

**Social and Economic Mobility of a Traditional Social
Group: Case Study of Theyyam Performing Community
of North Kerala**

Social and Economic Mobility of a Traditional Social Group: Case Study of Theyyam Performing Community of North Kerala

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Applied Economics of the Jawaharlal Nehru University

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DECLARATION

I hereby affirm that the work for the dissertation titled "*Social and Economic Mobility of a Traditional Social Group: Case study of Theyyam Performing Community of North Kerala*", being submitted as part of the requirements for degree of Master of Philosophy in Applied Economics of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, was carried out by myself and has not formed a part of any other Programme and not submitted to any other institution/University for the award of any degree or Programme of study.

30th June 2003



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Certified that this study is the bonafide work of Mr. Rajesh Kumar.K, carried out under our supervision at Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram.



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Abstract of the Dissertation

Social and Economic Mobility of a Traditional Social Group: Case study of Theyyam Performing Community of North Kerala.

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This study attempts to analyze how long-term social transformation reflects on the life of a community in terms of their committed adherence to Theyyam performance and their traditional position as legitimate artists/workers of Theyyam. The purpose of the study is to understand and to evaluate the predicament of the marginal communities in the larger stratified society. Historically, marginalised communities have been relegated to the conditions of existence of the most backward communities in the hierarchical social structure of Kerala. The successive socio-economic and political reforms, which took place in this region, are generally considered to have created facilities for social advancement of different communities including of the most backward. This study is to examine whether such social advancement has occurred in the specific case of the Theyyam performing community by looking at their actual experience of social mobility. The research would focus on the socio-economic backwardness of the community members in spite of the high ritual status that the north Kerala society ascribes to their performance. This would form the centerpiece of the study.

By adopting the socio-economic mobility approach (Transition Matrices) to study intergenerational educational and occupational mobility, and also by delving into the subject by employing the methods of cultural and economic anthropology, a more comprehensive understanding of the community is expected to be brought out. Since no other such studies have been undertaken on the Theyyam performing community so far, hardly any secondary data are available. In this context, the fact that the Researcher himself is an active performer of the Theyyam, a factor that has brought out some otherwise little known facts about the socio-cultural and economic aspects of the life of the community. The study shows that the economic assets and mobility pattern of the Theyyam performing community is very much marginalised compared to other communities in the villages of north Malabar, and that their social status at the interface with others is definitely backward. Why it remained so, in spite of their participation in radical political movements and their being a targeted group of the strongest Socio-Religious Reform Movements [SRRMs] that Kerala has seen, is because their traditional occupation skills were relatively devalued in the process of modernization. Hence they could not capitalize upon them and exchange them for other 'Capitals', necessary for social advancement. Nevertheless, Theyyam performance is being increasingly appreciated as the economy get liberalized and globalized through the development of tourism and 'Cultural' industry. Whether it will result in advancement of the whole community or of only individual performers is to be analyzed separately.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Some General Points

The present study is on the '*Social and Economic Mobility of the Theyyam Performing Community of North Kerala*'. The purpose of the study is to understand and to evaluate the current predicament of marginalised communities in the larger stratified society. Historically, marginalised communities have been relegated to a pitiable socio-economic existence in the social structure of Kerala, in spite of many socio-ritualistic, economic and political reforms in the post-independent period. In the larger social order in India as a whole, division of labour was based on services and each caste or sub-caste group was expected to render some service to society within that framework. The 'Theyyam' is a derivative of the Sanskrit word '*Daivam*' meaning God [Menon 1978] and is a ritualistic folk art of Kerala linked to the rich traditions of mythologies and ancient cult system. Theyyam enlivens the remote villages as the 'possessed' dancer in their Sacred Groves or Shrines called *Kavus* in North Malabar. The following castes have been involved in the performance of the Theyyam, ever since it came into being: *MALAYAN, VANNAN, VELAN, MUNNOOTTAN, ANJNOOTTAN*, as well as some Adivasi groups like *CHINGATHANS*¹. [Thurston 1909, Chendera 1968, Kurup 1973, Freeman 1991, Namboothiri 1995, Pallath 1991, Singh 1995]. Traditionally, these castes have been enjoying the privileges of enacting the ritual, as part and parcel of the cultural and artistic heritage of north Kerala. Their performance is believed to bring welfare and general happiness to the society at large.

As these communities have a common social origin and a common history, we may treat them as a homogeneous or single social group. The Theyyam, the ritual folk art, with a hoary past, is performed annually or on festive seasons as the expression of the local people's faith in the divine, their hopes and fears and their collective social consciousness. It is difficult to trace its historical origin. Social relations in Kerala are, by and large, defined by the hegemony of upper castes on the basis of specific property relations that have been existing in the region. According to the norms set by it, these communities were the servicing castes to the upper castes with certain degree of reciprocal relationships. Kerala with its high literacy and other

¹ There are other communities also who perform this ritualistic art like *KOPPALAR, MAVILAR, PULAYAR* etc. whose participation is limited. There is also a region-wise terminological difference; for example it is known as '*THIRA*' in south Malabar.

Human Development Indicators (HDI) and rich cultural and artistic legacy underlined by relative communal harmony, has attracted the attention of the entire world. Kerala is generally upheld as a model in social development, which has progressed over the years based upon the ethics and concepts of an egalitarian society. In this particular context it is relevant to study the social and economic mobility of the castes or groups of castes, who were for centuries trapped into the performance of a ritually important art form. It is necessary to look into the historical formation of these social groups against the background of general social development to trace the evolution of various stages of socio-economic mobility. It is still obscure why the privilege of enacting the Theyyam, through succeeding generations fell upon the shoulders of these communities alone, whose socio-economic mobility has been apparently more or less stagnant. On the other hand, the status and high esteem in which Theyyam, the ritual art form that they performed, never decreased in general social perception. In this context it is important to look at the possible social status of these community in the past, their standing in the present and what will be the prospects of this community in the new age of globalization. It is also important to understand why this community that have been participating for several generations in the cultural ethos of Kerala, with a unique '*Aharya*'² and spectacular theoretical splendour, still remains in their present position. The Theyyam performance could dazzle the eyes of thousands of foreign tourists who have acclaimed it as a very fascinating art form, apart from local devotees. It has therefore acquired a special position within even the secular art forms of Kerala and is acclaimed as a powerful expression of the artistic sensitivity of the rural folk of north Kerala. Meanwhile the apparent socio-economic status of the performers rightly raise the question whether it is really an art form or the cry in the wilderness³ of a community totally forgotten by others.

1.2 Why this Topic

The Theyyam is a popular folk dance performance with an unquestionably strong ritual background. It has a rare primordial quality that embraces the universality we find in all primitive art forms of mankind; some of which had even given nurture to classical dances. The heart of the cult of the Theyyam depicts the cultural heritage of a vast geographical area

² The artist's improvised energy and costume-based visual beauty of the art and it is found embodied with the members of the performing community.

³ Communities, which were socially, suppressed for generations tend to cry out their desperation which may be interpreted as art by modern society. This has been discussed widely by social scientists and also portrayed poignantly by literary writings as well. See Anand (1999).

known as north Malabar, which forms the extreme northern region of the present Kerala state. A detailed study of the Theyyam in its various dimensions can even help rewrite the local history of north Kerala. Briefly speaking, the performance of Theyyam has a significant place in the daily life and life style of the people of north Kerala and philosophy of life of a marginalised community which has sought expression in this art form. This community was apparently kept in the lower strata of social hierarchy for generations and all these castes belong to the category of the Scheduled Caste and Tribes⁴.

The aim of the dissertation is to make an inquiry into the socio-economic life of this particular community with the specific purpose of understanding conditions of social mobility or the absence of the same. Though the Theyyam performers are admired for their artistic talents and heritage, their livelihood was met largely by their income from performing ritual arts and working as, traditional birth attendants (Midwives), by washing clothes, and undertaking other assorted manual labour. They enjoyed very high social respect during the Theyyam performance, but soon after it was over, they reverted back to the status of untouchables. It is a poignant social reality that glares at us, that a community considered downtrodden as untouchables by the higher castes, could transform themselves into venerable symbols of rural deities during the short intervals, when they perform the dance of the Theyyam. Members of the higher castes of the local area and the neighbouring areas come forward to pay obeisance to the performers personifying the local gods, local heroes and ancestors whose memories they cherish through perpetuating the myths about them. It is an irony that makes high caste people pay homage to members of this community in the role of personification of points of worship and devotion during the Theyyam performance, only to alienate the artists later⁵. Besides giving a paltry amount of money as '*Archana*' or offerings to please the Theyyam, the higher castes discard the Theyyam artistes to their own fate⁶. This kind of economic neglect and consequent caste-discrimination has led the community to suppress its feelings of deprivation. Though the stories of deities, heroes and ancestors that they perform are replete with indications of rebellion against the given social order, never in recorded memory have the Theyyam performers been involved in an open act of defiance against the establishment, as a community. This indicates the strength of the methods of adaptation and appropriation

⁴ Census of India (1971, 1981) see special tables for SC/ST.

⁵ Two Castes belonging to this community, which are the *Malayans* and the *Pulayans* have the knowledge and power to perform sorcery which harm others called *Durmantravadam*. This capability is a point of potential fear and induce respect among others including higher castes.

⁶ From the field visit it was revealed that both in the temple of the *Chirakal Kovilakam*, the traditional ruling dynasty of the region and the houses of the *Namboothiri*, highest caste the reinstatement of their *Aroodam* or the pivot of their residences every twelfth year is done by a ritual perform by the so-called untouchable *Malayan*. This may denote the wide acceptance, even by the *Namboothiri* of the ritual and sorcery power of the *Malayans*.

exercised over them by the social order. Therefore the internalization of their untold miseries are found expressed in the performance of the Theyyam, as a manifestation of the depressed consciousness of the whole community.

When it is stated that the Theyyam performing community has not ever been part of an open act of defiance against the established order, it is not to deny their widespread participation in various political activities, which led to the rise of the Communist movement and party in northern Kerala. It was through a series of acts of revolts in *Kayyur*, *Karivallur*, *Cheemeni* etc targeted against the feudal landlords or Jenmi system that the Communist movement rose up to a position of hegemony over the political process in northern Kerala in the final decade of colonial rule. [Menon 1993; 1994] Later on, they were able to extend their popular support to the rest of Kerala, building up the movement into a larger framework for comprehensive land reforms and for *Aikya* or united *Keralam* the Theyyam performing community also participated whole-heartedly in the various stages of the rise of the Communist movement. [Kuttamatu 1997]. If their participation in a radical and secular political movement did not result in their social reorganization and in socio-economic mobility it is certainly worth investigating. The main question to be answered in this context is whether the plight of the marginalised groups such as women, Dalits, Tribals and traditional Fisherfolk who ended up with very little gain or nothing at all, when the general social order was apparently reordered by the Communist Party at the State level, has befallen upon the Theyyam performing communities as well.

In the earliest decades of the twentieth century itself the message spread by *Sree Narayana Guru*, who inspired the *Sree Narayana Movement*, the most powerful SRRM that Kerala has seen, had reached northern Kerala⁷ [Raghavan 1979, Ishwaran 1970]. Though the Movement had a great impact upon the *Ezhavas*, or (*Thiyyas* in Malabar) a lower-middle level or backward community, it had targeted the emancipation or development of all oppressed communities under the caste system. It is also worth examining the impact of such socio-religious movements as the Theyyam performing community. If it did not have any effect; then what were the reason behind it?

Apart from participation in a radical political movement and nearness to a socio-religious reform movement, the third factor, which could have facilitated social mobility, is the internal

⁷ Gough (1978 p.419) where has mentioned that (*Sree Narayana*) *Yogam*'s institutions being hijacked by the Communist *Thiyyas*.

structure of the community itself. Unlike other communities, the Theyyam performing community keeps a particularly modest and reticent culture. They keep the performing heritage as if they were destined to play gods and deities and to remain in want and poverty. Culturally conscious and deeply rooted in spirituality and ethics they are least organized socially and economically. They thus remain in an economically backward state. So the dissertation tries to focus upon the socio-economic life of these people. It studies the historical facts regarding the social mobilization of the Theyyam performing community of North Kerala. What is expected to be brought out is an insight into the changes that have taken place in the social conditions of this community, and into the circumstances that have compelled them to adjust themselves to the modern economic system. In this process factors which led them into socially obscurity, and kept them marginalised from the traditional ways in which they enjoyed patron-client relationship in a traditional hierarchical society are also expected to be understood. In other words we shall be analyzing factors bringing intergenerational occupational and educational mobility within and between social groups.

The primary occupation of the community has been to offer the Theyyam and related rituals for the entire society as '*cherujanmavakasam*'⁸, a little birthright that was granted to them by the existing power structure. A *Tharavadu* conducts these ritual offerings on a special day decided by the astrologer or the members of the Shrine who patronize it. The ritual is conducted for the good and development of the *Tharavadu* and the village community as a whole. Theyyam is conceived as the ardent prayer of the entire society to the almighty, whose sustained benevolence is sought by the performers, on behalf of the society. There is also a strong element of ancestral worship, worshipping the ancestors of the performers and the *Tharavadu*. When enacting the Theyyam ritual, the performer of the Theyyam worships for the cult of the Theyyam and their *Guru* or teachers while members of the *Tharavadu* worship their family ancestors. The ancestors had also been performing the Theyyam as a sacred ritual, who ought to be commemorated by the living. The dead are believed to be still alive

⁸ The jurisdiction of hereditary or ancestral *Tharavadu* as a political unit involved the right of artisans and other occupational groups under its sway. These hereditary rights and perquisites within certain local limits were known as *Cherujanmam* or little *Janmam*. The occupational groups like the *Kanisans* (Astrologer), the *Asari* (carpenter), the *Tattan* (Goldsmith), the *Kollan* (Blacksmith), the *Malayan* (Theyyam Performing caste and black magicians), the *Vannan* (Washerman), the *Veluthedan* (Waherman), the *Velan* (Midwife) and the *Vilakkathalavan* (Barber) enjoyed these rights. They were part and parcel of village community system. When the *Tharavadu* existed as a political office at the expense of the Village community system, it possessed supervisory right over those occupational groups and assigned a certain portion of the produce for livelihood of the members of these groups. This was the patron-client relationship, which has existed in north Malabar village life. See (Kurup 2000)

through this custom of the annual Theyyam festival. The Theyyam is performed every year as an irrevocable offering of the living to their ancestors. Theyyam is enacted also for the richness of harvests and the kindness of natural forces, which eliminate 'epidemics'. Some of the Theyyam *Kolams* or forms of Theyyam are personifications of natural forces and some *Kolams* represent ancestors. In these customs, the performers show their kinship to other primitive customs of many societies in other parts of the world. The Theyyam is not the product of a romantic imagination but a real psychic need of the community, which attaches great meaning to this ritual. The man who plays the Theyyam *Kolam* is the deity itself, and he dances as if possessed by the very spirit of a divine force, and in moments of ecstasy, he dares to make prophecies, predicts the future of agricultural fertility and good or bad productivity. He could make forecasts about the calamities that befall society and a particular Theyyam known as '*Vasoorimala*' originated from the similar forecasts about the visitation of the smallpox. It is believed that this *Kolam* is to be performed to appease the wrath of the goddess causing smallpox. In the past the prophecies of Theyyam performers are believed to have come true and hence the continued enactment of the '*Vasoorimala*' Theyyam. In north Malabar this epidemic had taken away the lives of the poor people in large numbers. Almost predictably only males do all the Theyyam performance; though female members have roles of facilitating the performance. But in other ritual arts *Kothamurypattu*, *Malayankettu*, *Kentrompattu*, and *Vedanpattu* females are essential both as performers as well as facilitators.

The origin, evolution and almost total acceptance of the Theyyam performance itself appear in a wide socio-ritual background. The complexities involved in the construction of such a richly ordained situation is permeated by a conducive internal social structure too. Apparently such a social group is entrapped within the parameters of a social ordering which receives signals from outside. The question to investigate in this context is whether the signs of modernization penetrating down to the rural areas of north Kerala, like new sources of authority and sponsorships like local Panchayats, Folklore Academies etc are adequate to substitute fully the earlier order based on the patron-client relationship. If they are not, then the ensuient social gap is likely to affect adversely the facilitating factors for social and economic mobilization of the Theyyam performing community. The possibility of sponsorship by the tourism industry and ethnic art lovers in a globalising economy becoming will be a substitute or not is also to be looked at.

1.3 Insider's Advantages

It is a member of the Theyyam performing community who is conducting this study. Since it is initiated by an 'insider', in interaction with other members and groups within this community, it is likely to unearth many relevant facts, which would be useful for a fuller understanding of the situation. The highlighting of the lives of the people can be done on more reliable data and in an objective manner. An outsider would not be able to take such a close-up view of the community. The researcher himself has been deeply influenced by the general identity crisis faced by the performing community. This identity crisis arises from two distinct quarters. The first is the pressurization by the dominant castes⁹ and organized sections of society can assert themselves through various means. The second is that the lack of a positive leadership among the marginalised communities which would respond to their deepening crisis in the fast developing social scenario.

This artistic community emerges from the subaltern classes who happened to be seasoned in the environments and customs attached to the performing of the Theyyam. The Theyyam to the community is not a mere annual repetition of an old practice, whatever the verdict of art connoisseurs or other communities or social groups may be. To the Theyyam performer, it is a traditional, yet spontaneous means of expression of his emotions, feelings, predilections, hopes, fears and aspirations. Therefore this community cannot abandon this social obligation in the name of the desire for a modernized society.

An insider's view on how this form of ritualistic art has stood the test of time is likely to be important. The '*Thottampattu*' or accompanying songs of Theyyam and the age-old practices of sorcery are of vital importance in understanding the true nature of the Theyyam. The myth and songs called *Thottampattu*, with which the researcher has been familiar from his childhood, can be used as an inevitable corollary to the cult and performance of the Theyyam, that hold the potential for the interpretations of social realities of the past and present. It is easy for the researcher who is an insider to establish a strong and enduring rapport with other families of performers of the Theyyam. It is possible for him to understand the ground realities. Generally speaking, the majority of the members of this community are highly reluctant to disclose their feelings and to discuss the problems they face with outsiders. An

⁹ According to M N. Srinivas, a caste is dominant when it is numerically the strongest in the village or local area and economically and politically exercises a significant influence. It need not be the highest caste in terms of traditional and conventional ranking of caste (Srinivas, (ed.) (1955): 7). In north Malabar village life, all castes are dominant except scheduled caste and tribes according to above-mentioned definition.

insider's search for facts among his own kith and kin may be relatively successful in bringing out such crucial facts without much hindrance. The communities have a deeply embedded faith in the continued observance of rituals. Why they preserve such a commitment in spite of the fact that it might have foreclosed many a chance for self-advancement as well as social development of the community as a whole, may have to be worked out. In this respect too, an insider's viewpoint is likely to be important.

This society has already developed a specific language, which may seem obscure and significant to others, but it is a product of ages-long social suppression¹⁰. This language is symbolic of their inventive power in reaction to the alienation they have felt in the past and still experience in the present. It has emerged gradually from their consciousness and it has taken shape as a defensive mechanism as well as an indirect means of hiding the techniques of the traditional ritual art. It is discernable to the insider alone.

¹⁰ Since the bulk of the community lies scattered and they are completely dependent on other communities, the language might have served them as a covert mode of communication and also as a medium for self-mockery. The mockery comes out of the discrimination in which they had to live. They used to call children '*Chittala*' instead of *Kuttigal* in Malayalam and money *Minippa* etc.

Folklore, Local Experience and Performance

In other words, the researcher who is an insider can directly transform his own experiences into data for analysis. To give an indication of the inherent possibilities a brief personalized statement is given below. The place the researcher was born in belongs to *Koorara*, a locality in the *Mokeri* village, near Thalassery in Kannur district where he has been performing the Theyyam for the past seven years. The entire community of *MALAYAN*, to which the researcher belongs, feels elated in performing the Theyyam and its associated rites. He started his Theyyam performing career enacting the village deity known as '*Vishnumoorthy*', which has its own legend¹¹. This community has its own unique folk art forms such as the *Kodamurippattu*, *Kannerupattu*, *Vedanpattu* and the *Ninabali*. They are practitioners of indigenous medicine and can cure many maladies of local people with herbs and drugs known only to expert members of the community. They had been practicing certain methods of

¹¹The people seem to believe in the myths related to many *Kolams* of the Theyyam. The myth of '*Vishnumoorthy*' has different versions and it has changed from author to author and from cult to cult. May be due to lack of close contact with members of the performing community, there are different interpretations.

According to initial researcher of Theyyam, Chenthera (1978) p: 103-105 *Kannan*-an orphan boy from *Thiyya* community seeks shelter with the Kurup-head of the *Karuvatan* family at *Neeleswaram*. Kurup employs the boy to look after his cattle. One day while sitting on the branch of a mango tree and eating a mango, the niece of the Kurup happened to pass under that tree. The mango fell on the girl and, agitated, she complained to the Kurup. The doors of the *Karuvatan* house were closed forever to *Kannan* and he left the place, finally reaching *Mangalapuram*, where he met a *Thulu* woman. The old woman was a good devotee of the God and she sheltered *Kannan*. His life with that woman made him a real devotee. Once he expressed his desire to go back to his old place for a while and the old woman permitted him to do so with a deep sense of sorrow. *Kannan* reached his place after a long duration. He was bathing in the lotus pond of *Neeleswaram*. Kurup, the head of the *Karuvatan* family got news of the arrival of *Kannan* and he rushed towards him with his '*urumi*' (a particular long sword like weapon) *Kannan*'s head fell rolling into the pond and the water was stained red. But the power of the almighty was completely against the Kurup and many bad signs started to manifest in the family. Finally an astrologer revealed that *Kannan* himself had become god. *Namboothiri* (1998) p: 129-130 says *Kannan* belonged to the *Karumana* caste, and was the servant of *Karuvatan* Kurup at *Neeleswaram*. Otherwise the same proceeds as in the case of the earlier version. *Palanthai Kannan* reached the *Neeleswaram* town. The Kurup who got information followed *Kannan* and finally he met *Kannan* bathing in a pond. In anger the Kurup cut the head of *Kannan* and threw his weapon in the pond; but it started to move in the water. Moreover many bad signs were seen in the house. The astrologer said that a clan god also came with *Kannan*'s spirit and they should be worshipped. Kurup (1980) pointed out that *Kannan*, a *Thiyya* boy was attracted to his uncle's daughter, and he misbehaved with her. Fearing punishment he left the place. The change of the same myth that occurred when it reached Menon (1994) p: 110-111 is quite amusing. It illustrates thus as "a Theyyam is that of *Palantayi Kannan*, a young *Thiyya* boy who fell in love with the daughter of the Nair who had given him shelter-*Kannan* was banished from the village and migrated to *Coorg*, but feeling home sick he returned, only to be killed by the Nair, *Karuvadani* Kurup. Immediately pestilence etc visited the Nair *Tharavadu* and Nair had to deify *Kannan* as an aspect of *Vishnu* to atone for his sins.

According to the original story, collected from *Thottam* artiste *Mr. Pappan*, the performing Community believes that *Kannan* was a farmer and a shepherd and that he belonged to the *Thiyya* caste. Once, the *Thiyyan* driven by thirst and hunger wandered around and saw the mangoes in the land of *Karuvatan Kurup*, a feudal landlord of the place. In those days lower caste members were asked to keep a distance from higher caste people, according to the existing caste system. *Kannan* started eating mangoes sitting on top of the tree. Incidentally, the niece of *Karuvatan Kurup* happened to pass through and unfortunately the mangoes fell down on to her body from the hands of the *Thiyya*, who was shivering with fear. The girl informed her uncle of the incident. Consequently the servants of Kurup were asked to produce *Kannan* before the landlord and the scared *Kannan* left the place. In addition, *Mr. Swaminathan*, one senior member of the *Malayan* caste says that *Kannan* used to milk the cow of the Landlord Kurup. But one day, as the milk was spilt by accident, *Kannan* could not give it to the landlord, and he got angry. *Kannan* then fled to *Magalapuram* (Mangalore). After a while he returned home due to homesickness and the landlord murdered *Kannan*. The above-said stories appear in the performance of the *Vishnumurty* Theyyam as a ritual named "*Madipidichi Munnazhi*". Moreover, as a member of the lower caste and due to the system of untouchability, we can safely assume that the love and giving shelter to a lower caste boy at a time when the caste system was at its height, never happened at all.

sorcery, which have been sources of solace to many disease-afflicted people. These practices were means of livelihood as well, but the income from these practices has always been too meagre. These practitioners of folk medicine could never make both ends meet.

In order to perform the above mentioned folk art forms, our community has had to coordinate activities with the services of other communities and social groups. Our village was responsive to progressive political ideas and has always supported political parties and social groups working for the welfare of the downtrodden. It still remains a distressing fact that many in these political parties could never understand the real problems of this community. While they were generally sympathetic to the problems faced by working people, they never developed an analysis specific to the sufferings typical of the community of Theyyam performers. They had a tendency to relegate the traditional art of the Theyyam to remnants of superstition and clinging to the customs of the past. During his transition to boyhood the researcher had entertained a serious doubt whether performing as a Theyyam artist, would place the stigma of orthodoxy on himself. Further he feared that his own caste identity which will be exposed once he perform the Theyyam would stand in the way of his social acceptability and respectability. Hence, in the initial stages he had to undergo dilemmas and some reticence to perform. On the other hand as he got involved more and more in the performance of the Theyyam, he began to feel proud of his rich ancestral artistic and ritualistic heritage. Performing the Theyyam regularly, with all the rites necessitated by it, he could acquaint himself with the problems of his own community, which are found reflected in the art of the Theyyam itself. To be strongly pulled in difficult directions by being a member of a modern society and being trained to be a traditional Theyyam performer is a common experience of each and every member of this community.

The Theyyam performing artist has to observe certain rites and abstain from certain actions before he is to perform. While performing the Theyyam he feels elated as a responsible member of the community, as well as the village society as a whole. He imbibes the predicaments of the humanity around him, internalizes their sorrows and distresses, which gives his personality an added strength and dimension. He gains the courage of conviction that he is discharging a sacred duty. The researcher had assumed himself as '*Vishumoorthy*' who has to bless all the spectators. It is an act of deification of oneself for the sake of doing justice to the '*Kolam*' he has undertaken to perform. The performance itself is an act of self-gratification and a psychic therapy to his own sorry state of existence. After the hectic activity of rigorous dancing and the peculiar manner of body language, the performer goes and seats

himself on a 'Peedam' to accept the offerings of the devotees. The entire village irrespective of caste and creed pays homage to the Theyyam deity and come forward with their contribution called 'Dakshina' which is a small monetary gift. Each one of them may narrate a family or personal problem to the deity and he is expected to suggest a remedy or solution to the problems¹².

The role assigned to the Theyyam performer seems to be, in addition to that of performer of a ritualistic art form, that of a sorcerer, healer and even that of a priest. In a modern society, a person holding any one of these positions is likely to be ranked very high in the social ordering. But it is evident that in the traditional society of northern Malabar/Kerala, the Theyyam performers who come from lower castes/subaltern classes were never considered as persons of high social ranking. Even their very performance was based upon sponsoring by *Tharavadus* of castes higher than theirs. In other words the respect they received to use Pierre Bourdieu's terms¹³, the social and symbolic capital that they enjoyed were purely transitory. While the larger societies become modernized, it had alternative groups performing as sorcerer, healer and priests and even as ritualistic-artistic performers. Therefore in the social ordering, the traditional Theyyam performers did not gain at all. On the other hand, with the distancing from the traditional patron-client relationship and sponsoring by *Tharavadus* of higher castes, their economic position stood threatened too. Though they still lead a miserable life of suffering, their preoccupation with the performance of Theyyam forms such a vital presence in their life, that they speak about it with a great deal of caution, reverence and awe. Even in the context of many modern tendencies and radical ideas, it is quite ironical to find the village folk of north Kerala, especially among the performing community, speaking with great reverence of the rites related to Theyyam. It is as if they have conceived the whole practice as a way of life and the members of the performing community imbibe the

¹² Once when he enacted a *Kolam* and became the deity he had to hear the complaint of a couple whom had no offspring. He replied to them in a particular accent, to perform something and asked them to observe as he has directed. He sent them with his blessings, which were not his personal blessings but of the deity. In the very next year when he was performing the Theyyam they appeared before him with their newborn baby. They gave the deity some gifts. Even some of the conflicts among the villagers are brought before the Theyyam, which could be settled by the deity. There were a wide variety of disputes and conflicts such as, cheating in visa affairs, separation between husband and wife and property disputes etc. in such situations the performer has to attain a rare state of courage, sobriety and wisdom which helps him to take decisions, give advice and make certain predictions.

¹³ In Bourdieu's terms, capital are represented in four basic forms. Each form can be exchanged or "cashed in" for any other form. Economic capital is the wealth or money that an individual possesses. Cultural capital refers to the knowledge of "in things" or high culture. Social capital is the network of people that any individual knows and can rely on. Symbolic capital encapsulates one's appearance, honour, prestige, body stance, manners, speaking habits, etc. with the use of the various forms of capital, groups or individuals jockey for positions giving them dominance over others. Through the exchange of the various forms of capital, the exchange of cultural ideas can diffuse from one area to another; potentially leading to changes in the societies engaged in exchange relations. The process of culture change results from groups of people gaining dominance or superiority over another. Bourdieu refers to *doxa*, which is the unmentioned, undisputed and tacit part of the social order. See Bourdieu, Pierre (1977).

custom naturally from the elders and grow rapidly to adopt themselves to the specific demands of the rite. Their affinity towards progressive movements does not become a major hindrance to their attachment to this spectacular and rigorous discipline of the performing the art of Theyyam. Even the higher castes/class sections, including the most modernized groups accept the Theyyam with great reverence but their respect for the Theyyam is only transitory as it was during the pre-modern times too. Why the higher castes/classes were forced to accept the Theyyam performers from lower castes as objects of great reverence in the pre-modern times may have its own peculiar historical and sociological reasons, which are not clear to us now. Even if the same kind of reverence is still practiced it has to emerge from the strength of the belief- system surrounding the Theyyam. With such a strong belief-system supporting the Theyyam performance, the performing community in modern social terms should be able to derive capital [Bourdieu 1977] out of their situation. Further the tourist potential for such a traditional and ethnic ritualistic art form should also be great. If in spite of these, the Theyyam performing communities have not been able to gain in terms of social advancement. Its reasons have to be actively sought.

1.4 Importance of the Study

Many observers of the development experience of the region have emphasized the social development of Kerala. In a comprehensive view of development, the existing conditions of all including the scattered and economically and socially marginalised groups, castes and communities of Kerala have to be taken into account¹⁴.

¹⁴ There are tribal people, traditional fishing community, earth-pottery craftsmen, Theyyam performing communities etc., whose specific socio-economic problems have to be studied and ways and means of addressing them have to be undertaken in order to complete the concept of total development. No attempts for social and economic amelioration and progress will succeed without a micro analytical study of these communities of Kerala engaged in certain traditionally pursued jobs for their subsistence. Some scholars have taken interest in the study of some of these people. For instance, Schenk-Sandbergson (1988) states that processes such as commercialization, population growth, technological innovations and capitalist penetration etc., have led to a number of important changes in the third world countries, resulting interalia in aggravating further the hardships of the poorer sections of the people of these countries. Kerala, with its high population density, limited cultivable land, high degree of communication, high literacy and political mobilization presents a highly critical situation for the subaltern group of people. The study also stresses its conclusion that more effective welfare activities have to be undertaken in the case of *Kudumbi* women and men in order to help them sustain their existence. A reorganization of the daily wage labour market and legislation regarding domestic servants, are very essential to give at least 'some protection' to workers who are doing such crucial and hard labour for the comfort and well being of the entire people. Some others had also expressed concern over people who are in the margins. See Kurien (2000 p.178-197). This study makes a preliminary attempt towards an understanding of why the factors which fostered public action for 'capability building' in Kerala as a whole did not permeate into the state's marine fishing community. According to the author, the paradoxical development experience of Kerala in achieving a high quality of life vis-a-vis its poor per capita income is represented by the 'central tendency' of the distribution. The marine fishing community of Kerala is seems to have been left out of the domain of public action and remains as an 'Outlier' to the development experience of the state. He highlights that state-led public action guaranteeing widespread access to the basic facilities required to attain a high quality of life is never adequate. Without genuine people's participation in the form of collaborative and or adversarial collective action such well-intended actions serve little purpose. Omvedt, (1998 p 31-33), Kunhaman, K (1985), Ravi Raman, K (2002).

In the field of socio-economic research, there is very little authentic and reliable study on the mobility of traditional communities in Kerala. Similarly, such an alienated community as the Theyyam performing community's intergenerational and intra-generational socio-economic mobilization is also of specific significance in the changing scenario of modern society. Hence this study is undertaken.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Folklore Studies

A review of literature on the subject makes it clear that it can be divided into three categories. One set deals with the art and literature of folklore studies, another is on historical studies of the community and the third on mobility aspects of the marginalised subaltern groups in Kerala. As stated in the introductory chapter the Theyyam is a ritual art form. It has its connections with folklore, traditional knowledge and myths. One set of studies discusses ritual, myth and social relations and the Theyyam meaning of and touches upon the status of the community. The historical studies try to locate the historical importance of the art and culture of the Theyyam, its impact upon the local people and try to trace out historical evidences as to the value of the Theyyam. In the review of literature, a generalization on the mobility pattern of subaltern groups of Kerala is attempted. Briefly, in order to interpret the position of these communities in the northern part of Kerala, one might have to locate the community of *Theyyattam*¹ in all the three-angles mentioned earlier.

The work of Namboothiri (1998) is one among a series of studies about the traditional art forms of Kerala. The book describes Theyyam, 'Thira' and related 'Thottam', 'Vellattam', and tries to understand the Theyyam 'Stanams' and customary rituals. It also describes the diversity of worship, the deity concept, the relation of Theyyattam to sorcery, the structural features of the Theyyam and the performing methods. He also mentions about the communities that perform the Theyyam and the patronage given to this tradition as an agrarian cult. The work emphasized the artistic beauty of the Theyyam and the role of tradition in the preservation of the cult and culture of the Theyyam. The *Tottam* and *Vellttam* are pre-composed songs (*Tottampattu*) that describe the character, history, places, and events of a deity or an ancestor's life, in order to establish a historical context for devotees, and thereby to prepare the dancer mentally for the transformation he has to undergo. The above mentioned communities had been entrusted with the Theyyam performance in as their little birthright and had then been divided into different castes². There are about four hundred forms of the Theyyam. This division is based on the Godlike and Devil-like aspects of the Theyyam. For examples *Pottam Theyyam* has God aspects while *Karavanar* have Devil aspects. The

¹ Dance of the Theyyam.

² Some of the senior performers are of the opinion that other sub-castes like *Munhottan* and *Anhottan* etc. are the part of *Vannan* and *Velan* tradition which were divided in two types.

Theyyam named *Karanavar* ought to be the *Karanavar* of a particular family, in which the family converts their *Karanavar* into the form of hero worship of the Theyyam/God or deification of ancestors. Meanwhile in the *Thottam* of the *Pottan* Theyyam, a *Chandala* is throwing questions against the caste-based discrimination to *Adi Sankara* himself. In this context, one could say that Theyyam is an artistic creation of the suppressed feeling of the lower castes as a reaction against the unjust social structure. The *Pottan* Theyyam is believed to be an incarnation of God Siva.

The Sangeeta Nadaka Academy (2002) contains the essays presented at a seminar conducted by it with the objective of preserving the folk art forms of Kerala. The introduction reveals the background of Theyyam, its artistic peculiarities, and aesthetics of the art. It is a ritual art form performed in the village atmosphere giving artistic delight to viewers (Nambiar, p: 22 – 26). Here the essayist expresses his concern and anguish at the tendency of the village folk art forms, especially, the Theyyam to disappear. The essay highlights the process of making the ornaments in the traditional way with indigenous materials to serve the artistic (*Aharya*) side of the form. It also touches upon the dancer's organic link with the hymns, usage of natural colours for make up and about the costumes. Theyyattam is a unique art form and the performer is like a priest, who assumes extra-human powers, simultaneously with his acting, dancing and singing (p: 25). But it should be remembered that the performer is not a priest but God himself at the time of performance. The book also touches upon the social relevance of the performances, the respect received by the performing community from the village society, the special right it enjoyed and the authority enjoyed by the community. In general, the author observes that no one has ever appropriated the properties of this community, nor has anyone denied them their rights. The rulers of the area had protected the property of the Theyyam community on the one hand, if the members of the community raised any complaints. Moreover, the general fears in which the Theyyam as a God is held effected prevented others from disturbing these communities. Another important factor might be, as the researcher had identified in the course of his fieldwork that every house of the performing communities' has a small establishment of Shrines with a *Stanam* where the deity in their family placed and which was built up with stone. It is imagined (*Sakalpam*) that the Theyyam resides in the *Stanam*. The presence of a God or Devil residing within the property of a Theyyam performer again proved an effective deterrent to 'encroacher'. The performing community deliberately does this, to protect their land, especially from other powerful communities. Another major factor is that most of the members of the Theyyam performing community acquire knowledge

in magic and sorcery. Fear of these types of practices engaged in by these castes has added to their fear towards the Theyyam performing community. It had also led to the social exclusion of the performing community members. Moreover, the village rulers/heads had awarded some honours to the performers, as a token of their respect for their artistic skill. It also may have given a feeling that they too, helped to preserve this community. Rulers might have done it; to control their labourers in the name of the Theyyam. The community of Theyyam had benefited had played a role in solving the sickness among others by the use of indigenous medicine as well as magical practices (*Mandravadam*). Even today, we could see that people are approaching the members of the Theyyam community to have a remedy to their problems (both material and spiritual) in their houses³.

Namboothiri (2002) p: 35-43 in the same work describes the rituals of Theyyam and its relevance, along with a description of the significance of the rituals. Mukkunnath Kunhikrishnan Nair (2002) p: 27-33 mentions the formalities of performing the Theyyam in the shrine, the entrance of the Theyyam or duty to the performing space, the rituals and other elements in those customs. He points out the difference in the rituals from those related to other art forms, their meaning, the penance, and special practices of Theyyam. The consumption of alcohol is prohibited/forbidden to the performers, but those who take part in rituals may use alcohol as a part of the ritual. Payyanad (2002) p: 46-47 depicts the specialities and importance of folk dances of Kerala, along with the rules and regulations of the Theyyam. The essay evaluates how much the unique characteristics of Theyyam resemble those of other folk dances of Kerala. It is found to differ in the ritual and visuals. He also enquires why these forms exist in north Kerala and influence the people in the north. He also points out are on the wane in the modern world that these ritual arts are in as wane the modern world. Payyanad assumes that the formats of the Theyyam had undergone many changes structurally as well as lyrically, and that there is no justification to think that there has been a brain behind these changes. The larger part of the changes owed to social and cultural transformations, along with the changes in other folk art forms based on the taste of the spectators, over a period of time. There were changes in the attitude towards the rituals. The changes that occurred in the Theyyam performance were not rapid. The influence of classical or refined forms of the performing arts may also have been responsible for the changes. Though Theyyam has been performed in different places of Kerala, especially in the north, as

³ Even if a doctor had treated the patients, especially pregnant women, husband still approach midwives of the Malayan community to get an opinion. The *Malayan* women had performed 'midwifery' or a job of a modern gynecologist, around twenty years ago in north Malabar villages. But due to the larger process of medical advancement these types of village practices are being wiped out. This shows the decline of traditional village based patron-client relationships.

time went on the early strong devotional element dwindled among the performers. This was mainly due to the influence of scientific or rational knowledge, urban as well as industrial culture and the responses of people towards these cultures. Though the Theyyam was ritualistic in content, it became difficult to give up all the customs and practices attached to it. The question whether Theyyam is a ritualistic art form or merely an art form, is of recent origin. It has come out especially after the theatre persons as well as academicians involved in it tried to differentiate the art and to study the characteristics of the Theyyam. According to the norms and understating of the performers of the Theyyam, they never considered it as an art. Two opinions existing among the performers of the Theyyam. This difference of opinion comes out in relation to the public demonstration of Theyyam in Kannur in an open ground facilitated by Kerala Folklore Academy. Some people are of the opinion that these arts should not be performed in an open space; rather it should be at a Shrine with all rituals, because the local people have been treating the Theyyam as God. While others including the members of the community, feel that the former argument is a conservative one. They argued this was a deliberate attempt of the upper castes and conservative Hindus to restrict the Theyyam and the Theyyam performer within the boundaries of the Shrine, where upper castes people have strong control over the Theyyam. Both views have strong support of the political parties. The former argument, which favours their restriction to the Shrines or traditional production sites, is strongly backed by the Bharatheeya Janatha Party (B.J.P). While, Communist Party of India (Marxists) (CPI M) supports the latter argument. BJP widely uses the Theyyam, as one of the icons to mobilise village people in the name of religious practices. The CPIM tries to ensure the argument that the Theyyam is a people's art.

The Communist party and Sree Narayana Movement had also faced problems in attracting village people, particularly the Thiyyas of north Kerala. The *Thiyyas* have been strong believers and upholders of the Theyyam performances. This can be clear from an interesting aspect of the message of Sri Narayana, who sanskritized *Ezhava/Thiyya* worship and was outspoken in his opposition to *Bhutakriya* and other practices associated with Theyyam. He is quoted at *Palakunnu* (a place in Kannur district where he did make a visit) as having said, "The temple is not a toddy shop. The temple is not a butcher shop" (Regina and Ashley (1983 p: 101)⁴ Theyyam was a functional alternative to the sanskritized worship under *Thiyya* priests. Therefore, before 1985, the differences of opinion originating from the definitional

⁴ Sri Narayana Guru strictly advised against conducting rituals with alcohol and chicken. But even the active members of the Sri Narayana Movement still practiced Theyyam. They used to justify their action by saying that the chicken etc. were used in the rituals were not for he deity but for the performer. Ragina and Ashley (1983)

aspects of the Theyyam did not exist. It came in to the discussion among the cultural elite as well as local people as part of the larger process of socio-political change of north Malabar. It looks like the Theyyam has both aspects of ritual and art.

The remuneration the artists received for the performance was not sufficient for their subsistence. The remuneration to the performer of the Theyyam was known as '*Koll*' in Malayalam. Even today it is called by that name. It consists of payment in terms of money and in kind. Chandra (1968 p. 30-37) had given a detailed account of the rewards for the Theyyam performance, based upon an old report, which was found in his *Tharavadu*. Members of the patrons of the Shrines determine the reward for Theyyam without any opinion of the performer. It naturally goes against the interest of the performer. This type of attitude of the upper castes also is a cause for the reluctance of the younger generation to perform the Theyyam. As far as the Theyyam rituals are concerned, they have been based on caste considerations and the dependent nature of the performer to the Shrine authority, which curtails the freedom to perform his rituals unhindered. These rituals are conceived by the rest of the society, as a caste duty of the performer of the Theyyam and they have no escape from it. In this context, when a small change happens in society, the disappointed performer tries to escape from these kinds of rigid form of village structure. But it will not be a problem to a Brahmin priest in his performance of a traditional ritual like the *Putrakameshti Yagam*.

Vasanth Kumari (2000) discusses the involvement of women in Theyyam related rituals. The "women's self" had made its imprint on society and it is reflected in folklore and folk arts. If we analyse folklore carefully, it becomes impossible to ignore the participation and quality of the duties performed by women in it. Vasanth Kumari tries to explore different folk forms of north Malabar and the role of women in these forms.

In the Theyyam performing community, women have been participating along with men in all kinds of productive activities, as in the case of women among *Dalitbahujan* as explained by Illaiah (1996). Women handle the rituals of exorcism and magic/spirit performances with equal proficiency as men. In the case of the performance of the Theyyam, women largely acted as assistants mainly to arrange different kinds of material and as spiritual accompaniments to the actual performers. Women sometimes accompany the male performer with percussion instruments and to sing *Thottam* songs. In the case of the actual performance of the Theyyam, women are quite marginal except in one form of Theyyam known as '*Apsarasu*' [Vasanth Kumari 2000 p: 105]. Though most of the Theyyam stories give

importance to women like *Muchillott Bagavati*, *Makkam*, *Thampuratti* etc. their roles have been performed by male members. In other rituals like *Vedanpattu*, *Kothamuryattam*, *Kendrompattu*, *Malayamkettu* and *Ninabali* etc the role of women is significant. But they are mostly performed in the Malayalam month of *Karkadakam*, which is a period of heavy monsoon rains, unemployment, shortage of food, widespread diseases, and is generally considered a thoroughly inauspicious time. Women are excluded from certain spaces of the Shrine where the Theyyam is performed. This exclusion is specially binding upon women from other communities, who come as devotees of the deity and spectators. Women are not considered as part of the priesthood rituals of the Theyyam. A performer of the Theyyam, who enacts the role of a God, can attain a position equivalent to the usual priests of the shrine. When the performer appears in the garb of the God in front of the Shrine, then he can conduct priesthood rituals. Otherwise a priest appointed by the Shrine committee or by the particular sponsoring *Tharavadu* performs the priestly duties of the Shrine. On this basis we can consider that the performance of the Theyyam is only a traditional ritualistic art form. It cannot be considered that the Theyyam performers are conducting the priestly duties of the Shrine. If the Theyyam performers had been elevated to the position of the priest of the whole rural society it should have helped in the upward mobility of the performing community. The performers could have exchanged the cultural capital of being a priest to earn other forms of capital for then self-advancement.

Payyanad (1997) emphasises the importance of the study of the role of folklore in contemporary society. Ajith Kumar (2000) provides details regarding the art form of the Malayan community rather than Theyyam in particular. Santhosh (1998) in a collection of essays deals with castes and folklore. He views the survival of the Theyyam rituals as detrimental to the so-called untouchable community. The performance of folk arts has acted as a reason for the reversal of fortunes of these castes. These folk arts reemphasise the fact that there exists a lower caste position. The keeping up of a traditional job as their main occupation has curtailed their social mobility to a great extent too. This traditional occupation had not given even the basic means of livelihood to the performing communities. Ellayavoor (1998) talks about the myths and legends of North Malabar especially in respect to the Theyyam and their relation to the Mappilas of the region. He has traced out the Theyyam of *Ali*, a *Muslim*, which reveals the secular aspect of the cult of the Theyyam.

Namboothiri (1982; 1983; 1990) Kerala Folklore Academy (2002), Karipattu (2002) Achutha Menon (1947), Raghavan (1947) also mention various aspects of the Theyyam and other folk

art forms against the background of the cultural and economic life of the rural people of north Malabar. These studies emphasise the art of the Theyyam rather than the community life behind this traditional art form. There is hardly any specific study on the economic conditions of the Theyyam performer's community. Many of them have tried to locate the economic life of this community within the larger rural social structure.

2.2 Historical Studies

There are some studies, which are historical in nature. Chendera (1968) produces an overview of the history of north Malabar in relation to the art form of Theyyam. It informs about the various rituals prevalent in Theyyam under different Rajas, and what the myths that lay behind them. It also discusses Theyyam in neighbouring *Thulu Nadu* and depicts the songs of different forms of Theyyam. By locating one of the founding ancestors of the Theyyam cult, called *Manakadan Gurukal*⁵, he argued that the Theyyam might be 400 years old. In general it is believed that *Manakadan Gurukal* himself designed the ritual art of the Theyyam. But it is possible that even before him there were shrines and the ritual folk form-the Theyyam-possibly in existed in an altered form in north Malabar. Kurup (1973) has pointed out that the old songs of the so-called *Sangam* Age of south India, do suggest that the ritual art form, which gave shape to the Theyyam might have grown out of the folk worship practices of *Velan* priests in northern Kerala, and thus, it dates back at least 1500 years.

Kurup (1980) also gives details of the culture and art of the Theyyam. He emphasizes the dominant elements of the *Dravidian* and *Aryan* culture, both manifesting themselves in this art of north Kerala. The social processes were being transferred into the fabric of Theyyam. Kurup (1973) also writes that the Theyyam depicts "The indigenous work of hero-worship as recorded in the *Sangam* literature, which is still preserved through the ritual folk dance of *Theyyattam*. The memory of the heroes was cherished by the people and the worship of the spirits developed into a folk dance, generally known as *Theyyattam*". It represents the unique folk tradition and cultural legacy of an entire region. In a way, it has been instrumental in creating a sort of cultural integration among several caste groups of the region. However, since the integration took place in a hierarchical caste society, the benefit from it was not

⁵ A *Vannan* dancer held by legend to have lived about 400 years ago at *Karivallur* village performed 35 Theyyams in a single night at the request of the *Chirakkal* Raja. There is a small monument to *Manakadan Gurukal* at *Karivallur*. He is believed to be *Adi Vannan* (Original) dancer. There are variants of this story. According to some, he was given the forms (the costumes and make up) in a dream or trance. The *Malayan* dancer tradition also assigns the origin of Theyyam and their part in its performance to the same area. The Theyyam form of *Vishnu* as *Narasimha*, *Vishnumurthy* Theyyam, is danced only by *Malayans* and is extremely popular through out the area. For details see Regina and Ashley (1983) too.

derived evenly by all groups. To most of the performers of the Theyyam, it has been a means of livelihood. They generally viewed it as a traditional obligation to perform these art forms for the happiness of the village at large. But for them to perform the space to perform and the birthright (*Cherujanmammam*) and access through it to the place of the performance had to be granted by members of other castes, all of them from higher levels of the social hierarchy. In order to establish the birthright and the traditional division of right to perform the Theyyam in an allotted place both of which are vital to the status of the performers different members of the community often quarrelled leading to struggles even between brothers. Thus this art and its culture which on one hand integrates the rural folk of north Malabar across castes and creeds, is itself on the other, disturbing for the unity of the performing community and their movement towards development. The art of Theyyam as well as the community due to their relatively low social position could be exploited by the patronage provided by upper castes. The unevenness of the social order and ensuciant realities of dominance could very well be brutal too. A dancer who made errors in reciting the titles of important men at the time of performance was beaten after the ceremony [Regina and Ashley 1983 p: 97]. *Kannan Peruvannan*, a well-known Theyyam performer, him admits this fact.

Freeman (1991) provides a cultural anthropological analysis of the worship of local deities known as *Theyyams*. The study raises the problem of the understanding of sacred power (*Sakti*), as represented by the current worship of *Theyyams* and the traditional narratives on which that worship is based. He has brought out the Theyyam performances and festivals, the Theyyam ritual texts, various historical works, Shrine characters and myths, and several case studies in the ethnographical perspectives. He argues that clear separations between divine power and political power do not apply in this culture. In this very important study he holds that there are marked continuities with the past, in the way social relationships are construed today through the metaphor of battle and as reflected in the inherently contestatory nature of social life. The current political and social situation in the two northern most districts of Kerala, *Kasargode* and *Kannur* reflects such a severe contestation, leading to constant and widespread social strife and political rivalry leading to even regular murders. In such a situation different castes groups on the basis of power availability to them within the hierarchy of the village structure have kept on enacting that power upon their subordinates. The combination of mixing up of the secular power structure with the divine in north Malabar is certainly a very complex one. Since Theyyam seems to have grown out of the age-old requirement of the society in this region, to venerate ancestral acts of heroism and heroes, as

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Kurup (1973) has pointed out; this ritual art remains a permanent fixation in the social life of the region. Even in contemporary north Malabar society, social equality among different castes and communities have not been achieved. Though the desire for social equality is very strong, the unfinished nature of movements for political and social equality leads different levels of power within the hands of different social groups along with the 'traditional' desire for ancestral hero worship. To meet the social desire, power is used unevenly by all social groups in this society; the subordinates providing 'labour' in the form of organisation and performance of the Theyyam and the so-called social superiors providing and legitimising space for performance and sponsorship. Since both the radical political movement and the socio-religious reform movement have only succeeded in effecting a partial reordering of the social structure, it seems that the performers remain the same while the old sponsors have given way to relative newcomers. As Freeman (1991) has pointed out, in the enactment of Theyyam the divine and political power-factors are difficult to separate, with both stabilising the roles of the performers and sponsors.

The decline of the joint family system and the effects of the land reforms are major causes for the decline of the earlier existing patron-client relationship in north Malabar. The Malabar Matriliny Act of 1933 was followed by partition of the *Tharavadus*, which led to the sale of properties, fragmentation of holdings and evictions of labourers [Menon 1993]. The old *Tharavadus* found themselves unable to keep on subsidising Shrines and religious festivals due for want of finances. The majority of the Theyyam Shrines were controlled and owned till then by *Nairs*, *Nambiars*, *Maniyanis* and *Vaniyas*. The celebrations of the Theyyam festival were considered as a sacred and socially obligatory duty, which can only be conducted by financially sound *Tharavadus*. Just as the members of the performing community are duty bound to perform; the *Tharavadus* sponsoring the Theyyam are also duty bound to continually sponsor the performance. Even today in the villages of north Malabar, we can see members of the Communist party too becoming President of the Shrine committees and taking charge of the overall supervision of conducting the rituals. After the land reforms that came into force in 1970, the power of the *Nairs*, the *Nambiars* and other upper caste *Tharavadus*, which was already weakened by the partition of matrilineal holdings, seem to have almost wiped out. Control over the religious festivals of the shrines was taken over by the *Thiyyas* (*Ezhavas*), a dominant caste in Kerala especially in north Malabar, who were beneficiaries of the Land reforms as leading community of former tenants [Radhakrishnan 1989]. The *Thiyyas* succeeded in restructuring the Theyyam Shrines and they took over the charge of conducting

festivals from the other castes. But around the early 1990's this control gradually and formally shifted to committees sponsored by Political Parties. In these politically motivated committees also *Thiyyas* as a caste have a clear prominence. What these changes bring out is that power relations on the patron level were controlled wholly by the members of the dominant castes among whom *Thiyyas* are to be included. The Theyyam performing community remained subordinate to the other castes, despite all the social changes, which has been witnessed in north Malabar. It has been pointed out that similar conditions apply to subaltern groups in general of other parts of Kerala too [Kunhaman 2002].

Sanjeev (1999) criticizes the mindless political killings in north Malabar and an well-articulated argument that the Theyyam promotes casteism in the region. According to him "Theyyam does not promote violence. It does not promote casteism either". In stead, he says, "it is a ritualistic art form born out of casteism but it leads people to a casteless, classless and cultured society". It may be remembered that Kurup (1973) has also said that Theyyam leads to the harmony of the whole society. Interpreting Theyyam as a ritual art, which provokes enmity and hostility between different castes, is definitely farfetched. Some specific aspects of the performance may seem to provoke violence. But they are to be seen in a larger context of giving expression to the suppressed emotions of the performers reacting to age-old social oppression. In that sense it cannot be said to lead to a caste-less, classless and harmonious society either.

In the context mentioned in the preceding paragraph Menon (1994) who explores inequality and differences in north Malabar society which are tempered by a perception of shared symbols and values, becomes interesting. He narrates the political and economic relationship between different castes. Though the festival of the Theyyam emphasises caste and the place of different castes within the given hierarchy, it also afforded a vision of a sphere in which all castes mingled, despite their differences. This study also looks critically at the attempt of reformers to move away from various aspects of the Shrine community, which emphasised caste subordination, and tried to recreate a sense of community of equals around temples. However, it sought to combine several aspects of the rural community like common worship, mutual help and interdependence. This was the aim of the *Sri Narayana* Movement also in setting up of temples on the basis of *Sri Narayan's* principle of worship as expressed in his well-known dictum of 'one caste, one religion, and one God for humanity'.

Ashley (1993) explains how to begin mapping out a moment in the social life of Theyyam. He has taken a processional view of cultural production; noting how politicians, theatre practitioners and cultural agents of the Nation State are linked to the other values and discourses different from that of the traditional Theyyam. He demonstrates the way political and cultural agents are exploiting the art and culture of the Theyyam in the form of theatre. They had used the images and myths of the Theyyam to rewrite these myths for political mobilisation of rural proletariat. There was a case filed against *Kannur Natanakala Kshetram*, a theatre company, on the allegation of misinterpretation of myths of *Muchilot Bhagavati* Theyyam. It led to an open struggle between different sections of rural people, especially members of the *Vaniyar* caste. The *Vaniyar* caste has a close connection with the Theyyam of *Muchilot Bhagavati*. Even the slightest departure in interpretation and presentation leads to widespread conflicts because each Theyyam is very important for caste's social identity purposes. It can be called as caste *Kolams* of the Theyyam [Chendera 1968]. It is around these *Kolams* that each caste offers ancestral worship and prays for their welfare. This may be a valid point to note with regard to the question why the Theyyam form of worship is still prevalent in north Malabar. It is mainly because of the caste, caste position, and power attached to each caste, which allows the Theyyam culture to survive.

Though this art is very prominent as a folk art and has had a definite social role in society how the community which perform and preserve these art form lives and what the socio-economic conditions of the performers are form the focal points of this study. As such, next we may review literature on the social and economic mobility of marginalised communities in Kerala.

2.3 Mobility Studies

A discussion on the social mobility of communities⁶ in Kerala is usually dominated by the social and economic mobility of the *Ezhavas* because it is a community that spectacularly and through unique ways acquired social and economic mobility in the twentieth century. The *Sri Narayana* movement and the subsequent mobilization of the community helped them to move upward. A work done by Osella and Osella (2000) elaborates on it. They point out that the *Ezhavas* sought to improve their position by accumulating economic, symbolic and cultural capital through employment, religion, politics, migration, marriage and education and hence tried to assert their right to mobility, often in the face of opposition from their high status Christian and Nair neighbours. This study also examine how the *Ezhavas*, through repudiation

⁶ Communities here mean sub-divisions within religious and other larger social groups.

of their nineteenth century identity and search for mobility, have come into a complex relationship with modernity, colonialism and globalization. By citing experiences from a field survey, they point out that most of the *Ezhava* individuals and families are imitating the life style of the upper castes. They attained employment in the lower level, teaching and clerical jobs, made a little money through migration and raised the cash and used it to buy up old *Nallukettus*⁷ or to build two storied houses in prime village sites. The traditional caste occupation of the *Ezhavas* or *Thiyyas* was primarily varied and included those of toddy tappers, coir workers and other agricultural labourers on garden land. At least in the case of the first two occupations as well as those engaged in Public work a great deal of mobility was possible due to local as well as global developments [Jeffrey, 1977]. As an intermediate caste in Kerala, they could use the opportunities opened up for them. But to the Theyyam performing communities, the demand for their caste occupation was based on village economy and they were an isolated and scattered community too. Moreover, as part of the declining nature of the patron-client relationship and the process of social change, the importance of these communities was also on the decline. They could not attain cultural capital from the village society with their command over Theyyam performance and rituals as their only assets. The theatre persons and cultural elite who had realized the cultural value of the Theyyam tried to use it for themselves. Their dependent state of existence upon other communities further led to social immobility of the community. Moreover like other communities in Kerala, they were not able to integrate completely with the larger process of political mobilization and organization of labourers. These mobilization and organizational movement did not try to integrate Theyyam performance as a traditional occupation or as a particular class. Isaac and Tharakan (1986) argued in the case of *Ezhavas* that the economic emergence of a middle class from among them did not coincide with the social status accorded by caste society. The conventional caste hierarchy no more conformed to the *Ezhava*'s new economic power and assigned themselves only inferior social status. The emerging middle class from *Ezhava* community found that the traditional social structure and social practices both within as well as outside the *Ezhava* caste acted as barriers to their further development. It was in this context that the *Ezhava* Reform Movement (ERM) emerged. The ERM changed their traditional rituals and adopted the life style of others, especially those of the castes above them. In other words the *Ezhava* community had succeeded in exchanging their social and financial capital to attain social and cultural capital through their reform movement and the organization inspired by it called SNDP movement.

⁷ A traditional form of residential construction which is viewed as high social status.

Saradmoni (1981) conducted a study on the *Pulaya* community and their mobility in *Venganoor* village. Sri *Ayyankali*, the most famous reform leader of the *Pulayas* was born there. In spite of a favorable political and social climate in the state, a large section of the Scheduled Castes as well as the poor of other communities, are outside development itself. She suggests that, in order to remove this backwardness, there must be greater involvement of the deprived sections in all social activities and that is the only answer.

Sivanandan (1989) shows that the size of land holdings as well as area owned per household is the highest among *Nairs* while it is the lowest among SCs. Caste is the most determinant factor in the mobility of communities and castes. One could say that caste and land had positive correlates and it might be true in the case of Kerala [Ajith 2002]. It is visible in the context of the Theyyam performing communities too. Caste status contributes to social as well as cultural capital in a caste-based occupational structure of the society. It automatically affects in the course of one's development. It curtails him/her to come out from the caste divided occupation to enter into the modern general labour market. In this context, the caste identity is a major hindrance to the upward mobility of the Theyyam community.

On the point of view of methodology, Varma's (1993) study on intergenerational and intragenerational mobility patterns is very important. The study lays stress on educational as well as occupational mobility in the city of Calicut in Kerala. The study found a positive correlation between the education of the father and educational attainment of the offspring. In that context, the mobility of marginalised sections is very low. All the above studies point out that, certain communities in Kerala, have been socially and economically excluded from development of main stream development and social progress.

2.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To situate the Theyyam performing communities in the historical background of Kerala,
2. To study the intergenerational and intra-generational social and economic mobility of the Theyyam performing community from two angles, occupational and educational and;
3. To study the mobility pattern of the community, in comparison with that of other communities in the study area.

2.5 Whether this Community is a Single Social Group, a Caste or a Class

Beitle (1969) defines castes as small groups known by peculiar names with certain common characteristic features of marriage relationship, membership from birth, distinguished lifestyle, traditional employment methods, the special status acquired through the scheduling in a social system by the nature of its rituals etc. As far as the Theyyam community is concerned, it has similar forms of caste-based employment, ethnic marriage relationship and distinguished culture and caste status. Therefore, it could be included under the caste system prevailing in Kerala for several generations, as a single community.

A caste can be considered as a sub-society with a special status in the general society by its common employment and life style. All caste categories have a bundle of sub-castes, as Dumont (1970) says. There are castes with hundreds of such sub-castes and there is hardly any caste without sub castes in India. The sub-caste categories are tabulated on the basis of the social status they enjoyed as the sub-castes. It has also been responsible for the birth of the sub-castes on the basis of purity and impurity concepts. These features are also applicable to the Theyyam performing community, as this community had to keep a distance from the upper caste members. On the other side, there was the feeling of pride that the community had their exclusive right to perform the Theyyam. Other villagers needed them too. This presents a dichotomy of rejection and acceptance.

The caste system is a peculiar Indian social phenomenon. Mixing the concepts of caste, caste system, class, and creed has been the common feature of many studies relating to specific Indian communities. 'Caste' is a Portuguese word which denotes the ethnic nature of a group of people, although, the usage of this term in our context, does not justify that meaning. Eventhough, the tribal ethnic group comes under the concept of the term 'Caste', it has no relevance in the caste system, as we know it. Class division is possible as it is based on the particular status of an individual in a production system. The caste system consists of constant and deep social and cultural status beyond the relation of a production system. We thus study the Theyyam-performing community, which satisfies the characteristics of both caste and class. It is a productive force in the fertility cult in the form of providing labour productivity by performing particular form of Theyyam based on agricultural fertility myths. There has been a kind of a traditional caste division based on particular jobs and at the same time it has suffered all the adverse impacts and evil effects of the caste system, as it has already been relegated to a lower caste, from the inception of the caste system.

In Kerala, all the subaltern communities are economically depressed, as they are subjected to casteism, and also as they have been engaged in traditional employment or jobs, which have not help them earn a sufficient subsistence income. It is the caste system that forced traditional artists to lead a particular kind of rural cultural life in Kerala. Like many other culturally bound communities, the Theyyam performing community in Kerala has also been isolated from the main channel of socio-economic progress in spite of its specific role in culture. It is very important to make an investigation into the reasons for the depression of the community in the social and economic field. There is something fundamentally wrong with a society that throws a culturally alert and resilient community to the backyards of life, devaluing the community's cultural contribution down the centuries. What is the social psychology behind such a lack of acknowledgement? These communities have been very proud of their versatile performing capacity of the Theyyam on the one hand and on the other, they have been left unwanted to encounter economic and social ruin. A study of this kind in this context may lead to further new inquiries into several important factors, which stand as formidable hurdles in the path of economic, social and cultural mobility of this community. Though the programmes of democratic governments have helped this community to achieve a slight upward movement, as they have been enlisted in the reservation schedule of the Kerala State. The lack of mobility in the economic development of the Theyyam community may be due to the fact that this community could never create an educated middle class and it had no leadership or organization on community lines. Moreover, if anyone from the community becomes the subject of an upward mobility in either education or in income he is never ready to do the Theyyam performance and even shows reluctance to work for the development of the community. This has revealed from members of the households who were upwardly mobile. It has been revealed in the field study from the members of the households who were upwardly mobile. Consequently, to give a parallel this community has never got a family like, the famous 'Moorkoth family' from among the *Thiyya/Ezhava* Community of north Malabar, which could set inspiring models to upcoming *Ezhavas*. It was this family which acquired higher education and that had helped them to fight against caste oppression. A comparison with other communities is relevant simply because of the fact that once the Theyyam performing community has had a kind of a patron-client relationship as a servicing caste with other communities, but that beneficial interactive phenomenon has disappeared in course of social change. Basically, an inquiry is necessary as to what happened to these communities, as a part and parcel of society in the scenario of the process of social change.

2.6 Methodology

The methodology appropriate to such an analytical exercise is multi-dimensional in the sense that culture and economics are interlinked with and are looked upon in an organic totality. The study uses both secondary and primary sources of data. The social and economic mobility would be analyzed by adopting 'Transition mobility matrices' [Prais 1955]. A participant-observation methodology would be used in conjunction with multi-sited strategies wherever appropriate and permissible to explore the forces, connections, and relationships that underpin Theyyam practices of north Kerala. We would also employ methods of cultural and economic anthropology to delve into the subject concerned [Freeman 1991]. They are likely to make the understanding of the community's present status more comprehensive.

The mobility pattern of a community can be studied in three ways. One is intergenerational mobility in comparison with that of other communities, which has an equal social status, and the second is a comparison with other communities, whose status is above them; and the third is through a comparison with a community, which is below it. Here the study proposes an examination based on a comparison with a community, which is above it, in social and economic status. It is because other intermediate castes⁸ are socially and economically higher than the Theyyam performing community and the Theyyam performing community is one of the lowest castes in the villages of north Malabar. The villages on which the study concentrates are no exception. So the method which we have adopted for the survey is a purposive stratified sampling technique using random number tables. According to the parameters we chose two villages, with the same basic nature. One is the rural and another is urban. The rural area is *Karivallur Panchayat*, which exhibits more concentration both in the case of family size of performing castes and Shrines of the Theyyam. It is also widely believed that *Krivallur* village was the centre of the Theyyam in relation with the legendary ancestor of the Theyyam, *Manakadan Gurukal*, whose burial place still exists as a shrine there. It is an interesting fact that these people who delved deep into the traditional rituals had given strong support to the Communist movement in North Kerala. The urban area is *Chirakkal Panchayat*, which is very close to *Kanuur* town and it interfaces traditional rituals with Muslim culture, and it is a Muslim dominant area.

⁸ Intermediate castes are castes above the Theyyam performing castes in caste hierarchy, especially the *Thiyya*, the *Vaniya*, *Nair* and *Maniyani* castes etc. in the villages.

By using the panchayat level population tables and voters list of the Panchayat, we could divide our sample size with respect to each community. Special weightage has been given to the Theyyam performing community, because the total number of this community is less in comparison to others. We can choose two kinds of methodologies in our approach, such as conventional questionnaire method and methods of conversation, case studies and narration of life histories. Though we will substantiate some of the facts with Census report, such an exercise is highly limited because community levels data and intergeneration figures are not available. We are primarily depended upon primary data collected through a conventional questionnaire method. It is an investigation to explore the factors of social, economic and cultural depression, which have manifested in the politically, and economically low status of these people.

Chapter III

THE CHANGING PATTERN OF COMMUNITY'S SOCIAL STRUCTURE

3.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to analyse the social and economic condition of the Theyyam performing community in the larger social structure of north Malabar. It is argued that a kind of patron-client relationship had prevailed between upper castes and the Theyyam performing community, a service caste.

Kurup (1971 p. 26-30) mentions a particular case of social control over the Pulayas who are land-less agricultural labourers. It was based on the myth that Theyyam is God and if anyone refuses to work hard for their masters, then Theyyam will punish them severely. The power of the myth was so strong that *Pulayas* generally believed that they had to perform to appease the Theyyam deities who otherwise would cause them great calamity. Also even when they were sick and tired, they were only too willing to work hard to increase agricultural production.

The superior castes succeeded in creating a severe mental servitude among the subaltern sections subjecting them to ever greater expropriation of surplus. Although, the Theyyam was the art and cult of the 'inferior' castes or the depressed classes, it seems to have been reconverted to shackle them by classes in power and authority as elsewhere in human history [Kurup 1971].

The landlords transferred most of their lands on *Kannam* or superior tenancy to the intermediate castes. Since they also were part of caste society and practices. The *Kannam* holders also like the landlords, spurned manual labour. Their holdings were therefore passed on to people of the lower strata of society on inferior tenures. [Varghese 1970]

The *Ezhavas* or *Thiyyas* planted the wastelands and managed garden lands. The *Vellalars* were the cultivators of wet lands. Even up to the close of the 19th century, similar organisation survived leaving the handicraftsmen, etc., known as the *Cherujanmakar* or small-birth holders to survive by the income generated from such lands.

The performing communities and the slave castes like *Cherumar*, *Pulayar* etc. worked under the *Cherujanmum*. It provided the moral right to these people to work in a particular division of land. They have distinct rights to follow their traditional occupations, and other services to the villagers in general and to certain families or castes in particular. The functions thus acquired in the body politic became birthrights and the holders thereof have been entitled, for their services, to certain portions of the produce of the lands within the limits of their birthrights.

The social status of castes in Malabar closely followed the land rights described above. The kings, *Namboothiris*, *Nayars*, and *Nambiars* belonged to the higher castes and *Thiyyas*, or *Ezhavas*, *Kaniyan* or *Kanisan*, *Asari*, *Malayan*, *Vannan*, *Panan*, *Pulayan* etc., were within the broad category of the lower castes. There was further division of society. Because of the deep-rooted caste consciousness of the people of the region, though they were lower than *Namboothiris*, the *Nairs* would behave towards the castes below them much like Brahmins behaved towards them. Even among the performing communities, castes of *Pulayan*, *Mavilan*, etc., were treated differently.

Radhakrishnan (1989 p. 264) has pointed out that after the land reforms, the social position of the *Thiyyas/Ezhavas* had improved. Nevertheless social exclusion prevailed. Thus he has pointed out that there were two religious centres to which the *Thiyyas* of the village belonged which is nearly half of the *Mappidacheri* temple in their won locality in the village and the one next to the *Vanillam Kazhakam* in an adjoining village. The former has a *Theyyam* festival conducted once in three years. As part of the festival, the temple authorities take out a *Theyyam* in a procession to the households of all except the *Pulayans* of the temple area. It may be noted that the dancers of the deity are untouchables and lower castes. In 1973 when this practice was repeated, the *Pulayans* respondent resented it and requested the temple authorities not to single them out. When his request went unheeded, he took it as an affront and reported the matter to the removal of untouchability squad. The temple functionaries including the *Theyyam* performers were arrested and produced before the law court. The litigation went on for about two years and at the end of it the accused were acquitted after they tendered an apology for the offence. From these types of incidents we can understand the condition of extreme discrimination and the way in which the castes slightly above treated the lowest.

There were strict laws among the performing community which do not to allow anyone from outside the *Cherujanmaum* to perform any kind of services without the consent of the *Janmakkaran* or head of the performing community household, who possesses the 'little birth right' or *Cherujanmaum*. Normally, the members of the performing communities would not violate the area as their little birthright and related functions. Everybody in the area customarily knew the division of areas according to the *Janmam*. But now-a-days, the system is not known so much in society, particularly to youngsters. They were provided with some kind of material benefits in return for the services, which these castes had rendered to the members of the villagers and families. This type of transaction or exchange forms the basis of the patron-client relationship. This relation was on the basis of the power of the caste or the families concerned. This was a continuation of the power structure in land relations, which we have mentioned above.

As the lowest in the caste hierarchy of north Malabar and in the land tenure system, the freedom enjoyed by the performing community was limited and it was a kind of bondage to the agrarian social structure of Malabar in which they lived. The system of land and caste position in north Malabar may be typified as in *Karivallur* and *Chirakkal* villages, which we chose as our area of study.

3.2 The Performing Castes

The institution of caste strengthened dependency further, as some communities were considered untouchables. Economic servility and social disability together made the performing community literally subjugated to the caste hierarchical structure. Though the castes named *Malayan*, *Vannan*, and *Velan* are the prominent castes who perform Theyyam, the castes like *Chingathnmar*, *Mavilan*, *Anhuttan*, *Munoottan*, *Paanar*, *Perumannan*, *Kalanadigal*, *Koppalar*, and *Pulayas* also performed occasionally [Namboothiri 1995 p. 59-64]. All other castes except the first three have been performing a specific kind of art called 'Thira' and Theyyam in the north and south of Malabar. For example, in such places as Ezhimala, Peruvamba, Peringom, etc., the respective collectors of Kolathiri Raja decided upon the performance [Namboothiri 1995 p. 61]. The Mavilans can be seen at Taliparamba, Hosdurg, etc., engaged in making shallow basket or *Muram*, collecting honey etc., which were the means of livelihood for them. They also perform Theyyam at their own respective places or shrines. The *Anhuttan* and *Munoottan* are actually part of the *Velan* caste and they are found in *Thalassery*, and *Vadakara*. They perform *Thira*, an art form akin to Theyyam in

northern Malabar. The *Paanans* of Kozhikode also perform *Thira* and the women among them were traditional birth attendants in their respective areas. The *Perumannan* caste can be found in Kozhikode and Malappuram districts. The *Kalanadigal* are seen mainly in Wayanad and the *Koppalan* and *Pulayas* in Hosdurg and Kasaragod. Most of the Theyyam communities, except *Malayan*, *Vannan*, and *Velan*, used to perform the Theyyam at their own community shrines largely.

The *Pulayas* perform Theyyam, but catering only to their own community and at the time of their festivals [Pallath 1995]. But, in places where Theyyam is most concentrated as in north Malabar and in *Kannur* district particularly, we find only the *Malayan*, the *Vannan* and the *Velan* as the chief performers of Theyyam. Among these communities, the dancers are exclusively male. Women of all performing castes especially the *Malayan* women, occasionally accompany their male relatives in performances as background singers. Vasanthakumari (2000 p.105) has noticed an exceptional case of a woman being a performer in nearby *Thekumbadu* Shrine in *Cherukunnu*. All castes performing Theyyams were considered polluting to the caste-Hindus (*Savarnas*), and even the *Malayan* and *Vannan*, the highest castes among the Theyyam performers, were subject to distance pollution, as untouchables. Most performers of these castes were only employed during the Theyyam season, which traditionally ran from October to May (from the 10th of the *Malayalam* month of *Tulaam* until the tenth of the month of *Medam*)¹. In this period, they perform as groups at the Shrines that are considered their *Cherujanmam* and they perform with invitations from other places. At various Shrines, some of them are designated as dancers for each of the gods and the rest are to provide make-up or assemble the costumes, play the percussion instruments (drums), sing and provide other accompaniments, and perform ritual assistance required in the God's worship. Most members of the performing castes are fully engaged during this season.

Even during the off-season, those caste members who have not taken up the vocation of Theyyam performances have various other traditional occupations, many of which were also directly related to their caste's roles as Theyyam performers [Freeman 1991 p.174]. All of the castes working as Theyyam performers are also routinely engaged in sorcery. These types of exorcism were practised on the persons who approach the performers to get his/her illness healed and for the smooth running of all his/her personal and family matters. This is intended

¹ See Ellayavoor (1986), Chendera (1968).

for the good of the people as a whole, irrespective of caste and religion². Most of the performing castes also had traditional occupational rules, which entailed the removal of ritual pollution from the higher castes. Thus *Vannan* women washed and provided clean clothes for high caste women during their menstrual period and performed changed clothes associated with funerals. In this manner, they were believed to transfer the pollution of the upper caste's biological processes on to themselves thus facing the former from pollution. See Thurston (1909 VII, p. 315-321).

While the *Malayans* and *Vannans* provided these services for caste Hindus, the *Velans* were similarly engaged in polluting services for lower castes, putting them even lower in the scale of pollution reckoning [Thurston 1909 VII, p. 342-359]. But due to modernisation and the overall process of development, the importance of these traditional jobs, especially, midwifery and the washerwomen's job are on the wane. But it does not mean that it was completely non-existent for the sake of subsistence in villages. To some extent, these communities are doing their traditional jobs even to day.

In addition to these ritually marked out occupations, the *Vannans* worked as herbal physicians and as tailors. The male members of the *Malayan* community were also engaged in umbrella repair and the *Velans* worked as basket and grass-mat weavers. These castes also work at whatever additional jobs they can get and many people among them, now a days, choose construction work or work as vehicle cleaners, and daily labourers. In some cases they work as teachers in schools and perform the Theyyam at various shrines, activities that entitle them to greater social status.

The head of each performing community should receive *Vettila* (betel leaf) and *Adakka* (Betel nut) from the *Embran* or priest of the shrine. Before they are received the head of the performance group has to pledge that "*Adiyan Adiyante Divathinde Karmangal Nirvahichu Collam*" which means, "my humble self would sincerely carry out god's duties". The *Vettila* and *Adaka* are received with a *Thorth* (Towel) hanging from the left shoulder of the performer holding both his hands together. This ritual is called as *Adayalam Sweekarikkal*. This system still continues in north Malabar, but when a schoolteacher or a government servant of the performing community does the same thing, the attitude changes. Some respect is shown to

² My father and mother practice exorcism to some extent, i.e., *Noolumathram*, *Uruku*, and *Ariyum Bhasmavum*, and these are practices to remove evil eye and other problems of the people.

them³. These types of cases are very rare and exceptional among the Theyyam performing community.

During the Theyyam season, a performing troupe is scheduled to dance at various Shrines and it is by and large determined by the traditional Malayalam calendar. Each Theyyam shrine is dedicated to a particular set of gods whose Theyyams are generally performed either on fixed dates of the year, or within a small range of days whose exact dates were fixed by astrological consultation, some weeks before the festival. Many Shrines may go for much longer periods without performances, sometimes at intervals, fixed by tradition (every 3, 12, or 25 years), and it sometimes depends on the resources required for conducting a performance, and sometimes, on the basis of supernatural occurrences as interpreted, again by astrologers.

The right to perform certain Theyyams is bestowed only on certain castes. For instance, the Theyyam *kolams* like the *Vishnumoorthy* and the *Pottan Theyyam* can be performed only by the *Malayans*. The *Kolams* like *Vettakkorumagan* are performed by *Vannans* and the *Kundora Chamundi* by *Velans* only. So a shrine which has all three of these gods established would employ all three castes on the occasion of celebrating its Theyyams, and the shrine owner provides separate spaces made out of coconut leaves to these performing caste persons. The performance at certain shrines follows the moral right of *Cherujanmam* (little birthrights). These rights based on *Cherujanmam* are mandatory within the lineage, and are passed on from generation to generation, contingent traditionally on ratification in a ceremony of investiture by the local chieftains or high caste temple authorities. Many of these rights are still ratified by the descendants of these chieftains or religious authorities, although there has been some relaxation in the system by the breakdown of the traditional system of sanctions, which went with the positions of these authorities.

Thus, we can conclude that social and economic position of these performing communities in the caste-ridden hierarchical social structure of northern Kerala, make it binding on them to perform certain services to the village and dominant families for the sake of subsistence. The caste system together with their economic condition compels these communities to carry on with their traditional occupation. In earlier times, there was a high demand for the services of the castes but due to modernisation, the demand for them has declined.

³ The Former chairman of Folklore academy, Kannur, Professor Kannan, performs Theyyam at a number of Shrines but only as the assurance that the caste people would respect the deity and the performer.

As we explained earlier, the patron-client relationship was more or less based on services, which these communities provided. There, society followed a norm in that it provided basic sustenance to these communities. For example, during the marriage function of a member of the performing community, the Shrine, which comes under these performing castes, is expected to meet a part of the expenses either in cash or in kind. Most often, it is given in kind, say, fifty coconuts or other such agricultural produce. This practice is not continued today. As for the economic existence of the performing communities, apart from the Theyyam performance and other traditional services, they practise other art forms through which they earn their means of livelihood. These kinds of performances vary from caste to caste. We shall describe them one by one.

Malayan Community

Kannerupattu, *Kothamuripaattu*, *Aivedan*, *Ninabali*, exorcism and in certain circumstances, the practice of traditional medicine and the other forms of activities are performed by this community. *Kannerupaattu* is performed to ward off the effects of the 'evil eye'. Many people from different castes, including those from the *Muslim* community also approach the performers for it and they give money in return for this. This is fast losing popularity because most of the younger people do not know what it is and how to perform it. Even if, they do, they are not ready to perform these kinds of 'primitive' rituals. The spread of reason and scientific temper with modern education could be the reasons for the lack of popularity of these practices. *Aivedan* is performed during the *Malayalam* months of *Karkidakam* and *Chingam* (i.e. July-August roughly). The performers in their costumes go from house to house and enact this as a source of livelihood in some parts of north Malabar. Sometimes adolescents also enact it but it is the adult males who usually perform this. The purpose of this is to remove all types of evil spirits from the houses. So people receive this performance with lighted lamps in their courtyards. After the performance, each household gives money, rice and other agricultural products as part of the ritual to the performer.

Kothamuriyattam is believed to have a history of at least two centuries, [see School of Drama 1984]. Minimums of six people are needed for a performance. The leader along with the troupe goes to each house, plays on the *Chenda* and begins to sing. The six members are the members of a family including children and women. Every family gives money to each member, just like in *VedanPattu*. This is an art form, which is performed when the harvest is

over. Performers get rice as their share of harvest. Each prominent family gives it. Now a days this art is very rarely performed⁴.

Ninabali means 'blood sacrifice'. It is an art, which requires great expense to perform. So, it is performed very rarely and only a landlord family could have it performed. It is too theatrical⁵.

Vannan and Velan

Kendrompattu and *Aivedan* are the other forms of art performed for a means of livelihood by these groups. It is to be noted that, being an art form, which incurs huge expenses for the families, which owned the shrine, it required material resources in plenty to celebrate the Theyyam. The dominant power of these families belonging to the *Namboothiri* and *Nair* caste has declined and their power has been transferred to others especially the *Thiyyas*.

The continuity of the Theyyam performance was threatened by the late 1960s, when ceremonies at many Shrines (especially *Nair* Shrines) were discontinued [Holloman and Regina 1983 p. 93]. By the mid-seventies, however, the situation with respect to number of shrines and ceremonies had been reversed, and we find those old shrines are being renovated at great cost, and new shrines are being added. Reviving the shrine is a matter of pride for those who do it because earlier it was the landlords of the region who did it. In order to attain upward social mobility and superior position in the village society both *Nairs* and *Thiyyas* are now trying to patronise Theyyam performances. Kurup (1973 p. 77) has said, "the urbanisation has not disturbed the socio-religious structure of the traditional society based on Theyyam. These cults have been so much deep-rooted that the social changes and modernisation of our day have not destroyed them". In contrast to Kurup's argument it can be said that large-scale changes in society have not affected the prevalence of the Theyyam only because of the dissemination of myths between generations and also due to duties assigned

⁴ Nevertheless, my family gets a share from the concerned caste people as a continuation of the old custom.

⁵ This art is similar to *Mudiyettu* in south Kerala only in that they share a common myth.

according to castes. With the younger generation of the performing community there are changes in attitude towards the Theyyam and the nature of festival itself has been changing⁶.

Earlier the celebration of the Theyyam festival created an opportunity for the members of the society to get together annually. The belief in divine power was strengthened and it made the people observe law and order in society. It was a means of social control too. It also performed some judicial functions. Conflicts between families in the name of land and some court cases etc. were sometimes settled in front of the Theyyam or the deity. Some disputes between higher castes like *Nairs* are still settled before the Theyyam deity according to a solution decreed by it. This was prevalent even in the period before the emergence of modern courts and organised political parties.

The practice of the Theyyam performance in *Vallurkavu*, a Shrine in *Wayanad* near *Mananthody*, sheds light on the sale and purchase of slaves [Aiyapan 1948 p: .99, Panoor 1987 p. 23, and Bhaskarunni 1988 p. 503]. At *Vallurkavu* the slaves from the *Paniyar* tribe had to take an oath before the goddess *Valluramma* to serve a master for an amount of money

⁶ I perform mainly at a Shrine called '*Mandamullathil Kavuvu*'. It is a place of worship of the *Thiyya* community. The entire public in our locality extends their co-operation and sincere devotion to this Shrine. According to the "*Thavazi*" custom the determining power holder of the shrine in each generation, one of the male members of the family connected with the Shrine is selected to the post and is called "*Embran*". It is his duty to light the lamp and do worship everyday without failure. All economic transactions and all distributions in relation to the Shrines should be done with the consent of this person. The power is to be transferred to the next generation when the present "*Embran*" expires. At present there are a few controversies related to the power centre of this Shrine. The Shrine committee conducted a "*SwarnaPrasna*" (a special astrological *pooja* done by *Brahmins*). The result of the *pooja* ordered that instead of the annual Theyyam performance, there should be a *Brahmin Poojari* to do daily *poojas*. It is a Theyyam Shrine or *Kavu* where there was no *Brahmin* priest to date. When a *Brahmin* priest conducts the sacred rituals of a Theyyam *Kavu*, it will slowly converting a Temple. In a Shrine (*Kavu*) rituals are done with alcohol, cutting chicken etc, while in a temple only vegetable material is used. It would be *pooja* in a *brahminical* style. Shrine (*Kavu*) is an unstructured sacred place in close harmony with nature. But a temple is with structured architect and *Brahminical* *poojas*.

For a long period, after one '*Embran*' died, the senior most male member of the family took up the duty of the *Embran*, but as time went on there was nobody to come forward to take the duty 'because the members of the later generations seemed to shy away from these duties. According to suggestions such as the one ordered by the *SwarnaPrasna* of *Mandamullathil Kavuvu*, are seeking *brahmins* as the priests now. They also conduct daily *Poojas* all the year round. Thus the *Kavus* are becoming minor temples just as other Hindu temples are, with daily '*Nerch*', and '*Dekshina*'. The rationale behind such changes is that the *Thiyya* family who now control the *Kavu* or Shrine could retain its authority over the *Kavu*-transformed into a temple and with a *Brahmin* priest the place of worship will become popular among the people, whose *Dakshinas* would amount to a considerable sum. There are obvious signs of Sanskritization or Aryanisation and a strategy for greater control over power, status and material wealth. This movement towards greater Aryanisation makes the Theyyam performing community and the traditional folk arts of the Theyyam more away from the *Kavu* altogether. Slowly and steadily the annual enactment of the centuries old Theyyam would be done away with.

The new tendency in the shrines indicates that, with the demise of the present '*Embran*', a *Brahmin* will conduct the "*Niyaya Pooja*". It may eventually lead to the capture of the ritual power of the shrine by the *Brahmin* community which they had never enjoyed before in relation to folk culture. They can not only enjoy the economic advantages of the temple, but also the dominating power over other castes/classes in the society. It is believed that the worship of the deity can continue without Theyyams if the deity can be persuaded to accept an alternative mode of worship.

Similarly, transformation in the administration as well as priesthood has been taking place in *Kavus*. *Kavus* have been transformed into *Kavus* with Sanskritised mantras and rites. Slowly, these may transform into temples. It is being promoted by the strong ideological movement emerging from the Hindu Right forces in the area and they are acquiring support from the performing community as well.

that he had been given earlier, for a period of time⁷. The fact that the agreement was arrived at before the Goddess and in the sacred temple reinforced the obligation of the slaves, and it was projected as an image of voluntary submission on the part of the slaves. The Theyyam approaches upper caste leaders (if they are present) and reminds them of their duties to 'the people'. Sometimes, the Theyyam could also point out their failures to meet obligations.

In fact, during the period before social reforms, many of the religious ceremonies prevalent among the people were performed only at the sweet will and pleasure of the *Janmis* and there were several instances of these ceremonies, especially the Theyyams, being stopped abruptly by the *Janmis* for some reason or the other. The abolition of landlordism and tenancy and conferment of ownership rights on the cultivating tenants of the lands leased out to them have more or less put an end to such religious domination. [Radhakrishnan 1989 p. 21] In the post-reform period, the *Namboothirs* did not exert any influence at all over the religious affairs of the village people. In the whole of the northern part of the north Malabar, a number of shrines were traditionally owned and managed by the dominant *Nair Taravadus*, but because of the failure of these joint families to manage their affairs properly, in 1950s, they were taken over and their management was entrusted to public trustees.

The back of the traditional system was not broken in northern Kerala until 1970 when the Kerala land reforms act was actually implemented in that area [Regina, Holloman and Wayne Ashe 1983, p. 99]. This Act was passed in 1969 as an amendment to the 1963 legislation. The 1969 Act not only abolished tenancy completely but also transferred the burden of proof to the landlord, placing the state between the former tenant and the landlord in the compensation system. Under this legislation any person who 'honestly believed' himself to be a tenant was designated as a 'deemed tenant' and he became the owner of the land. The amount of rent arrears, which could be claimed, was limited and later a six-month moratorium for collection of rent declared. In cases of litigation, the tenant was allowed to remain in control of the land and rent, arrears and purchase payments were deferred until settlement. Those agricultural labourers, who were not cultivating tenants, but who had houses on landlords' property were given the right to purchase those houses at nominal prices. These conditions were proved beneficial to the *Thiyyas* because they were mainly tenants in north Malabar. The whole lot of Dalits and the Theyyam performing communities could not enjoy

⁷ It was pointed out by (Ravi Raman 1997 p.122) that when temples all over Kerala remained closed to lower castes or untouchables the gates of this temple alone were thrown open to them by the feudal landlords with an ulterior motive of recruiting labour for paddy fields, plantations etc.

any real benefits out of the land reform, because they were considered land less rural proletariat.

Further the Theyyam cult had to undergo a decline for a brief period in the late 1960s since the old social order had come to an end [Regina and Wayne Ashley 1983 p. 100]. Another pertinent cause for the decline was owing to the withdrawal or curtailment of the contribution of the *Nairs* as sponsors and that of the *Koimas* who curtailed or withdrew their support.

In fact Jeffrey, (1976) places the major period of decline of Nair dominance between the year 1847-1908 in Travancore, and traces the evidence of a changed relationship with respect to Nair sponsorship to most cultural/religious events, a generation before 1972. The principal legislation for the break up of *Tharavadus* was passed in the 1930s, and as a result of that, many legal suits began to rise immediately, but the number of partition suits in Malabar seem to have increased sharply only after the formation of the state of Kerala in November 1956.

Now, as we have noticed from the fieldwork, the patronage system has undergone a sea-change on account of the new social relations and the Gulf phenomenon has given rise to a large number of men getting recruited annually for work in the UAE and Saudi Arabia. In the northern part of *Kannur* district, the majority of the contract workers has been from the *Thiyya* community. The major *Thiyya* Shrines of Kannur district receive money from abroad, such as, Dubai, Saudi Arabia etc., With this money, Shrines have been renovated and the traditional shape of shrines has been replaced by concrete buildings and other infrastructure facilities with big temples coming into being. Corresponding to this, the *Thiyyas* could give formation to the *Samyukta Kazhakams* linking the four coastal groups for cultural exchange and co-operation. The purpose for it was variously described as “the development of the *Thiyya* community,” “giving up of ritual segments which are supposed to be obsolete”, area [Regina, Holloman and Wayne Ashey 1983, p. 99-100]. The provision for assistance to poor *Thiyya* students, etc., in total, a kind of sanskritisation process has taken place.

Now the dancers are paid mostly in cash and Theyyam dancing has become a job, somewhat outside the traditional system, enabling the artistes to have rights and obligations. Caste associations now exist among the dancers and, to some extent; this has resulted in giving them greater bargaining power. Thus in 1978, the *Malayan* and *Vannan* dancers who were responsible for the Theyyam performance at many places, began to demand more money and went to the extent of threatening to withhold their services in protest. These castes were

prepared to give shape to an alternative form for the annual ceremonies, using the services of an astrologer to find out what mode of worship the deity would accept instead of Theyyam. The *Vannans* and the *Thiyyas* could come to an agreement and the Theyyam ceremonies were performed as before. But the example is very instructive because it could show how the particular mode of worship (Theyyam) could be separated from other modes of worship, that is, it was performed in a manner that is consistent with culturally acceptable norms and beliefs, though divorced from the ritual framework.

Once, it was the responsibility of the sponsors to assemble the necessary paraphernalia i.e., ceremonial materials (coconut oil, particularly), most of this is now brought by the dancers themselves and paid for by the sponsor as a package. Rights to dance at some Shrines have been given away to other dancers (but it is always restricted to the caste itself). Although it could not be ascertained clearly, the transference of their rights came into practice in many families of performers themselves in spite of the lack of genuine interest in this art among members of younger generation, and later of most of them ceased to learn the rituals and performance altogether. This decline is chiefly on account of the cost of conducting the ceremony and also because the number of ceremonies associated, have been dramatically on the increase. This tendency, together with the abandonment of the traditional involvement in the art on the part of the younger dancers, led to a sharp decline of the art which suffered by contrast to its former glory in the past.

The rituals of Theyyam, which were conducted with *arrack* (country liquor) etc., before, have been replaced by coconut milk and they were substituted for toddy as part of the imitation of higher caste rituals. The structure of patronage of Theyyam has also been changed to a greater extent. Evidence for this can be found in the recent reversal of the previous practice of prohibiting Communist party members from participating in the traditional religious activities of all sorts. Earlier, Communist party members were not allowed to participate in conducting religious rituals and ceremonies. Now party affiliation is not a problem at all.

Corresponding to the process of social change as part of the capitalist transformation of society and modernisation, good Theyyam performers from all castes are increasingly in demand at the State and University sponsored performances and outside the traditional sites of performance. This phenomenon, which might be called 'Folklorisation', has its cultural roots outside the religious traditional system, and it can be attributed to the class-related values and incoming ideology of a new political economy. It is the reflection of a new attitude towards

life and society. At present, two kinds of processes are found, namely the traditional and modern became quite compatible. It can be found that the question, 'how has Theyyam been affected by changes in the political and economic Organisation? becomes a particularly serious one, for example, the causes and effects of the transformation of the dancer's role from fulfilling some right/obligations to working on a job.

Thus we could conclude that the process of social transformation that has been taking place over the decades in north Malabar villages has influenced largely unfavourable to the socio-economic life of the Theyyam performing community.

Chapter IV

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SURVEYED HOUSEHOLDS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter delineates the data, which have been gathered from primary survey. Though we shall explain the analysis of intergenerational mobility of the respondents in education and occupation and intragenerational mobility pattern later on, in this chapter, we discuss, Concepts defined, Problems of conceptualization, Profile of the sample, Characteristics of respondents and their spouse.

4.2 Concepts Defined

The social and economic mobility of traditional and culturally bound communities like the Theyyam performing community is to be studied in comparison with the mobility of other communities within the region. The particular community under study has been trying to find a space in the changing social scenario. By looking at the mobility pattern of the community, we could explore the factors that contributed to the forward movements of these communities with respect to others. To this end, we have adopted the concepts of intergenerational, educational and occupational mobility and Intra-generational mobility trend. Here, we add concepts of ownership of land, income and monthly expenditures on selected items of the households, to show the economic status of the respondents.

As the economy has evolved, many communities have reported a diversification of occupations, with a sharp decline in traditional occupations and a rise in relatively new occupations. This is often reflected in the social and economic mobility of the communities as a group or as individuals. Economic and social mobility involves changes in the status of individuals and groups in a stratified society, which may happen in three directions. (1) Vertical mobility (involving a change in social or economic rank) (2) Horizontal mobility (involving a change in occupation but no change in rank) (3) Spatial mobility with a change in location or migration, with or without change in rank, or it refers simply to movement within the social class structure.

Economic mobility is defined as change in the wealth of a group of people or community. Wealth, in this context, means land and income. Economic mobility of certain social groups can be measured in terms of land ownership of families, caste status, occupational status,

educational status etc. The Spread of education, occupational diversification, spatial mobility, female employment, self-exploitation, active participation in land lease market, thrift, caste net work, state patronage and freedom to enter into market are important factors that help us to understand the phenomenon of upward economic mobility. On the basis of power exercised by a caste in a region, it could develop a net work to deal with all sorts of economic activities, which help members of the caste move upward. But it would be difficult for a caste, lower down in the caste hierarchy to move upward socially and economically in a stratified society.

Economic mobility of this social group specifically means the status in society on the basis of their income, housing status, occupational change from traditional job to non- traditional and educational attainment and occupational change. Here we basically look into the changes in a community, which is historically bound to a particular cultural pattern of life, and factors that influenced the transformations over a period of time.

We use the intergenerational and intra-generational classification of mobility to conceptualize educational and occupational mobility. The selection of the concept 'intergenerational' is important in the sense that it covers almost 50 years. The Theyyam performing communities have been leading their life in a caste based social and economic structure. It is because of the fact that the majority of them are following traditional occupations, which were decided by birth. We find that all communities had followed the conditions of the rigid caste system and its elements are working on the basis of occupational division even today in the villages of north Malabar. In order to understand the changes that have been taking place within the social life of rural people during the last fifty years, we choose the concept of intergeneration mobility. In this context the conceptualization of mobility requires extra importance. What types of occupational and educational concepts are required in the present study are to be made clear.

Occupational Mobility

From the point of view of the present study, the concept of occupational mobility means the changes that have taken place in the occupation of the performing community of Theyyam intergenerationally with respect to the occupational changes of other communities in the villages. Occupational mobility helps us to study the characteristics of the community which moves both voluntarily and involuntarily from a traditional occupation to another, and effects changes in the living conditions of persons of different generations.

‘Occupational mobility that is due to career mobility is considered as mobility to a higher level occupation’ [Sicherman and Galor 1990 p. 45]. In this sense career mobility is nothing but another name for vertical occupational mobility in the upward direction.

Occupational mobility reflects the “the versatility and adaptability of manpower to changing technological and cultural conditions” [Yoder 1950]. Occupational mobility can be considered either as movement between occupations during the life span of a given individual or as an intergenerational shift, i.e., “a movement of the offspring of individuals into occupations other than those of the parent” [Addison and Siebert 1979]. According to Pal (1968), “A change in work is broadly styled as occupational mobility”.

The concept of inter-generational and intra-generational mobility may be defined as ‘a change in the occupational status between the members of two generations and it is thus called intergenerational occupational mobility, while movement between occupations during the working life of an individual is known as intragenerational occupational mobility. A further division of the concept of occupational mobility into vertical occupational and horizontal occupational mobility is possible, to which now we turn.

Vertical Occupational Mobility

To use a broader definition of vertical occupational mobility, we may quote Davis and [Matchett 1954], “ we shall use the term ‘vertical mobility’ to designate the degree to which individuals have the opportunity to acquire the skills and education to permit them to move to the highest occupational level consistent with their ability, their capacity, and their desire. It should be noted that movement may be up the ladder or down it”

Horizontal Occupational Mobility

In simple terms, when individuals move between the same type of occupations in their span of life, we call it horizontal occupational mobility. “Horizontal mobility signifies a change of job, but not status” [Pal 1968]. All these mean that horizontal occupational mobility is a movement between similar occupations.

Educational Mobility

Occupational mobility has two counterparts, viz., intergenerational educational mobility and intragenerational educational mobility. We define intergenerational educational mobility as the changes in the attainment of educational status between or among members of two generations. Intragenerational educational mobility is defined here as the highest attained educational status of an individual. For intragenerational mobility, we use the term “Educational level”.

4.3 Problems of Conceptualization

Definitions of mobility have been developed differently according to various contexts in various countries. As we conceptualize it in a more complex society we find that several problems originate. In a country like India there are varied forms of labour market, both in the rural and in the urban sectors. This makes construction of a suitable definition difficult. “A change in job involves inter-industry, inter-occupation or inter-regional change” [Papola and Subramanian 1973]. To separate occupational mobility from other types of mobility seems to be a difficult process. As a result, a single definition of occupational mobility cannot convey its full meaning because it differs from context to context. To conclude, poverty, inequality, unequal opportunities, the heterogeneous character of the labour market, differences in skill in rural and urban environment and the complex caste division of labour etc., make it difficult to develop a representative definition of occupational mobility suitable to the context of the present study.

4.4 Definitions

We use the following definitions of occupational and educational mobility in the present study:

Occupational Mobility

We define intra-generational occupational mobility in this study only for the purpose of identifying whether the head of the household has been mobile or not. It includes both purposive and forced or involuntary movements between occupations at the same level of skills or different level of skills by individuals. As regards the intergenerational occupational mobility, we may define it as the changes in the occupational status with same skills/differing

skills between and among the members of two generations. The upward or the downward movement along the occupational ladder can also be related while the mobility transition matrices are taken into account.

Educational Mobility

We define inter-generational educational mobility as the changes in the attainment of educational status between and among the members of various generations. Though we do not analyze the data on intra-generational educational mobility separately, among the total educational mobility matrix, we could relate them as the attained educational status of an individual or of a social group. But we use “Educational Mobility” in the intergenerational context only. Here we include the concepts of intergenerational vertical upward mobility, intergenerational vertical downward educational mobility and horizontal i.e.; mobility but with an equal status. We use it while explaining the basic factors of the mobility pattern in certain categories.

4.5 Profile of the Sample

We shall begin the data analysis with the presentation of background characteristics, followed by characteristics of respondents and their spouses.

Household Characteristics

The average size of the household in the sample works out to 5 persons. Households with this average figure of 5 members per family constitute 53.3 percentage of the sampled households. Out of the sampled 60 households 20 are from the Theyyam performing community and 40 households from others, including *Muslims* 5 (8.33 percent). The performing communities in the villages are the *Malayan*, the *Vannan* and the *Pulayar*. The *Chaliar* (15.00 percent), the *Kanisan* (1.67 percent), the *Maniyani* (6.67percent), the *Nambiar* (1.67percent), the *Namboothiri* (1.67percent), the *Thiyya* (20.00 percent), the *Vaniya* (11.67 percent) are the castes other than Theyyam performing castes residing in the villages. Sampled households have been chosen according to weight on the basis of population of different castes. Malayalam is the mother tongue of all the sampled households. In the case of highest educational achievement of any single member of the household, individuals with primary, secondary and higher secondary education constitutes the major portion. The mean household

income is between Rs. 2500-3500 per month. Only 36 percent of the households receives a monthly income have above Rs. 5000 (see Table: 4.4). In the case of Theyyam performing community the average monthly income would be come only at the lower level. This shall be described in the next chapter.

Characteristics of Respondents and their Spouses

In the matter of age-structure of the respondents, 43.4 percentage of the respondents are at the age level of 40 years and above, with a mean age of 55 years. Educational level of the respondents shows that 63.33 percentage had education only up to the upper primary level, and the illiterates are 5.00 percent. Only 10.00 percent have higher secondary education level. In case of spouses, 65.00 percent are in the upper primary and 13.3 percent are in the secondary level (see Table: 4.6).

With regard to occupational attainment, 50.00 percent are enjoyed in manual labour & artisans and 20.00 percent form performing artists. Performing artist's category consists only of Theyyam performance and other ritual activities and 13.33 percentage are in the employed category, which means only the government sector employment.

Most of the wives are in the age group of 40-55 years and their mean age is 43 years. In the matter of occupation, 58.33 percent of the wives are engaged in household work. 5.00 percent are working in traditional work like midwifery¹, accompanying artists of Theyyam performances, artistic or ritualistic and other old jobs like washing cloths for neighboring houses and as other service activities. This shows the decline of traditional job opportunities. It also means the decline of patron-client relationship in villages. Fifteen percent of the wives are in the occupational category of employed. Their labour force participation would be very low compared to respondents and no wives are in the higher-grade occupations.

With these clarificatory statements and definitions let us now look at the tables generated from the field survey.

¹ Means the midwifery is a ritual work in the sense that certain rituals (*Pujas*) with traditional lamp, rice, paddy, banana, water etc were to be practice before it have to done. These rituals are a ritual prayer to community's ancestors to help when it is practiced. Briefly, A kind of ritual is attached to midwifery too.

TABLES

Profile of the Sample

Table 4.1 Household Characteristics

<i>Household Size</i>	<i>Numbers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1 - 4 (Members)	22	36.7
4 - 7	32	53.3
Above 7	6	10.00
Total	60	100.00

Source: Primary survey

Table 4.2 Caste* and Religion

<i>Caste Name</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Chaliar	9	15.00
Kanisan	1	1.67
Malayan*	11	18.33
Maniyani	4	6.67
Muslims	5	8.33
Nambiar	1	1.67
Namboothiri	1	1.67
Pulayar*	1	1.67
Thiyya	12	20.00
Vaniya	7	11.67
Vannan*	8	13.33
Total	60	100.00

Source: Primary survey

*The name of the Theyyam performing communities

Table 4.3 Highest Educational Attainment of any single member in the Household

<i>Educational Attainment</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1. Illiterate	17	5.4
2. Primary (1 - 4)	20	6.3
3. Upper primary (5 - 7)	70	22.15
4. Secondary (8-10)	86	27.21
5. Higher secondary (11+)	154	48.73
6. University (12 +)	18	5.6
7. Professional	37	11.8
Total.	316	100.00

Source: Primary survey

* Head of the family's Religion/caste is considered as the family's Religion/caste.

Table: 4.4 Monthly Income of the Family (In Rupees)

<i>Monthly Income</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Below 500	2	3.3
500 - 1000	4	6.7
1000 - 2000	10	16.7
2000 - 3000	6	10.0
3000 - 4000	9	15.0
4000 - 5000	7	11.7
Above - 5000	22	36.7
Total.	60	100

Source: Primary survey

Table: 4.5 Characteristics of Respondents and their Spouse

<i>Age</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentages</i>	<i>Spouse</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Below 20	0	0	4	6.7
20 - 40	5	8.2	14	23.4
40 - 55	26	43.4	33	55.5
55 - 70	24	40.00	4	6.7
Above 70	5	8.2	5	8.2
Total	60	100.00	60	100.00

Source: Primary survey

Table: 4.6 Educational Level of Respondents and Spouse

<i>Education</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentages</i>	<i>Spouse</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
1. Illiterate (0)	3	5.00	3	5.00
2. Primary (1 - 4)	6	10.00	5	8.33
3. Upper primary (5 - 7)	38	63.33	39	65.00
4. Secondary (8-10)	6	10.00	8	13.33
5. Higher secondary (11+)	2	3.33	2	3.33
6. Professional	5	8.33	3	5.00
Total.	60	100.00	60	100.00

Source: Primary survey

Table: 4.7 Occupational Status of Respondents and Spouse

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentages</i>	<i>Spouse</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
1. Manual Labor & Artisans	30	50.00	13	21.67
2. Artist Performance.	12	20.00	3	5.00
3. Trade & business	10	16.67		
4. Regular Employment	8	13.3	9	15.00
5. Household Work.	0	0	35	58.33
Total.	60	100.00	60	100.00

Source: Primary survey

Chapter V

OCUPATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL MOBILITY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the factors affecting intergenerational, occupational and educational mobility. Intra-generational mobility patterns are also analyzed. The monthly income characteristics, monthly total expenditures on selected items, material assets (consumer durables) in the households, the land holding characteristics and the land question of the Theyyam performing community are discussed. Based on these variables, we attempt a comparison of the Theyyam performing community with respect to non-Theyyam performing communities and try to bring out the factors which are responsible for the mobility or lack of it among the sample households.

5.2 Intergenerational Occupational and Educational Mobility

The extents of association and contrast between fathers' and sons' occupations, education, and the mother's and daughter's occupation and education have been analyzed below. To be brief, the present study takes into account father-son and mother-daughter versions of intergeneration shifts, through transition matrix (Method) tables.

Absolute Occupational and Educational Changes between Father to Sons and Mothers to Daughters

Using percentages, from table 5.1 and table 5.2, we may study the intergenerational absolute changes in occupation between fathers and sons and mothers and daughters. Table 5.1 tells us that of 35 (100.00 percent) fathers who were manual labourer and artisans, their sons have been engaging themselves in occupational activities such as manual labour and artisanship, trade and business and regular employment in members of 23 (65.71percent), 6 (17.14 percent), 6 (17.14 percent) respectively. It means that the majority (65.71 percent) of the sons has not moved in any considerable manner from the father's occupational status. Column wise, out of the 30 (100.00 percent) sons, fathers who have engaged in manual labour are 23 (76.67 percent), in Artist performance 4 (13.33 percent) and in trade and business 1 (3.33 percent) only. It is interesting that out of 19 (100.00 percent) fathers, who were in the artist performance category 12 (63.16 percent) had sons who were engaged in the same occupation.

It means that though there have been occupational changes, the traditional occupations still hold a major place among the Theyyam performing community. In other categories, we could find that only slight occupational changes have occurred among cases in the total observations. Table 5.2 tells us the transition matrices of how many daughters have changed their occupation in comparison to their mothers had. Out of the 32-(100.00 percent) mothers who were engaged in manual labour and artisanship, the percentage of daughters 11-(34.38 percent) was found to be who are engaged in the same category. It is also a fact that the majority of the daughters were engaged in household work alone. A similar trend is found in the case of the artist performance category i.e., among the Theyyam performing community, where 12 (60.00 percent) of daughters have engaged in household work. It means that though there have been occupational changes, the traditional occupations still hold a major place among the Theyyam performing community. It means that compared to the mothers, the daughters have been engaging themselves more widely in household work, the traditional occupation, slowly losing its hold. Generally, this is not because of the inability of the daughters to enter into the labour market, but is rather a matter of prestige that they do not work outside the home. This is widely seen in financially newly emerged families. The husband's attitude and decision are also factors, which are very decisive. It may be due to the changed status in the standard of living in comparison with those of their mothers. As a total, out of 60 (100.00 percent) mothers, daughters 35 (58.33 percent), 9 (15.00 percent), 3 (5.00 percent), and 13 (21.67 percent), percentages respectively were formed in the categories of household work, regular employment, performing artist and manual labour and artisans.

In the case of occupational mobility between fathers and sons, though existent, it is not in a very significant proportion. In the artist performance category the majority of the sons occupations have not changed at all. This is wholly due to the perpetuation of the caste division of labour and an adherence to the indigenous/traditional life style. Traditionally

forced to undergo all kinds of community ritual classes and forced into performing duties to the villagers¹. The performing community is tied to their particular way of life. Thus the community's occupations are socially determined. The main difficulty that they face is their inability to enter into the general job market because of lack of basic entitlement, which includes lack of employment and land. But some upward mobility has been realized among those who could succeed in coming out of the clutches of tradition. The main reason for this upward mobility is educational attainment. The Reservation policy has given the push recorded for an upward occupational mobility. The causes for the mobility may be a positive demonstration effect and the adoption of life styles of other castes. The Theyyam performing families have also tried to join in local bodies and political parties which enabled them to engage in Panchayat level politics and led to a increase in this general awareness about society. But the tendency has not reached the majority of the people. The rigidity of the traditional form of culture (which will not permit them to intermingle with others) has acted as a very strong factor preventing from entering the general social sphere, or the mainstream of social development.

In the case of mothers and daughters, there has been a high degree of immobility within total households and hence the majority of them have engaged themselves in the monotonous chores of daily household work. About thirty years ago, it was the usual practice that men and women did some job or other. The new generation's mobility trend indicates that the majority of the women find jobs only within the household, with no scope for mental, social or intellectual development.

The factor that induces daughters of the Theyyam performing community, to engage only in household work, is the declining trend of patron-client relationship and the consequent loss of

¹ Moreover, members in this community have to study and practice all rituals from the elders of the community, from his/her childhood onwards. It is the family (clan) duty of the elders to teach how to practice different forms of rituals, *Thottams* or songs and other forms of art associated with the Theyyam community. The marriage of a female in this community will be on the basis of how good she is in midwifery and other rituals like exorcism and in *Thottam* of the Theyyam. The teaching of *Kulasastram* usually begins at the age of 9. In the *Malayan* community, everyone is expected to study *Malammal Sastram*. So parents usually give importance to their family (*Kula*) education. Local *Tharavadus* and upper caste peoples encourage this, because they mostly need these services as strong belief in the *Kula Daivam* or god induces the Theyyam performers to be the performers of god's rituals. Therefore, they undergo training in playing musical instruments and study different forms of rhythms to various kinds of rituals. Making of costumes, face writing and studying *Vedan Pattu*, *Kothamoori Pattu*, *Kentrom Pattu*, *Ninabali* etc are other branches of their teaching. Elders of the families take greater pride in teaching these rituals to their children. This attitude of the elders is automatically followed by the younger generation too. Children too do traditional ritual practices for the villagers. This practice is now on the wane, but it is found that members of these communities are straddling two worlds struggling to find new space in the changing social hierarchy. As an isolated and lower caste/community in the village social structure, their subsistence and identity are based on their traditional occupation. Highly stratified society and perpetuation of caste divided occupation led them to continue their tradition. The skill needed for other occupations lie beyond their reach.

traditional occupations i.e., washing clothes, village midwifery, weaving coconut leaves for thatching roofs of houses and performing the religious and indigenous rituals. It is because of this that the '*Uthara Kerala Malaya Samudaya Sangham*' has demanded that the authorities recruit their women to work as midwives in general hospitals as reported by the Secretary of the organisation.

In tables 5.3 and 5.4 we delineate intergenerational educational mobility of the total observation of the sample. It includes the mobility pattern of father to son and mother to daughter. It is shown that increasing educational intensity is centered in the category of primary and upper primary levels leads both in the case of father to son and mother to daughter. In table 5.3, we could see intergenerational education mobility matrices of fathers to sons. It tells us that out of 26 (100.00 percent) of illiterate fathers (57.69 percent) of their sons have moved to upper primary level and out of 20 (100.00 percent) fathers in the category of primary level of schooling, their sons have moved to 15 (75.00) in the upper primary level. By looking at the trend of a father who had secondary education, it was found that his son has moved on to the professional category. Here also it is shown that the general trend in the father's educational level induces in the offsprings the initiative to move educationally upward. Consequently, we find that intergenerational education mobility has been found in two villages. But such trends may not be equal among different social groups.

In table 5.4, it is disclosed that an educational transition has taken place from mother to daughter. It is a similar trend that we have witnessed in the category of father to son. A major percentage of the daughters are found concentrated in the upper primary level. But it is a tremendous change that out of 38 (100.00 percent) illiterate mother, the daughters have moved by 25 absolute numbers (65.79), and 2 absolute numbers (5.26 percent) to the categories of upper primary and professional respectively.

Now let us note briefly the reasons for the phenomenal educational and occupational mobility between generations. The vast changes that have accompanied the economic development, the break up of the joint family system and the formation of nuclear families, land reforms and the consequent economic decline of some groups have led to the bare necessity of acquiring higher education and organized sector occupation for material existence. As compared to the older generation, the new generation has witnessed high educational mobility, because of the increase in the number of schools, both private and government, even in rural areas. It may be

due to the high level of interaction of political parties with the villagers that made the latter politically and socially conscious. The villagers thus realized the importance of education. Moreover, the social importance of educated men and the consequent respect they commanded in rural villages has given the villagers a model to follow. The *Grandhasala Prasadhanam*, the literacy movement etc., had also played a positive role in creating awareness among people about education. Intergenerational upward educational mobility is a clear sign of increased human capital intensity between generations, helping the offsprings of the coming generation in the matter of access to better occupations.

It is evident from the field survey that the Theyyam performing caste possesses an educational mobility, which is higher than their occupational mobility. It may be due to the fact that gaining admission to the educational institutions is easy for them and that they are granted stipends for their education as guaranteed by the Constitution. The intergenerational educational mobility of the Theyyam performing community as against others in the villages, both fathers to sons and mothers to daughters are being depicted in tables 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7 and 5.8 respectively.

Table 5.5 shows the intergenerational educational mobility of the Theyyam performing community. There is a great change in the educational mobility of fathers to sons. This change is highly concentrated in the upper primary level and it is similar in the case of the intergenerational educational mobility of the non-Theyyam performing community. But, non-Theyyam communities have been showing a high educational movement towards higher-grade education, including professional courses. Broadly speaking, educational mobility among these two groups was high, and it is due to the general educational advancement of the State as a whole.

In the case of mother-to-daughter intergenerational educational mobility of the Theyyam performing community and non-Theyyam performing community there is a concentration of educational attainment upto the upper primary level.

The Theyyam performing community could have achieved greater educational mobility if they could break out of the rigid mould of culture and tradition. It is only through a fuller utilization of the reservation policy of the central-state government, that these communities could move upward and establish equal social status with other members of the society in the

modern era. Broadly viewed, the main hurdles, which are found from the field study, are tradition, poverty, and seasonal unemployment. The Theyyam related occupation would be only for around six months. A kind of traditional attachment to the village's custom induces them to follow all kinds of traditional norms and rituals. This affects their larger process of social participation in the mainstream society.

5.3 Intra-generational Occupational Mobility Pattern

Though different categorical divisions can be applied while measuring intra-generational mobility, we use this concept by taking the number of shifts that had been undergone by the head of the family. By adopting such a criterion we could classify respondents into (a) immobile (b) moderately mobile (c) highly mobile categories. An immobile respondent is defined as a person who held no occupational shift throughout his career. A moderately mobile individual is defined as one who has shifted occupation, and a highly mobile individual is defined as one who had undergone occupational shift thrice. We categorize people like this because in the sample only a three times occupational shift had happened to respondent in the life span of his occupational shift.

In this category of intra-generational occupational mobility measurement, we use only the mobility pattern, which occurred among respondents or heads of households. Table 5.9 shows how the head of the household or respondents had changed his occupation.

It is clear that, out of the 60 respondents, only 5 (8.33 percent) had moved significantly upward in the occupational ladder and 34 (56.67 percent) have been immobile. But 35.00 percentage of the respondents moved only moderately. It means that there has been occupational mobility among the respondents but only very slowly. This is interesting when we analyze with respect to two social groups. Table 5.10 tells us the intra-generational occupational mobility of the Theyyam performing community as against others. It reveals also the immobile nature of the respondents of the Theyyam performing community. That is, 15 (75.00 percent) of the respondents had been immobile. It means that within the community, occupational shifts have occurred very slowly. At the same time in the case of non-Theyyam performing group, there has been mobility. That is, 47.50 percent of respondents had moderate mobility and 5.00 percent have been highly mobile. It may be the fact that occupational diversification had occurred due to the occupational nature of intermediate castes in the

villages. Intermediate caste means castes above the Theyyam performing castes in the region. They are the *Thiyyas*, *Manaiyani*, *Vaniar*, *Chaliar* etc. It may be that particular cultural tradition of the Theyyam community and the isolated lower caste inhibitions deprived them of a shift towards other occupations. This is clearer from table 5.11. Though the sample size is very small, table 5.11 also coincides with these problems. We had gathered the sample from the performing community through direct conversations with a large member of the performing community.

5.4 Monthly Income Characteristics

In the total sample, the mean income was Rs. 6490.833 with a standard deviation of Rs. 7645.346 and the median income was Rs. 4000. But while looking at the smallest income limits Rs. 300-600 and largest Rs. 17000-48000, it shows a huge income gap between the households. The mean income is thus high because of the wide range of total observations. It is shown in table 5.12.

The Theyyam performing caste has a mean income of Rs. 3727.5 and a median Rs. 2550 with a standard deviation of 3611.876. While in the non-Theyyam performing castes, their average income is 7872.5 with a median of 4750 and a standard deviation of 8729.085, which means that the monthly income of the Theyyam performing community is very low in comparison with that of the non-Theyyam caste. This may be due to the occupational uncertainty of the Theyyam community outside the traditional occupations as the Theyyam performance is a seasonal one, and they are not able to come out from their less rewarding traditional job. As far as non-Theyyam communities are concerned, it may be due to the fact that they could engage themselves in the general labour market and because of their having many other sources and material assets, which made them capable of engaging in different income earning activities. In the Theyyam group, the upper income level is only Rs. 5000 –13500, while in the non-Theyyam group it is Rs 17000-18000. This also gives us an idea as to what the income variation of the households among two categories is. While looking at the lower limit Rs. 300-600, 800-1600 for Theyyam and non-Theyyam respectively we may discern that the rich and poor income gap is also very large in these two social classes. See table 5.13, 5.14 and box plot given below. It shows the difference in monthly income between the Theyyam community and non-Theyyam community in figures given in the table section of this chapter.

The first box plot shows the income concentration of the Theyyam performing community and the next shows the same non-Theyyam community.

5.5 Average Monthly Expenditure on Selected Items of the Sample

It is clear from the table 5.19 that the monthly expenditure on selected items of the Theyyam community and non-Theyyam community reveals the same trend as monthly income wise differentials. If we look at the mean of different items from the table we could see that the expenditure of the Theyyam performing community is less when compared to the non-Theyyam community. Among the Theyyam performing community, mean of monthly expenditures on selected items are Rs. 3430.5 with a standard deviation of 133.24533. But while looking at average smallest expenditure limits Rs. 510 and largest Rs.158225, it shows expenditure differentials within the households. While among the non-Theyyam performing community, mean expenditure is Rs. 11567.25 and average smallest limits Rs. 1040 and largest Rs. 10175. It shows that pattern of expenditure inequality is high within the Theyyam performing community than others. Thus it conveys that the average monthly income falls far short of the monthly expenditure, which forces them to depend on loan.

5.6 House and Household Durables of Two Social Groups

The material status of houses of the Theyyam performing communities with respect to non-Theyyam community is quite interesting in the sense that it reveals differences in terms of household assets, which is quite clear from table 5.16. It is found that 70-percent of the houses of the Theyyam community had tiled roofs compared to only 47.50 percentages of non-Theyyam community houses. Coconut leaves are most widely used by the marginalised communities in the village. It reveals a difference in income. The stone walled houses are around 85.00 percentage among intermediate castes of the village while it is only 70.00 percentages among others. Considering the floors of the houses, 30.00 percentage of the houses of the Theyyam community were made of cow dung while only 15.00 percentages to other communities had such floors. Though there are differences between the electrified and non-electrified houses in the villages, this difference is not high. It may be due to the public action to provide electricity to the villagers. The availability of drinking water is also inadequate in the villages. Around 72.50 percent of the houses have their own source of drinking water among the non-Theyyam community, while only 45.00 percentage among the Theyyam performing community level such a source. The lack of drinking water and

bathroom facility is the main problems facing females of the households. The People's Planning Programme of the Panchayat has solved the lack of toilet facility of the houses of the villages to some extent. This was the opinion of one of the respondents to our interview. The fuel used in the kitchens of the Theyyam performing community is firewood (80.00 percentages), while 45.00 percentage of the kitchens of other communities use LPG Gas. Households, wherein educational as well as occupational mobility had occurred, possessed vehicles and other consumer durables. The Theyyam community members are also not different in these cases and it is clear that the inequality within the Theyyam community is more than other in communities. It mainly depends upon the ability of the members among the Theyyam community, who could use the reservation chance and, in Bourdieu's words the cultural capital from their traditional ritual art performances. It means that access to occupational diversification from the traditional job requires a kind of capability. The lack of this capability is the major problem of the Theyyam community in the villages and it has a close correlation with caste-based marginalisation and social as well as economic exclusion of the moral community of the *Theyyattam*.

5.7 The Question of Land and the Landholding Characteristics

The land status of lower castes/dalits when compared to that of the upper castes/non-dalits in Kerala has been found to differ widely and the factors responsible for such differences are traced historically in the literature on land reforms in Kerala.² In a critique of the land reforms in Kerala, Tharakan (2002 p. 358) pointed out that the provision for abolition of tenancy might have affected adversely the land holding rights of the Adivasis, the indigenous people of the state. Instead, it might have benefited settlers from the plains who had leased in land from the Adivasis and therefore were considered as tenants. Ravi Raman (2000), Bijoy and Ravi Raman (2003) was further argued that the settlers would “claim and obtain pattas to the lands, dispossessing the tribal owner who had become the landlord”. The same kind of problem with regard to land had occurred in many households of the Theyyam performing communities too. As a social need of the society, performing community held in great respect their ritual services to the villages as the Theyyam performances, midwifery etc. Since the rural chieftains also held these rituals in great respect they gave small portions of their land to

² Kerala's achievements in the area of land reform have been discussed extensively in literature [RAJ and Tharakan 1983, Radhakrishnan 1989, Oommen 1971, Franke and Chasin 1989, Menon 1994, Tharakan 1998, 2002]. The Kerala land reform movement witnessed long struggles against landlordism by peasants and agricultural labours with the strong support of political movements especially the Communist movement. The aftermath of land reform was that it abolished statutory landlordism, the Janmi system, and consequently weakened upper caste dominance over land. It gave freedom of ownership right to tenants and legally banned tenancy [Tharakan 2002 p. 361-362]. In this way it had benefited Dalits too. But its impact was more on social aspects than material aspects of the development of the communities. It means that it had contributed larger process of social change that affected positively to the marginalised communities of the region as well. It is worth remembering that the first strike by agricultural workers in Kerala in 1914 demand admission for a Dalit girl from an agricultural worker family to a government school near Trivandrum [Tharakan 2002 p. 361]

In economic terms, the Dalits had not acquired much, due to land reform. It lay greater stress on tenancy reform. The majority of the Dalits in Kerala were not tenants. In 1930, in response to various demands of the peasant unions of Malabar, the Malabar Tenancy act was passed which protected the interest of the *Kanamdars* (the principal tenants). The objective of this Act was to put an end to the arbitrary powers of the landlord in evicting the tenants and in enhancing the land rent at their will. But it did not stress on the demand of the *Kudikidappukars* who were largely Dalits, though some solace was promised to the *Verumpattakars* (tenant at will). The programme of allotment of house sites (and dwellings) gave agricultural labourers their own space for housing. It had not reached sections like that of the Theyyam performing community. Land has been a crucial problem with new generation growing to form new families. Redistribution of land to land-less workers did not take place except through excess land redistribution, which was limited. By 1993, only 1.47 percent of the total operated area had been redistributed to the absolutely land less. The land declared surplus by the government in 1980 was only 44,000 hectares, which accounted for only 6 percent of the land notified in 1957, showing clearly how landowners evaded ceiling laws by transferring land and making use of the Gift Deeds act.

There are no data available at the state level, which would help us to understand and to evaluate the relationship between caste and landholding pattern. But here relaying on secondary data, we could develop an argument that the Dalits had not benefited in the material process of development. Here we made a comparison between three studies, which are [Varghese 1970, Abraham Vijayan 1998, Thomas Isaac, et al 1995] respectively. Vijayan's study area was in *Palghat*, in an agrarian village. The number of sampled households was 385 where the average land square was 1.43 hectares. Isaac studied *Kaliassery* Panchayat in *Kannur* district. He had taken all households in the Panchayat where average land holding was 48 cent. It is shown in table 5.21. It throws light on very interesting facts regarding land holding patterns among different castes in different study areas. It shows that the land holdings of upper castes had declined and other backward caste's land had increased. This is also because of the principle criteria followed in transferring land to the tenants in land reform policy. What it means is that the intermediate or middle level castes who dominated the tenants group benefited relatively. In case of Dalits who were mainly agricultural labourers the pattern remain unchanged. It can actually be seen that right now Dalit families are living with their sub families in a hutment of a few cents.

the community. Some of the families of the *Malayan* community were invited from different parts of the district to north Malabar villages to perform their traditional jobs as a collective need. In addition to small portions of land, some of the families also got some agricultural land. But as a Theyyam performing community, whose members were largely involved in performances and attached rituals, they could not make the necessary labour input into the soil. Therefore they used to give land to mainly members of the *Thiyya* caste for cultivation. Such lands naturally ended up with the so-called 'tenants'. Even today, the performing communities give their coconut trees etc on the basis of *Pattam* or leases to *Thiyyas*.

As the Dalit community of Kerala we find that the Theyyam community has also been marginalised from land ownership. Historically, they do not have a major role in the land tenure system of the north Malabar except the *Cherujanmam*. Cherujanmam is not a part of the land tenure, but is a small division of area of land over which the Theyyam caste holds a moral right. So the question of land differentials is very important in a comparison between the Theyyam and the non-Theyyam groups. On an analysis of the data regarding the pattern of inequality of land holdings among the Theyyam performing community and non-Theyyam performing community, we note the glaring and pathetic deprivation suffered by this marginalised community of northern Kerala. Fifty percent of (50.00) the households have land within 10 cents and 36.67 percent owned land between 10 – 50, and 11.67 between in 50 – 100 cents. Only 1 household owns a land of 100 + (See table 5.17).

An analysis shows that the average of the total households is 30.93 cents with a standard deviation of 61.91672. The smallest land limit within the observation is 1- 4 cents, while the largest limit is 99-450 cents of land. It is clear that an inequality in land distribution of two villages is an undeniable social and economic reality. But it has been noted that the majority of the surveyed households had acquired land below 15 cents only and none of the Theyyam performing household has land more than 20 cents except one (See also table 5.18 for the comparison of Theyyam and non-Theyyam community's differentials). This is the house of *Narthkarathnam Kannan Peruvannan*, a well-known performer. This is because his land and economic position after independence had changed and his offspring had attained a very sound position occupationally as well as educationally. As we gathered from our conversations with members of the Theyyam households, most of them got land through land reforms in the form of surplus land and the housing policy of the Panchayat. In the case of agricultural land, only *Maniyani*, *Nair* and *Thiyya* castes have productive agricultural land.

Though the Theyyam performing community has had land only below 15 cents, they do not have agricultural land, i.e., the land is not good enough for any profitable crop.

5.8 Household Indebtedness

As we have discussed earlier, the economic indebtedness of the households to the co-operative banks is very great. The Theyyam performing community has been acquiring loans from the cooperative banks as personal loans. It is the general perception that it has become possible only through the help rendered by the political parties of which they were members. It is because these banks were under the control of different political parties. The membership in one party had induced in the members of the performing community the need for social mobility and had created awareness about the socio-political systems of the region. The lack of political awareness among these social groups is a hurdle in the way of their own social mobility. So it is imperative that they either organize themselves or enter into political parties to get adequate representation to enhance their position in the social and economic spheres.

What we have observed from this chapter is that the material as well as socially constructed capital of the Theyyam community is quite marginal, in comparison with other communities in the same social structure. The inter-generational occupational mobility from father to son was minimum and thus the traditional occupations still hold a major place among them. The inter-generational occupational mobility from mother to daughter was almost nil, and they are confined to household work, which is largely due to the decline of patron-client relations and the loss of traditional work. The inter-generational educational mobility that we found among the Theyyam performing community is largely explained as a general outcome of the advancement of the state in terms of education. In terms of intra-generational occupational mobility, the shift has occurred within the Theyyam performing community but very slowly as against the other communities such as the *Thiyyas* and *Vaniyas* in the villages. The average monthly income of the Theyyam performing households falls short of average monthly expenditure which forces them to depend on loan, largely from the co-operative banks. Though various forms of social and institutional changes have taken place in Kerala, they have not been able to increase the opportunities for development of the Theyyam performing community in the state.

TABLES

Table 5.1 Intergeneration Occupational Mobility Matrixes (Father-Son)

<i>Father's occupation</i>	<i>Son's Occupation</i>				<i>Total</i>
	1. Manual Labor & Artisans	2. Artist Performance.	3. Trade & business.	4. Regular Employment	
1. Manual Labor & Artisans	23 65.71 76.67	0 0.00 0.00	6 17.14 60.00	6 17.14 75.00	35 100.00 58.33
2. Artist Performance	4 21.05 13.33	12 63.16 100.00	2 10.53 20.00	1 5.26 12.50	19 100.00 31.67
3. Trade & business	1 33.33 3.33	0 0.00 0.00	2 66.67 20.00	0 0.00 0.00	3 100.00 5.00
4. Regular Employment	2 66.67 6.67	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	1 33.33 12.50	3 100.00 5.00
Total	30 50.00 100.00	12 20.00 100.00	10 16.67 100.00	8 13.33 100.00	60 100.00 100.00

Source: Primary Survey.

Table 5.2 Intergeneration Occupational Mobility Matrixes. (Mother to Daughter)

<i>Mother's Occupation.</i>	<i>Daughter's Occupation.</i>				<i>Total</i>
	1. Manual Labor & Artisans	2. Artist Performance.	4. Regular Employment	5. Household Work.	
1. Manual Labor & Artisans	11 34.38 84.62	0 0.00 0.00	4 12.50 44.44	17 53.13 48.57	32 100.00 53.33
2. Artist Performance.	2 10.00 15.38	3 15.00 100.00	3 15.00 33.33	12 60.00 34.29	20 100.00 33.33
5. Household Work.	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	2 25.00 22.22	6 75.00 17.14	8 100.00 13.33
Total	13 21.67 100.00	3 5.00 100.00	9 15.00 100.00	35 58.33 100.00	60 100.00 100.00

Source: Primary Survey.

Table 5.3 Intergeneration Educational Mobility Matrixes (Father-Son)

<i>Father's Education.</i>	<i>Son's Education.</i>						<i>Total.</i>
	1.Illiterate(0)	2.Primary (1-4)	3.Upper primary (5-7)	4.Secondary (8-10)	5.Higher secondary (11+)	6.Professional	
1.Illiterate (0)	2 7.69 66.67	4 15.38 66.67	15 57.69 39.47	4 15.38 66.67	0 0.00 0.00	1 3.85 20.00	26 100.00 43.33
2. Primary (1-4)	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	15 75.00 39.47	1 5.00 16.67	2 10.00 100.00	2 10.00 40.00	20 100.00 33.33
3. Upper primary (5-7)	1 7.69 33.33	2 15.38 33.33	8 61.54 21.05	1 7.69 16.67	0 0.00 0.00	1 7.69 20.00	13 100.00 21.67
4. Secondary (8-10)	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	1 100.00 20.00	1 100.00 1.67
Total.	3 5.00 100.00	6 10.00 100.00	38 63.33 100.00	6 10.00 100.00	2 3.33 100.00	5 8.33 100.00	60 100.00 100.00

Source: Primary Survey.

Table 5.4 Intergeneration Educational Mobility Matrixes (Mother-Daughter)

<i>Mother's Education.</i>	<i>Daughter's Education.</i>						<i>Total.</i>
	1.Illiterate(0)	2.Primary (1-4)	3.Upper primary (5-7)	4.Secondary (8-10)	5.Higher secondary (11+)	6.Professional	
1.Illiterate (0)	3 7.89 100.00	3 7.89 60.00	25 65.79 64.10	5 13.16 62.50	0 0.00 0.00	2 5.26 66.67	38 100.00 63.33
2. Primary (1-4)	0 0.00 0.00	2 13.33 40.00	9 60.00 23.08	1 6.67 12.50	2 13.33 100.00	1 6.67 33.33	15 100.00 25.00
3. Upper primary (5-7)	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	4 66.67 10.26	2 33.33 25.00	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	6 100.00 10.00
4. Secondary (8-10)	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	1 100.00 2.56	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	1 100.00 1.67
Total.	3 5.00 100.00	5 8.33 100.00	39 65.00 100.00	8 13.33 100.00	2 3.33 100.00	3 5.00 100.00	60 100.00 100.00

Source: Primary Survey.

Table 5.5 Intergenerational Educational Mobility of Theyyam Performing Community
(Transition Matrix row col.) Fathers to Son.

<i>Father Education.</i>	<i>Son's Education.</i>					<i>Total</i>
	2.Primary (1-4)	3.Upper primary (5-7)	4.Secondary (8-10)	5.Higher secondary (11+)	6.Professional.	
1.Illiterate	0	7	1	0	1	9
	0.00	77.78	11.11	0.00	11.11	100.00
	0.00	50.00	50.00	0.00	100.00	45.00
2.Primary (1-4)	0	4	1	1	0	6
	0.00	66.67	16.67	16.67	0.00	100.0
	0.00	28.57	50.00	100.00	0.00	30.00
3.Upper primary (5-7)	2	3	0	0	0	5
	40.00	60.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
	100.00	21.43	0.00	0.00	0.00	25.00
Total	2	14	2	1	1	20
	10.00	70.00	10.00	5.00	5.00	100.00
	100.0	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Primary Survey.

Table 5.6 Intergenerational Educational Mobility of Non- Theyyam Performing community
(Transition Matrix row col.) Father to Son.

<i>Father education.</i>	<i>Son's Education</i>						<i>Total</i>
	1.Illiterate	2.Primary (1-4)	3.Upper primary (5-7)	4.Secondary (8-10)	5.Higher secondary (11+)	6.Professional	
1.Illiterate (0)	2	4	8	3	0	0	17
	11.76	23.53	47.06	17.65	0.00	0.00	100.00
	66.67	100.00	33.33	75.00	0.00	0.00	42.50
2.Primary (1-4)	0	0	11	0	1	2	14
	0.00	0.00	78.57	0.00	7.14	14.29	100.00
	0.00	0.00	45.83	0.00	100.00	50.00	35.00
3.Upper primary (5-7)	1	0	5	1	0	1	8
	12.50	0.00	62.50	12.50	0.00	12.50	100.00
	33.33	0.00	20.83	25.00	0.00	25.00	20.00
4.High school (8-10)	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100.00
	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	25.00	2.50
Total	3	4	24	4	1	4	40
	7.50	10.00	60.00	10.00	2.50	10.00	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Primary Survey.

Table 5.7 Intergeneration Educational Mobility of Theyyam Performing Community. (Mother to Daughter) row col. Mother to Daughter

<i>Mother Education</i>	<i>Daughter's Education.</i>				<i>Total</i>
	2. Primary (1 – 4)	3.Upper primary (5– 7)	4.Secondary (8- 10)	5.Higher secondary (11+)	
1.Illiterate (0)	1 6.67 100.00	11 73.33 73.33	3 20.00 100.00	0 0.00 0.00	15 100.00 75.00
2. Primary (1 – 4)	0 0.00 0.00	2 66.67 13.33	0 0.00 0.00	1 33.33 100.00	3 100.00 15.00
3. Upper primary (5 – 7)	0 0.00 0.00	2 100.00 13.33	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	2 100.00 10.00
Total	1 5.00 100.00	15 75.00 100.00	3 15.00 100.00	1 5.00 100.00	20 100.00 100.00

Source: Primary Survey.

Table 5.8 Intergeneration Educational Mobility of Non-Theyyam Performing Community. (Mother to Daughter) row col. Mother to Doughtier

<i>Mother Education</i>	<i>Daughter's Education.</i>						<i>Total</i>
	1.Illiterate (0)	2.Primary (1 – 4)	3.Upper primary (5 – 7)	4.Secon dary(8- 10)	5.Higher secondary (11+)	6.Professio nal	
1.Illiterate (0)	2 8.70 100.00	3 13.04 60.00	14 60.87 58.33	2 8.70 40.00	0 0.00 0.00	2 8.70 66.67	23 100.00 57.50
2. Primary (1 – 4)	0 0.00 0.00	2 16.67 40.00	7 58.33 29.17	1 8.33 20.00	1 8.33 100.00	1 8.33 33.33	12 100.00 30.00
3. Upper primary (5 – 7)	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	2 50.00 8.33	2 50.00 40.00	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	4 100.00 10.00
4. Secondary (8-10)	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	1 100.00 4.17	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	0 0.00 0.00	1 100.00 2.50
Total	2 5.00 100.00	5 12.50 100.00	24 60.00 100.00	5 12.50 100.00	1 2.50 100.00	3 7.50 100.00	40 100.00 100.00

Source: Primary Survey.

Table 5.9 Intra Generational Mobility

<i>Change.</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
0 (Immobile)	34	56.67
1 (Moderately Mobile)	21	35.00
2 (Highly Mobile)	5	8.33
Total	60	100.00

Source: Primary Survey.

Table 5.10 Intra-generational Occupational Mobility Matrix of Social Classes

<i>Social classes</i>	<i>Immobile</i>	<i>Moderately Mobile.</i>	<i>Highly Mobile</i>	<i>Total</i>
Theyyam Group.	15	2	3	20
	75.00	10.00	15.00	100.00
	44.12	9.52	60.00	33.33
Others.	19	19	2	40
	47.50	47.50	5.00	100.00
	55.88	90.48	40.00	66.67
Total	34	21	5	60
	56.67	35.00	8.33	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Primary Survey.

Table 5.11 Caste wise Intra-generational Occupational Mobility

<i>Caste Name</i>	<i>Mobility Pattern.</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Immobile</i>	<i>Moderately Mobile.</i>	<i>Highly Mobile</i>	
Malayan	10	1	1	12
Vannan	5	1	1	7
Pulayan	1	1	0	2
Chaliar	2	5	1	8
Kanisan	1	0	0	1
Maniyani	2	2	0	4
Muslims	4	1	0	5
Nambiar	0	0	1	1
Namboodiri	0	1	0	1
Tiyya	6	6	0	12
Vaniya.	3	2	2	7
Total	34	20	6	60

Source: Primary Survey.

Table: 5.12 Monthly Income of the Total Observations

<i>Percentiles</i>	<i>Smallest</i>		
300	300		
600	500		
1100	600	Observations.	60
2000	600	Sum of wgt.	60
4000	largest	Mean	6490.833
7650	17000	Std. Dev	7645.346
15000	23500	Variance	5.85e+07
20250	24000	Skewness.	3.172432
48000	48000	Kurtosis.	16.12012

Table: 5.13 Monthly Income of the Theyyam Performing Community

<i>Percentiles</i>	<i>Smallest</i>		
300	300		
400	500		
550	600	Observations.	20
1600	600	Sum of wgt.	20
2550	Largest.	Mean	3727.5
4450	5000	Std. Dev	3611.876
9675	6900	Variance	1.30e+07
12975	12450	Skewness.	1.667928
13500	13500	Kurtosis.	5.057284

Table: 5.14 Monthly Income of the Non-Theyyam Performing Community

<i>Percentiles</i>	<i>Smallest</i>		
800	800		
1250	1000		
1600	1500	Observations.	40
2400	1600	Sum of wgt.	40
4750	Largest.	Mean	7872.5
9750	17000	Std. Dev	8729.085
16000	23500	Variance	7.62e+07
23750	24000	Skewness.	2.79313
48000	48000	Kurtosis.	12.47322

Note: F test proves statistically whether the variances of two samples are significantly different or not. Here null hypothesis is that variances do not differ significantly. The probability obtained is very small (0). So we reject the null hypothesis. That is the variances of two samples differ highly significantly. That is the differences obtained between the two variances are statistically significant. In case of t test, probability (1.41e-08) is less than 0.05 that is we reject null hypothesis. Hence, mean obtained differs highly significantly. The results are given in tables 5. 16 below.

Source: Primary Survey.

Table 5.15

<i>F-test Two-sample for Variance:</i>	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable2</i>
Mean	6568	1.666667
Variance	4.02E+08	0.225989
Observations	60	60
Df	59	59
F (F<=1) or	1.78E+09	
F Critical c	1.539956	

<i>T-test Two-sample for Assuming unequal variable.</i>	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable2</i>
Mean	1.666667	6490.833
Variance	0.225989	58451313
Observations	60	60
hypothesis	0	
df	59	
T stat	- 6.57457	
P (T<t) tw	7.07E- 09	
T critical	1.671092	
P (T<=t) tw	1.41E-08	
T critically tv	2.000997	

Table 5.16 House Characteristics of two social groups of the villages

<i>House Characteristics of two social groups.</i>	<i>Theyyam community.</i>		<i>Non-Theyyam community.</i>	
	Frequency	Percentages	Frequency	Percentages
<i>Roof</i>				
Tile	14	70.00	19	47.50
Coconut Leaves	1	5.00	0	0.00
Concrete.	5	25.00	21	52.50
<i>Total</i>	20	100.00	40	100.00
<i>Wall</i>				
Stone	14	70.00	34	85.00
Mud	6	30.00	6	15.00
<i>Floor</i>				
Cement	10	50.00	25	62.50
Cow dung	6	30.00	6	15.00
Tiles	4	20.00	9	22.50
<i>Electrification.</i>				
Electrified.	18	90.00	38	95.00
Not electrified.	2	10.00	2	5.00
<i>Drinking Water</i>				
Own Availability	9	45.00	29	72.50
Not available.	11	55.00	11	27.50
<i>Bath Room.</i>				
Own Bathroom.	16	80.00	35	87.50
No bath room.	4	20.00	5	12.50
<i>Toilet</i>				
Own Toilet.	19	95.00	39	97.50
No toilet.	1	5.00	1	2.50
<i>Cooking Fuel.</i>				
Firewood.	16	80.00	22	55.00
LPG.Gas.	4	20.00	18	45.00
<i>House Owned.</i>				
Rented.	1	5.00	0.00	0.00
Owned.	19	95.00	40	100.00
<i>Vehicles</i>				
Not owned	12	60.00	31	77.50
Owned.	8	40.00	9	22.50
<i>TV/VCR/VCP</i>				
Nothing.	8	40.00	7	17.50
TV.	11	55.00	32	60.00
TV/VCR/VCP.	1	5.00	1	2.50
<i>Radio/Tape.</i>				
Not available.	7	35.00	12	30.00
Owned.	13	65.00	28	70.00

Source: Primary Survey.

Table: 5.17 Total land frequency

<i>Land</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
0 – 10 cents of land	30	50.00
10 – 50	22	36.67
50 – 100	7	11.67
100 +	1	1.66
Total	60	100.00

Table: 5.18 Land holding: A comparison of Theyyam and Non- Theyyam group

Theyyam Performing Community:

Land	Frequency	Percentage.
0 – 10 cents of land	13	65.00
10 – 50	7	35.00
50 – 100	0	0
100 +	0	0
Total	20	100.00

Source: Primary Survey.

Non-Theyyam Performing Community:

Land	Frequency	Percentage.
0 – 10 cents of land	17	42.50
10 – 50	15	37.50
50 – 100	7	17.50
100 +	1	2.50
Total	40	100.00

Source: Primary Survey

Table 5.19 Average Monthly Expenditure on Selected Items

<i>Theyyam group.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev</i>	<i>Mini</i>	<i>Max</i>
Food	1522.5	951.5189	250	4000
Cloths	277.5	208.6769	0	500
Medical	145	182.0208	0	600
Children Nutrition	72.5	117.5126	0	500
Education	600	687.2906	0	2000
Rent	0	0	0	0
Housemaintenance	140	134.3601	0	500
Travel	127.5	155.9985	0	500
Recreation	315.5	1120.762	0	5050
Fuel & Lighting	117	122.7256	0	500
Smoking	30	44.129	0	150
Chewing	6.25	15.96666	0	50
Cosmetics	2.5	11.18034	0	50
Religious&Social	74.25	61.96933	0	200
Total	3430.5	133.24533	510	158225
<i>Non-Theyyam group.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev</i>	<i>Mini</i>	<i>Max</i>
Food	1850	960.502	400	4000
Cloths	391.25	316.8126	50	1500
Medical	241.5	250.1133	0	1000
Children Nutrition	65	181.5884	0	1000
Education	825	923.6216	0	4000
Rent	18.75	82.96392	0	500
Housemaintenance	242.5	253.577	0	1000
Travel	336.25	424.7152	0	1500
Recreation	3858.125	23760.87	0	150375
Fuel & Lighting	136	139.5193	0	600
Smoking	19.375	40.22672	0	150
Chewing	13.75	35.85494	0	150
Cosmetics	8.75	27.47376	0	100
Religious&Social	130.5	190.7603	0	1000
Total	11567.25	27721.84437	1040	10175

Source: Primary Survey.

Note: Whether this variance is statistically significant or not is a question mainly because of the different set of observations of both Theyyam group and Non-Theyyam group. So here, in the case of the total expenditure on selected items we prove that it is significant by using t test and f test. By testing F test, null hypothesis is that variances do not differ significantly. The probability obtained is very small ($3.9e-257$). So the variances of two samples differ highly significant. It means the differences obtained between Theyyam group and Non-Theyyam groups are statistically significant. T test is to be examined statistically whether the means obtained for 2-sample (Total expenditure) set differ significantly or not. The variances obtained are significantly different. So assuming unequal variances, null hypothesis is that, mean obtained for 2 sets do not differ significantly. Here probability (0.014) is less than 0.05. I.e., we reject null hypothesis. Hence, the means obtained differ significantly at 5-percentage i.e., at the significance level. It means the mean obtained differ significantly. Results of the tables 5.20 are given below.

Table 5.20

<i>F-test Two-sample for Variance:</i>	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable2</i>
Mean	6568	1.666667
Variance	4.02E+08	0.225989
Observations	60	60
Df	59	59
F	1.78E+09	
P (F <=f)	3.9E-257	
F Critical c	1.539956	

<i>T-test Two-sample for Variance:</i>	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable2</i>
Mean	6568	1.666667
Variance	4.02E+08	0.225989
Observations	60	60
hypothesis	0	59
df	59	
T stat	2.53616	
P(t <=t)	0.006937	
T critical	1.671092	
P (t <=t) tw	0.013875	
T critical tv	2.000997	

Box plots 1 and 2 are given as below



Table 5.21 Caste and Landholding (percentages)

Caste.	T.C.Varghese (1958)		M.V.Vijayan. (1986)		T. Isaac (1992)	
	Family	Land	Family.	land	Family	Land.
Namboothiri	0.43	3.20	1.03*	3.45	0.2	0.6
Nair	18.47	28.38	1.82	5.27	12.5	18.2
Other upper castes.	0.87	12.22	3.89	4.91	**2.8	2.1
Total upper caste Hindus	19.77	43.80	6.74	13.64	15.5	20.9
Upper caste Christians	16.63	22.42	-	-	-	-
Total upper castes.	36.40	66.22	6.74	13.64	15.5	20.9
Muslims	11.23	9.75	6.76	7.45	16.1	15.2
Ezhava	29.16	19.34	49.62	59.63	43.4	45.4
Other Backward castes	13.72	2.77	6.75	17.09	19.8	16.0
Total scheduled castes	32.88	22.11	56.37	76.73	63.2	61.4
Dalits	16.41	1.75	30.13	2.18	5.0	2.3
Dalit Christians	3.02	0.15	-	-	-	-
Total Dalits	19.43	0.90	30.13	2.18	5.4	2.3
Total.	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source:

* In the study of Vijayan, he talking about Brahmins.

** In this, 0.2 percent of upper Christians also included.

Chapter VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has attempted to bring out the social and economic mobility pattern of the Theyyam performing community as compared to non-Theyyam groups of the villages of north Malabar. The *Karivallur* and *Chirakkal* villages in *Kannur* district were chosen for the present study, the former rural and the later semi-urban, being very close to *Kannur* town. Sixty households of the two villages surveyed with the help of a detailed questionnaire and in-depth conversations with the villagers have helped to explain further the results of the survey. The study is an investigation of intergenerational and intragenerational mobility-educational and occupational, against the backdrop of a historical and cultural understanding of the socio-economic backwardness experienced by these marginalised sections of society. The method of 'experience as framework' has been widely used for the better understanding of socio-cultural aspects of the community. The statistical method of 'Transition Matrices' [Prais 1957] was applied to explore the mobility trends.

The 'Theyyam' is a folk-art and it is the members of the marginalised community, who perform it, as it is their caste-based traditional occupation. The performance of the Theyyam had also been associated with other services, which have been traditionally rendered by the community such as midwifery and washing clothes. Though the village social structure of north Malabar has been highly influenced by Communist ideology [Kannan 1988 p: 133, Menon 1993], Communism and traditional rituals still co-exist therein. Generally, social mobility is more evident in communities other than the Theyyam performing community, the latter with very low level of assets in terms of land, housing facilities and monthly income.

The intergenerational and intragenerational educational and occupational mobility of the Theyyam performing community has been very low when compared to that of the other 'intermediate castes' of the villages of north Malabar. The crucial factor, which probably contributed to the mobility of the performing community, is its liaison with its own educationally upward members, which has a positive demonstration effect. One of the prominent factors, which was a hurdle to the personal development of the members of the community is the feeling of lower caste inhibition. They have found that castes hierarchically above them, are superior and powerful and all means of social control rested with them and they never shared power with the lower castes. Such a state of inferiority has compelled them

to hide their caste identity and they have not tried to engage in social and economic activities other than those of traditional ritual practices.

Some students who belong to this community have expressed their experiences without inhibition. They were often reluctant to accept educational benefits like the stipend provided by the district-scheduled caste departments, for fear of exposing their caste identities. Students belonging to other castes often insulted and humiliated them. The members of the staff of these institutes were hardly different in that they too often made hurting remarks. For the same reason some of them preferred not to perform the Theyyam in a traditional ritual manner.

The housing conditions of the performing community and the non-performing community have a tremendous difference as is immediately evident on a visit to these villages (see table no 5.16.) The majority of the houses, in which the performing community lives, are constructed with the help of the housing programme ' *Indira Vikas Bhavana Padhadhi* ' of the central government. A house consists of two bedrooms and a kitchen. With the People's Planning Programme initiated by the State government, they could improve the infrastructure of these houses to some extent. The absence of a drinking water well and toilets is a major problem that is being faced by the majority of households of this community. The floors of the houses are made of cow dung and cooking is done with firewood only. The roof of some of the houses is urgently in need of repair. But the majority of the houses of other communities are far better than that of the Theyyam community. Their average monthly income falls short of their expenditure forcing them to depend on loans. The indebtedness of the people to the co-operative bank and *Tamil Nadu* based moneylenders is also very significant. The latter exploit the colonies of Scheduled castes, which includes the Theyyam performing community.

Among the younger generation of women belonging to the Theyyam community, it could be observed that intergenerational occupational mobility from mother to daughters is almost non-existent. In the case of mothers, they were engaged in traditional jobs, while the daughters have avoided traditional jobs, which are no longer in demand; neither do they possess the skills needed for these jobs. Therefore, the majority of the female members are primarily engaged with household activities.

Though there is sex discrimination among all communities in the villages, in terms of roles in their families, gender bias among the Theyyam performing community is not very prominent. In this community, men and women alike engage in all productive activities. For example, women were engaged in all activities including the performance of the Theyyam, playing instruments, singing *Thottam* and other rituals (i.e. sorcery, *Mantravadam*, wage labour etc). As in the family of *Dalit Bhahujans* [Illiaya, Kancha 1996], females enjoy equal rights over the social and economic activities within their caste and family.

It is found that occupational diversification has occurred among the intermediate castes. They could move up in the labour market and could engage in activities, which were not their traditional occupations. It can be concluded that as far as the intermediate castes are concerned, the process of occupational change has been advantageous for them, whereas in the case of the Theyyam performing community, the strong hold of pre- modern institutions in social and cultural spheres and spatial segregation have inhibited occupational mobility.

The breakdown of the traditional agrarian economy¹ is a result of the decline of the traditional patron-client-reciprocal-relationship and the penetration of capitalism. It amounted to a decline of traditional relationships of employment and subsistence of the service castes. Though traditional ties had declined on the one hand, the performing communities were not able to gain access or avail the facilities provided by the State because of the traditional social inequality and the lack of basic entitlement. For example, they had lost midwifery jobs specifically because of medical advancement, but they were not appointed as '*Dais*' (Midwifery) in government hospitals despite the fact that women from other castes had been appointed to these posts. For this, a small organization called '*Uthara Kerala Malaya Samudaya Sangam*²', initiated a continuous protest demonstration in front of District collectorates. But members of other castes like the *Maniyani* (stonecutters), the *Ezhavas* (Toddy Tappers), the *Chalias* (Weavers) etc. were able to organize themselves. This may be because, these castes were greater in number and hence received due consideration from political parties because they formed significant vote banks. But the Theyyam performing communities are very isolated, scattered and are not dominant in numbers. The question

¹ Here in this context, the Theyyam performing community's economy can be described as moral in the sense that the members of the community service the interest and welfare of the villagers at large. For example, Menon (1993) has denoted the Theyyam community as 'Moral community of Theyyattam'. He is building upon a concept, which has derived from the stories of the myth of the Theyyam. All stories contain implicit regulations on behavior, and a sense of right and wrong, injustice and justice, of morality and immorality emerges. This may be termed as a 'moral community' of castes built around a notion of the limits to the actions of both upper and lower castes.

² Organization of the *Malayan* community.

whether performing these rituals, on the basis of traditional caste division of labour, is a labour activity or an artistic activity is a basic one, which makes political labour unions hesitate to include this community in their ranks. The fact that they are lower down in the social hierarchy as also the fact that the leadership of the labour unions is mainly upper-caste, work together to ensure that the Theyyam community members are neglected by the labour unions. The trade unions themselves make no effort to eradicate ritual practices like Theyyam, as political consciousness among the community would rob the upper castes of their dominance over the performing community.

Factors such as progressive movements like Communism, trade unionism, literacy and library movements have helped lower castes to become socially and politically conscious. The movement for agrarian reform had contributed to a tremendous social change in the village social structure. Social reform movements have encouraged the literate lower caste individuals. Caste associations have raised the question of 'caste inequality'. But these changes did not make any drastic alterations in the status of performing community; whereas other communities who had better assets-both economic and social to start with - have benefited well. Even today most of the performing community members are compelled to follow the same traditional style of social life due to economic dependence on intermediate castes and upper castes in the villages.

The decline of the joint family system and the adoption of land reform were other major causes for the decline of patron-client relations. The Malabar Matriliny Act of 1933 was followed by partition of the *Tharavadus*, which lead to the sale of properties, fragmentation of holdings and evictions of labourers. Then, the *Tharavadus* found themselves derelict and in want of finances to subsidise shrines and religious festivals. The majority of the Theyyam shrines were controlled and owed by *Nairs*, *Nambiars*, *Maniyanis* and *Vaniyas*. The celebrations of the Theyyam festival were considered sacred and socially obligatory; to be conducted by financially sound and good *Tharavadus* alone. It is the general perception especially among women that participation in Theyyam related rituals is a prestigious affair. So much so people engage in the Theyyam festival more as a symbol of social and cultural prestige than anything else. This can be seen even today in the villages of north Malabar, where we could see Communist party members themselves take charge of the overall supervision of conducting the rituals.

After the land reforms that came into force in the 1970s, the power of the *Nairs*, *Nambiar*s and other upper castes over the religious festivals have been transferred to the Thiyyas. With the gains from the land reforms and involvement with the Communist party, the better-educated Thiyyas have succeeded in restructuring the Theyyam Shrines and they have taken charge of conducting festivals. But the 1990s again transferred this control to political parties from castes groups. The former has taken steps to revive old shrines and to perpetuate traditional rituals. The Bharatiya Janata Party is the major proponent of this act and they are attracting and influencing the village folks through such a strategy. The Communist parties are using the Theyyam images in their political demonstrations as a strategy to maintain their ascendancy in the name of promoting the art. But in reality, it is destroying the intrinsic value of the Theyyam.

It could be concluded that on caste lines, the Theyyam community has been exploited to ensure the social power of the political elite who come mainly from castes superior to that of the Theyyam performers. On the political plane Theyyam is being used as a tool to mobilize people in the name of ritual practices. All these structural changes in the social patronage of the Theyyam have not changed the traditional social attitude towards the Theyyam community as being of a lower caste. The performers of the Theyyam have now become 'artists' or performers before an 'audience'; the sense of community has become fragmented as pointed out by Menon (1993). It is a transition from ritual to theatre, [Hollowman and Regina 1983]. And it is particularly evident in the increasing shift from the traditional ritual site to the modern production site, with the advancement of cultural tourism.

The ashes of a pre-capitalist productive arrangement continue to coexist with enduring Communist ideologies and the state-sponsored tourism development. This may change the traditional value of art and make it a part of global theatre. This is a commercial proposition, pre-planned to wash off the Theyyam community's identity and its deep-rooted cultural moorings. It is a desecration of religious values held sacred and dear for centuries, as a part of the rich heritage of a land and its people. The Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) is appropriating the Theyyam as a folk ritual icon good enough for marketing and product development strategies aimed at promoting tourism development. The government of Kerala's aggressive commodification suggests that new modes of patronage for the Theyyam may be emerging as a consequence of state-sponsored efforts to recontextualise the ritual art form in more profitable capitalist productive relations. Our field study indicates that almost the entire community objects to the ethical and moral violation involved in this.

The cultural elite too exploit the art of the Theyyam in the context of globalization of art and culture by arranging international folk performances as they naturally become intermediaries even without any knowledge of the traditional art or the artists who have been the custodians of it in its various predicaments. The major portions of the rewards of such performances go to the intermediaries³. The media also try to copy the performance without considering the intellectual property rights inclusive of artistic right and copy right of the age-old performances preserved by the community. This happens because these rights have not been officially patented.

The festival committees of the shrines derive their main source of income from the Theyyam performance. As people are more and more devoted to this festival, the donations to the Shrine and to the performer become a major source of income. There is no organized bargaining in the wage fixation for the performers. This is due to the superior social standing commanded by the castes who control these Shrines.

We could say that some of the economic, social and cultural characteristics prevalent in Kerala specifically affect the Theyyam communities placing severe restrictions on its members from achieving a level of 'Capabilities' commensurate with that of other communities in northern Kerala. These conditions have resulted in keeping these people in the same position as before, i.e., it is a case of sustained status quo or mere stagnation.

Whatever be the disadvantages and shortcomings of the community as a whole and its derelict state in present day society, one thing that is unchangeable is the privilege that came to this community to perform the various Theyyam *Kolams* to purge a society and thereby command the respect as god or an equivalent for at least for a brief period. The community's performance of the Theyyam and related magic rituals made other people to evince a respect for them in order to get help from the community whenever they wanted. The village people have a kind of fear about these ritual practices of the Theyyam community. This ritual art has been a cultural asset and artistic capital from which they derive sustained strength for livelihood, a way of life for thousands of people. This they can hardly live without, for the

³ Apart from my personal experience, these processes could be illustrated from the detailed conversation with the members of the Theyyam community who had visited other regions to perform the Theyyam. The performers of the festival felt that the group leader who was an intruder has taken the major portion of the remuneration. They approached the court to clear the issue. They include *Mr. Kannan Peruvannan Puzhayanoor, Mr. P.K. Panicker Kezhara, Mr. M.R. Krishma Peruvannan, Mr. Lakhmanan, Azhiyoor, Mr. Prakashan Panicker Puzhathi, and Mr. K.V. Raman Panicker*. A noted performer named *Kunhiraman Panicker* also revealed similar feelings after his visit to Asiad festival. Recently, group of performers who had gone to *Paris* for the performance of the Theyyam in a French festival disclosed that the intermediaries who controlled their group exploited them.

divine edges of the cult of the Theyyam with its attached sorrows and pleasures are the mark of their identity in time and space, and the umbilical cord of the community to the whole organic unity of Kerala society, in which all castes had their respective space and legitimate identities.

By adopting a certain kind of culture and style of life, other neighboring communities could not fully intermingle with the performing community. This cultural difference has been a hurdle in the way of their co-operation with the Theyyam performing community. So, other communities automatically excluded these common cultural features. In this way, the cultural difference of the performing community from other communities in the region has led to an exclusion of the artist's community socially and economically. Moreover, the Theyyam performing community could not fully accept the pattern of life of others because of their value-oriented habits of thinking and living. This ultimately induced the performing community to enter into the labour market and other social spheres for their very existence. With very little skills and capabilities they face an uphill task.

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6. Intergenerational Occupational Mobility

Generat ion	Beginning Occupation & work status	If Traditional What are they	Final Occupation Work status.	Place where Worked	Year	Unemploye nt between Occupation	Duration of your traditional job	Constru ction work.	Daily wage labour
Father		1							
		2							
		3							
		4							
		5							
		6							
		7							
		8							
		9							
		10							
Mother		1							
		2							
		3							
		4							
		5							
		6							
		7							

7. Intragenerational Occupational Mobility

Occupation	Nature of Job	Age	Year of Joining	Year of Leaving	Income Earned Monthly in Rs	Place where worked	Period of Unemployment between Jobs	Reasons for Occupational shifts	No. of years waited for the first job
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									

8. Are you benefited from any Government Scheme?

S.No.	Name of the Schemes	Detail	Present status
1.	Housing Board		
2.	Group House		
3.	IRDP Loan		
4.	Loan for small scale enterprise		
5.	Indira Vikas Patra		
6.	Others		

9. Details of Asset ownership and Income

A		B) Income (Annual)			
Sl. No.	Assets:	Units owned presently.	Sl.No	Source	Annual Income (in Rs)
1	a) Agricultural Land		1	a) Land	
	(in cents)			b) Livestock	
	b) Non. Agri -land		2	Rent	
	c) Livestock. Cow/ Buffalo				
	Goat				
Hen/Duck					
2	a) House Owned/rented			i) From land	
	b) Commercial structures and Building:			From Dwelling	
	c) Commercial Vehicles		3	ii) From Equip. Vehicles etc	
3	Consumer Durables:		4	Remittances From Outside	
	a) Car/ two wheelers		5	Salaries	
	b) TV/VCR/VCP		6	Wages	
	Tape/Radio.			Business	
4	Other Assets			1) Own Business	
				ii) Shares, Stocks etc	
			7	Others	
	Total		8	Total	

10. Average monthly expenditure on selected items

SL. No	Items	Amount (Rs.)
1	Food	
2	Cloths	
3	Medical	
4	For Children Nutrition	
5	Education	
6	Rent	
7	House maintenance	
8	Travel	
9	Recreation	
10	Fuel and lighting	
11	Smoking	
12	Chewing	
13	Cosmetics	
14	Religious/Social	
15	Others	

11. Household Indebtedness

S.N.	Details	Number of borrowings				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Loan number					
2	Month of borrowing					
3	Year of borrowing					
4	Principal					
5	Collateral					
6	Principal outstanding					
7	Rate of interest					
8	Interest paid					
9	Source of borrowing					
10	Purpose of borrowing					
11	Remarks					

12. Attitudinal Questions

1. What were your parental preferences regarding traditional occupation?

1.1 They want to continue that tradition?

1.2. No.

1.3 Why? ...

1.4 The type of education for you.

1.5 The occupation they believed to be more suitable to you?

2. What are your occupational preferences?

2.1 What type of occupation do you prefer for your children?

2.2 Do you want to bring your children to those occupations desired by you?

2.3 Why?

3. Which year do you get land in your own name?

4. What you think about the Theyyam which comes outside the shrine?

5. D you feel any social and economic problem? Y. N. If yes what are they.

6. Approximate income from the traditional job, annually?

7. Do you think that in non-traditional or modern Job, your income will be more. Y. N. If y, why you are going for that?

8. What is the social and economic benefit from the *Tharavadu*, which you perform?

9. What are the Theyyam you performing?

10. Remuneration for One performance?

11. Are you performing only in Shrines and temples? Why?

12. Do you owned all materials for performance? Y. N.

13. Howmany Theyyam which you perform in a year?

14. Other than Theyyam, other sources of Income?

15. What is your opinion about the attitude of other caste's people towards you?

15.1 Social

15.2 Economical

15.3 Political

15.4 Other institutional?

16. Did you register in Folklore academy as a performer?

16.1 What is the reason, which you register in academy?

16.2 What is the reason, which you won't register in Academy?

17. Any award as a performer?

17.1 which award?

18. From where you get practice of this art.

19. For materials, from where you are getting financial assistance?

20. If you get a deserving job, will you shift from traditional job?

If not continue, why?

Do you have any other comments?

21. How family's economic assistance is going on?

22. Do you have any caste-related problems?

23. Problems of women?



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