CHAPTER 10
CONCLUSION
CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted in the Northern Part of Kerala State among the Tiyas inhabiting the various towns and villages of Kasaragod and Kannur Districts. Intensive study was conducted at Ramanthali, Ettikulam, South Trikasipur, North Trikaripur, Podanna, Cheruvathur, Valiyapatamba, Nileshwaram, Kaubangad, Pallikkara, Kottikulam, Uduma, Keetoor and Poinachi.

Hindus and Muslims live side by side in North Malabar. Muslims constitute about 25% of the total population. Among the Hindus we find a number of castes who are hierarchically placed in the society. Important caste groups are Havik Brahmins, Shivalli Brahmins, Gowda Saraswat Brahmins, Nayars, Maniyamis, Tiyas, Chaliya, Vannan, Mukkutti, Kakkuthi, Vania, Malaya, Pulaya etc. The traditional occupation of Vannan is washing the clothes of the higher castes and performing Teyyan ritual, Malayas and Pulayas also perform Teyyan dance. Nayars are the main landlords as they were warriors for the erstwhile kingdoms of Kerala in the past. Tiyas are mainly agricultural labourers and marginal agriculturists. Tiyas also manage most of the Teyyan shrines in North Kerala. Their traditional occupation is toddy-tapping, toddy being an essential item in Teyyan performance.

The objectives of the present study as mentioned in chapter 1, is to understand the institution of Kalakam among the Tiyas of Northern Kerala. Teyyam, a divine dance form of Northern Kerala, is a prominent cultural institution for the entire Hindu community. All communities participate in
Teyyan rituals. However, Tiyas have an important role in the conduct as well as the management of this cult.

Tiya society is divided into kinship groups as well as territorial groups. The kinship units are called illam, the main function of which is to maintain class exogamy. Various illams of Tiyas are spread over the entire region of North Kerala.

Kalakam is a territorial division of Tiya society. In the past, all the families living in a particular territory were members of that Kalakam. There are four Kalakams with specific names viz., Kuruvanthatta kalakam, situated in Kannur district; Ramavilyam, Nilamangalam and Palakunnu kalakams situated in Kasaragod district. But now-a-days because of migration, many members of particular kalakams may not be living within the traditional jurisdiction of the kalakam, but they are found to follow the dictates of the kalakam. Otherwise, they face the threat of ex-communication and others forms of punishment.

Majority of the shrines called kavu (sacred grove) or stanam (shrines located in the village settlement) are managed by the members of Tiya community in Northern Kerala. Kalakam has its origin in the Brahmin settlements of North Kerala. However, the Brahmins have given up this custom long ago. But the Tiyas who imitated the Brahmins in the organization of their villages are still following this custom with all seriousness. It may be said that the institutions of Kalakam and Teyyam reinforce each other and hence with flourish as powerful centers of cultural activity in North Kerala.
The four kalakams described in the preceding chapters have their own jurisdictional area, by-laws, offices (or statutes) associated shrines and rituals. We can also find that the traditional institution of kalakam is brought within the modern legal system about four to five decades ago. This is the result of modern education and the importance of democratic system in Kerala. Traditional values are still retained by Tiyas. But at the same time some of the traditional institutions have been modernized by adding new structures.

The main issues addressed in this thesis is about the two processes of social change viz., Sanskritization and modernization. They are not opposed to each other as we can see from the study of kalakam institution among the Tiyas.

First of all we have hundreds of legends on places and communities in North Kerala which take us back to the puranic age. Legendary figures referred in Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavata etc., find their place in the ethnohistory of North Kerala. Sanskrit texts are held in high esteem by all the Hindu caste groups of North Kerala. In fact, people believe that the incidents mentioned in the ancient texts are historical incidents. Most of these incidents refer to the introduction of brahminic culture to North Kerala. I have already referred to the legend of Parasurama in the earlier chapters. North Kerala is also known as Parasurama Kshetra (the land of parasurama). The Brahminic culture was first accepted by the royal families and later by the common people. After the introduction of Brahminic culture the indigenous cultures also underwent many changes. The two culture complexes were integrated to form a new cultural
tradition. Srinivas had called this process as sanskritization. Redfield has described the process of interaction between the local and the learned cultural traditions as ‘little’ and ‘great’. Sanskritization and modernization are the two dominant but parallel process of culture change in the contemporary society in Kerala.

Our care studies in Perumkaliyattam, Pooram festival, Poorakkali and Marathukkali illustrate the interaction between great and little traditions. (Chapter 8) A number of Teyyans are performed during the Perumkaliyattam. But Bhagavathi is the chief deity of the festival. Bhagavati is considered as the incarnation of Parvathi and Vishnumoorthi, another important Teyyan, is considered as the incarnation of Vishnu. The maximum number of Teyyans are related to either Shiva or Parvathi and a few Teyyans are related to Vishnu. This shows the dominance of Shaivism over Vaishnavism in North Kerala.

Pooram is a festival of flowers offered to Kama, the love god of Hinduism. Worship of Kama is an all India phenomenon. It takes different forms in different parts of India. Kalakam plays an important role in the celebration of this festival. Lower level organization like Ara or Mundya also plays an important role in organizing this festival. Pooram is a community festival not only of Tiyas, but of other caste groups also. As we have described in Chapter 8, Kama takes three different forms in North Kerala. Kama is made out of flowers, clay and cowdung. This is a process of parochialization of an all India Sanskritic deity.
Poorakkali is a dance art form of North Kerala related to the celebration of Pooram. There is several myths which relate this dance form to great tradition as described in chapter 8. It is related to Vishnu, Durga, Kama, Parasurama etc. Some of these myths mention the name of Tiya in the mythical narrations. Several communities participate in the dance performance, but Tiyas have a prominent role to play in the organization of the event.

Marathukkali is also conducted during Pooram festival. It is also a performing art in which intellectual activity is given prominence. It is a competitive play in which intellectual discussion takes plays on Hindu mythologies. It can also be described as a process of parochialization in which sanskritic ideas and concepts flow to the little traditions. In this play, intellectual discussions at a very high level are held by the players on competitive basis which are judged by experts in Indology, Sanskrit and Philosophy. In this way Tiyas and others have imbibed the concepts and values mentioned in Hindu mythologies.

Finally, it may be concluded that kalakam, the territorial division of Tiya society, has played an important role in the sanskritization process in North Kerala. Since people belonging to various caste groups participate in the teyyan performance and other performances conducted by the kalakams of Tiyas, it has an impact on the Hindu community in general. Kalakam has played an integrating role in Hindu society in North Kerala.