was super imposed over animal worship. The people clearly did weave the Sanskritic myth over the original one, after the assimilation of Hinduism.

The myth of *Karimkuttichāthan* speaks about the practice of pastoralism, and expiation of unjustifiable behaviour against a cowboy. This *teyyam* also draws a picture of feudalism, and the feelings of 'high' and 'low'. The laymen were submissive and lived as a mere tool of the 'superior'. They were punished heavily even for minor 'crimes'. The misfortunes of the servants or, 'inferiors' are symbolically portrayed in this myth. The black spots marked all over the body of *Karimkuttichāthan* express the deadly persecution experienced by the cowboy from his master. To redress the sin, and the unjust and improper behaviour against the 'inferior' or the poor, the 'superior' caste people symbolically made *chāthan* as one of their deities, and worshipped him as, *Karimkuttichāthan teyyam*. The myth also indicates the defeat of Pre-Aryans people by the Aryan invaders. While *Chāthan* represents the indigenous people, *Kalakādan* represents the Aryans.

Unlike the *tōttam pāttu* of *Madayilchāmundi* that tells the legend of goddess *Kāli*, it also has a recessive myth that reveals the animistic feelings of the primitive. The undefeated pig is considered as super human and is worshipped as divine. The use of pseudo pig face, *moghompidi*, confirms the above argument. The symbolic ritual, *kozhi chavittal* (pressing a fowl by the feet) during performance also supports our viewpoint, since it reminds us the killing of *Vannadil Poduval* and his wife narrated in the old story. Further, *Madayilchāmundi*, the name itself indicates the cave dwelling of a pig.

Rituals

The myth and rituals of *teyyam* have a common theme of reference. It has a structure and function. The structure reflects the local customs and practices, rooted in the social realm and relations. Since, the *teyyam* being the sacred and profane, rituals are

important. In *teyyam*, it functions through the people's memory that is also a product of culture and nature in general, and social discriminations and exploitations in particular. According of Kishore Jadav,

Ritual, pervasive kind of behaviour can be as basic to the understanding of the man. Man is sometimes described or designed as a basically rational, economic, political or playing species. Man may, however, also be viewed as a ritual being, who exhibits a striking parallel between his ritual and verbal behaviour. Since ritual is a specific, observable kind of behaviour based upon established or traditional rules laid down by all known societies. It possible to view ritual as a way of defining or describing man. (1998:41)

This view endorses our contention. The French sociologists Durkheim says that,

Ritual is a determined mode of action. The reference, or object, of ritual is the belief system of a society, which is constituted by a classification of everything into the realms of the sacred and profane. (cit. Kishore Jadav 1998:43)

His words also give a fit explanation, even of the belief-system that governs the people, and *teyyam* reflecting that belief-system in a dynamic concrete form of religious performance.

Edmond Leach defines ritual as "culturally defined sets of behaviour" (cit. Pallath 1995:8). Nancy Munn elaborates its definition in that ritual is found,

As a generalized medium of social interaction in which the vehicle for constructing messages are iconic symbols (acts, words, or things) that convert the load of significance or

complex socio-cultural meanings embedded in and generated by the ongoing processes of social existence into a communication currency. In other words, shared socio-cultural meaning constitute the utilities that are symbolically transacted through the medium ritual action.

(cit. Pallath 1995:10)

Teyyam also represents a generalised medium of social interaction through message, conveying iconic symbols. Ritual is a symbolic representation of events based on myth. It is practised without change and maintained through performance. Without myth, rituals have no existence, and both of them are inseparably tied together. The myth of *teyyam* creates customs, which are continued and modified into rituals. In the field of *teyyam*, the rituals are practised and performed without any change, and are maintained through worship and performance. Sound knowledge of a particular myth is essential both for the appreciation, and the performance of a *teyyam*. Otherwise, one cannot understand where the ritualized signifiers are pointing at the time of performance.

Many rituals are performed from the beginning to the end of *teyyam* celebration. These rituals have a common framework originating from the belief system, and worship. They are sustained by the regular practise of performances, and worship.

Table: IV.1 Basic Rituals of Teyyam Performance

Stage	Rituals	
1	Worship (<i>prarthana</i> Or Devotion)	<i>Adayalam Kodukal</i>
2	Performance	<i>Thudangal/Tottam/Vellattam/ Kottithudangal/Teyyam Kettal</i>
3	Distribution of gifts and cleaning	<i>KoluKodukal/Koluwangal/ kariadikal</i>

The rituals can be divided into three sets. The preparatory step, that can be taken as the first step has *prarthana* (worship) and *aday lam kodukal* (giving token for taking charge). In the second step, that is the main, and the brightest part of *teyyam* performance, the rituals start with the *tudangal* (starting) and end in *vilakkuzhiyal* (worshipping the fire, and releasing deities). The final step of *teyyam* celebration includes *k lukodukkal* and *k luwangal* (distribution of gifts), *kariyadikkal* (cleaning of sacred place), and worship (praise). The collection of these rituals forms the base and structure of *teyyam* celebration.

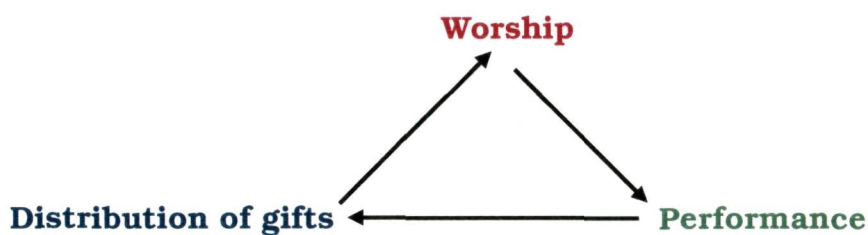


Figure: IV.2 Basic Rituals of Teyyam Performance

Worship

The faith in *teyyam* is directly linked with the belief-system, embedded in religion and magic. If a devotee makes arrangements for the performance of *teyyam*, it would be only when he has trust and confidence in *teyyam* worship (*prarthana* or devotion/praise). This system of belief, and worship, is framed as the initial ritual in *teyyam* performance. After performance, the devotee's confidence and ardent attachment go high, and their psychic satisfaction reiterates the worship, and makes it all the more powerful.

Worship exists as the symbol of people's worldview, and the belief-system. It is the practice of worship that gives the threshold energy to *teyyam*. It exists in and through various myth, ritual, and performances. As noted above, *teyyam* celebration begins and ends with worship.

Adayalam Kodukal (Symbol of Agreement)

When a person wants to arrange the performance of *teyyam*, he goes straight to the performer's house after fixing a date tentatively for the performance. Sometimes, the devotees consult an astrologer to fix the date, but, it is not essential in all cases. The performer either receives *adayālam* (token for taking charge of *teyyam* performance, at a particular place, and on a particular date). He is usually invited to the house or, the sacred place of the celebrant to receive that *adayālam*. And the performer is given betel leaves, areca nut, and coins (now-a-days currencies) on this ritual, *adayālam kodukal*. The performer is given all these, usually by the *taravattumūppan* of the family that arranges for the performance. *Adayālam kodukal*, which marks the involvement of performers, is decisive of the whole performance, as it fixes the dates of the celebration in accordance with the lunar calculations. In most cases, however, the date

proposed by the celebrant will be chosen for celebration, if the performers do not have any inconvenience.

Performance

Performance of divine deities in a 'unique manner' gives *teyyam* celebration a distinct look. Various rituals are performed during a single performance itself. This is associated and completed with many other rituals. Turner writes in his theory of performance that,

Man is sapient animal, a tool making animal, a self-making animal, a symbol using animal, he is no less, a performing animal, Homo Performans. (cit. Pallath, 1995:17)

Teyyam endorses this view.

The performance of *teyyam* is the most important and unique ritual, since in which the deities are appeared before its devotees. It is the part and parcel of *teyyam* worship, for praising or, pleasing the deities. *Teyyam kettu* or *kōlam kettu* is the local phrase, which is used to refer to *teyyam* performance. There is a local saying, "*ithu enthoru kōlam?*" (what kind of dress or appearance is this?), when a person appears not well dressed. Hence, the word *kōlam* here refers the appearance of a person wearing a dress.

Teyyam kettu (performance) is done at night or day, according to its norms. *Teyyam* performance has two stages, a prior performance and a real performance. The prior performance includes, *tudangal*, *tōttam* or, *vellatam*. In the second stage of performance, the real *teyyam* will be performed.

Tudangal (Starting)

Tudangal or *kottitudangal* is nothing but announcing the starting of the *teyyam* performance. This initiation ritual is conducted in front of *sanctum sanctorum*, *somanam vathil*, by a group of performers. The group is led by its *mūppan*. The performers recite *stuthi* (prayers) of particular *teyyam* to be performed during that celebration. Playing of musical instruments such as, *chenda* (drum), *cheenikkuzhal* (pipe), and sometimes *elathalam* (cymbal) accompany the recitation. The *tudangal* is extended only for a short time, 30 to 60 minutes. *Tudangal* is done in an elaborate manner in the case of *Pottan teyyam*, and usually it lasts for hours. A single *tudangal* is enough in the case of more than one deity, worshipped at a single *sanctum*. But in the case of the large sacred centre, the deities are worshipped at different spots. In such places, the Malayan performs *tudangal* separately in the same manner in front of each spot. In few centres of *teyyam*, when the performance is *prarthana kaliyattam*, the *tudangal* is performed in evening or night prior to the performing day.

Tōttam

In the day of performance, a short while after *tudangal*, follows *tōttam*, the symbolic representation of *teyyam*. We cannot trace any kind of similarities between *teyyam* and *tōttam*, except in dance and rituals. All the important rituals of a particular *teyyam* are conducted symbolically in the *tōttam*.

The *tōttam* wears *chuttum kettum*. Generally, no decoration is used on the waist. Sometimes, *tōttam* adorns garlands, and specially designed necklaces. Soon after leaving the *aniyara* (open air green room), the performers bow before the *sanctum* and receive *kodeela* (a tip of plantain leaf with lighted wicks, a handful of rice, betel leaves, peaces of areca nut, and turmeric powder). By throwing rice, the

performer bows facing north, east, south and west, and after that the *kodeela* is placed on the *vadakken bagham* (north side of the yard of the centre). Thus, with certain assistance the performer wears small headgears such as, *komaban thalappali pāttam* (a rectangular shaped gear), and *oppicha thalappali pāttam* (circular in shape) along with *thalappali* and *thalappu*. *Tōttam* does not wear ornaments on legs. The Malayan use sandal paste markings, *kuri*, on forehead, chest and hands in a peculiar fashion, instead of facial writings on the occasion of *tōttam* performance.

The disguised performer stands behind a *peedam* (wooden seat) on which a *chenda* is placed, in front of the sanctum. The celebrant dispenses betel leaves, and areca nut among the performers and their assistants. The performer spells aloud with folded arms “*vellisreepeedathinum thiruvayudhathinum ariyittu vandikka...*” (bows to the weapons and the sacred seat of *teyyam* by throwing rice), and follows the recitation of *tōttam pāttu* according to its rhythm and tune. Usually, a *tōttam pāttu* narrates the myth of the particular deity or *teyyam*. It has three phases such as, praising, narration of origin and history, and a description of the route of *teyyam*'s migration. By beating *chenda* (drum), either the performer or anyone among the assistants, recites *tōttam pāttu*. Some stanzas of *tōttam pāttu* are sung in chorus. Especially in the case of the Malayan, the females also take part in such chorus. Ordinarily, *tōttam pāttu* lasts for one to two hours.

After the completion of *tōttam pāttu*, the inspired performer performs *kalāsam* (dance) called, *urachil* (excitement). During *kalāsam*, *tōttam* is to perform certain rituals, and play with weapons. The *tōttam* of the Malayan distributes rice and ixora flowers during *kalāsam*. *Tōttam* does not speak but makes *attahāsam* or *muralal* (noise like roaring or grunting). After completing the important rituals of a

particular *teyyam*, the *tōttam* breaks a coconut, and throws it to the ground in a peculiar fashion. Then blesses everyone, and the performer himself removes the head decoration marking the end of that *tōttam*. The dress and other remaining decorative materials are removed in the green room.

Most of the *teyyams* are to be preceded by their own *tōttam*. It is a pilot kind of practice in the order of its performance. In all the big and important sacred centres of *teyyam*, one can find the performance of *uchcha tōttam*, and *anthi tōttam*. *Uchcha tōttam* is to be performed during the daytime, roughly between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. *Uchcha tōttam* does not perform all the rituals of *tōttam*. *Anthi tōttam* is the real *tōttam* that has to perform all the rituals generally expected of a *tōttam*. It is performed after the sunset between 7 p.m. and 2 a.m. at night. In great celebration like *perumkaliyāttam*, which lasts five to seven days, the main deities are performed only on the last day but, the *tōttam* of those deities are performed twice every day as *uchcha tōttam*, and *anthi tōttam*.

Kodeela tōttam is a kind that is performed without *kalasam*. The *tōttam* receives a *kodeela* with lighted wicks and holding that the performer has to bow facing north, east, south and west on the courtyard of the sanctum. After performing some rituals like *kuruthi tharpanam* (symbolic act of blood sacrifice), *kodiyila tōttam* leaves the courtyard.

Chuttilakal is also conducted during *tōttam*. It is performed only during great celebrations. *Velichapādu* or *kómaram* also joins at this stage of performance, and along with him the *tōttam* (a single *tōttam* or more) goes around the sanctum three times, just after the completion of *tōttam pāttu*, and before the beginning of *kalāsam*.

Table: IV.2 Teyyam have Tottam or Vellāttam

Teyyam Have	
<i>Tottam</i>	<i>Vellāttam</i>
<i>Vishnumurthi</i>	<i>Kuttichathan</i>
<i>Madayil Chamundi</i>	
<i>Raktha Chamundi</i>	<i>Thekkan Gulikan</i>
<i>Raktheshwari</i>	
<i>Panchuruli</i>	<i>Kandakarnan</i>
<i>Uchitta</i>	
<i>Bairavan</i>	<i>Muthappan</i>
<i>Moovalamkuzhi Chamundi</i>	
<i>Ottakolam</i>	

Vellāttam

Vellāttam is not very prevalent among the performances of the Malayan in the middle and northern side of North Malabar. In the southern side, however, the Malayan performs *Karimkuttichathan*, *Tekken Gulikan* (*Kuliyanthira*), and *Kandākarnan* along with *vellāttam*. In this area we cannot distinguish between *vellāttam* and *tōttam* performed by the Malayans at the first sight. The additional use of *vanchi* (a specially designed wearing resembling the hair on head) on the back of the head and the simple painting on face make *vellāttam* of southern side different from *tōttam*. But in the case of the northern region the *vellāttam* of *karimkuttichathan* appears like the *vellāttam* performed by the Vannan community. *Vellāttam* is performed without reciting *tōttam pāttu*. It also does not speak but only makes a few noises. Similar to the *tōttam* of the Malayan, his *vellāttam* also receives cash, which indicates a gift embodying its blessing. *Vellāttam* leaves the courtyard after its performance.

Teyyattam

Teyyam is performed during day or night according to its importance, tradition and custom, apart from the desire of the celebrant (in special cases). It is performed after *tudangal*, *töttam* or, *vellättam*. From *mughathezhuthu*, various rituals like *vechukettal* (wearing of decorations on the body), *kalupidikkal* (bowing the elders), *kodeela vangal*, *varavili*, *töttam padal*, *kalasam*, *munbasthanam*, *kuriyedukkal* and *kuri kodukkal*, *varana*, *kuruthi*, *kalasem* (toddy or arrack) *chuttal*, *mudiyazhikkal* and *kodeela vangal* are performed.

When the celebration is fixed with the ritual *adayālam kodukkal*, the appointment or selection of the performer to perform *teyyam* is also done. The knowledge and skill of the person is taken as the criterion for selection. Sometimes, the help of an astrologer is sought. He may select the performer, and he can be one who is 'believed to be pleased' by the deity to perform a particular *teyyam*.

Since the agreement to perform a *teyyam* is made, the performer has to observe certain abstinence. The Malayan observes the abstinence for one day or, three days or, five days or, seven days. Some times, even for 11 days in conformity with the importance of *teyyam*, which he is going to perform. In most of the cases of *teyyam*, and on most of the occasions, a single day's observance is enough. But, the Malayan will observe abstinence for three to five days before the performance of *Pottan teyyam*. If a person is selected to perform *Ottakkōlam* the length of observance should be seven to 11 days. Only on rare occasions, the selected performer should observe the abstinence in a *kuchil* (a small temporary hut-like structure) erected inside the boundary of the sacred place. According to the custom and tradition, the performers abstain from eating the remains, and

strictly avoid intimate physical contact with females during this period of abstinence. The avoidance of non-vegetarian food is also a part of this observance. This is certainly due to the influence of the so-called 'high' caste Hindus. The senior informants told me that this is a later trend and in old days, the Malayan freely took non-vegetarian food and alcohol because, they considered meat, fish and liquor as important items of offering to *teyyam*. Even today, the Malayans take toddy or arrack just before starting his performance. The pollution like *pula* (death pollution) or, *balayma* (birth pollution) does not cause any problem in performing *teyyam*. A purificatory bath in fresh water is more than enough to overcome this kind of pollution.

Mughathezhuthu is the first ritual when the performer gets ready to perform *teyyam* on the day of performance. It is the act of painting and drawing certain patterns on the face. *Mughathezhuthu* is followed by *vechukettal*, the wearing of *aniyalam* (attire-ornaments and dress). After *thalappali vekkal* (tying *talappali* on the forehead) the performer adorns with other head decorative pieces, *thalachamayam*. Wearing dress is the next stage, and decorating hand and legs follows it. *Mekkezhuthu* (painting on body) and body decoration is done in the last stage of this ritual. The other members of the performing group would help the performer to wear *aniyalam*.

Then the performer bows before the elders, and touches their feet, which is called *kalupidikkal*. The *mūppan* or, some other member of the performing group guides the performer to the courtyard of the sacred centre with a lighted oil lamp, *kaivilakku* or, lighted *chūttu* (leaf torch). Before obtaining a *kodeela*, the performer bows towards north, east and south, and also towards west, where the sanctum lies. The *kodeela* is placed before the *kaivilakku* that is already fixed on the *vadakkan bhagam*, and the performer recites *varavili* (a

magical chant which requests the particular deity to come there). The assistants recite *tōttam pāttu* in short form. At the end of *tōttam pāttu*, the *mudi*, *purathattu*, *uda* and the *mugham* are fixed. The *varavili*, and *tōttam pāttu* helps the performer to possess the deity.

Soon after fixing *mudi*, *uda* or *mugham*, and possession, the *teyyam* (performer) performs *kalāsam* (dance) in a state of almost trance. The Malayan plays various rhythms on drums from the *vechukettal* onwards to the end of *kalāsam*, before the ritual *munbasthanam*. There are different kinds of steps for the dance, and *eduthukalāsam*, *asurāttam*, *villāttam*, *tekkenāttam*, and *chuttāttam* are some of them. The steps of a particular *teyyam* are unchangeable. A *teyyam* cannot do all *kalāsam* but, it performs its own steps. For example, *Vishnumūrthi* performs *villāttam*, a peculiar kind of dance, holding a bow and arrow in hands. *Madayilchāmundi* performs *tekkanāttam*, and *chuttāttam*. During the *kalāsam*, *teyyam* uses weapons. *Tekkanāttam* and *villāttam* are examples of *kalāsam* of *teyyam* with weapons. In certain stages of *kalāsam*, *teyyams* like *Vishnumūrthi*, *Madayilchāmundi*, and *Rakthachāmundi* tread the fire spot arranged on the northern side of the courtyard. *Pottan teyyam* sits and lies on *meleri* (fire) while *Uchitta* sits. *Ottakōlam* or, *Theechāmundi* jumps to the *meleri* (heap of fire) many times. The ritual is called, *meleripannaku*. *Madayilchāmundi* dances with lighted *chúttu* on both hands. *Kuttichāthan* also dances with *theekkotta* (a special device made up of *kuruthola*, inside of which is placed burning coal). *Kandākarnan* dances with *kettupantham* (big torch) around the waist, and *Raktheshwary* uses *kuthupantham* (torch) on the *uda* during dance.

Mumpasthanam makes the end of *kalāsam*. The expression of migratory route, and the way of arrival of the deity into the sacred place are warranted in *mumpasthanam*. *Kuriyedukkal* is the next

step of performance in which the *teyyam* takes ash or turmeric powders as *kuri* or *adayālam* (*prasadam*). Distribution of *kuri*, *kurikodukkal*, is followed then. The celebrant receives *kuri* at first, and then the *teyyam* calls out the devotees one by one according to their status and seniority and blesses them with *kuri*. In return the devotees offer cash and kinds. This is also the time for traditional counselling and guidance. People, both male and female, children and adults approach *teyyam* for the solution of their problems. The *teyyam* by offering practical solutions consoles the devotees. *Pretham kodukal* (releasing the dead soul) is also performed during the final stage of *kurikodukal*. The people of North Malabar believe that the dead soul of unnatural and immature death is not able to leave the world. The *teyyam* releases the dead soul through the ritual *pretham kodukal*. *Vishnumūrthi* is considered as the final authority of releasing *pretham*, the dead soul.

Parāna or *vārana* is performed between *kurikodukal* and *kuruthi* (sacrifice). The *teyyam* takes food (usually *aval*, *malar*, *pazham*, etc) symbolically at the time of *vārana*, and also drinks *elaneer* (tender coconut milk). *Vishnumūrthi*, *Madayilchāmundi*, and *Rakthachāmundi* take *vārana*. But *Pottan teyyam*, *Gulikan*, *Bairavan* etc., never performs *vārana*.

Almost all the *teyyams* of the Malayans do fowl sacrifice (*kozhi aravu*). After cutting off the head of the fowl, the blood (*chora* or *raktham*), that oozes out is mixed with *kuruthi* or *gursi* (made of water, turmeric powder and lime). The *gursi* is poured at the northern side, *vadakkan bhagam*. After that, the assistant gives betel leaves, and the *teyyam* not really but, symbolically chews the leaves. A coconut is broken and thrown at the courtyard in front of the sanctum called, *sobanam kānal* (fortune telling). According to the informants, if the two pieces of coconut turn upside, the sign is

prosperity, good health and long life. If one piece of coconut turns upside and the other turns down, it shows that the misfortunes are ended. The two pieces, that have turned upside down shows catastrophe. Then *teyyam* throws the betel leaves and the pieces of areca nut.

Vishnumūrthi and *Madayilchāmundi* use temporary masks. This mask is called *moghompidi*. It may be a facemask of pig, which is used during a particular stage of *kalāsam*. This is symbolic of the relationship between animal and *teyyam*. In certain big and important celebrations, *Vishnumūrthi* and *Rakthachāmundi* should go round the sanctum on a wooden vehicle, designed as tiger and pig, respectively (the tiger shaped vehicle is called as, *narivandi*). These rituals also point to the relationship of *teyyam* with some animals.

Thlabharam thūkal is a ritual that is related only to *Vishnumūrthi*. The informants said that this was performed according to the legend of Lord Krishna who had given a test to find out who (Rukmini, or Sathyabhama, the wives of Krishna) was more affectionate (devotion) towards him.

Vishnumūrthi, *Madayilchāmundi*, and *Rakthachāmundi* perform *kalesam chuzhalal* or *kalesam chuttal*. The *kalesakaran* takes the *kalesapathram* on his head and guides the *teyyam* three times around the sanctum. Going round the *kaliyambali* takes plays in small centres, and also in homes. This is a symbolic performance.

Irulurayal, another rare ritual, that is performed in a few sacred centers. The *tōttam* or *teyyam* alone goes to a distant fixed place to perform certain rituals in the night.

Ārādikkal is performed at the end of *teyyāttam*. A symbolic ritual purifies the *teyyam* before leaving the centre. This ritual is observed only in big celebrations.

Vilakuzhial is another ritual. Unlike other rituals, both the celebrant and the performer performed it jointly. Through this ritual, they release the diety/s that is present in the centre during performance. This ritual makes the completion of *teyyam* performance, the *teyyāttam*.

Kolu Vangal (Receiving wage/gifts)

During the feudal period, the performance was treated as *janmam* (birthright) of the lower castes. The feudal setup of that period gave the higher caste a socio-economic, and political dominance over lower castes. The masters gave rewards to the lower castes for their service in the form of gift, usually in cash (*panam*), which is called *kōlu*. Along with *panam*, the celebrant also used to give *ūnnari* (rice). The gift, *kōlu* is received by the *mūppan*, and he will distribute the shares to the members in accordance with their service.

Kariadikkal (Cleaning)

Clearing the sacred centre is another ritual. If a centre is a temporary or permanent, the unwanted remains, and other materials are removed from there, especially from its yard. This ritual is done on the third day after the celebration/performance, and the process is called, *Kariadikkal* (sweeping the waste).

Teyyam Celebrations (*Kaliyattam*)

Pallath says,

Teyyam rituals as well as the organization of the whole celebration is very fluid. The celebrant of highest authority is the eldest of the clan; his memory is the final word. It can fade according to age, thus the ritual celebration provides itself some amount of dynamism. One can notice variation in different celebration of the same *teyyam* within the ritual structure of the same celebration of . . . is a lot of room for variation and change. (1995)

This observation is not universal but, partially true. It is not applicable to all centres where the celebrations are done, calendarically every year. Moreover, the memory of the celebrant alone is not taken into consideration. It is taken along with other elders, performers and their views before finalizing the celebration.

The people of North Malabar use terms like *kaliyāttam*, *teyyam kettu*, *teyyam*, *teyyāttam*, *tira*, *tirayāttam*, *kōlam*, *kōlamkettu*, and *kettiyāttam* as synonyms for *teyyam* celebration. Usually the celebration starts in the evening, continues in the night, and ends before the end of the next day. At times, the celebration continues for three, five or, even seven days. Sometime, even for a month.

Normally, there are three kinds of *teyyam* celebrations: *prarthana kaliyāttam* (celebration in accordance with prayer or desire), *kalpana kaliyāttam* (celebration on a fixed date and time every year), and *perum kaliyāttam* (big celebration at an interval between two celebrations, that exceeds at least few years). The *prarthana kaliyāttam* lasts for only a single day (starts around at 4pm, and ends in the next evening at 4pm). In *kalpana kaliyāttam*, the small centres celebrate *teyyam* with single day performance, and in a few

centres the celebration extends up to one month as per the local custom. Some big centres like, *Kannangattu*, *Muchilodu* etc., celebrate *teyyam* for four to five days. *Perumkaliyāttam* is usually lasts for three to seven days or, more that period.

Table: IV.3 Teyyam Celebration and its Duration

Sl.No.	Celebrations	Duration
1	<i>Prarthana kaliyāttam</i>	Single day
2	<i>Kalpana kaliyāttam</i>	Single day
		More than a day
		Up to one month
3	<i>Perum kaliyāttam</i>	3 to 7 days
		More days

The celebration is of three kinds according to its social importance: private, communal and public. Most of the *prarthana kaliyāttams* are private. Majority of communal celebration are comes under *kalpana kaliyāttam*, and the public celebration includes all the three, *prarthana kaliyāttam*, *kalpana kaliyāttam*, and *perum kāliyattam*.

Gurusi

Gurusi, a ritual performed instead of *teyyam* celebration, if the celebrant is unable to celebrate *teyyam* performance in its full swing. Because of financial problems, he is able to worship his deities only through a part-performance, *gurusi*. The performers perform *gurusi* in the night symbolically by doing a *tōttam*-like performance.

Mudrakalāsam

This is also a part-performance. The performers perform certain rituals, symbolically, to satisfy the respective deities during *mudrakalāsam* or, *Elamkōlam*. The rituals, *gursi* and *mudrakalāsam* are devoid of *teyyam kettal*. Such performances are of with different aims. But, the devotion of the performers, and the celebrants remains same and strong.

From the foregone discussions, its clearly evident that *teyyam* has implant its roots very deep in the society. All its actions and activities are shaped according to the well and wish of the people. The whole spirit of *teyyam* rests on life, and intrinsically grappled with man's every-day experience, so it reflects every beats of the life, and been the pulse of the people.

Photo IV.1 Vishnumurthi Teyyam Anushtangal – Rituals



Varavili



Dance on Tengkallu



Kalasam Chuzhalal



**Koodiyattam with Poomaruthan
Teyyam**



Narivandiyeral



Varana



Kozhiaravu

Photo: IV.2 Traditional Way of Counselling & Guidance



“Vishnumurthi...Rakshikannae..!” Devotees with Teyyam



“What is your Problem..?” Devotees Discussing with Teyyam

Chapter V

*Jeyyam and the Malayan:
Adaptive Strategy for
Social Unity*

CHAPTER V

TEYYAM AND THE MALAYAN: ADAPTIVE STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL UNITY

The day-to-day life of North Malabar is more or less grappled with *teyyam* worship. Almost all the life activities have been directly or, indirectly revolving round the special kind of belief system embodied in the *teyyam* worship. As a socio-cultural panacea of North Malabar, *teyyam* relieves the tensions of the people, and is said to bring social solidarity and integrity. *Teyyam* at its best welds knowledge and technique, and unites religion, magic and science. It also controls even the contracts between social individuals. Having the 'divine' power, it has played a vital role in the formation of the social network. This network includes *teyyam* and performer, the Malayan, who too has to do certain roles in the socio-cultural milieu of North Malabar.

Significance of *Teyyam*

Teyyam emerged from man's social adjustment to the environment for the sake of survival and existence. *Teyyam* often describes symbolically the actual social relations, status, and the role of individual in the society. *Teyyam* is the repository of genuine expression, imagery, truth, and ethical conceptions of the people, who belong to North Malabar. All rituals connected with *teyyam* performance emerge out of the belief system, and have their meaning only in relation to this system. The rituals are patterned on myth or, some aspects of myth. These rituals mark the crisis in individual or, social life—a crisis that is present as a transition from one mode of life to another.

Teyyam is the most important element of adaptive strategy, that binds the multi-caste groups of North Malabar under a common belief system. The rituals that emerge out of the belief-system constitute a firm social frame. The 'nature-man-spirit complex', and the social structure based on caste systems of this region further strengthen the adaptive ability of *teyyam*. *Teyyam* has a traditional agential role in healing and counselling in a situation, when everyone in the village is socio-religiously held together. Thus, *teyyam* acts as a 'social doctor' and 'social engineer', by providing conceptual tools to control and care many 'diseases' in social relations.

Social Structure of North Malabar

Like any other society, the social network of North Malabar takes its form on the terrain of caste, class and other social hierarchies found in human relations. The components for this active process of the formation of social structure are human beings themselves. Family, being the smallest unit, basically regulates the hierarchies and contributes to institutionalize relationships. These institutionalized relations constitute the core of this phenomenon. According to Brown, 'a complex network of social relations connects human beings'. He uses the term 'social structure' to denote this network of 'actually existing relations'.

I quote Brown:

Social structures are just as real as are individual organisms. A complex organism is a collection of living cells and interstitial fluids arranged in a certain structure; and a living cell is similarly a structural arrangement of complex molecules. (1952:190)

The same is true even with the society of North Malabar. The society of North Malabar is mainly stratified into three components in terms of religion: Hindu, Muslim and Christian. Religions like Jainism and Buddhism are not present in this area today. These three social groups have their own life-styles, and behaviour. The Hindus are the dominant ones and, traditionally, they are said to be the old inhabitants, the *Mapila* (Muslim), and *Christyani* (Christian) the later migrant group. It is the dominant Hindus, who came in close touch with *teyyam* through an attempt at assimilation. This is why the structure of the Hindu caste society overlaps with that of *teyyam*. Precisely because of this reason, *teyyam* is to be studied closely.

A close look at the traditional social structure of North Malabar shows a multi faced, three folded, correlated interactive divisions: the sacred, the religious, and the political structure.

Traditional Sacred Structure of North Malabar

In chapter III, the sacred center and its structure have been elaborately discussed.

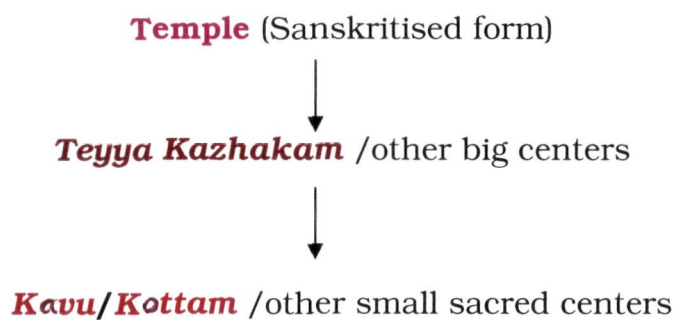


Figure: V.1 Traditional Sacred Structure of North Malabar

The Sanskritised temple stands on the top, and the local *teyyam* centers are placed at the bottom in the hierarchy of the structure. This sacred part of the structure is always kept in touch with the

other two ingredients of social structure: the religious and the political. The former gives it life, and the latter, orderliness.

Traditional Political Structure

The traditional political structure emerged out of the socio-cultural interaction. The political structure was formed drawing the religious concepts of law and order. *Tampurān* or *nāduvāzhi* (local ruler), was the supreme authority, who preserved ‘peace and harmony’ in the society, through his representatives like, *tantri*, *kōyma*, *ūralanmār*, *tarakār*, etc. According to the desire and decision of *tampurān* or *nāduvāzhi* the Brahmin priest, *tantri* prescribed the procedure of sacred and profane. The *kōyma*, *ūralanmār* or *tarakār*, and *taravāttu Kāranavar* or *mūppan* watched and kept vigil to find out if anyone would go against these regulations. To impose and implement rules and regulations, the political setup also made use of the sacred structure. Each and every sacred center in the area creates awareness on this matter to the people.

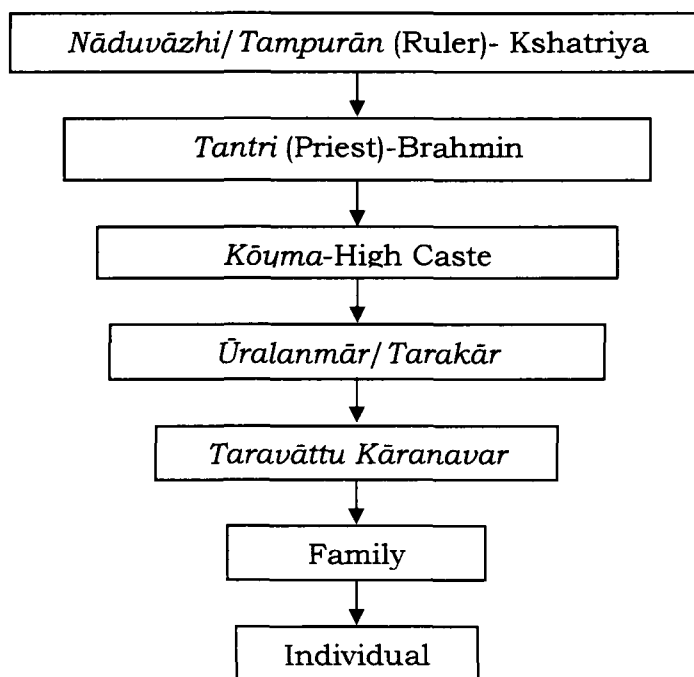


Figure: V.2 Traditional Political Structure of North Malabar

At present, the *tampuran* or *naduvazhi* has lost its power due to modern political-system, but the *tantris* continue to play a role in *teyyam*. He is a very important official now.

Traditional Hindu Religious Structure

Varna refers to the four main categories into which the Hindu society is traditionally divided (Dube 1955, Panikkar 1955, Ghurye 1961, Beteille 1966, Mandelbaum 1970). The whole Hindu society is commonly stratified into Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vyshya, and Shudra.

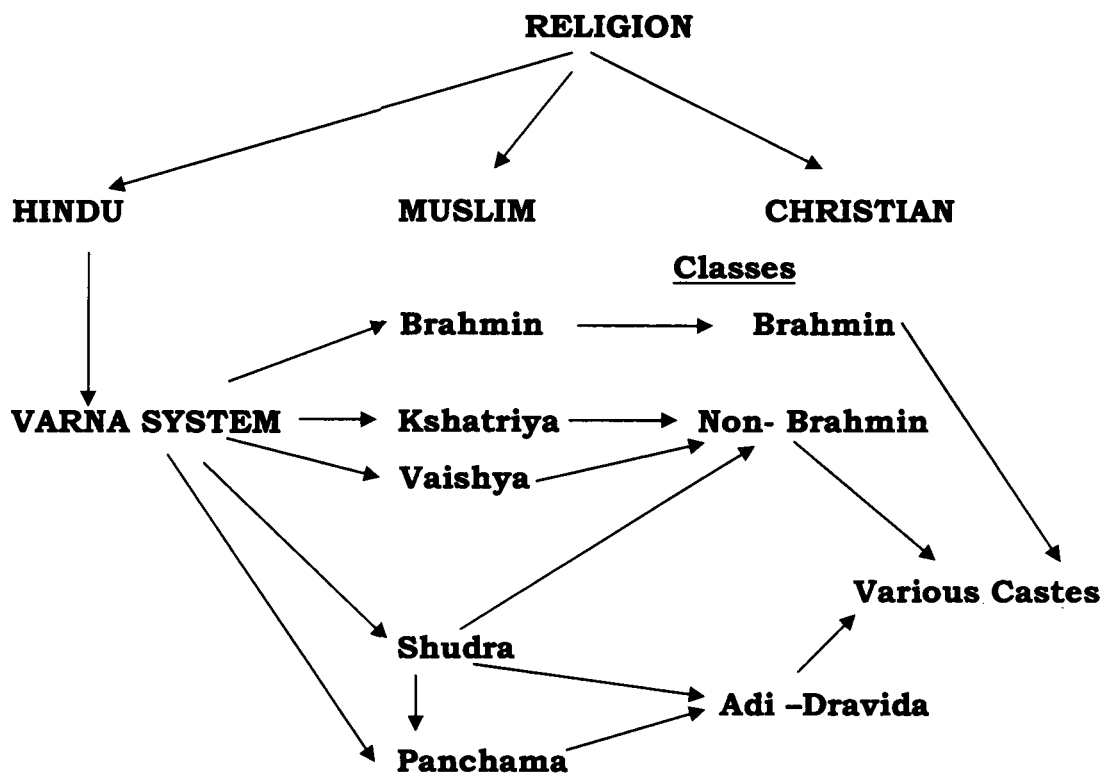


Figure: V.3 Traditional Religious Structure of North Malabar

The four *varnas* are further divided into so many castes and sub-castes. Each has its own position in terms of certain criteria. The smaller sub-sections are known as, *jati* or *samudayam*. In general, the English word ‘caste’ is used to denote either *varna* or *jati*, not only by the foreigners but also by the Indians. It is because of Hindu

religion, the caste is the unique characteristic of the social structure of North Malabar. It exists by caste ties. This phenomenon of caste relationship is maintained through what we call the 'caste system'. Renjini says,

A unique system of social stratification based on caste system. Though not purely, was prevalent in Kerala. The caste system when began as a rudimentary form of social stratification in Kerala had been crystallized into a highly differentiated form during the Sangham period. The caste ranking in practice, was more elaborate in Kerala than in any other part of the sub continent. (2000:2)

Caste System of North Malabar

The traditional Hindu society has a unique social phenomenon, the *varna* system. Each *varna* is divided into many *jatis* or *castes* (Hutton 1951, Srinivas 1952, Majumdar 1958, Ghurye 1961, Beteille 1966, Mandalbaum 1970, Ketkar 1979), and each of them has its sub-divisions. But, I would like to divide the Hindu society into three, the Brahmins, the Non-Brahmins, and the untouchables, Adi-Dravidas. It is this classification, which is adopted from Beteille (1966) who used to classify the society of a Tanjore village-Sripuram, a working one, which prevails in this area rather than the traditional four folded *varna* system.

Each division has settled in its own area of residence. The Brahmins live in houses known as, *illams*, the wealthy high castes among the Non-Brahmins live in *nālukettu*, and all other castes reside in thatched huts. The untouchables, Adi-Dravidas were not allowed to enter even in the hamlet of the high castes due to the strict observations of the system of *purity and pollution*. Anyone's purity is at risk, if he comes into close contact with a lower one. It was

concretized; a low caste person could pollute a high caste person by coming even within a certain 'distance' from the latter. For example, a Pulayan could pollute a Brahmin at a distance of 64 feet. The members of high caste often refuse or, avoid eating or taking food and water from the low-caste people. If they do so, they would suffer pollution. Then, the pollution would have to be removed by appropriate and prescribed rituals. To remove mild pollutions, bathing is enough. Severe pollutions demand more complicated rituals. Some acts like illicit sexual relationship with lower caste would need outcasting. This is changed now, and the system has almost weakened.

In past, the Brahmins, the Non-Brahmins and the Adi-Dravidas live in different parts. They have occupied different positions in the economic structure. As said earlier the Brahmins own land, and they are also been engaged in various priestly functions, domestic and external related to temple. Pdārans, a rare group of people who themselves claim that they are Brahmins, are also engaged in temple priesthood.

The Non-Brahmins are basically cultivators and service renders. Among them, Ambalavāsi, Vāriyar, Nambisan, Mārar, Poduval etc., who extend their service as temple servants. Principal cultivating castes among them are Nair, Maniyāni, Vāniyan and Tiyyan. The artisans include potters, carpenters, weavers etc. The Kusavan (pot maker), Āsāri (carpenter), Mūsari (ballotter), Kollan (black smith), Tattān (gold smith), Chaliyan (weaver), Kaniyan (umbrella maker and astrologer), Chembooti (copper smith), Kdaran (painter) and Muari (mason) are some other examples. The servicing castes includes, warrior (Nair and Tiyyan), washer man (Vannathān, who wash the cloths of the 'high' caste persons, and Vannāthi who serves the Tiyyas as washer woman), barbers (Nāthiyan, who serve the high

castes, and Kāthiyan serves the Tiyyan), fishermen (Mukkuvan, Moyon etc.), performer (Kaniyān, traditional astrologer and who also performs some rituals), toddy tapper (Tiyyan), etc.

All the Adi-Dravidas are servicing castes. The agricultural labourer, Pulayan, extends his service to the landowners, and tenants. The castes like Malayan, Vannān, Vēlan, Pulayan, Anjutān, Munnutān, Chingatan, Mayilan, Kopalan, etc., serves the society as *teyyam* performers. Pulluvan performs some rituals. There are boatman (Valluvan), toddy taper (Karimpalan), cobbler (Cheriputhi or Chakliyan), and the scavenger (Tōti) also among the Adi-Dravidas. Vannāthi, the woman of Vannān serves as a washer women to the Tiyya, who also washes the clothes of the prsons of 'higher' castes, during puberty, delivery, death, etc.

The Brahmins, the Non-Brahmins and, the Adi-Dravidas have striking differences in their physical appearance. The Brahmins are regarded as fair, sharp-nosed and more 'refined'. The Non-Brahmins are also considered fair, and almost similar to Brahmins. But, the Adi-Dravidas appears darker, shorter and broad-nosed than the others. Thus, the physical appearance of the Brahmins essentially has given them an upper hand over the others.

Dress also ascertains the boundary of castes. The lower ranked Non-Brahmins, and the Adi-Dravidas have never been allowed to wear clothes below knee and above waist. The Brahmins, and the aristocratic Non-Brahmins wear upper garment, *vēshti*. Hairstyle also expresses the caste identity. Each group has distinctive hairstyles. Ritual separation is being elaborated to a high degree in the society. It maintains the sectarian elements within the caste system. Usually, two castes will not inter-dine unless the distance between them is less. The Brahmins do not accept cooked food from

the Non-Brahmins, and the Adi-Dravidas but, the latter accept it from them. The Brahmins, the Non-Brahmins and Adi-Dravidas behave differently. But the sub-divisions of these three divisions, castes, also behave in dissimilar fashions.

Table: V.1 Castes and their respective traditional occupation

Class	Traditional Occupation		Caste
Brahmins	Priest		<i>Nambuthiri</i> (<i>Namboori</i>)
			<i>Pdaran</i>
Non-Brahmins	Temple service		<i>Ambalavasi</i>
			<i>Marar</i>
			<i>Nambisan</i>
			<i>Poduval</i>
			<i>Variyar</i>
	Artisan	Potter	<i>Kusavan</i>
		Carpenter	<i>Asari</i>
		Blacksmith	<i>Kollan</i>
		Gold smith	<i>Thattan</i>
		Belleter	<i>Musari</i>
		Weaver	<i>Chalyan</i>
		Painter	<i>Kdaran</i> (for Sacred Centres only)
		Copper smith	<i>Chembutty</i>
		Mason	<i>Muvari</i>
			<i>Maniyani</i>
	Service	Warrior	<i>Nair</i>
			<i>Tiyyan</i>
		Trader & Oil-presser	<i>Vaniyan</i>
		Washermen	<i>Vannathan</i>
		Barber	<i>Nathiyani</i>
<i>Kathiyani</i>			

Class	Traditional Occupation	Caste
	Fisherman	<i>Mukkuvan</i>
	Fish trader	<i>Moyon</i>
	Performer	<i>Kaniyān</i>
	Astrologer	
	Toddy taper	<i>Tiyyan</i>
Adi-Dravidas	Teyyam Performer	<i>Malayan</i>
		<i>Vannan</i>
		<i>Velan</i>
		<i>Pulayan</i>
		<i>Mavilan</i>
		<i>Chingathan</i>
		<i>Kopalan</i>
		<i>Anjutan</i>
		<i>Munnutan</i>
	<i>Pulluvan</i>	
	Washerwomen	<i>Vannathi</i>
	Agriculture Labourer	<i>Pulayan</i>
	Toddy taper	<i>Karimpalan</i>
Boat-men	<i>Valluvan</i>	
Cobbler	<i>Chakliyan (Cheruputhi)</i>	
Scavenger	<i>Tōti</i>	

The economic structure of North Malabar has a special kind of system that characterizes a service-return relationship. Under this system each caste group within a territorial division is expected to give certain standardized services to the families of other castes. For example, a *Nāthiyan* (barber) cuts hair of a higher caste man but, he does not extend his service to others. Each man works for respective family or group of families, with which he has hereditary ties. His predecessor worked for the same families before him, and his

successor will continue to work for them because, the caste is the determinant of the occupation or service. In return, the serving person will get cash or kind. In this manner, the Malayan, the traditional performer of magic, medicine, midwifery, and *teyyam* extends his services to particular families, residing in a territory, or to groups of families with which he has hereditary ties. In return, he gets cash and kind. The system has also been shown that each and every caste constitutes two-way interaction, one way they give service to others, and on the other way, they receive service from others.

We have seen the differentiation in the styles of living to be of a very high degree within the caste system. This had happened because, the society strictly marked the caste boundary and rank between the Brahmins, the Non-Brahmins, and the Adi-Dravidas. Beyond this point there is a good deal of ambiguity among various castes within the division of the Non-Brahmins, and the Adi-Dravidas. The Āsāri claims to be Brahmin; the Maniyāni, Vāniya and Vannathān claim to be Nairs; they try to make use of stories, legends and myths to prove their claim. These are never being conflicting claims to superior ranks or, status, and often it is impossible to speak of a consensus. These ambiguities are essential in a system that seems always to have permitted a certain degree of facility.

A question that requires an answer regarding the 'low' castes is, "why are they considered as low and impure-being?" This disturbs their lives and actions. To overcome such defunct, and mental strain, the society has been started to mime high castes by knitting fit myths and stories. It is a continuing process of '*equalization*' among the bottom-layers. We can find several examples but, I would like to discuss only a couple of them to prove such tendency of '*equalization*' among the castes in North Malabar.

The *Nanguvarnam* is consisted of four 'low' castes, Āsāri, Musāri, Tattān and Kollan, and they claim themselves as a society equal to that of Brahmins since, they believe they are the descendants of *Deva Silpi Viswakarma*, the mythical architectural engineer of Devas. I found many persons of Nanguvarnam, who wear sacred thread. This is not only for self-satisfaction but also to communicate to others that they form a better society.

The other perfect example is none other than the Malayans, the focus of this study. They believe that their progenitor was a sage, *Agasthya Muni*. The myth of origin presented in *Malamashastram*, *Sathyaguruvachanam*, *Anniyarashastram* etc., supports this notion. They are proud of it, and wear *rudrakshamāla* (rosary made of *Elaeocarpus lanceolatus* beads) and, on few occasion, their own *poonul* (sacred thread) to show their status to the others. The Malayans also uses *chandanam* (sandal paste) and *basmam* (ash) to ritual body markings (*kuri*). During a few rituals, they hold *chural* (cane). The Malayans do all these for two reasons. First, to satisfy themselves that they are rishi putra Malayans (descendant of *rishi*, sage), and second, to perform an equally important ritual and to tell that their social 'status' is equal to that of the Brahmins. These two examples tell us about a unique 'trend': the tendency for *equalisation* among the Hindus. Such process never coincides with the concept of 'Sanskritisation' (Srinivas 1952, 1956). Sanskritisation,

Is a process where a low caste changes its customs, rites, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently twice-born castes.

(cit. Sangeet Kumar 2005:35)

The above said castes have neither adopted any kind of 'Sanskrit' way of living nor new customs, rites, rituals, and ideology. This is not being an upward movement or, an elevation. They continue to keep

old customs and practices, as they existed in the past. No changes have been occurring in their social-structure and culture. So, we can say that this process, 'the *equalisation* process among the caste Hindus, is nothing but a tendency of people, other than that of the Brahmins, to 'show' that others they had an 'equal' social or ritual 'status', and also for their self-satisfaction to minimise the mental strains'.

Being segmented in nature, the caste system is associated with a special characteristic, fission and fusion. Cases of small segment merging or fusing with an adjacent caste are not rare. For example, the *Nikkunnath Gurukal* segment at Kokkānissēri recently fused with Maniyāni. The Kurichians of Kannavam, and Wayanad divide themselves into separate groups showing the fission process.

Even though the social structure of North Malabar shows high degree of stratification, examples of interaction between castes are in plenty. The society assigns different activities to different sections. The harmonious working of the social system is made dependent on the mutual co-operation of the people. After independence, the then government of Kerala headed by the E.M.S. Namboothiripad's Ministry passed the revolutionary 'Kerala Land Reforms Act', which disturbed the feudal set up as well as the occupational homogeneity of the state. Today, many Brahmins have taken up what may be considered new occupations formerly religiously forbidden to them. There are clerks, teachers, and even last grade servants among them. The Non-Brahmins engage in various kinds of manual work. Almost all of the Non-Brahmins, and the Adi-Dravidas, except *teyyam* performers, do not give much interest to perform their traditional occupations, today. A large number of them have received government, and private employment. Several non-Brahmins are very successful in trade and business. In a few decades, the

traditional caste relationship has been altered. The agriculture based service-return system does not exist now. A good deal of overlap between the work of the Non-Brahmins, and the Adi-Dravidas is noticed. But at the same time, the Non-Brahmins, and the Adi-Dravidas do not involve directly or, indirectly on the Brahmin's traditional occupations.

The Malayan of North Malabar has to play multiple roles in the day-to-day life. First, he is a mesh of social network secondly, a performer, and finally a linking agent. He has been a link in the caste system, occupying a status and rank in the ritual and hereditary. As a performer, the Malayan brings the sacred world to the society. He stands between man and his sacred world, and also connects the past with the present. The chief aim of this chapter is to find out to what extent *teyyam* plays a role in the construction of the social structure of North Malabar with special reference to caste system.

Role of Malayan in the Social Set-up

The traditional specialist of magic, midwifery and *teyyam*, the Malayan, is placed among the Adi-Dravidas in the social hierarchy. By birth he is obliged to do three special kinds of services to a particular area and society. This is known as, *jenmam*. The *jenmam* is nothing but a modified form of bonded labour. Each and every member of the Malayan community of a territorial area is expected to give his services to other caste people. His father had served the same people before him, and as his children, they will continue to serve them tomorrow. The rite of heredity-based service is known as *jenmam*, while the man who extends service is called, *cherujenmi*. The term, *jenmam* is also used to indicate a particular territorial region. The caste system, and the economic structure of North Malabar do not allow the Malayan to change his occupation. They

are tied to a service-return system; nobody can break it. The server receives his income for his service soon after the auspicious function. The Malayans are of the opinion that the 'high' caste people are very much opportunists. They are allowed to enter anywhere in the 'upper' caste's home or settlement during the performance. But, the 'high' castes deal with them as 'untouchables', the moment the function is over.

The practise of *teyyam*, magic and midwifery gives the Malayans all necessary goods and cash to make a living. The performance of *teyyam* has given the Malayan some religious and ritual importance. The traditional 'sacred complex,' 'nature-man-spirit complex' needs sacred specialists to establish liaison with spirits. Thus, to exercise this task, the society assigns *teyyam* performers as sacred specialists and, he stands between the nature, and the spirit. The people converse with their deity through him by his specialized *teyyam* performance, and magic as well. With divine utterance, counselling and guidance, the performer satisfies the people. It is believed that the utterances of the performer, who takes a divine form, will bring prosperity and peace to the society.

The Malayan plays a significant role in the cultural life of North Malabar with their occupation and service specializations. He binds the nature and spirit by his *teyyam* performance. In that sense, he definitely links the society and culture. This shows that the Malayan maintains a cultural continuity in North Malabar between villages. The sacred centres, which have become the core of *teyyam* performance act, as a link between the villagers and performers, and in a broader sense, constitutes to what is perceived as society. Thus, by keeping the cultural continuity among human beings the Malayan necessarily combines the past, the present, and the future.

Relationship between the Malayans and others

In a service-based network of social setup the Malayans have traditionally been related to everyone in the society. This relation is seen in the mutual obligations, which includes individual and religion. According to Opler and Singh,

Not only does everyone have some place within the Hindu system, but it is significant that every group, from the Brahmin to Chamar caste, has been somehow integrated into the social and ceremonial round of the community and has been given some opportunity to feel indispensable and proud. (1948)

My observation on the life and practices of the Malayans in particular, and others in part leads to a quite different assessment. It seems evident that the relationships between the 'high', and the 'low' lend a hand to the exploitation of the 'inferior'. Land ownership being the bases of power, the high castes make the life of the others more difficult. The remedial activities of socio-political leaders, and organizations have succeeded to a small extent to question the arbitrarily held upper hand of the high caste in decisive matters. The increasing dependence on money and market has further contributed to weaken the old, notorious style of the caste system.

The old caste relationship is disturbed. The religious ritual, *teyyam*, is a means for the Malayan to continue the age-old service relation system but, only during the season of celebration. Each and every corner where *teyyam* is performed is linked with certain service relationship, and will have a story to tell regarding it. Heredity being the basis of relation between the celebrant, the performer, and the devotee, the phenomenon reflects a high degree of service-return relationships.

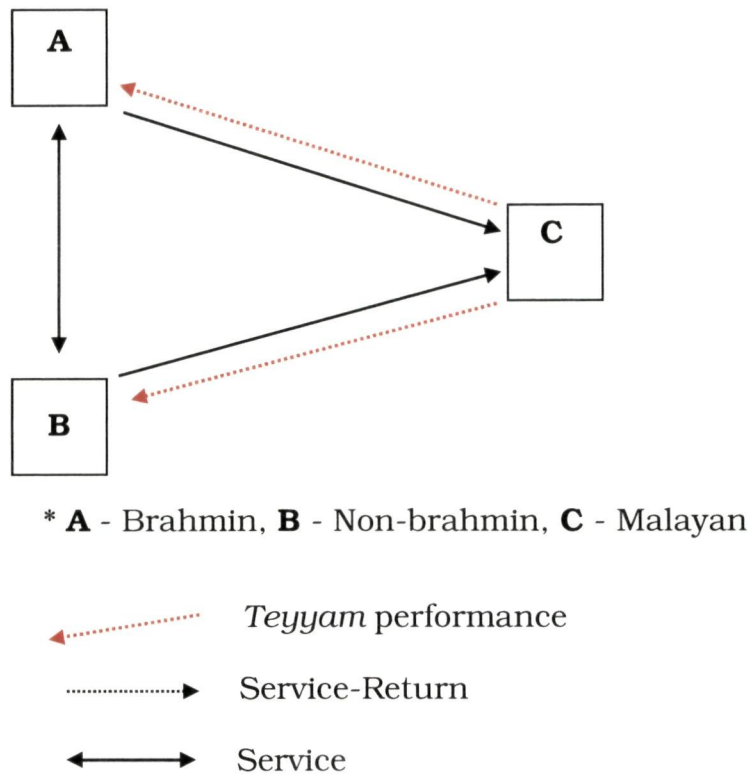


Figure: V.4 Service-Return Relationship of Malayan with the Non-brahmin and the Brahmin

The Malayans are considered to be a lower and polluting caste. They will not dine even with other *teyyam* performers and low castes. In the past, they got respect whenever the ‘high’ caste people received their service in the form of *teyyam* performance, magic, and midwifery.

At the time of these services, they are permitted to enter the house and allowed to touch even the Brahmins. Soon after their service, the high castes treat them as any other polluting lower castes. Even though the Malayan has been experiencing the ill effects of the lower status, they too consider the lowest caste as polluting. This happens because, it is believed firmly that nobody can deny the rules and regulations of caste system. The system has the strength to insist

each and every one to observe certain patterned behaviour, i.e., purity and pollution.

The interaction between other castes and the Malayans is a patterned one. The relation between other *teyyam* performing castes, and the Malayan needs special mention. The intercommunity interaction between the Malayan, and the other *teyyam* performers is characteristically limited. They believe that all other *teyyam* performers are 'inferior' to them hence, they do not take cooked food and accept drinking water from them. Nowadays, the progress of science and modern means of life alters and weakens the many traditional practices.

The new characteristic feature of social structure of North Malabar shows group dynamics. Traditionally, the social organization has been emphasising caste, kinship, and inter and intra community interactions. The present study of the Malayan of North Malabar has discovered still another dimension of the social structure, i.e., the existence of small cohesive groups within the caste, which has a locus of power and decision-making. These small cohesive groups constitute the very heart of social life. The formation of these factions is recent, and their emergence is closely related to the increase in jobs, outside the field of *teyyam*, and also to the gradual break down of old service-return socio-economic system. The progressive and educated Malayan living in urban or, nearby urban centres, do not have any interest to perform *teyyam* because of socio-economic reasons. The change in the man-nature-spirit complex of *teyyam* in a new environment of the money market, forces the people to observe *teyyam* as an 'art' more than as a 'social etiquette'. Moreover, the practise of *teyyam* generates only a low income. Consequently, there is a lack of attraction to the job of performing *teyyam*, and this forces the urban performers to give up their traditional 'bonded labour'

based service, and try for new employment and jobs. Now the traditional *teyyam* performers can be seen doing types of jobs that are totally different from performance. Recently, these small groups seem to be functional in the same way 'factions' are. The phenomenon of emergence of small dominant groups within the castes is common among all communities of North Malabar. Here I make an attempt to discuss this new phenomenon, and dimension seen in the social structure of North Malabar.

***Teyyam* and Society in the New Scenario**

All over the world we can see many rituals and performance, that are related to religion, society and culture. But, we cannot acknowledge a similar creation such as, *teyyam* anywhere in the world. The village people heavily depend on *teyyam* for their survival and existence. The limited technology and know-how insist them to trust in *teyyam* for the common good of everyone. The nature-man-spirit complex has been the backbone of the sacred structure of the people's life in North Malabar. There are enough grounds, religiously, and also in terms of social hierarchy, for the people to take *teyyam* as their 'science' and 'culture'. Their day-to-day life has been directly revolving round it. According to Pallath,

From the description of the life-cycle ceremonies, it is clear that the important life cycle ceremonies such as childbirth, initiation, and death and burial are celebrated with *teyyam*. Calendarical as well as devotional celebrations of *teyyam* almost determine the life of the people. (1983:57,58)

The social life of North Malabar still continues to be governed by caste. It has been shown that a number of castes constitute many compartments in the social divisions. In the Hindu set up, caste divisions play significantly both in actual social interactions, and in

the ideal values. Members of different castes are expected to behave differently, and to have different ideals and values. These differences are religiously sanctioned but, attested and presented as unchangeable. The individual position in the caste structure is fixed by birth, and is immutable.

The caste is a small and named group of persons characterized by hereditary membership, endogamy and specific style of life. Life-style here includes particular traditional occupations. Usually caste is associated with ritual status in a hierarchical system.

The difference in the style of living has a very high degree of difference with-in the caste system. The entire social setup of North Malabar is divided to constitute a segmented structure in which each segment is differentiated from the other, in terms of certain criteria. The division into segments is never made with an egalitarian basis. However, some are closer to each other. The distance between the Brahmins and the Nairs is less than the distance between the Brahmins and the Pulayans.

Different parts of the country have varied castes. Each caste group has its own separate identity. As said earlier, there are three main sections occupying different positions in the structural hierarchy: the Brahmins at the top, the Non-Brahmins in the middle, and the Adi-Dravidas (untouchables) at the bottom. Apart from their occupations in the economic, and the political systems these three groups are also associated with different qualities and attributes.

Status in the caste hierarchy is based partly upon wealth, but not entirely. It is also being associated with specific life styles. Characteristically, the Brahmins are landowners; the Non-Brahmins are cultivating tenants and service renders, and the Adi-Dravidas are agricultural labourers and service extenders. In a technologically

inactive and tradition-bound society, land was considered to be the principal form of wealth, and the whole economic activity revolves round it. Under such a socially stratified system, an institutionalized system of land-control, which may also be called 'feudal', was emerged. With the development of trade and commerce, industrial enterprises and dominant money-economy, the concept of 'wealth' began to change.

But in recent times, as a result of industrialization, urbanization, and the influence of modern education, technologies and science, the village life of North Malabar is changing fast, and it is more so with respect to the relationship between people and *teyyam*. Whenever culture undergoes change in tune with new trends, the myth, the ritual modes, and the performance type are also readjusted, accordingly.

Case Study-I

Traditionally, offering alcohol is common and unavoidable in *teyyam* performance. But soon after the independence, there is a ban on using alcohol, and *madyavarjanam*, that generated problems for *teyyam*. The ban had forced the people to find an alternative to liquor. In that circumstance, the people used *elaneer vellam* (tender coconut milk) instead of alcohol. This was ritually sanctioned and observed all over North Malabar in *teyyam* celebrations during that period.

Case Study-II

Madayilchāmundi performs a ritual called, *chuttāttam*. The ritual symbolically indicates the killing of the wife of *Vannādil* Poduval. During this ritual performance, the performer presses a fowl under his feet. A *taravādu*, situated very near to Payyanur, worship

Madayilchāmundi as the family deity. Years ago, at the time of nationalist movement, under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, the *Kāranavar* of that *taravādu* did not allow the killing of fowls. He strongly opposed the killing of fowls during *teyyam* at his *taravādu*. Since that time, the performers started performing *Madayilchāmundi* without fowl sacrifice, at that particular *taravādu*. As a result of this, instead of real performance, the performers imitate the action of kicking the fowl during *chuttāttam*. These cases clearly show the flexibility of *teyyam* performance in tune with the new trends, and the changes in culture.

As we have seen in the previous pages, *teyyam* performance is very much related to religion by its function and form. Earlier, with the limited technology and knowledge, the people mould their remedial measures for their existence in line with their 'culture-nature' interaction. The high degree of dependence on nature has possibly laid the foundation for 'nature-man-spirit complex'. The religion, the worldview, and the aesthetic sense of the human beings, prepare the ground for the germination of *teyyam*, a special kind of belief-system, and performance. 'Nature-man-spirit complex' being the backbone, the people of North Malabar gives trust in *teyyam* performance to get rid of socio-psychic diseases. Later, the introduction of modern and formal education brought serious changes in the outlook of the people. The view of Panikkar is worth quoting here:

Thus it will be noticed that the age in which we now move is one of transition and revolution, in which one form of society is rapidly passing off and its place being filled up by other forms fashioned after alien models...It is the educated masses that are responsible for welcoming and adopting them. (1900:274)

Education is one of the major agencies of socialization, an agency that ensures change. Education is commonly called as, the 'Light of Knowledge'. It removes the darkness of ignorance. The advanced technologies, and science, enforce the people to get rid of superstitious and irrational beliefs. But at same time, they cannot avoid *teyyam* performance, in spite of the fact that the nature-man-spirit interdependence does not work to the same degree and intensity in every aspect of culture and life as before. The weakening of 'nature-man-spirit complex' happens also due to the decrease in forest resources, and the impact of money and market.

The occupational mobility of North Malabar also ensures social change. Once, the caste-based society was highly segmented, every one was obliged to perform certain occupations, which fully rest on service-return system. In the land and heredity-based service return system, the Malayans had to do *teyyam*, magic and midwifery. They performed these three to make a living because, there were no alternatives. They had no training in other fields of knowledge hence, had no other choice. The formal education, attraction to new jobs and the modern innovations changed the Malayans attitude towards other occupations, a lot. The shift in occupation alters their viewpoint. A good number of them, who live in urban or sub-urban areas, have given up performing *teyyam*. The people of such locality are forced to bring people of the same community from villages to do the performance. Even though some significant changes are observed, the service-return and heredity-based old etiquette is still prevalent in *teyyam* performance. Still the Malayan of each village, who performs *teyyam*, extends his service on a fixed date and time every year during *teyyam* celebration, *kalpana kaliyāttam*. In most cases, he was not paid properly. Even then, the performer usually believed that it was his duty to do it even if the celebrant (*jenmi*) does not pay him properly. The celebrants take advantage of this folly

attitude of the performer. The celebration becomes rich in outlook, but the exploitation is still going on.

The constitutional safeguards such as, equality of opportunities and protection from social injustice, and exploitation also brings changes. The activities of political parties, welfare agencies, and eminent personalities brought about serious changes in the socio-political life of this area. Since the performance is treated as a *jenmam* right, most of the celebrants take any effort to increase the *kōlu* (wage/gift for performance). However, the increasing cost of living makes life more and more miserable. But recently, some positive attitudes from the celebrant are observed. It happened so by the awakening programmes and activities of welfare agencies, particularly those headed by the *Uthara Kerala Malayan Samudayoddharana Sangham*, and the newly formed *Malabar Area Teyyam Artists Association*, 'MATA'. The social discriminations, and injustice are plenty in *teyyam* performance. Almost all *teyyams* express the state of social discriminations in one way or another. The relationship between the celebrant and the performer also indicates high and low, superior and inferior attitudes. Nowadays, in accordance with the involvement and interference of political parties, welfare agencies, and eminent personalities this feature of *teyyam* weakens along with the alterations seen in the social structure of North Malabar. The alteration in the religious and political set up of this area force the people to watch *teyyam* performance, less 'social' and more 'art', and a 'folk art'. But, on the contrary, the worship-system based on *teyyam* and its divine power remains same.

After the exhibition of *teyyam* in 1982 at Delhi Asiad (Asian Games), *teyyam* has won an increasing popularity. Such events have given birth to new attitudes towards *teyyam*, and consequently it is seen more as 'folk-art'. Its scope for exhibition, and high artistic values

has given enough encouragement to watch *teyyam* as a 'piece of tourist attraction', and *teyyam*'s bodily dress materials are used as colourful decorative parts of public processions. However, *teyyam* has not lost its traditional stronghold in the society, and it still performs certain socio-cultural functions through its systems of belief, i.e., 'sacred' and 'profane'. I consider it worth quoting the following enlightening words of Durkheim, regarding 'sacred' and 'profane', before concluding this chapter:

This was the real characteristic of religious phenomena, that they always supposed a bipartite division of the whole universe, known and knowable, into distinct classes... Sacred things were those that the rules and regulations protected and isolated, profane things were those to which those regulations applied and which had to remain at a distance from the former. Religious beliefs then were the representations that expressed the nature of sacred things and the relations they maintained with each other or with profane things. (cit. D'Souza 2005:110)

Photo: V.1 Teyyam Officials



“Velichappadan” – An Oracle standing in front of a Centre



“Kalasakaran” with Kalasam

Photo: V.2 Celebrants, Performer & Devotees



What a Combination..!! Celebrants, Performers & Devotees

Chapter VI

Conclusions

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

In all societies, everyone does something for others or shows obligations to help others for the common good of humankind. It is a fact that a society cannot survive unless its members live in co-operation by helping each other. In ancient time, this was found among the tribes since their survival was depended upon mutual solidarity. The same is true even today with many of the tribes as well as other simple societies.

Another important fact to be noted here is that the members of a community, living with in the social geography cannot live as an isolated social group. They have to serve for others, by their contributions, while serving for others they also work for their own well being. The Malayans of North Malabar in Kerala is an example to this phenomenon.

The Malayans play a dual role: one as a member of the community, and the other as a member of the society, which consists of heterogenous populations. The foregoing pages narrate the first detailed ethnography of the Malayans of North Malabar of Kerala State. The Malayans are a major and important caste who performs *teyyam*, one of the magnificent rituals and religious customs of the people of Kerala. This group of people till today has been able to retain much of their cultural identity, because of the fact that they were considered as an endogamous caste, whose social position in the multi-caste village was fixed and unaltered. The social structure of North Malabar strengthened and more or less perpetuated the socio-cultural isolation and age-old customs. This has evolved primarily through mutual interaction between nature and man. That

is to say, the customs and practices of the area have been produced by a pattern of interaction or relationship between man and his ecosystem. The interdependent interaction, between individuals, individual and culture, which is called as mutualism or symbiosis, shows a two-way interaction and coexistence. This becomes possible for the Malayans through the performance and preservation of *teyyam*. The performance of *teyyam* in a way has shaped the social structure of North Malabar, and thus has influenced its history. The present study of the Malayans, and their religious-ritual performance *teyyam*, essentially and necessarily reviews the history of North Malabar.

The present study is an outcome of eight years of intensive, as well as systematic research. Anthropological research techniques have been used for data collection. Functionalism of Malinowski and structural-functionalism of Radcliffe Brown have been used for interpreting data. Further, the *teyyam* and its performance are being looked through the concept of 'nature-man-spirit complex' (Vidyardhi 1961, Sahay 1975, Mann 1978).

As many as 325 households, spread in 51 villages in North Malabar was selected as sample. Various scientific research tools, both quantitative and qualitative namely, observation, interview, case study, survey, genealogy, statistics, etc were employed to generate the data. Written documents, printed materials, including periodicals, were also used as the secondary source of data. The information thus gathered were systematically synthesized and analyzed according to the objectives adopted for the study. As part of the study, computational analysis has also been employed.

As with the case of any other aboriginal, the origin of the Malayans, one of the Scheduled Castes of North Malabar, could not be

historically reconstructed but, the local myths and legends tell us the story that they have direct relations with their surroundings-the hills and forests. The story of incarnations that revealed during magico-religious chants (*kanneru pāttu*) establishes this fact. Thurston (1909), and Singh (1996) also propose the same. In fact the word, 'Malayan' means, 'a man of *malai* (hill)', and thus, refers to their ancient past.

North Malabar, the northern tip of Kerala State, is famous not only in India but also abroad for its unique socio-cultural diversity and richness of flora and fauna. The topography is ideal for bio-diversity and the environment such as, thick forests, hills, rivers and valleys, mould the thinking of man and his activities directly or indirectly.

In respect of dress and ornaments, the Malayan had their own fashion and style of wearing. Both men and women exhibited simplicity. The culture and life style had also marked some difference. The time has changed. At present, we cannot distinguish a Malayan from others because, they freely use modern dresses and ornaments without any hesitation.

The Malayans are non-vegetarians, and very fond of fish and meat. The practice of *teyyam* and magic provide them with the opportunity for acquiring the essential commodities to prepare food. They mostly boil and roast the food items. They also drink alcohol, and their favorite choice being toddy. It is taken almost regularly by most of the adult males, and ceremoniously and occasionally by the youngsters. Generally, the females do not consume alcohol but, rare cases have been reported.

The Malayans of North Malabar show high literacy rate, and were able to achieve cent percent primary basic education. However, they have never shown interest to improve their skills and temperaments

to a higher level. The lack of motivation and material infrastructure has made these people mere school dropouts. The parents do not pay any attention to improve the educational standard of the children, who only mechanically visit the schools and become unsuccessful in getting higher level of education. It is possible that poverty, and a long period of hereditary profession of *teyyam* have prevented them from looking beyond their traditional social pattern.

The society of the Malayans is stratified into clan, lineage and family. Family is the basic and smallest unit of the Malayan's social as well as religious set up. In olden days, *taravādu*, a kind of laterally/horizontally extended joint family, was used to refer the family. Recently, the number of nuclear families is increasing. Since they live in a patriarchal society, the father or an eldest male leads the major activities in the family. The power of the head of the family is passed on to the eldest male after the head's death. The females enjoy less power, even though they have their influence in day-to-day matters. The young ones grow up under the control of elders.

Marriage meets the biological and social drives of the Malayan, and also serves as an institution for acquiring family and sustenance. The general norm accepted for marriage is monogamy and clan exogamy. A few incidents of polygyny have been reported but, polyandry is not reported. Child marriage is strictly avoided. Divorce is less in frequency, and remarriage is very common. Normally the ways of acquiring a mate is through negotiation. They strictly avoid parallel cousin-marriage. However, cross-cousin marriage is allowed. Elopement is also prevalent but, less in number. Inter-community and inter-religious marriages are also reported. The people consider the marriage between close relatives as incestuous, hence, it is forbidden. Practice of dowry or bride price in cash or kind is totally absent, but the groom has to pay a fixed amount (*ardhakannam*) to

the bride's brother and mother. The residence, after marriage, is either virilocal (patrilocal) or, neolocal.

The kinship ties of the Malayan shows the bond between person to person, either consanguineally or affinally. These ties express through kinship terminology, and the terminology shows more or less a difference between terms of address and terms of reference. There are denotative and classificatory terms. The rule of avoidance and joking relationship along with teknonymy is also present among the Malayans.

They are mainly animistic and believe in spirits, souls, ghosts and other unnatural powers. The religion of the Malayans always keeps a close touch with magic. It is in accordance with their religion that the belief system and the worldview of the Malayan are formed. They worship local deities in the form of *teyyam* like the others in this area. Change is noticed in religion. The people seem to be much impressed with Hinduism after the influence of the Hindu philosophy in this area. They also believe in all kinds of Hindu pantheon.

As far as their religious affinity is concerned, the Malayans, in addition to *teyyam* performance, celebrate all festivals and ceremonies of the Hindus. The people believe in casteism and observe untouchability, purity and pollution in addition to hierarchical demarcation. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the caste ties loosened due to the progressive socio-political movements by the efforts of great leaders, political parties, organizations and social reformers of Kerala.

The Malayan has a traditional caste council known as, *sangham*. Eminent personalities are selected from them to lead the council. The council is responsible for maintaining law and order in the society, and acts both as caste and political council. The political set up of

the Malayan is not well developed. It is submerged in the religious set up. Like religion, the political set up has no supreme head. Women are not competent, according to them. The council functions for the welfare and development of the society and enjoys judiciary powers. The council looks after the arbitration and settlement of social offenses. Change is also noticed in the traditional political set up. They trust the Indian Constitution and judiciary. The people have adopted the modern political set up, i.e. the party politics.

The economy of the Malayans shows different stages of development. In the distant past, it depended on nature. The eco-system then was very ideal for minor hunting and gathering. The Malayans usually go for minor games. Fishing is another favourite deed. The rivers, gullies and ponds that are, present everywhere in the area, provide good stalk of fish fauna. They also gather minor forest products such as, honey, tubers, roots, vegetables, fruits, seeds, medicinal plants and their parts. The materials used for making the attire of *teyyam* are also obtained from the local surroundings. The myth of origin, and their love for hunting and fishing, even today, expresses the glimpses of their attitude toward once prevalent hunting-gathering economy. Their religious belief, i.e., animistic, the worship of nature, plants and animals in the form of *teyyam*, tell us with clarity that once they were forest dwellers.

In the second stage, they depend on service-return economy. In this stage of economic development, the source of income can be divided into two, primary and secondary. The performance of *teyyam*, magic and midwifery supplies more income and other essential commodities, compared to hunting and gathering. Caste, being the base of socio-cultural activities, instigates everyone to extend certain services to others. In this service-return economic system the Malayan has to perform *teyyam*, magic and midwifery for the

common good of others. They receive cash and other goods, as gift and wage for their service. In addition to this, the Malayan also earns from secondary sources such as, minor hunting and gathering, and as a coolie. The shift of religious feeling, animism to polytheism or, 'primitive' religion to Hinduism, establishes casteism and encourages caste-based occupation that enforces the society to execute the service-return system, instead of nature-dependency. The popularity and universalization of *teyyam*, magic and midwifery all over North Malabar give the Malayan a space to practise the same within the service-return economy. In other words, the change in habitat and environment, i.e. from hills to plains, has forced these people to adopt a new economic system. Possibly this leads to the emergence of service-based economy.

In the present stage, the third stage of economic development, the Malayan heavily depends on market instead of nature. Recently the traditional income generating practices other than *teyyam* such as, magic and midwifery have become defunct. The Malayan earns more from non-traditional jobs in government and private sectors. The hunting and gathering, and fishing are modified into leisure time activities, which could not be nourished by the Malayan any longer. Industrialization, modernization, and the increased facility in transport disturbed the 'production-distribution-redistribution-consumption' equilibrium of this area. The establishment of market in front of the door started supplying everything the people need. The Malayan buys goods from market by paying money. The collapse of caste-based feudal system gave a new force to modify the insignificant service-return based economy. The nation's independence had much to contribute to all these developments. The influence of money as the unit of exchange also enriches the market economy. The division of labour among them is based on sex and age. The income of man is more than that of woman but, the

consumption of alcohol by men minimized their income and disallowed their economy to achieve a stable growth. As mentioned earlier, the people of this area got absorbed into the modern means of labour, and it has seized, almost permanently, any scope for midwifery now. The modern education and the recent developments in science and technology have succeeded in altering the outlook of laymen. The thinking process of them is said to acquire a 'more scientific' nature than ever before. Due to this new awareness, the importance of magic too has reduced. In this sense, the present study reveals the fact that even if the majority of the Malayans still depend on *teyyam*, they have readjusted their economic resources in tune with modern trends. Their increasing involvement in employment, other than *teyyam*, in private and government sectors can clearly explain this change. The change also indicates the evolution of the Malayan's economic organization, starting from hunting-gathering to market through a system of service-return economy, i.e., a shift from the practice of subsistence economy to the market economy.

The Malayan never shows interest in agriculture, horticulture, and animal rearing at any stage of economic pursuit, because, these practices are not fit for their day-to-day activities. Moreover, they do not get any opportunity other than that of *teyyam*, magic and midwifery to participate in the social and cultural fields. Although the practice of cultivation and pastoralism need hard manual work, the Malayan is not willing to do such activities like tilling and other works related to agriculture. The other important reason for their dislike towards cultivation and animal rearing is the lack of land. Traditionally they are landless people but, the sample survey shows that many families have small holdings. Laziness as well as mismanagement of land gradually minimized the possession of land by the Malayans.

Concept of property was not developed well in the past but at present, the Malayans have their own property. The caste as well as the ritual isolation has led them to maintain a life of material simplicity. Their dress, utensils, furniture, house, etc. all speak of simplicity. The household utensils and other implements are very few. The materials connected with *teyyam* and magic are shared either by the *taravādu* or by the family. But in the case of individual property, it is inherited by the male successor, and the daughters have no right over it. In the absence of sons, the same will become the property of the next nearest male successor.

The Malayans are experts in *teyyam*, magic and midwifery. Their aesthetic and artistic sense can be seen in the beautifully decorated *teyyam*. The *aniyalam* (costumes and wearing of *teyyam*), mainly made of wood, bears the evidence of their mastery in woodcarving. The excellent facial art explains their great skill in drawing and painting. The *tōttam pāttu*, *vadyam*, *kalasam*, etc express their talent in music and dance. The counselling and guidance that they use to give during the performance of a *teyyam* shows their temperament in psychosocial analysis. It is true the whole life activities of the Malayan, especially in connection with *teyyam* performance, confirm again and again the fact that the Malayan is a 'Master of many things'.

Celebrations and festivals go in tact with the Malayan's life. They ceremoniously celebrate the life cycle rituals. The Malayan's life is marked by different phases of life-cycle rituals through various rites, rituals and prohibitions. However, nowadays no importance is given to puberty, ear boring, name giving, hair cutting ceremonies, and pollution in connection with menses, birth and death. They are very keen to observe marriage, but it is performed just in a single day, instead of seven days in the past. No change is noticed in initiation

and death ceremonies, and ancestral worship. The Malayan celebrates all Hindu festivals in addition to local festivals. Besides this, these people also celebrate *teyyam* with more importance, dignity and respect.

Sex differentiation is well marked. Besides the household work, women contribute a decent share through the practice of magic and midwifery. Although women play vital roles in socio-economic spheres, their status is not high compared to that of men. The Malayan considers women as valuable but at the same time, keeps them indoors.

Teyyam is one among the different indigenous performances of the Kerala State. The performance possesses great socio-cultural values in the highly stratified society of North Malabar. It is inseparably tied with magic and religion. In accordance with the religious feelings, the people of North Malabar worship the nature, spirits, heroes and gods through *teyyam*. They find in each *teyyam* their different local deities. In the given ecological set up the Malayan has evolved some adjustments with nature through various sets of arrangements at social as well as religious levels to ensure their survival. In their struggle for existence and survival, the people of North Malabar interact continuously with their environment. The social arrangement and the world of religion put together, provide a well-adjusted plane. The religion has played an important role in shaping their life by providing a balance in their approach to meet the challenge of ecology of the area.

The two-way interaction between man, nature (environment) and religion led the people of North Malabar to a belief system according to which they believe that their destiny is guided and controlled by supernatural powers, locally known as *teyyam*. The *teyyam* is

invoked and propitiated by worship and performing. Several myths and rituals are submerged into it. The people consider *teyyam* as their local deity with a strong belief that it may bring peace and prosperity. *Teyyam* is treated as 'sacred and profane' and the performer necessarily occupies the position of a middleman in between men and *teyyam* or, nature and culture. Thus the interaction between man and his environment, the performers and *teyyam*, and the religion and worship exhibit a complexity that becomes the part of a whole, i.e., 'sacred complex' (Vidyarthi 1961). In other words, *teyyam* is emerged in a given space and time as a part of the whole culture; 'sacred complex', the 'nature-man-spirit complex' (Vidyarthi 1961, 1963; Sahay 1975, Mann 1978).

The people always widen their territorial boundaries in accordance with growth of population. It always resulted in the spread of human settlement far and wide all over North Malabar. This also necessitated the spread of *teyyam* over this area in every nook and corner of North Malabar. The people designed certain places for worship in tune with their eco-system. Naturally, the *teyyam* deities are wander everywhere but, the devotees opine that the deities always exist in their sacred centres. These centers are identified as *kāvu* (sacred grove), *ara* or *palliyara* (holy chamber) and *kottil* (a room of the house). Generally a family, group of families or a community owns a sacred centre, or more. All Hindus trust in the power of *teyyam* but, performers always belong to a low caste, and the Malayan is one among them.

Although the ritual significance of *teyyam* is fading due to the influence of modern science, technology and education, it still performs certain functions in the society. This includes religious, economic, political, communicative, cultural and psychological functions. By observing these functions, *teyyam* brings harmony and

solidarity to the highly stratified and segmented society. It also helps to maintain law and order among the members of the society. Each and every one of North Malabar has his own role in connection with *teyyam*. The performers perform and the devotees make arrangements and worship their deities. The performance is incorporated with numerous rituals and rites. It starts and ends in worship via performance. The people of North Malabar ceremoniously celebrate *teyyam* performance according to calendar or, whenever they find a necessity. The term *kaliyāttam* is used to denote *teyyam* performance. There are three categories namely, *kalpanakaliyāttam*, *prarthanakaliyāttam* and *perumkaliyāttam*. The period of a single celebration lasts from half a day to a few days.

The devotees give offerings to their deities. The materials used for offerings are easily available in their surroundings. Rice is considered to be the main item, which is largely cultivated in this area. Alcohol is inevitable. Fowl sacrifice is also essential. The core of the celebrations is the *teyyam* performance. The performance is somewhat amazing and enchanting. The performer has to disguise into *teyyam* by using specially designed *aniyalam* (attire) all over the body. The *aniyalam* is of two types, permanent and temporary. A single performance needs both temporary and permanent attire. The headdress is of different size and shape. Huge *mudi* (headgear) of thirty to fifty feet long is to be used for certain performances. Some *teyyams* use small gears. The shape is more or less geometric, i.e. circular, semi circular or, triangular. The face is painted with red, yellow and black colours. The performers use certain patterns that are borrowed from the local eco-system. *Pottan teyyam* and *Gulikan teyyam* use *mughapala* (facemask) instead of *mughathezhuthu* (facial writing).

The body decoration has great vividness. For this purpose white and red coloured clothes are used in plain and folded form. Tender coconut leaves are also used in plenty to make dress. The costumes and wearing of *teyyam* express different faces of development in a line of simple to complex, and from nature to market.

During performance, each *teyyam* performs certain *kalasam* (steps) in concord with the rhythm of the beating of *chenda* (a percussion instrument-drum). There are different kinds of steps for the dance. The steps are systematized with the myth of each *teyyam*. Occasionally the performer observes rituals and rites. *Āyudham* (weapon) is treated as an integral part of *teyyam*. It assumes importance, as the people believe that all weapons represent the respective deities. Exercise with *āyudham* is common during *kalasam*. The ritual, *kuri kodukkal* (the act of blessing) has psychological significance. Through this the society accomplish the scope of traditional counselling and guidance. It brings satisfaction, self-confidence and helps to relieve the tensions of the devotees. In return of their service, i.e., performance, the performer gets economic benefit in cash, kind, and recognition.

There is a growing tendency among the Folklorists to see *teyyam* performance as a 'folk-art'. Their inference is not true. It only seems to be true. It is mainly done because, they do not observe *teyyam* in its totality. Without bothering about its socio-cultural contexts, they simply consider its aesthetic aspects and make the Himalayan blunder. In reality, *teyyam* possesses great artistic beauty but, as far as the people of North Malabar are concerned, it is their 'science' and 'technology' of the past as well as the present.

As a social etiquette, the people of North Malabar observe *teyyam* as the creator and destroyer. Its rampage causes destruction and its

blessings bring happiness. In a simple society with less advanced technology, *teyyam* takes its origin as the 'science of the primitive'. Thus the people estimated it as their boon, 'adaptation' (Steward 1955, Rappaport 1968), to overcome life hazards. The life itself being a struggle, a struggle for existence and survival, the interaction between nature and man is inevitable. This interaction syndrome depends heavily on technology (here in this case, the belief system, religion) lead the emergence of a novel product, a defense mechanism, *teyyam*, a system with socio-cultural adaptability.

No doubt about the fact that it is its aesthetic beauty that is widely appreciated. Some years ago, the people or the devotees never paid attention towards the aesthetic beauty of *teyyam*. They only worshipped its super power and divinity but, at present, the magico-religious power being diminished, the aesthetic beauty of *teyyam* is given appreciation. While analyzing the future of *teyyam*, I have come across rather a surprising fact that the intensity of *teyyam* performance is increasing day by day. I have not been furnished with any satisfactory explanation by anybody but, my experience with this matter leads me to the conclusion that the mechanized life of the people badly needs a companion; a powerful superhuman. This search essentially ends in *teyyam*.

Further, in fact, *teyyam* is not an 'art' but a 'social system', a system of worship. It is not a 'lore' of any 'folk', but it is the common wealth of this area. Moreover, it is a social etiquette, a critique that controls the society. Although the magico-religious significance is fading due to the interventions of modern education, science and technologies, what *teyyam* did before is still done by it. This is why, the capacity of bringing social solidarity and harmony among the people induces a new dimension to this traditional performance. As said earlier, its attributed artistic value increases its divinity. The artistic skill and

beauty seen in the facial writings, attire, dance, and music of *teyyam* is appreciated as part of aesthetic enjoyment. This shift in the level of appreciation of the people, but not by its dedicated devotees, turned the attention from 'performance' to 'useful art' and made them 'audience' or 'observer' rather than 'active participants'. This is an adaptation, an 'artistic adaptation', and a re-adjustment to the altered society. The change from 'magico-religious-performance' to a 'ritual useful art' or 'ritulistic art' has further strengthened the establishment of more sacred centres and the frequency of performance.

Another reason for the increase of performance is simply due to the influence of existing political set up of this area. North Malabar is well known for much protest movements against the socio-cultural discriminations and feudal oppression. In the present day party politics, the Communist Party of India – Marxist, CPI (M) has occupied a dominant position in this region. This is achieved by the active involvement of the party men in every walk of the day-to-day life of the people. Recently, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) have decided to pay attention to increase their power in this region. The CPI (M), and the BJP-RSS combination stand in opposite poles with reference to their ideology and philosophy. The effort of the BJP-RSS coalition aimed at capturing the political supremacy usually leads to strife between them and the CPI (M). To win the battle for supremacy the support of the people is essential. Both the parties have correctly assessed the fact that the cultural supremacy will give political dominance. Therefore, they try their best to achieve dominance over culture. As the culture of North Malabar is still inseparably tied with *teyyam*, the parties mentioned above consciously encourage *teyyam* performance to win supremacy over the culture. The party men take part more actively than before in all events, which are related to *teyyam* with all

possibilities to attain their goal. The conflict is still going on. The analysis of the socio-cultural set up of this area reveals that this will certainly enrich the performance in the future. In other words, the special features of *teyyam*, i.e. the aesthetic element, the status of a superhuman, and the projection of culture surely give *teyyam* enough fuel to survive, and blaze more and more in the future. In short, these infrastructural forces will definitely favour the growth of *teyyam* in the days to come.

In addition to this, I have observed an important feature, an interesting one which I have experienced during my fieldwork, that the colour manipulation of the Communist parties, CPI (M) in particular. The red symbolically represents revolution and struggle. The extensive use of red colour in *teyyam* performance has created a positive attitude towards revolution and struggle in the unconscious mind of the people. Taken red as the symbol to convey the same message that it stands for revolution and struggle, the CPI (M) is very much effective to attract the people of this region.

The social set up of North Malabar also nourishes *teyyam* performance. The society is highly stratified and segmented according to the existing castes. The caste system being in practice, caste hierarchy is an integral part. Ideologically, this hierarchy consists of four major grades, i.e. *Chaturvarna*—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra groups. According to the Hindu scripture, all Hindus are placed in any one of these above said *varnas*. An individual's *varna* is determined by a descent rule, which is based on heredity and traditional occupation. Nobody is allowed to violate this descent rule. The members of each *varna* have to do their own occupations.

The Brahmins engage in priesthood; Kshatriyas rule the territory and occupy the position of warriors; Vaisya executes trade, and the Sudras extent their service to the other three *varnas*. Each *varna* is internally stratified into subdivisions known as *jathi* (caste). Caste or, *Jathi* is endogamous and assigned to traditional occupations (Hutton 1951, Dutta 1968, Mandelbaum 1990, Ghurye 1993), and is further divided into exogamous clans and lineages. In the present study, the Hindu society of North Malabar is divided into three segments: Brahmins, Non-Brahmins and Adi-Dravidas. It is this classification which is adopted from Beteille (1966) who used to classify the society of a Tanjore village-Sripuram, a working one, which prevails in this area rather than the traditional four folded *varna* system. The Brahmins occupy the upper position and the Adi-Dravida is placed at the bottom, the Non-Brahmins being in the middle. By possessing land ownership, the Brahmins acquired both religious and political power. They also control the society with their magic and tantric rites. The priesthood has given them a position of mediators between the god and the people.

The Non-Brahmins are the dominant population. They too have internally stratified subdivisions. The Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras are included in this compartment. Among them the rulers, warriors, traders and servicing castes are present. Tenants and cultivators also come under this category. The Adi-Dravidas are placed at the bottom. All of them belong to the division of Sudras. This stratum includes *teyyam* performers and agricultural labourers. They are landless and always render their service to the upper castes. They have dark complexion and short stature and are broad-nosed. By and large, they possess the Dravidian elements in their culture. All of them are scheduled under the Indian Constitution. The society perceived them as 'slaves', and as the 'most polluting' caste.

Purity and pollution are two major characteristic features of the caste system. The upper caste people treat the lower caste as impure and polluting (Kapadia 1947, Srinivas 1952, Ghurrae 1961). In this regard, they observe untouchability. A person's purity is considered to be lost, if he comes into contact with a lower caste person. The upper caste always refused to dine or to drink water from the lower caste people. If they do so, they would suffer pollution. Inter-caste marriage is also not allowed. Although the caste regulations and rules were unchangeable, mobility is experienced. The cases of caste fusion and fission have been noticed, i.e., the existence of small cohesive groups within the caste (Dhillon 1955, Lewis 1958, Gough 1960, Mandalbaum 1970). The formation of these factions is recent and their emergence is closely linked with the occupational mobility and economic changes.

As a part of the society of North Malabar, the Malayans contribute their share. Though they are placed under the group of untouchables, all upper castes including the Brahmins receive their service, i.e., through *teyyam*, magic and midwifery. They render their service by hereditary obligation in a system of 'bonded labour'. The server receives compensation in return for their subsistence. The upper castes are very opportunists in the sense that they allow the Malayans to enter anywhere in their home and permit them to touch them during the performance. And on other occasions, the upper castes deal with them unfairly just as they treat other untouchables, who are only victimised by injustice and discrimination.

The intra and inter community interactions have two ways. The first is social in which all caste Hindus exchanges their services to the others directly or indirectly in the order of economic and religious norms and formalities. Secondly, it is fully cultural where interaction is possible. The concept 'sacred' has made everyone to associate with

one another. The traditional social structure of North Malabar further exhibits another set of cohabitation, a set of interaction between sacred, religious, and political sub-sects.

Traditionally, the society of North Malabar stands static and exhibits less dynamism but, the present study has emphasized the fact that the social set up of North Malabar is changing in accordance with the new trends and innovations. The change is visible both in structure and in function. Anthropologists argue that a single reason cannot be attributed for socio-cultural change (Evans-Pritchard 1940, Srinivas 1952, 1955; Mead 1953, Leach 1954, Firth 1959, Epstein 1962, 1973; Mandalbaum 1970). I have done a detailed investigation and found some interesting and important inference with respect to the life and culture of the Malayan, who is taken as an ideal example to study the culture, custom and society of North Malabar. And this has been examined in the light of 'nature-man-spirit' interaction (Vidyarthi 1963, Sahay 1975, Mann 1968).

Looking to the life in the North Malabar in general and *teyyam* in particular, the world of spirits is found to have a very close interaction with man, his social structure and the environments. It has long been established that ecology places a vital role in conditioning the culture of a given area (Steward 1955, Rappaport 1968). The people of North Malabar live in a harsh environment, which implies ecological features such as, hilly terrine, forest, excessive rain, thick flora, fauna etc.

The people consider that the forest is not only the source of food, fuel, medicines, materials for building houses, etc. but also, the abode of their patron spirits. Such is the attachment towards the forest that they preserve a 'part of the forest'-sacred grove, *kavu* in some place in accordance with the present situations. And assign

these sacred groves, *kavu* to be the abode of their *teyyam* deities. It may be observed that the life of North Malabar has been traditionally dependent upon the forest for subsistence and the people have developed a belief system in harmony with their ecological setting. Thus, the 'nature-man-spirit' complex (Vidyathi 1963, Sahay 1975, Mann 1978) gets prominently reflected in the life and culture of North Malabar society. This fact gets substantiated when the deities associated with their forest-based agriculture nourished economic life. The economic system creates specific situations when the people need help and interference of spirits. The forest, hills and sacred groves are believed to be the abode of spirits and deities on the one hand and the sacred performance need certain fruits, nuts, leaves or other agrarian products, which are locally available on the other hand. At present, modern forces of change have affected the working of the traditional sacred complex over the life and culture and weakened their interrelations. It is also true that, at the same time, the complex also exhibits high degree of flexibility and dynamism which has given it an extraordinary capacity, to re-adjust in tune with the new trends.

A serious examination has advanced a view that directly points towards the social structure of North Malabar. This social structure, in fact, did not favour the spread of *teyyam* beyond its territorial boundaries. This has happened due to the force of a caste, based social stratification. The caste-bound economy has also given its share. The caste-oriented feelings never allowed the people, Malayans in particular, to cross the boundaries of North Malabar. If anybody does that, he is punished for the violation of the caste rules. The person will be treated as an outcaste.

The self-sufficiency of this area has also not favoured the interaction with outsiders. The interactions were limited to the field of trade. The

rare opportunities to contact the outsiders decrease the chances for the spread of *teyyam* beyond its native area.

Teyyam did not take its origin as an art. Instead, it originated as a social etiquette, one of socio-cultural significance. It emerged as a 'primitive science', 'technology' to overcome the life hazards. It came into practice only on the basis of 'nature-man' interaction. The nature, i.e., the local eco-system, is not uniform in character in all places. In that sense, the environment of North Malabar is different from that of its adjacent places. Hence, the 'nature-man' interaction too is not uniform in North Malabar and in other places. In other words, the environment beyond North Malabar is not fit to *teyyam* for its survival and existence.

The worldview and the belief systems of North Malabar, and other places are not identical. In this sense too, *teyyam* is not able to exist in those places that live with a different value system. Hence, *teyyam* exists only in North Malabar.

The above arguments that point to the limitations of *teyyam* to spread beyond a fixed territory did of course stand against the thoughts of 'cultural diffusion' (Kroeber 1944, Wissler 1926, etc.). Upadhyay and Gaya Pandey opines that,

Cultural diffusion is the process by which cultural traits, discovered or invented at one place or society, are spread directly or indirectly to other societies or places. (1993:97)

One of the cultural traits of North Malabar, *teyyam*, is a product of the society and its value system did not allow it to spread beyond the boundaries. The very existence of *teyyam* within a boundary strongly opposes the idea of cultural diffusion.

The Malayan of North Malabar has faced diverse social, economic, political and educational problems. The sufferings of the Malayan's community from time immemorial for no fault of theirs are part of commonplace knowledge now. Their problems have aggravated the situation over years, and pushed the unfortunate masses of the community to total subjugation and exploitation. One thing is certain: in the caste-ridden society in North Malabar, social and economic statuses are the necessary prerequisites for any individual to progress. An analysis of any part of the Indian society that does not take caste into consideration is therefore incomplete. Almost all socio-cultural activities, economic, political, educational, etc., revolve around the notions of caste. The structural form and relationships in rural areas have continued almost intact in the post-independence India.

Land is the basis of rural economy, and its ownership determines the wealth, income, status, and also indirectly the structure of the society. Only Brahmins and other aristocratic upper caste people own land in this area. Majorities of the people, including the Malayans, do not possess land by any means. The picture is now changed. The successful implementation of the 'Kerala Land Reform Act' by the state government has given everybody in this area at least some land to possess as his or her own.

Patterns of semblance and difference exist between the old and the new habitats of the Malayans. The new habitat has not encouraged the traditional source of subsistence such as, hunting and gathering. The new habitat has to rely heavily on wages or employment. Earlier the forest or the local surroundings supplied enough materials for the construction of houses, and the new settlements are scarce.

Now the Malayan's family is fully nuclear and patrilineal. The male head has acquired more authority because, he is now the main breadwinner. The increased economic dependency of women has led to greater stability of the marital bond and the relation between the parents and children have become stronger. In a changed situation, the family has ceased, to some extent, to be the unit of production. The participation of women folk and children in daily labour, has declined now. The service-return based economy now plays a very minor role. The Malayan has responded to the opportunities of occupational mobility that offers a higher income. The people readjusted their traditional economic system from subsistence to the market-based one. Thus, the material necessities of life tend to be purchased from the shops. They have pruned many of their old rituals, practices and feasts, and abandoned many of the ceremonies and gift-making rituals that characterized their lives in the past. In this manner, the people do not give any importance to life-cycle rituals such as, puberty, name giving, hair cutting, ear pricking, pre-natal and post-natal rituals. The social organizations such as, religious and political institutions are also insignificant now.

The Malayan used to attribute high value to the service-return economy viz, *teyyam* performance, practice of magic and midwifery. However, in the present environment the magic and midwifery attach no value because, there are no adequate opportunities to carry on such activities. Recently, the need to think about tomorrow has begun to find a place in the Malayan's mind. As a result, the recreational activities are not given due attention nowadays. The custom of visiting one's relatives and friends has also become less frequent. The increased importance of labour has taken away the leisure time and energy.

In the past, the Malayan used to partake in the multifarious nature-man associations. The present day situation has forced them to weaken those ties and has led to many adjustments and compromises with their new 'environment'. Certainly it has contributed to their substantial integration into the changed society and culture from the extremes to the centre. It also shows the Malayan's potential for adaptations.

The democratic political system and 'protective discrimination' have not made much headway, nor are they meaningful in the case of communities like the Malayans. The notions of equality and equality of opportunities and democratic values over the years have all been interpreted only relatively. The result is that those who were economically poor and socially and ritually inferior have remained backward and continue to be considered inferior by others. Efforts made by the government by implementing the statutory provisions of 'protective discrimination' enshrined in the Constitution of India to the Scheduled Castes have not yielded the desired and expected results. Experience in the past years shows a different situation where exploitation of the Malayan has increased at least in the sheer economy that is related to *teyyam* performance. They are born with high skill and temperament. But none of them gave any attention to improve their abilities other than that of *teyyam* and its allied fields.

To conclude, the study was conducted in the North Malabar, Kannur and Kasaragod district of Kerala State, where the individuals, culture and society interact each other in accordance with the environment in a given space and time. The ethnography of the Malayan and the social structure of North Malabar and its sacred and profane '*teyyam*' clearly reveal the fact that the life and practices of this region exhibit great degree of flexibility and adaptability.

Teyyam possesses great socio-cultural value in a segmented society of North Malabar. It is tied up with magic and religion. In accordance with the religious feelings, the people interact with their nature and spirit in a given space, the ecological set up, to ensure the survival and existence. This two-way interaction between man, nature and religion, the struggle for existence and survival exhibits a complexity-‘sacred complex’, the ‘nature-man-spirit complex’, according to which, the people of North Malabar believe that their destiny is guided and controlled by supernatural powers, in the form of *teyyam*. As a social etiquette, the ‘science of the primitive’, *teyyam* is part and parcel of life. As a common wealth of this area, *teyyam* acts itself a social critic that controls the society. Like any other social system, it performs certain important functions within the threshold of divinity.

The life and culture of Malayans reflect the multifarious association between man and nature. The influence of modern education, science and technology forced them to many re-adjustments and compromise with the new ‘habitat’, which exhibits high capacity of flexibility and dynamism to re-adjust, i.e. the potential for adaptations. All activities of the people in North Malabar are more or less shaped in tact with man-nature interactions. Whenever and wherever these man-nature relationships get alteration, the structure and function of all human activities are re-adjusted. In a given space and time, the people continuously interact with their environment for their survival. In short, the society and culture, the Malayan and *teyyam* in particular, exhibit high degree of adjustments in the given ecological set up with nature through various sets of arrangements, i.e. the struggle for existence, to ensure their survival by providing a balance approach to meet the challenge of ecology of North Malabar.

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Appendix

KANNUR UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Taravad: Madhurakkad

Taluk/District: Hosdurg / Kasaragod

House No: X/63,

Date: 17/03/1998

House Name: Madhurakkad


Village/Settlement: Ajanur

Sl. No	Name	Age	Sex	Relationship	Education	Occupation		Land Holdings		Marital Status	Remarks
						Primary	Secondary	Wet	Dry		
1	Raman	51	M	HD	Vth Standard	Teyyam	Teyyam Helper	--	17.5 Cent	MD	Performer and Helper
2	Leela	40	F	W	V1th Std	--	--	--	--	MD	Knows Midwifery, Magic etc.
3	Rekha	21	F	D	Xth	UNEPPD	--	--	--	UM	-
4	Rajeesh	19	M	S	Xth	Teyyam	Teyyam Helper	--	--	UM	Performer and Helper

Br = Brother D = Daughter Dv = Divorced EPD = Employed F = Female Fa = Father HD = Head of Family

M = Male MD = Married Mo = Mother S = Son UM = Un Married UNEPPD = Unemployed WD = Widow

Wr = Widower Z = Sister


Signature

KANNUR UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Taravad: Vilamana
House No.: VII/558, Payam Panchayath
House Name: Maruthiyotu Kalari

Taluk/District: Thalasseri/Kannur
Date: 20/04/2000
Village/Settlement: Vilamana

Sl. No	Name	Age	Sex	Rel'ship	Edu.	Occupation		Land Holdings		Marital Status	Remarks
						Primary	Secondary	Wet	Dry		
1	Raman Panikker	58	M	HD	Vth Std	Teyyam	--	--	1 Acre	MD	Teyyam Performer
2	Leela	46	F	W	VIIIth Std	--	--	--	-	MD	Knows Midwifery, Magic etc.
3	Kunhikrishnan	28	M	S	Xth Std	Teyyam	--	--	--	MD	Teyyam Performer
4	Praseetha	19	F	D	Xth Pass	--	UNEPA	--	--	UM	--
5	Rajesh	18	M	S	VIIIth Std	Teyyam	--	--	--	UM	Teyyam Performer
6	Prasanna	16	F	D	Xth Going	--	--	--	--	UM	Student

Br = Brother D = Daughter Dv = Divorced EPD = Employed F = Female HD = Head of Family
M = Male MD = Married Mo = Mother Mo = Married UM = Un Married UNEPA = Unemployed WD = Widow
Wr = Widower Z = Sister

Signature



Signature

GENEALOGY CHART OF A SAMPLE FAMILY

Taravad: Vilamana

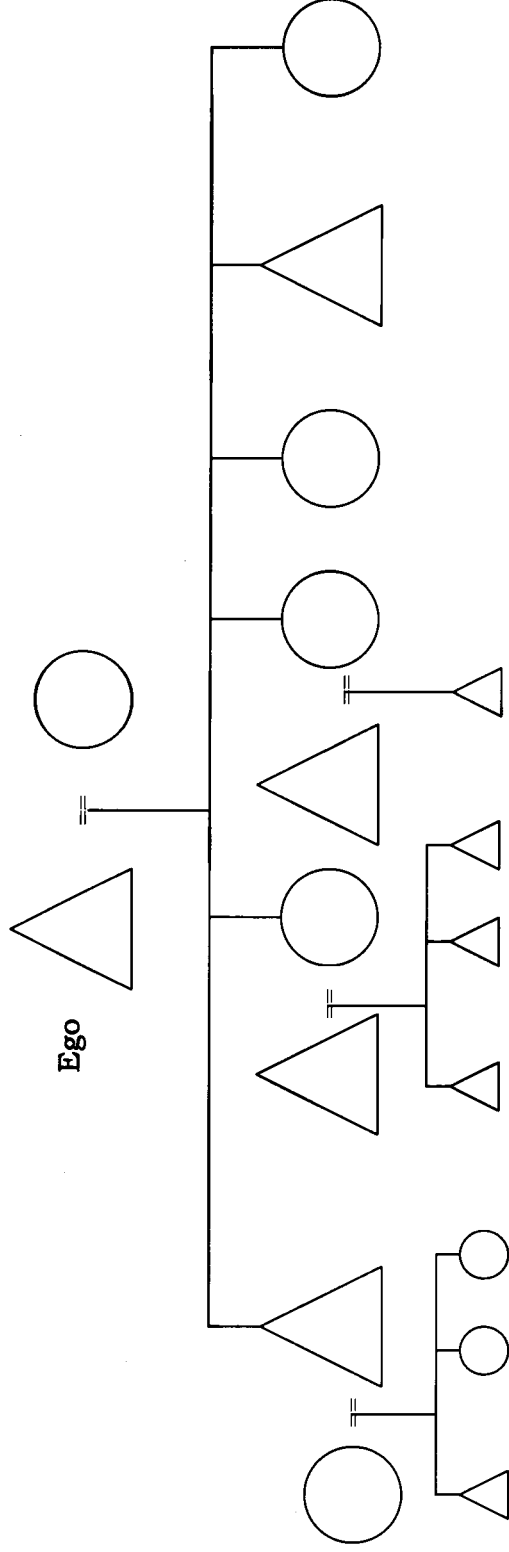
Houe No.: VII/558, Payam Panchayath

House Name: Maruthiyotu Kalari

Taluk/District: Thalasseri/Kannur

Date: 20/04/2000

Village/Settlement: Vilamana



Distribution of the Sample Population and Households

Sl. No.	Village	Household	Taluk	District
1	<i>Chokli</i>	7	Thalasseri	KANNUR
2	<i>Kannavam</i>	3		
3	<i>Kelakam</i>	1		
4	<i>Pazhassi</i>	12		
5	<i>Pinarayi</i>	7		
6	<i>Sivapuram</i>	9		
7	<i>Vekkalam</i>	Nil		
8	<i>Vilamana</i>	1		
9	<i>Cheruthazham</i>	16	Kannur	
10	<i>Irivery</i>	14		
11	<i>Kannur 2</i>	3		
12	<i>Madai</i>	12		
13	<i>Mattool</i>	7		
14	<i>Muzhuppilangad</i>	6		
15	<i>Pallikkunnu</i>	24	Taliparamba	
16	<i>Alappadamba</i>	5		
17	<i>Kankole</i>	20		
18	<i>Karivellur</i>	3		
19	<i>Kurumathur</i>	13		
20	<i>Morazha</i>	16		
21	<i>Panniyoor</i>	8		
22	<i>Pariyaram</i>	8		
23	<i>Payyavoor</i>	5		
24	<i>Peralam</i>	5		
25	<i>Perinthatta</i>	2		
26	<i>Taliparamba</i>	23		
27	<i>Thirumeni</i>	3		

28	<i>Vayakkara</i>	3	Hosdurg	KASARGOD	
29	<i>Vellad</i>	Nil			
30	<i>Ajanur</i>	14			
31	<i>Balal</i>	Nil			
32	<i>Beemanady</i>	2			
33	<i>Cheemeni</i>	1			
34	<i>Cheruvathur</i>	8			
35	<i>Chittarikkal</i>	2			
36	<i>Kallar</i>	Nil			
37	<i>Kanhangad</i>	7			
38	<i>Kinanoor</i>	8			
39	<i>Kodakkad</i>	6			
40	<i>Padna</i>	3			
41	<i>Perole</i>	9			
42	<i>South Trikaripur</i>	3			
43	<i>Adhur</i>	3			Kasargod
44	<i>Ednad</i>	2			
45	<i>Kadambar</i>	2			
46	<i>Kalanadu</i>	5			
47	<i>Kasaragod</i>	5			
48	<i>Kodalmogaru</i>	Nil			
49	<i>Kuttikole</i>	4			
50	<i>Paivalike</i>	1			
51	<i>Uppala</i>	4			

LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

1. Smt. M.P. Sreedevi Amma, Kokkanissery, Payyanur, Kannur Dist.
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5. Sri. Krishnan Pannikker, Kundayamkole, Kannur Dist.
6. Sri. Krishnan Pannikker, Ezhilode, Thalayi, Kannur Dist.
7. Sri. Krishnan Panniker, Kozhummal, Vellur, Kannur Dist.
8. Smt. Chiruthai, Kundayamkole, Kannur Dist.
9. Smt. Narayani, Kunnaru, Kannur Dist.
10. Smt. Parvathi , Kozhummal, Vellur. Kannur Dist.
11. Sri. A.V. KunhIRaman Pannikker, Koyonkara, Trikarapur, Kasargod Dist.
12. Sri. Ambu Pannikker, Thayineri, Payyanur, Kannur Dist.
13. Sri. Chandran Pannikker, Arathil, Thalayi, Kannur Dist.
14. Sri. Krishnan, Aduthila, Payyangadi, Kannur Dist.
15. Sri. Gopi Pannikker, Aduthila, Payyangadi, Kannur Dist.
16. Sri. Raman Pannikker, Alapadambu, Kannur Dist.
17. Sri. Kellu Pannikker, Kozhummal, Vellur, Kannur Dist.
18. Sri. Raman Pannikker, Trikarapur, Kasargod Dist.
19. Prof. M.V. Kannan, Former Chairman to Kerala Folklore Academy, Kerala.

20. Sri. Rama (K.R.) Peruvannan, Kandankali, Payyanur, Kannur Dist.
21. Sri. E.K. Vaidyar, Muthialam, Korom, Payyanur, Kannur Dist.
22. Sri. Y.V.Kannan Master, Kunhimangalam, Kannur Dist.
23. Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, Former Vice-Chancellor to University of Calicut, Kerala.
24. Dr. M.V. Vishnu Namboodiri, Former Chairman to Kerala Folklore Academy, Kerala.
25. Dr. R.C. Karipath, Payyanur.
26. Sri. K.K. Marar, Mazhi.



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