Chapter IV

Performance: The Pulse of the People
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PERFORMANCE: THE PULSE OF THE PEOPLE

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

![Basic Components of Teyyam](image)

Figure: IV.1 Basic Components of Teyyam
Myth

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

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

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

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

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

**Pottan Teyyam**

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

_Tettada Pulaya vegam_
_Kuttamallaykil ningal_
_Kāttamillathe yundam_
_Mattarum tadukkayilla_
_Tellu tamasiyathe po_
_Mallu nee bhavikkenda_
_Vallathum paranjalippol_
_Thallinnu kalamundam_
_Varunanthu kandal doore_
_Maranju nilkkendum jathi_
_Paranjathu kettal polum_
_Kuranjonnu shankayille?_

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

While Sankaracharya was speaking thus, the Pulayan responded as:

Tettuvanendu mulam
Tettalle paranjithappol
Kuttamatta sasthram
Athilithu kandittundo?
Anu pennennu randu jathiyallathe
Mattengaredo jathi varna
Bhethathe kalpichu chol?
Anthanarennum pinne
Anthoara jathiyennum
Enthoru bhethamullu
Chinthichal ishwaranu?

......................
Akaram thannil chedam
Cheythalulloru raktham
Aranarkkuilla poleyallayo
Njangal meyyil?

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

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

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

*Vishnumurthi*

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

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

**Karimkuttichathan**

Kalakattich than illam was very famous among the tantric Brahmin families in North Malabar. In a remote past, according to the tottam pattu of Kuttychathan, "ezhala kaliyundente Kalakadarku", the illam had seven ala (cattle shed) cattles. The head of the family, Kalakadan had given charge to a boy namely, Chathan to look after his seven ala cattle. The boy took the cattle for grazing every morning, and returned in the evening. One day, the Kalakadan counted the number, and found that one of the cattle was missing. He asked the boy what had happened to his chenkomban kala (red horned ox).
Chăthan replied that he killed it when he was thirsty on Friday and fulfilled his drive. Hearing such irresponsible words, the Kalakattachan (Chăthan addressed Kalakadan as achan, which means, father or master) got angry and tied Chăthan to the railing of a cattle shed. By using a chural (cane stick) he beat Chăthan severely many times. In dissent against the harassment, Chăthan left the place (or was he murdered?). Later, he was worshipped and performed as Karimkuttichăthan teyyam. It is symbolic of the pathetic stories of similar incidents, experienced by those under miserable conditions.

**Madayilchamundi**

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

However, this story is not mentioned anywhere in tōttam páttu, which reveals another myth. It is a super imposition of the Hindu
Malayans of North Malabar and their Teyyam

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

Analysis of Myths

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

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

The informants told me that in the past the practice of punam krishi (shifting cultivation) was very much present in the high ranges of North Malabar. Whenever the people cultivate in punam fields, they perform Pottan teyyam in the field itself for getting good yield, and protection. The people believe that the faith in Pottan teyyam will drive away all destructive wild beasts. The costumes, and other wearings including, the mughapala (mask) of Pottan teyyam essentially give it an appearance of wild beast. The mask reflects a face of a beast rather than a human being. The ritual theepanakku (lying in fire) during the performance also symbolically indicates the
glimpse of once prevalent ‘slash and burn’ cultivation. Thus, the appearance and performance indicate the nature-animal worship. How does the töttam pāttu reveal another story of Siva and Sankaracharya? The answer is very simple: it happened along with the assimilation of Hinduism. The super-imposed Hinduised myth dominates over the original one. The same happened in almost all the teyyam myths.

Now we shall turn to analyse the tale of Palenthayi Kannan, which expresses the brutishness of feudalism. In a service-return based society, the ‘high’ caste people considered the ‘low’ caste people as their slaves. Palenthayi Kannan and Karuvattu Kuruppu represent the ‘low’ and the ‘high’ castes, respectively. The myth also lay open the fact that the society treats even unconsciously done mistakes, and even minute mistakes of the low castes as ‘serious’ and ‘punitive’. Similarly, the ritual chithravadham (also known as hiranyavadham) symbolically sketches the killing and consumption of prey. Another ritual performed during the performance, with moghompidi (a pig mask), is indicating its animal connection. According to the töttam pāttu, soon after the murder of Palenthayi Kannan, Vishnumūrthi attacks the cattle of the villain. This also gives some clues to the fact that this deity inflicted destruction over cattle, pointing towards leopard worship. The appearance of the teyyam also indicates some facts to confirm this argument. Vishnumūrthi is considered as a male teyyam. But at the same time, it wears aroda, as specially designed aniyalam, which is worn only by the female teyyams. These peculiarities reveal that it is of neuter gender. Both male and female animals cause destruction over cattle. In this way, it is very clear that the worship of Narasimha was super imposed over animal worship. The people clearly did weave the Sanskritic myth over the original one, after the assimilation of Hinduism.
The myth of *Karimkuttichāthan* speaks about the practice of pastoralism, and expiation of unjustifiable behaviour against a cowboy. This *teyyam* also draws a picture of feudalism, and the feelings of 'high' and 'low'. The laymen were submissive and lived as a mere tool of the 'superior'. They were punished heavily even for minor 'crimes'. The misfortunes of the servants or, 'inferiors' are symbolically portrayed in this myth. The black spots marked all over the body of *Karimkuttichāthan* express the deadly persecution experienced by the cowboy from his master. To redress the sin, and the unjust and improper behaviour against the 'inferior' or the poor, the 'superior' caste people symbolically made *chāthan* as one of their deities, and worshipped him as, *Karimkuttichāthan teyyam*. The myth also indicates the defeat of Pre-Aryans people by the Aryan invaders. While *Chāthan* represents the indigenous people, *Kalakādan* represents the Aryans.

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

**Rituals**

The myth and rituals of *teyyam* have a common theme of reference. It has a structure and function. The structure reflects the local customs and practices, rooted in the social realm and relations. Since, the *teyyam* being the sacred and profane, rituals are
important. In *teyyam*, it functions through the people's memory that is also a product of culture and nature in general, and social discriminations and exploitations in particular. According of Kishore Jadav,

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

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

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

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

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

As a generalized medium of social interaction in which the vehicle for constructing messages are iconic symbols (acts, words, or things) that convert the load of significance or
complex socio-cultural meanings embedded in and generated by the ongoing processes of social existence into a communication currency. In other words, shared socio-cultural meaning constitute the utilities that are symbolically transacted through the medium ritual action.

(cit. Pallath 1995:10)

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

Many rituals are performed from the beginning to the end of _teyyam_ celebration. These rituals have a common framework originating from the belief system, and worship. They are sustained by the regular practise of performances, and worship.
The rituals can be divided into three sets. The preparatory step, that can be taken as the first step has *prarthana* (worship) and *adayalam kodukal* (giving token for taking charge). In the second step, that is the main, and the brightest part of *teyyam* performance, the rituals start with the *tudangal* (starting) and end in *vilakkuzhiyal* (worshipping the fire, and releasing deities). The final step of *teyyam* celebration includes *kulukodukkal* and *kolvangol* (distribution of gifts), *kariyadikkal* (cleaning of sacred place), and worship (praise). The collection of these rituals forms the base and structure of *teyyam* celebration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Rituals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Worship (prarthana or Devotion)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Adayalam Kodukal</em></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td><em>Performance</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Thudangal/Tottam/Vellattam/Kottithudangal/Teeyam Kettal</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Distribution of gifts and cleaning</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>KoluKodukal/Kolvangal/kariadikkal</em></td>
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**Figure: IV.2 Basic Rituals of Teyyam Performance**
Worship

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

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

Adayalam Kodukal (Symbol of Agreement)

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

**Performance**

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

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

*Teyyam* endorses this view.

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

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

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

Tōttam

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

The *tōttam* wears *chuttum kettum*. Generally, no decoration is used on the waist. Sometimes, *tōttam* adorns garlands, and specially designed necklaces. Soon after leaving the *aniyara* (open air green room), the performers bow before the *sanctum* and receive *kodeela* (a tip of plantain leaf with lighted wicks, a handful of rice, betel leaves, pieces of areca nut, and turmeric powder). By throwing rice, the
performer bows facing north, east, south and west, and after that the kodeela is placed on the vadakken bagham (north side of the yard of the centre). Thus, with certain assistance the performer wears small headgears such as, komaban thalappali pāttam (a rectangular shaped gear), and oppicha thalappali pāttam (circular in shape) along with thalappali and thalappu. Tōttam does not wear ornaments on legs. The Malayan use sandal paste markings, kuri, on forehead, chest and hands in a peculiar fashion, instead of facial writings on the occasion of tōttam performance.

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

After the completion of tōttam pāttu, the inspired performer performs kalāsam (dance) called, urachil (excitement). During kalāsam, tōttam is to perform certain rituals, and play with weapons. The tōttam of the Malayan distributes rice and ixora flowers during kalāsam. Tōttam does not speak but makes attahāsam or muralal (noise like roaring or grunting). After completing the important rituals of a
particular *teyyam*, the *tōttam* breaks a coconut, and throws it to the ground in a peculiar fashion. Then blesses everyone, and the performer himself removes the head decoration marking the end of that *tōttam*. The dress and other remaining decorative materials are removed in the green room.

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

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

*Chuttilakal* is also conducted during *tōttam*. It is performed only during great celebrations. *Velichapādu* or *kōmaram* also joins at this stage of performance, and along with him the *tōttam* (a single *tōttam* or more) goes around the sanctum three times, just after the completion of *tōttam pāṭtu*, and before the beginning of *kalāsam*. 
Table: IV.2 Teyyam have Tottam or Vellāttam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tottam Have</th>
<th>Vellāttam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vishnumurthi</td>
<td>Kuttichathan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madayil Chamundi</td>
<td>Thekkan Gulikan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raktha Chamundi</td>
<td>Kandakarnan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raktheshwari</td>
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<tr>
<td>Panchuruli</td>
<td>Muthappan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uchitta</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bairavan</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Moovalamkuzhi Chamundi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ottakolam</td>
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Vellāttam

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

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

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

Since the agreement to perform a teyyam is made, the performer has to observe certain abstinence. The Malayan observes the abstinence for one day or, three days or, five days or, seven days. Some times, even for 11 days in conformity with the importance of teyyam, which he is going to perform. In most of the cases of teyyam, and on most of the occasions, a single day's observance is enough. But, the Malayan will observe abstinence for three to five days before the performance of Pottan teyyam. If a person is selected to perform Ottakkōlam the length of observance should be seven to 11 days. Only on rare occasions, the selected performer should observe the abstinence in a kuchil (a small temporary hut-like structure) erected inside the boundary of the sacred place. According to the custom and tradition, the performers abstain from eating the remains, and
strictly avoid intimate physical contact with females during this period of abstinence. The avoidance of non-vegetarian food is also a part of this observance. This is certainly due to the influence of the so-called ‘high’ caste Hindus. The senior informants told me that this is a later trend and in old days, the Malayan freely took non-vegetarian food and alcohol because, they considered meat, fish and liquor as important items of offering to teyyam. Even today, the Malayans take toddy or arrack just before starting his performance. The pollution like pula (death pollution) or, balayma (birth pollution) does not cause any problem in performing teyyam. A purificatory bath in fresh water is more than enough to overcome this kind of pollution.

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

Then the performer bows before the elders, and touches their feet, which is called *kalupidikkal*. The *mūppan* or, some other member of the performing group guides the performer to the courtyard of the sacred centre with a lighted oil lamp, *kaivilakku* or, lighted chūttu (leaf torch). Before obtaining a *kodeela*, the performer bows towards north, east and south, and also towards west, where the sanctum lies. The *kodeela* is placed before the *kaivilakku* that is already fixed on the *vadakkan bhagam*, and the performer recites *varavili* (a
magical chant which requests the particular deity to come there). The assistants recite töttam pāttu in short form. At the end of töttam pāttu, the mudi, purathattu, uda and the mugham are fixed. The varavili, and töttam pāttu helps the performer to posses the deity.

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

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

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

Almost all the teyyams of the Malayans do fowl sacrifice (kozhi aravu). After cutting off the head of the fowl, the blood (chora or raktham), that oozes out is mixed with kuruthi or gurusi (made of water, turmeric powder and lime). The gurusi is poured at the northern side, vadakkan bhagam. After that, the assistant gives betel leaves, and the teyyam not really but, symbolically chews the leaves. A coconut is broken and thrown at the courtyard in front of the sanctum called, sobanam kānal (fortune telling). According to the informants, if the two pieces of coconut turn upside, the sign is
prosperity, good health and long life. If one piece of coconut turns upside and the other turns down, it shows that the misfortunes are ended. The two pieces, that have turned upside down shows catastrophe. Then teyyam throws the betel leaves and the pieces of areca nut.

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

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

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

Irulurayal, another rare ritual, that is performed in a few sacred centers. The töttam or teyyam alone goes to a distant fixed place to perform certain rituals in the night.
Adikkal is performed at the end of teyyattam. A symbolic ritual purifies the teyyam before leaving the centre. This ritual is observed only in big celebrations.

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

**Kolu Vangal (Receiving wage/gifts)**

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

**Kariadikkal (Cleaning)**

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

Pallath says,

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

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

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

Normally, there are three kinds of teyyam celebrations: prarthana kaliyattam (celebration in accordance with prayer or desire), kalpana kaliyattam (celebration on a fixed date and time every year), and perum kaliyattam (big celebration at an interval between two celebrations, that exceeds at least few years). The prarthana kaliyattam lasts for only a single day (starts around at 4pm, and ends in the next evening at 4pm). In kalpana kaliyattam, the small centres celebrate teyyam with single day performance, and in a few
centres the celebration extends up to one month as per the local custom. Some big centres like, Kannangattu, Muchilodu etc., celebrate teyyam for four to five days. Perumkaliyāttam is usually lasts for three to seven days or, more that period.

Table: IV.3 Teyyam Celebration and its Duration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Celebrations</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Prarthana kaliyāttam</td>
<td>Single day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kalpana kaliyāttam</td>
<td>More than a day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Up to one month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Perum kaliyāttam</td>
<td>3 to 7 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Gurusī

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

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

From the foregone discussions, its clearly evident that teyyam has implant its roots very deep in the society. All its actions and activities are shaped according to the well and wish of the people. The whole spirit of teyyam rests on life, and intrinsically grappled with man's every-day experience, so it reflects every beats of the life, and been the pulse of the people.
Photo IV.1 Vishnumurthi Teyyam Anushtangal – Rituals

Varavili  Dance on Tengakallu  Kalasam Chuzhalal

Koodiyattam with Poomaruthan  Narivandiyyeral

Teyyam

Varana  Kozhiaravu
Photo: IV.2 Traditional Way of Counselling & Guidance

"Vishnumurthi...Rakshikannae...!" Devotees with Teyyam

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