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In Lieu of Conclusion
The dissertation explored the political economic aspect of a cult called the Theyyam, confined to the region of north Malabar. It appears that Theyyam as a ritual dance is spread between two rivers, Korappuzha in the south to a little beyond the Chandragiri in the north, and between Arabian Sea on the west to the hills of Coorg in the east. This is the geography of the Theyyam. The Theyyam has witnessed a shift of thrust from devotion of the villagers to performing art. From there it has attained the position of an object of aesthetics and gratification, and finally in its present status as, 'commodity', that enters into market as a theatre object; a tourism product in cultural transactions. Thus, it crosses its earlier cultural spaces to other areas and social spaces according to the negotiation of its new patrons. Now Theyyam could be a figment in the Republic Parade in New Delhi jostling with Punjabi Bhangda, an exotica in the Olympics opening grand display besides the Brazilian Samba, a ticketed half-hour show accessible to the European tourist at Cochin or available in a compact disc or in a television channel for private viewing in the drawing room. The sociality of the ritual and the subjectivity of the Theyyam dancer had altered in these social discourse of change. Theyyam dancers now become 'artists' performing before an 'audience'. The social and economic dynamic of these transformation is the central focus of the study. Though Theyyam has been categorized under various heads, as a cult, a ritual, festival, a dance, a performance, an art form, it acquires its meanings in a 'time–space' based specific social context. The determinants of such varying veneration of the cult and the attributing nature
of its identity are not confined to the domain of economy alone but coexist with social-cultural processes that are part of a continuum.

Apart from the combination of theoretical perspectives--that political economy meets with anthropology--these aspects of change and continuity of the cult has been located through unraveling a critical review of literature on the Theyyam which identified the themes and methods discussed in those works. It has observed that those works largely lay stress on the ritual and performative aspect of the cult and the narrative descriptions of the ritual process. The specificity of the method employed in the study is autoethnography to locate these transformation of ritual, which describe the lived experience of the researcher as a Theyyam dancer from his childhood onwards. Thus, the micro aspects of self (auto), ethno (cultural link) and graphy (the application of research process/writing) make possible to create an autoethnographic text. Putting experience of Theyyam dancing and living a life in a family of Theyyam dancers and its creative and evocative writing on the life narrative of members of the own family makes the text distinct among other vast body of literature on Theyyam. Theyyam dancing experience has been analytically observed here. These descriptions both thin and thick has put in the broader framework of political economic change of a society and culture. The Theyyam as an object of social science has observed along its multiple visibilities and veneration in an angle of time-space homology. This aspect is observed in the general transformation of Theyyam at social level and the same has been interpreted along the shifts and changes occurred among individual dancers and groups. These were culled out through interviews, biographical sketches, participant observation, ethnographic fieldwork, while going after Theyyam and its dancers both in its traditional spaces and outside.
Autoethnography is not simply writing about the self as an autobiographical genre. It locates experience analytically. Thus, it becomes a social science approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically observe personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. At present this is a popular form of qualitative research that challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others. It treats research as a political, socially just and a concious act. The active presence of the self of the researcher in the text is the specialty of this approach. It does not mean that it is completely a subjective account on the constituent part of an individual. The individual experience is combined with the social context and culture one study and that relate to the experiences of the other. Thus it gives stress on the self but takes patterns and process from the society. A kind of exercise that objectifies individual lived experiences in communion with others. A researcher of this sort uses tenets of autobiography, ethnography to do and write autoethnography. As I hail from a traditional Theyyam dancing family and a dancer of the Theyyam as a hereditary occupation, I put my experience of being the local deity, serving ritual duties and obligations to the villagers as a major component of the narrative. I had gathered from the locality to substantiate the changes in the micro spaces of Theyyam festival and consequently its reflections on the larger society. Varied meanings and definitions of the Theyyam has been observed in its varied social spaces of veneration. Thus, the approach in place is conceived both as a process and product of the research.

As I explained in the introductory part of the dissertation, doing an autoethnography requires certain research positions. Put it most simply, as argued by Leon Anderson (2006) that analytic autoethnography is a viable and valuable subgenre in the realist ethnographic tradition. He also proposed five key features on the subject position of the researcher: 1) complete member
researcher status i.e., researcher is a complete member in the social world under study. This could be attained either through "opportunistic"—may be born into a group by chance or "convert" into a group and acquire intimate familiarity through active participation. The case of my position is the former which is a rationale for me to proceed with these sort of qualitative method. This makes space for me as a researcher to engage dialogue with groups intimately. 2) Analytic Reflexivity, i.e., it gives scope for self-conscious introspection motivated by a desire to better understand the self and others. This is possible through an examination of one's actions and perceptions in relation to those of others. 3) Narrative or textual visibility of the researcher's self i.e., unlike hiding the self inside the ethnographic text, to argue for more objective positions, it bring forth researcher's personal engagement in the social world under study. 4) Dialogue with informants beyond the self i.e., a position of the researcher to have interrelationships between him/her and others to inform and change social knowledge. 5) Commitment to theoretical analysis i.e., the purpose is not simply document personal experience or to create an "insider's perspective", rather to seek theoretical insights into some broader set of social phenomena. Narratives or texts in this study has been created and observations were made by keeping these defining characteristics of social science research.

Thus, the study argues a theoretical position that the self of the individual would also form an account of experience, which could be taken as a social account for theoretical propositions and as a method in itself, thereby offering itself as a text which in itself is a case for self-observation in ethnography. Drawing distance from conventional realistic ethnographic style of writing and documenting lives, autoethnography has indulged with cultural relative sensibilities. With the time and space, assuming a new mood, colour and structure, consistent with the different social,
historical movement, the worship of Theyyam which spoiled the sleep of the Europeans in colonial times and was represented as spirit and devil, has now become something that is art and ritual, and a commodity in the cultural transactions or an iconic image of Kerala culture. This is the political economic context of the Theyyam. Micro level changes of Theyyam venerating spaces has been closely observed and interpreted in this perspective with ethnographical descriptions and its sensibilities.

A gaze through chapters would suggest that the traditional customary ties which bound the Theyyam dancing castes within a specific cultural context with the old social structures, remains a constant. This becomes evident when a parallel is drawn with the other lower castes (Thiyyas) in the hierarchy. The latter asserted and freed themselves from the obligatory ties/associations with upper caste tharavadus by participating in socio-religious movements, reaping its benefits or, by attaining progress through education. An upward mobility which was possible by association with such movements was never achieved by the Theyyam dancing castes. The fact that the Theyyam dancing group had clear-cut ritual functions in the traditional order, and were more clearly integrated into the ritual relationship with the upper caste families and tharavadus deprived them of a take off into a fresh lane which could prevent them from getting tethered to original caste-community obligations and occupations. The 'inclusion' that was experienced with the savarna castes on account of their traditional cult status was not simply labour--in the sense of activity producing a material surplus, but the protective mantle the Theyyam accorded to the tharavadu, even if it be a supernatural power. The value assigned to such a role and the benefit accrued could never be at par with what was acquired from mere labour. For the Thiyyas, the detachment was possible because their association was not bound by ritual but through agrarian
equations. The Thiyyas assertion to build up their own caste identity and to establish their social status through the mediumship of the ownership and authority over *kaavu* administration reflects the changing dynamics of economy, society and culture. These social conditions set for the Thiyyas to tap social capital.

The process of how Theyyam constructs and reconstructs itself within the quick turn of events describes a kind of patron client relation embedded in the sacred spaces and the shifts thereof. While reviewing the changes and variability in the *kaavu* in terms of its social and spatial changes, we get a sense of Theyyam that are not socially fixed or static in the way it existed in the past. Though it has continuities in many ways and are so stable on some part of its rituals, the spatiality of the *kaavu* and the Theyyam in its making-up also has adopted a sense of stepping down from the *kaavu* premises, and slowly entering the market and other related social and cultural spaces. The process of how Theyyam construct and reconstruct itself within the changes brought about by all round progress and development has been a central concern. The visuality of the Theyyam and the *kaavu* as part of presence of electricity is one of the aspects which signify a historical phase of modernity.

The emergence of the new economy has led to a process to redefine the spatiality of the *kaavu* in a major way - altering the earlier notion of *kaavu* as a space for the rural festival of the locality, that encompasses all of castes and class, into a process of de-secularization which happens as a silent process. This explains the well accepted process of imitating the life styles and worship pattern of upper castes by the lower castes in Indian rural scenario. The rigidity of social behaviour that was vested with the practice of Theyyam in older times is reoriented by *kaavu* members themselves to
observe that the Theyyam could be a flexible form, which could be photographed, which was otherwise not permitted by the kaavu owners themselves. It reflects on the changing attitude of the kaavu owners towards the worship of the Theyyam, thereby their changing subjectivity in relation to the practices. The spatial changes within the kaavu and the consequent idea of Sanskritisation imparts lesser importance to the Theyyam worship, which led the kaavu to think of replacing Theyyam worship with a regular puja which involved the installation of an idol in a sanctum sanctorum.

The location-venue of the Theyyam, the kaavu, becomes a contested space, the net result of socio-religious reform movements and the communist movement of the late nineteenth century. The interventions by both the movements have redefined the Theyyam dancing caste's sacred map of cherujanmam as a contested space. The authority to settle the contests in this space become an affair of the prominent political party which has a strong often uncontested local political base. The altered power dynamics relegates the Theyyam to a lesser status eroding the value assigned to the Theyyam dancer's caste and hereditary attachment to the kaavu. Positing the Theyyam against the background of these socio-political processes, one could argue that the Theyyam as a form of worship has redefined itself to adopt the changing nature of the time and space, which shifts its earlier identity as a static form of ritual into an object of marketable aesthetic performance.

When the Theyyam and the kaavu become part of the ongoing processes of political rivalry between parties in the rural politics there is also a concurrent transformation that happens to the Theyyam dancer. He is now a Theyyam artist directly impacted by the changing nature of sociality.
and spatiality of the Theyyam, which is also a marker of social change in contemporary rural society in Kerala. The experience of dancing Theyyam in the domain of cultural transactions relies not solely on the experiences of the autoethnographer, but also of other performers who are part of cultural productions beyond the kaavu. An ethnography of a cultural event of grand festival at Thiruvananthapuram bring forth these aspects. Here, Theyyam is completely alien to the natives of the region. The social structural distinctions, and the ethnographic detailing of the people, and their inclination towards certain worship patterns and much more urban characteristics of lives in Thiruvananthapuram makes the exercise of participant observation interesting and challenging. A group of Theyyam dancers from North Malabar performed fifteen various forms of the Theyyams on ten evenings at Kanakakunnu palace premises where the encounter of the Theyyam was with people who did not share myths, legends, and memories of various experiences of Theyyam in their lives. This part forms an ethnographic account done with the method of participant observation.

The Theyyam as a ritual and art in its later venerations encounter the social process that led to commoditisation, in various spaces seeks to legitimize the potency of the Theyyam incorporating changing nature of time and space: its experiential venues, and consequent uses of the Theyyam as an image, forms etc., as an icon of culture and a symbol for political parties propaganda, its appearance as an item for Onam celebrations in southern parts of Kerala. The changing nature of subjectivity of the performer as well as the dilemma he encounters when the Theyyam is removed from its traditional roots are the processes that modify, reinvent and relocate the Theyyam.

Examining the change in ritual spaces, revealed that the traditional sacred map of cheru janmam and the notion over its working still have a marked presence in the thinking of the dancers as well as
the kaavu authorities. There is a dilemma a Theyyam dancer encounters in the shifting spaces of the Theyyam and at the same time there are performers who do Theyyam, both at its traditional sacred spaces, as well as, in modern sites without being affected by the duality of performing a ritual and presenting a cultural product. It opens a way to argue that there are Theyyam dancers who could adapt and assimilate themselves according to the time and space dynamics without any traditional barriers, rather, who could use their hereditary assets to acquire an upward mobility in society. But, at the same time there are others, who still find it difficult to adjust with the changing vicissitudes of contemporary social process associated with the traditional cultural forms.

When Theyyam becomes a part of a cultural commodity during festivals and is performed in a region where the local viewer is totally alien to the sanctity assigned to the Theyyam as a form of worship, as well as, a ritual-art-dance form in its original spaces, the observer-performer equation and dynamics open up interesting possibilities and challenges to the performer. Here the Theyyam dancer has to strike a balance – one that does not violate his belief systems, and the other to hold the attention of the viewer before him who is often unable to attach any religious role to the Theyyam.

Moreover, the event in place also works as a pointer to remind me about the Theyyam in kaavus and various contexts where I have encountered similar situations and meeting people. This, in turn, enabled juxtapositions of locations and connecting experiences of varied sites while positing a logic of associations. While interfacing these points of status I could construct a story of human experience in the field that formed as an ethnographic text. Though I tried my level best to covertly observe the ritual event, in the process of its progress I was not able to hide my identity.
as a Theyyam dancer and the observation becomes overt participation. Thus, the researcher presents as participant in a dual participant-observer role in which I myself form part of the representational processes and writing of these ethnography. Thus, it brings forth a narrative text that was made possible through a technique of following the Theyyams, kaavus, people, costumes, forms, myths, spaces and the life while identifying me as a dancer of the form and as a researcher.