MATRILINY AND PATRILINY:
CONCEPTUAL INTERPRETATIONS ON CHIRAKKAL

Institutions are part of social construct, and have been formed and transformed according to the requirements of the society. Inheritance pattern was one of the most fundamental areas which had been influenced and debated by Anthropologists. Thus, they had tried to explain the origin and evolution of family system, marriage and inheritance pattern of societies. Morgan explained the evolution of social institutions, especially family and marriage and explained it through five major stages and sixteen sub-stages. According to him, during the initial stage, matrilineal system of inheritance existed. This was due to the prevalence of sexual promiscuity and as a result, the relationship was mainly considered from mother to children. He considered group marriage as savagery and monogamy as civilization (1982).

Mc Lennan, Henry Maine and E.B.Tylor also discussed the origin and evolution of social institutions. As referred in Upadhyay and Pandey (1993), L.H.Morgan, Bachofen, E.B.Tylor, Engels, Briffault et al argued on the earlier origin of matriliny and later origin of patriliny. Westermarck, Henry Maine, Malinowski were against this argument. They were of the opinion that
matriline was not the first form. According to Mc Lennan (in Upadhyay and Pandey, 1993), lack of women due to female foeticide may have led to polyandry. Later on, because of the increase in the number of females, monogamy came and property inheritance from father to children happened, which led to patriliney.

Thus, the contributions of Morgan, Mc Lennan, Bachofen and Henry Maine about the cultural evolution especially social institutions were mainly bounded to explain social change and inclined to historical reconstruction.

According to Nongbri (2003), the approaches in Anthropological analyses of matrilineal institutions can be categorized into two. The first predicts the inevitable demise of matriliney in the face of modernization, urbanization, and colonialism. This prediction rests on the notion that matrilineal institutions are more liable to change than patrilineal ones when confronted with economic differentiation. Accordingly, this theory can be traced to Morgan (1985[1877]) who regarded the matrilineal system as less advanced than the patrilineal system..... Friedrich Engel’s, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State (1972[1884]) endorsed Morgan’s evolutionary theory of the human family and advanced the view that patriarchy and monogamous marriage are a consequence of the accumulation of surplus value and the rise of the State. In Engel’s schema, matriliney not only precedes patriliney, it is also associated with preclass, preliterate, and stateless societies that are societies which are essentially based on a subsistence level of production and community cooperation. This view underlies the disintegration theory in social anthropology. ..... For Murdock, the erosion of matriliney is closely tied up with patrilocal residence, as this involves a man in
lifelong residential propinquity and social participation with the father’s patrilineal kinsmen. In Murdock’s opinion this meant the end of the road for matrilineal descent (in Nongbri, 2003).

Using Murdock’s World Ethnographic Atlas as the basis of his analysis, Aberle (1972[1951] proceeds to establish that matrilineal descent groups are confined to a narrow ecological niche, primarily in economies of horticultural base, and are rarely found in societies which practice plough agriculture or animal husbandry. Jack Goody, in his study of the Lowillii, claims that disparities in income weaken the matrilineal principle (in Nongbri, 2003).

It should be possible that specific social and economic backgrounds may be the underlying factors for the evolution of family and marriage. But the evolution of social institutions all over the world was not in a uniform way. Its nature and form varies from place to place.

In the history of Kerala, Travancore, Cochin and Malabar were the three distinctive areas existed as separate entities before the re-organization of the State of Kerala in 1956. Even though, majority of the people of the area spoke Malayalam as their mother tongue, there were marked differences in their cultural and social practices and customs. Major changes in Kerala social structure and form happened with the advent of Britishers. Malabar became under the control of Britishers in 1792 when the treaty of Seringapatnam was signed. Colonial influence in changing the social structure is evident in the laws which were crucial in changing the traditional social structure and institutions like marriage, kinship, system of inheritance etc.
Historical and documental evidences related to the existence of different social institutions in Kerala were retrieved and which gives a little information on Kerala society from 8th - 9th Century onwards. However, a detailed account gets from 13th Century onwards. Inadequate representations of literatures and historical documents during the earlier Centuries posed controversies before the researchers regarding the origin and evolution of matriliny and patriliny.

Because of this, the origin and development of the system of inheritance has been a matter of dialogue among the historians and anthropologists for a long. The general view is that makkathayam was the system of inheritance prevalent in ancient Kerala and that marumakkathayam came into vogue at a later period of Kerala history under the impact of some compelling forces. About the origin of marumakkathayam system, Gopala Panikkar says that ‘the real origin of marumakkathayam is to be sought in the system of polyandry or if we go further back, in promiscuity, which marks the dawn of married life’ (Panikkar, 1900).

Padmanabha Menon has expressed the view that the marumakkathayam system was non-existent in Kerala till the thirteenth Century and that it came into vogue in the fourteenth Century in response to the challenge of certain compelling circumstances (in Menon, 1996). Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai who too believed in the later origin of marumakkathayam and accepted the view of P.T.Srinivasa

6The matrilineal system of Kerala is popularly known as marumakkathayam.
Iyengar that, the system was unknown in Kerala till the tenth Century, but he agreed with the substance of Padmanabha Menon’s view. A.L. Basham says, “In the early days of the Chera kingdom of Kerala, inheritance was through the male line but about the twelfth Century matrilineal system became regular, according to which the heir to the throne was the son not of the king, but of his eldest sister (in Menon 1979).

Elamkulam Pillai regards the *marumakkathayam* system, like the *janmi* and the *kalari* systems, as the product of the compelling socio-economic forces let loose by the Chola-Chera war of the 11th Century A.D. He has pointed out that the political and religious dominance of the Nambuthiris, their rise to economic ascendancy as the *janmis* of Kerala and the introduction of compulsory military training leading to the formation of the suicide squads or chavers during the Chola-Chera war were the compelling circumstances which led to the switch over from the patrilineal to the matrilineal system in Kerala (in Menon, 1996). However, Elamkulam failed to explain the inheritance pattern of *Naduvazhis* of Kerala before the Chera-Chola war (in Ganesh, 2004).

M.G.S. Narayanan has tried to show that the rulers of Mahodayapuram were matrilineal at least from the 9th Century and that some of the other Kerala powers like the *Mushakas* accepted matriliny under their influence. It has been pointed out by him on the evidence of the *Mushaka vamsa* (11th Century A.D) that the matrilineal order of

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7The holder of *janmam* land or landlord is termed as *Janmi*. 90
succession was established among the Mushakas by the early part of the 10th Century (in Menon, 1996). In Kerala, scholars and historians like Elamkulam, Unni, Padmanabha Menon have tried to establish the pattern of inheritance existed here by analyzing the Sanskrit texts, especially mushaka vamsa and also by analyzing the descendants of rulers of various dynasties.

There are several arguments regarding the origin of marumakkathayam system of Inheritance. Some of the historians argue that the system existed in Kerala from the ancient period itself and not originated during the medieval period. But there was no evidence to show that in Kerala there was no dynasty existed before the 11th Century which followed marumakkathayam. Mooshika vamsa by Atula also picturised that till the 11th Century makkathayam existed in Kolathunadu and during the 11th Century marumakkathayam started (Unni, 1980). It shows that a shift had occurred during the 11th Century from patriliny to matriliny. But there hadn’t any instance in Kerala, like the Kolathunadu dynasty, which could establish the incidence of makkathayam pattern of inheritance earlier in Kerala.

The advocates of Property theory on the origin of marumakkathayam says that the system was introduced to prevent the partition and destruction of family property and keep the Nayar taravads intact. According to military theory, the male members of the Nayar families were condemned to military service from the early days of their

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8Patrilineal system in Kerala is generally known as makkathayam.
youth to the decline of manhood so much so regular married life with its attendant obligations was not possible in their case and under the circumstances necessitated by this particular military organization, the Nayar women were forced to have the *sambandham* form of marriage as a necessary evil (in Menon, 1979).

These two theories show certain limitations in which not only among the matrilineal communities but also patrilineal communities like Brahmins also prevented the partition of property by following certain conventions. The advocates of the military theory discussed only about the Nayar community and their inheritance pattern. In Kerala, several Castes and communities are there who had followed matrilineal system of inheritance but not engaged in military activity. The Varma women also followed *sambandham* relationships but it was not been correlated with the military service of the Varma males.

E.M.S Namboodiripad argues that (1981), in different parts of India and all over the world long lasted war happened, but there was no evidence to show that the people accepted *marumakkathayam* because of these.

In north Malabar, the matrilineal system is known as *marumakkathayam* and in Tulunad the term used to refer matriliney is *aliyasantana* (Krishnakumar, 1999). In *marumakkathayam* system, the inheritance is through female line and the families were joint type and the household consisted of the mother and her children with joint rights in property. The lineage was traced through the female line. The female members and their children were thus, an integral part of the household property. It was followed by majority of the castes in
Malabar, especially the Nayars, Vaniyas, Marars, Thiyyas, Maniyanis etc., though the pattern has differences. But at the same time in north Malabar certain Caste groups followed inheritance from father to son.

The term marumakkal is a Malayalam word, which means sister’s children, i.e., marumakkathayam denotes descent and inheritance through sister’s children. On the other hand, makkathayam denotes lineage through one’s own children. The term makkal in Malayalam denotes one’s own children- both male and female. In short, in both of these systems, makkathayam and marumakkathayam, the male child have had property ownership privileges and rights, but the female members completely lacked the rights to inherit property in patrilineal system of inheritance. In north Malabar, under makkathayam system, only the male children inherit the parental property.

The meaning of marumakkathayam, specified in Madras Marumakkathayam Act of 19329 was that, the system of inheritance in which descent is traced in the female line and marumakkattayee means a person governed by Marumakkathayam Law of Inheritance. The term marumakkathayam or matriliny is very much different from matriarchy. Even in marumakkathayam system different patterns are evident. It differs at various dimensions, but coming under the general category i.e., matriliny. The marumakkathayam system again varies from caste to caste.

 caste and area wise variations are also visible. Such variations have been influenced by several factors such as caste occupations, community structure, economic and land system, position in the social and caste hierarchy, gender aspects etc.

Generally in Kerala, matrilineal system is termed as marumakkathayam. But, all matrilineal systems are not showing the typical features of marumakkathayam. The matrilineal system followed by different communities in this village show different features. The matrilineal system followed by the Nayars was considered as the typical marumakkathayam system by the anthropologists and scholars. In this system, property was joint in nature, controlled by a karanavar. Most of the Caste groups in north Malabar followed matrilineal system and was the prevalent form and their inheritance and hereditary relationships were through female line. In matrilineal system the female member’s brother look after the property, but the property always goes to his sister’s children. i.e., inheritance of property is from uncle to sister’s children. There were different opinions regarding the origin of marumakkathayam system in Kerala, and all these are related to Nayar matriliny, not answering the marumakkathayam system found among other Caste groups. The marriage of a girl with her uncle’s son, and the role of mother’s brothers in all ceremonies and rituals are indicators of the existence of matriliny.

Head of a matrilineal household is known as Karanavar.
Not only the inheritance of property, but also pollution matters and rituals connected with death also exhibit the inheritance pattern. In matriliny, after the death of a Karanavar, the chief mournerers are his sisters and their children, not his own children. They might have to mourn for a fixed period. The dead person’s children, wife and brother’s children were not supposed to observe pollution. As a result, in the past, because of the immediate presence of sister’s son, the chance to do death rites normally falls upon him. Thus, the system has been framed in such a way that to inherit property to those people who conduct death rites. Thus, one’s sister’s children were the chief mournerers and the property inheritors.

*Taravad*\textsuperscript{11}, the matrilineal household is an important element of traditional *marumakkathayam* families. The main residents in a *taravad* include female members, their children and brothers. Female member’s husbands, her brother’s wives and children are not treated under her *taravad*. However, at the same time, distant female relatives and children belong to the family were considered as *taravad* members. Therefore, the distant female relatives and children observe pollution while death happens in a matrilineal *taravad*.

\textsuperscript{11}*Taravad*, refers to undivided matrilineal family, all claiming descent from the same ancestress, see Unni, 1994. The Malabar Marriage Act 1896 describes the *taravad* as a joint family with community of property governed by the matrilineal law of inheritance.
A taravad occupies several members and when the number increases, tavazhis were formed based on the mother-children relationship. Elder most male member in a taravad system was termed as karanavar. The property mainly rests on the female members, but the karanavar is supervising the property and was responsible for protecting it. Generally taravad property is the common property of the members in a taravad. The consent of all the members was essential to divide the property. The daily expenditure of the taravad members also met from the common property of the taravad. The position of karanavar passes from the male member to the next senior most male member, mostly, this may be his brother or may be related kinsmen. In the absence of karanavar, senior most female member of the taravad handles the family affairs. Thus, under the marumakkathayam system of inheritance, descent, succession to the property etc were traced through the female line. The mother formed the hoard of descent and kinship.

In north Malabar, different versions of marumakkathayam existed. The differences are mainly in terms of residence pattern, role arrangements etc. For instance, matrilineal system followed by the Nayars and Thiyyas were entirely different, mainly in residence pattern and the ideologies prevalent in the society. Generally, the main indulgence that the female members enjoyed in the marumakkathayam system of inheritance was concerning their inheritance rights and carriers of their taravad name. In matrilineal society, the descent is based through the female line. Both the male and female children take their identity from the mother permanently. In short, according to the traditional legal practice, the descent is through the female members.
Household formation or residence formation is one of the fundamental areas of family system. The residence pattern changes from community to community. The residence or household formation has been influenced by several factors. In matrilineal system, the females enjoyed more power compared to those in the patrilineal system. In matrilineal system, the females have got property ownership, and not forced to leave her house after marriage. Compared to that of patriliny, variation in the system is found to be greater in matrilineality.

In anthropological point of view, *makkathayam* or patriliny refers to a system of kinship in which inheritance, descent, and succession are traced through the male line. In patrilineal system, the authority is vested in male and residence of a woman changes after marriage. The term patriarchy intended to denote a society which expresses male dominance at diverse spheres. But the intensity of dominance will not be the same both in case of patriliny and patriarchy.

In patrilineal system, the children born to a couple are regarded as members of father’s family. Male members, their children and their wives were regarded as the members of father’s or husband’s family. In this system, after marriage, a woman becomes part of her husband’s family and the right to property inheritance is restricted only to male members. If a girl has any property, movable or immovable, that will merge to her husband’s property after marriage. In short, the property inheritance is from father to son. The membership of female members within her natal family lasts with her marriage. The authority in patrilineal descent is confined to the male members of the family. In addition, religious duties and ceremonial rites were passing
through male line. The death ceremonies are performed naturally by the male members. The residence type is patrilocal in which the male children either resides with the father or near to his house. After marriage, female member’s residence changes and she becomes a member of her husband’s family. Death pollution is another decisive factor which determines the extent of relationship and the duration related to death pollution varies from community to community. In patrilineal system, the girl after her marriage observes pollution which affects her husband’s family. It does not even deserve to observe pollution related to the death of her parents. The girl should have to observe even the death pollution of distant relatives of her husband’s family.

After marriage, in matrilineal system the female member’s identity not changes. But in patriliny, female member’s identity changes, and the girl has to live with her husband’s family. In patriliny, it is not at all imposed that after marriage a man should live in his wife’s house, but there are variations in this aspect. Similar to the practice in patriliny, among certain matrilineal castes like the Thiyyas, Vaniyas and the Maniyanis, the husband brings his wife to his house. But after the death of one’s husband, the girl has to leave husband’s house and return to her native house along with the children. This is still in practice, in north Kerala.

According to Radcliffe-Brown (1952), “a society may be called patriarchal, when descent is patrilineal (i.e., the children belong to the group of the father), marriage is patrilocal (i.e., the wife removes to the local group of the husband), inheritance (of property) and succession (to rank) are in the male line, and the family is patripotestal (i.e., the authority over the members
of the family is in the hands of the father or his relatives). On the other hand, a society can be called matriarchal when descent, inheritance and succession are in the female line, marriage is matrilocal (the husband moving to the home of his wife), and when authority over children is wielded by mother’s relatives”.

According to Lowie, as Tylor recognized long ago, co-residence is a potent factor; and Steward has plausibly suggested that where men dominate economically, patrilocalism would be the rule. But patrilocalism is not enough: it might produce merely a joint family with loss of females on marriage; whereas the essence of a patrilineal lineage or clan is that members of both sexes permanently remain in it (in Parkin & Stone, 2004).

Baskaranunni (2000) has differentiated the differences between makkathayam and marumakkathayam system of inheritance in terms of family and property inheritance and also in terms of the position of wife and daughter after marriage.

The practice of hypergamous and hypogamous marriages were the most basic or accepted form regarding marriage among the higher castes such as the Nayars, Nambuthiris, Varmas etc., for making marriage alliances. These forms of marriages also have resulted in unique categories of residence patterns. In the past, there was no legal recognition or religious legitimacy to Nayar marriages. It was known in terms of pudamuri, sambandham etc. These relationships mostly last for a few periods. It was only a few decades back, laws passed related to Nayar marriages meant to regulate the Nayar marriage relations. These laws helped to accelerate the changes from matriarchal to patriarchal and afterward to monogamy.
Panikker (1900 rpt 1995) has pointed out that the Nambuthiris for their convenience practiced the sambandham relationship. Gopalakrishnan (1994) has pointed out that the communities which followed sambandham, have accepted matriliney at first like the Varma and Nayars followed by the Ezhava of north Malabar. The Ezhavas of Central Kerala followed patrilineal system. Works by Padmanabha Menon, Gopalapanicker, Bhaskaranunni et al show that the Muslims of Kannur, especially the Arakkal family and the Keyis of Thalassery, the Mappila-Muslims and the Brahmins of Payyanur gramam also followed Matriliny. In Kerala, the families of Rajas also followed this system of inheritance.

The present society in Malabar follows almost a bilateral type of inheritance and the parental property being inherited by the children equally and both mother and father are treated equally important. Because of this, there should not be any preferential treatment between the relatives of father and mother. The present or contemporary laws are in tune with this type of inheritance pattern. The present family organization mainly consists of father, mother and children and the requirements have been satisfied by the parents.

**MATRILINY, PATRILINY AND GENDER**

Matrilineal and patrilineal systems can be analyzed in the context of gender relations and roles. In this perspective, the emphasis should be given to the role of male and female members, especially mother and father. In typical matrilineal system, the role of father is almost absent. Instead, the uncle takes the responsibilities of his sister’s children. The property of
matrilineal household is usually shared by the male and female children of the female folk in a taravad. Purity and pollution also observed by the sister’s children. The residence is said to be Matrilocal. Generally in north Kerala the term taravad is used to denote the matrilineal house. The communities which do not practiced matrilocal residence also used the same term. Still there is belief and strong sentiments among the maternal groups that their family system is surviving only through the female members. Here, it is better to analyze the gender perspective in which the role of males and females of a society works. The gender roles in different communities are different. In matriliny after the death of father the children do not observe pollution, but the sister’s children observe. When a man dies in his wife’s house, all the ceremonies were performed by the members of his matrilineal taravad. This is again connected with the right on property. In the inheritance pattern, the individual is known through his taravad name. In matrilineal system, the decisions connected with marriage, rituals, etc., were taken by the karanavar and the younger members, and women were forbidden to mingle directly with the karanavan.

In traditional patrilineal groups like the Nambuthiris, Malayan, Viswakarma etc., father has the major role and the role of wife’s kin members almost diminishes. The father performs all the duties connected with his family. But instead of this, the practice of dowry was there and at the time of marriage, the girl is leaving the house with such material benefits. The girl has no further authority in the property and she rarely visits her house and delivery also conducted in her husband’s house and all the expenditures were met by her husband’s family. Purity and pollution connected with birth and death were observed at her husband’s family and the pollution matters of her
house, even her parent’s death pollution does not affect her. The residence after marriage is strictly patrilocal. According to Dube, under patriliny both boys and girls take their social identity from the father and are placed in his lineage, *khandan/kutumb*, and family. But while a son is a permanent member of these units, a daughter is viewed as a transient or impermanent member (2001:224).

In North Kerala the term *illam*¹², *kiriym* etc., are used to denote the family. In patriliny importance is given to male members and the male member is not leaving his house after marriage. The roles of females and males in patrilineal and matrilineal communities are entirely different. After marriage, the *illam* name of the girl changes. Nongbri (2003) explains that in patrilineal societies institutions are such that they allow male control over women’s fertility.

As a result of the shift in power structure from the *Karanavar* to the father, the father became the caretaker of his children. Nongbri (2003) has pointed out that the erosion of the mother’s brother’s power over the sister’s household has created considerable tension between the two male (father and *Karanavar*) authorities, in the family.

¹²A Nambuthiri joint household is termed as *Illam*. It also refers to the largest division of a community.
But after the death of a person, his wife and children have to leave the husband’s house to stay in her native house which was again a joint family. This has created a mind set among the people to construct their own house for an independent stay. The net result was that many of the rituals and ceremonies performed by the nephews fall on the son.

The differences in power relations can be identified in aspects such as, participation in the fiscal activities by men and women, nature and extent of freedom for mobility within and outside the household, power to inherit the properties and involvement in decision making and finally who has a say in the administration and management of property. These aspects also vary from society to society.

Patrilineal kinship is characterized by the necessary subordination of the bride to her husband and conjugal kin …… There are several aspects of the patrilineal family (more specifically the Hindi North Indian family) which are implicated in negative fall-outs for women: restrictions on women’s mobility, anxiety regarding early and appropriate marriage of daughters, the high valorization of chastity and fidelity which generates stringent and intricate rules for appropriate behavior of girls, severance of ties with natal kin which reduces the support network in times of stress and crisis, village exogamy which increases the physical distance between natal and affinal homes, limited contact between a woman’s natal and affinal kin, unidirectional flow of brides and gifts, asymmetrical status of bride-givers and bride-takers, limited access to resources, limited scope for patrimonial inheritance, and conditional rights in the matrimonial home over property, living space and children (Ganesh, 1999). Thus, according to Ganesh, socialization emphasizes the temporary
nature of daughters’ presence in the natal home, and her eventual destiny elsewhere in another family. ....There is a gap between patrilineal norm and practice, especially among groups lower in the social hierarchy.

The issue of transfer of membership of women on marriage and their assimilation and incorporation into the affinal group is central to patriliny. It forms the basis of new rights and responsibilities and is germane to the material conditions of women’s lives....In the patrilineal Hindu context, marriage involves more than transfer, it results in transformation of a woman’s identity and “transubstantiation” of her body through the ritual of kanyadana .....Apart from severance of membership in the natal and incorporation into the affinal family, the bride during marriage is believed to get transformed and become one substance with her husband. ...... Usually there are special symbols or insignia for women and in some communities the first name of the bride is changed to a new one (Ganesh, 1999).

The nature of the continuing connection of a married woman with her natal family is to be understood at several levels. In practice, while claims on parental property are severed with marriage, she is still entitled to support in the form of gifts on appropriate occasions, whose value may be substantial or only symbolic depending on the financial capacity of the natal family and the configuration and alignments of various protagonists in the negotiated marital alliance. The gift cycle continues till the marriage of her children. She has also rights of visiting her natal home, and may play an influential role in its domestic politics. ...... A married woman usually has no reciprocal financial duty to her natal family, but there is an expectation that with assimilation, she will be able to influence her husband to help natal relatives if necessary....That
there is a permanent dynamic tension in the dual membership of women and it is highlighted when a woman is widowed. Whether she says on with or under the charge of her affinal family or returns to her natal home would in part depend on whether or not she has children…. In case she returns to her natal home, there is a process of negotiation between her natal and affinal relatives. Her and her children’s claims on the husband’s property are not honored automatically, and to some extent depend on the goodwill of the affines...... The absence of unconditional living rights in the matrimonial home, and the associated insecurity has not disappeared even under reformed personal laws (Ganesh, 1999). The terms *marumakkathayam* and *makkathayam* implicates the inheritance with reference to male perspective.

The present day Kerala society is regarded as patrilineal though the inheritance right is equal to both male and female children. However, the society is patriarchal, in which male dominance is found. For the empirical data on the system of inheritance, the study has been conducted among the communities of Chirakkal which had followed different inheritance patterns. The households surveyed in Chirakkal Panchayat include the following Castes and Communities: Nayar, Thiyya, Vaniya, Maniyani, Pulaya, Marar, Varma, Valluva, Chaliya, Nambuthiri, Viswakarma, Malayan and Muslim.

For the study, a random survey has been conducted in 1000 households of different caste groups in Chirakkal Panchayat and majority of the castes, such as the Nayars, the Varmas, the Thiyyas, the Marars, the Pulayas, the Maniyanis etc., were representatives of matriliny and a few were patrilineal. The Muslims were also a matrilineal group. In addition to this, there were caste groups which show both the elements of matriliny and patriliny and
qualitative interviews of fifty two key respondents from matrilineal and patrilineal caste groups helped to frame the kinship pattern in Chirakkal.
Right to have membership in *taravad* or family

Family is the basic unit of social relationship and the right to have membership in a family or *taravad* is determined by birth. Generally, a person after birth naturally becomes member of a family. Generally, two types of relationships are found among the kin members—consanguineal and affinal. Blood relationship among the family members is considered as consanguineal. The membership in a family or *taravad* is acquired through birth and is unchangeable. This was the fundamental institution prevailed in the past to identify the people. It is not even necessary that the person should live in the family house itself and the membership never changes with the changes in household.

Right to inherit property

The right to inherit property, especially ancestral property was of crucial one in determining the kinship pattern. In the past, in Kerala, the ancestral property transmitted directly from the father to son or from the uncle to sister’s children. The present trend is inheritance of property from parents to children. Actually, the right to inherit ancestral property was a main factor which determines the pattern of inheritance.

Right to establish kin relationships

The right to establish kin relationships has direct connection with the inheritance pattern. Certain kins are considered as cross cousins and certain as parallel cousins and can have marriage with them with reference to this.
Cross-cousin marriage is the norm among the societies of north Malabar. In this type, marriage between children of brother and sister happens.

In the past, with respect to the father and the mother, certain kin members were considered as belong to the paternal side and certain other categories as belong to the maternal category. Thus, unilineal descent groups been formed and the property transferred.

**Right to have power and succession**

The right to power is determined through inheritance. Power in the family determines the status and role of the family members. Seniority of the member is another determinant factor in the holding of power. This right varies according to the nature of the society. Succession is auxiliary to enjoy power. After the death of a person, the string passes through the persuaded lines. This may be either paternal or maternal. Every caste group ought to have such mechanisms to pass their framework to the next generation.

In the bilateral type of inheritance, the community showed is mostly nuclear type and there shall not be any common property, common place, and common leader.

**Right to perform religious and ceremonial duties**

Religious and ceremonial functions are central to all religions and caste groups. This will not change all of a sudden. This is the area, in which change may happen or reflects at the most ultimate stages of a system. The obligations to perform and observe rituals are highly influenced by the inheritance pattern.
Post-marital residence

Post-marital residence indicates residence after marriage. Post-marital residence always referred in terms of the shift of residence of the girl after marriage. In general, the girl’s position is always treated as transferable. The change in the house is not a superficial one, along with the change many underlying aspects are also changing. Thus, the household formation makes many structural changes and adjustments at the societal level. The households are not always based on family. In north Malabar, the residence rules vary from society to society. The unevenness in household structure and its formation is influenced by an array of factors or variables such as religion, origin of caste, kinship organisation, economic system, ideology, cultural norms, demographic factors and so on. In order to understand the nature and process of household formation, it is essential to view them within the precise socio-cultural milieu.

NAYAR

The Nayars are considered as the military class of traditional Kerala and due to this, their position in the conventional social order was much higher. This caste group has been studied by many anthropologists such as Gough, Schneider, Fuller etc, because of the remarkable institutions- matriliny, hypergamous marriage, sambandham relationships- followed by the community members in the past.

The analysis of kinship and inheritance patterns has been done by means of the following variables:
Right to have membership in taravad or family: Among the Nayars, the membership in the family is only accounted through the female line. Traditionally, the Nayar females had the freedom to make marital alliances with the higher caste groups like the Nambuthiri, Varma etc. The children born to such a union were treated as members of the mother’s taravad as taravads were the ancestral family houses of Nayars. The taravad membership never changes and is through the maternal line. For instance, Maippally is one of the famous taravads of Nayars. S R D Prasad, gurukkal (master) of the martial art Kalaripayattu, belongs to Maippally taravad, even though his grand father, Ayilyam Thirunal Ramavarma Valiya Raja was a thampuran (ruler or naduvazhi), who belongs to Varma community and of the Chirakkal Kovilakam dynasty. The Thampuran married a Nayar woman and hence the children-Chirakkal T. Balakrishnan Nayar (a famous historian) and Chirakkal T. Sreedharan Nayar (a famous gurukkal of Kalaripayattu) - born to this union would be treated under mother’s caste and taravad. They will not be treated as belong to Varma caste. Sreedharan Nayar married from the Maippally taravad, a Nayar taravad, as per the customary rule of isogamy and the children S R D Prasad and Ambika Das obviously come under mother’s taravad i.e., Maippally. Still, among the Nayars the taravad membership is tracing through the female line.

Right to inherit property: At present, the right to inherit the property always rests on both the male and female members of the taravad. In case of females residing in her husband’s house, a share of the earnings of the taravad will be received and also on important occasions, clothes were also given to the nephews and nieces. The female member and each of her children would get individual share of the property during partition. Earlier, joint family system
was prevailed among the Nayars of Kerala and in a taravad a large number of individuals reside. In certain cases, the husband may build separate houses for his wife and children.

**Right to establish kin relationships:** The kin relationship is traced through the female line. Parallel cousins are treated as brothers and sisters. Cross-cousin marriage was permitted among the Nayars. Earlier, the marriage between cross-cousins was frequent to keep the property intact. The marriage between cross-cousins was of preferred category. In addition, the frequency of exchange marriages of brothers and sisters of one family with another was of high. This is especially found among high land owning families and the intention was to avoid the partition of property and avoid the dissolution of property to other taravads.

**Right to have power and succession:** The right to control the household affairs mainly restricted to the elder most female member, if she resides in her taravad. But the karanavar (maternal uncle) had the power to decide on matters connected with the taravad. In the absence of female members of the taravad the karanavar and his wife had managed the affairs of the taravad. After the death of the karanavar, the senior most male member of the taravad, who are allied through female line, inherits the power.

**Right to perform religious and ceremonial duties:** In a matrilineal set up, the right to perform death rites of a person always falls on his nephews and not on the son. In case of females, her son can do the rites, because he belongs to the same taravad. The pollution related to birth, termed, balaima and death pollution, pula also affects the members of the taravad.
The right to do rituals in the taravad shrine, and trustee position of the community temple also passes through the maternal line. So the
Figure 2.2
Genealogy of a Nayar Family

Maippally Madhavi
Maippally Devaki
Maippally Madhavi
Maippally Rajanmual

Kesavan Embranthiri
Aduthila Keralavarma Raja
Aduthila Godavarma Raja

Thayyil Sreedharan

Pokyarath Damodaran
Maippally Kanakabai

Rajalakshmi Leelalakshmi
S.R. Ambika Das
Sindha Das

S.R. Deviprasad

Subra Sathosh
Santhosh

M. Chandralakshmi
M. Sethumadhavan

M. Chandralakshmi
M. Ranjith
M. Sanjith

Sridha Kittshnan
Laxmi Priya

M. Sobha
Nephew residing in distant place from the taravad has to come to the mother’s place to perform the duties in the taravad temple, as and when requires. It was only allowed among the Nayars of north Malabar that sister’s daughters can observe certain rituals only with the consent of the Karanavar. For instance, during pooram festival (a festival related to gratify the god of love; kama), in order to observe it, they have to take the sanction of the Karanavar. As the female members reside in the taravad even after marriage, they had the power to enjoy the status of the taravad. If brother’s wife and the female members of the taravad residing in the same house, then the female member of the taravad have the power to decide on matters related to household and she was the exclusive decision maker in the household.

Post-marital residence: In case of marriage of the Nayar girl with higher caste man, the girl would not be brought to reside with the husband’s family. In rare cases, a separate house was constructed for their living near to the husband’s family. Ayilyam Thirunal Ramavarma Valiya Raja constructed a house for his wife and children, who belong to Nayar caste, near to the Chirakkal Kovilokam. Such residence pattern can be seen in hypergamous marriages. But in most of the hypergamous cases, the girl resides in her natal house itself.

In most cases of isogamy type of marriage, the Nayar woman resides virilocally. Usually, the marriage among the Nayars was termed
If a man taking his wife to his natal house is referred as virilocal.

as *pudamuri*. But delivery of the girl usually takes place in her house. The Nayars everywhere in Kerala followed *marumakkathayam*. The families who possessed high economic status resided with their wife in her *taravat*. A widow can never stay in her husband’s house for long. After the death of her husband, the widow returns to her natal house along with children.

However, there are regional variations in the system, according to economic status in observing matrilineal and patrilineal descent.

**VARMA**

Traditionally, the Varmas have been the rulers. In the past, they were one of the ruling classes in Kerala. In addition, they were landlords. The Varmas of Chirakkal are coming under *Chandra vamsam* and Parasurama *gotra*. Generally, the Varmas have been classified under different *gotras* named after different saints. Chirakkal dynasty was one of the oldest ruling royal families in India, and one of the branches or sects of Kolathiri royal family.

**Right to have membership in *taravat* or family:** Traditionally, the socially approved alliances of female members of Varmas were with the Nambuthiris and members of the same group. The male members of the Varma make alliances with the Varma or Nayar females. The children born to a Nayar
woman are treated as Nayar, due to the tracing of descent through maternal line. The children born to a Nambuthiri husband and a Varma female are treated as belong to Varma not as Nambuthiri. In short, one’s wife and children belong to wife’s caste and family. A person although he lives in his wife’s kovilakam never becomes a real part of the kovilakam if he is not related to them in any way. Marriage arrangements were made earlier by the Karanavar. Among the Varmas of Chirakkal, the children will be known in their mother’s surname and not belong to their father’s. They follow inheritance in maternal line and follow matrilocal residence. The daughters continue to live in their mother’s house after marriage. Even though, the inheritance is through the mother, property ownership was of joint in nature with the exception of male member’s children and wife.

**Right to inherit property:** In the past, the property ownership of the Varmas was of joint in nature and there was no practice of holding individual property. In most of the matrilineal communities, the property rests with the female members. Even today the Chirakkal Kovilakam family or the Chirakkal royal family possesses such ancestral properties generally be counted in the female line.

Properties like temple tank of Sreekrishna Temple at Chirakkal, Rajas High school etc belong to Chirakkal Kovilakam are still treated as common property. The female members and their children will be the authority to inherit that property. Male member’s children will not get the Kovilakam property. Still the feeling of oneness is working, and the members who were attached through female line are regarded as the same kin group.
Right to establish kin relationship: Among the Varmas of Chirakkal Kovilakam, the descent is traced through the mother, and the children being known by their mother’s Kovilakam name. Hence, the surname or initials of the members are termed as C.K. The guardianship of the children rests with the mother and mother’s brother (Karanavar). In case of inheritance only the female position is counted. The property of the Varmas was of oint type, and was accountable to all the members descended through the female line. The role of mother’s brother (Karanavar) is still significant in making marriage arrangements of sister’s children.

Right to have power and succession: The descent is traced through the female line and the authority and decision making power rests on the senior most male member usually the Karanavar of the family. He acted as the custodian and manager of the family affairs.

At present also, the designation of Valliya thampuran has been adorned by the senior most male member of the female line, though his the power at the societal level has declined. The position of Kolathiri is also adorned by the senior most male member of the Kolathiri vamsam, inherited through the female line. The Kolathiri royal family mainly divided into eleven branches. From these branches, the senior most male member adorns the position of Kolathiri. Thus, all the positions like Valliya Raja, Kolathiri, Karanavar etc., were positioned by the male members inherited through female line of the concerned royal family.

Right to perform religious and ceremonial duties: The presence of social observances and social rites among them show that the matrilineal system is still not disintegrated fully. In the past, the sister’s children were the chief
mourners and they observed pollution (balaima) with the death of a male person. The wife and children of the deceased person will not be polluted, but his brothers and sisters have to observe pollution. The death ceremonies and rituals last for twelve days are observed by the sister’s children, and not brothers as brothers children are not considered as part of the Kovilakam. Therefore in the system, the woman, her children and male members (brothers and male parallel cousins) have the right to inherit the common property held under Chirakkal dynasty. If any family of the Chirakkal Kovilakam lacks females in any generation, the matrilineal inheritance pattern doesn’t work. It works only with the availability of matrilineal females. For instance, the pooram festival celebrated in Kerala during the month of March is considered to be the celebration of women. If any of the royal houses of Varma lacks adolescent female members, then the particular family’s pooram celebration terminates. The female children of male members are not counted for that. In Chirakkal Kovilakam, Thankam thampuratti has five sons and lacks daughters, the pooram celebration and the continuity of the family on lineage basis ended. If any of the royal family lacks female child, especially below 16-18 years old, naturally the celebration gets stopped. This indicates that the matrilineal elements are still surviving, though they have shifted to patrilineal system.

Post-marital residence: Traditionally, the Varmas followed matrilocal residence. The Varma woman after marriage is residing in her house, and the children also were born and brought up in the mother’s Kovilakam. Marriage with Nambuthiri males usually resulted in this type of residence. However, there are cases in which the marriage with men of Kilimanoor Kovilakam,
which is considered to be higher in position to that of Chirakkal Kovilakom, made the women to accept virilocality.

**MAPPILA-MUSLIM**

In north Malabar, the Muslims popularly known as Mappilas and belong to Sunni sect of Islam. The stratification among the Muslims is not demarcated clearly but it has been divided into different sects. Koya (1983) has supported that, the Muslims of India were treated as the converts from Hindu religion. The Mappila-Muslims of Kannur district, especially in Chirakkal show distinct features deviant from the rest of the Muslim population. Most of the settlements of the Mappila-Muslims are found clustered.

**Right to have membership in taravad or family:** The taravad usually goes to females. But the karanavar manages the affairs of the taravad. Sister’s children’s marriage was also arranged by the Karanavar of the joint family. The children bear their mother’s surname, and are part of their mother’s taravad. The naming is still in matrilineal line, comprised the taravad name, and followed by the person’s given name. This pattern found among the Mappila-Muslims was mainly due to their contact with marumakkathayam communities in Malabar. During the division of taravad property, a part of it would be treated as common to meet the expenditure related to adiyanthiram (ceremonial functions).

**Right to inherit property:** Among the Mappila-Muslims of Chirakkal, both male and female members would get the property of the taravad. But the proportion of share would be different. Daughters are treated as
A Community is a social grouping or a total organization of social life within a limited area. See Jha, 1996 p 23.

the prime inheritor of taravad property and owners of the parental lands. The Mappila-Muslims of Chirakkal in north Malabar are still following the same pattern of inheritance.

Logan’s suggestion that the Muhammadan law is the original law and marumakkathayam rules are of later adoption which will very well be plausible for Muslims as a whole, but not for certain communities like Mappilas or for that matter any sect of Muslims having traces of Hindu ancestry (in Koya, 1983).

**Right to establish kin relationships:** The Mappila inheritance system closely resembles that of the pattern found among the Nayars, except in ceremonies and marriage pattern.

The Mappila community considers the females as permanent members of the household and never forced to relocate her domestic affairs away from her natal family when she marries. This involves the husband moving over from his parents to live with his wife and her relatives. The tradition bound ties existing between parents and daughters continued even after marriage as they are staying together.

**Right to have power and succession:** The Karanavar of the taravad controlled all the family affairs. He was the senior most male member of the family, who earns for the Joint family. He also contributes his personal earnings for the welfare of the family, and would take debts for the benefit of the family.
Earlier it was not necessary to give expenses to his wife and children to meet their requirements as they were in the wife’s Joint family. Later on, the system began to change, according to the changes in the socio-cultural and economic transformation happened in the Kerala society.

The power of female members in decision making varies depending on several factors. They can decide on household affairs. The major decisions were taken by the senior male members of the family. The women whose husbands are working abroad take decisions independently. Even though the male members change their household, the administration is always restricted in his parental or natal family. Joint family or extended family system was another important peculiarity of Mappila society of Malabar, especially in the Chirakkal region. This type of residence pattern is still followed by the Mappilas of Chirakkal.

More than that, the marriage proposal and search for the counterpart usually come from the bride’s part. The Karanavar of the taravad and officials of the Mosque have had a dominant role in this. After the death of the Karanavar, his brother or nephew can take the charge of the Karanavar depending on the seniority.

**Right to perform religious and ceremonial duties:** When the Karanavar dies, his sister’s children perform the rites and contribute some amount to his wife as parithoshikam for serving their Karanavar. The role to perform religious ceremonies of the taravad also passes through female line.
Post-marital residence: Some societies allow flexibility in selecting the post marital residence where as in others the cultural conceptions prevalent in the society prevent the members from making individual choices.

The post-marital residence is always the bride’s residence, and among the Muslims, the male members’ changes their household after marriage, but administration is always in his family. This pattern is reported mainly in north Malabar area, especially in Kannur. This type of residence pattern is still followed by majority of the Muslim families in Kannur. In other parts of Kerala the pattern is not the same. According to Shariat, after marriage the bride will be taken to groom’s house. Actually, the law is to bring the girl after giving money (mehr) to her family. The marriage is conducting in the presence of Khatheeb (mosque official) and the Karanavars.

Among the Mappilas, the post-marital residence is always the natal residence of the bride, but the husband would not stay permanently in the conjugal family. He visits wife’s house at night and returns in the morning. In real terms, in this arrangement the women get the protection and support of the brother, father and the husband. Earlier, they were mostly engaged in business or trade and nowadays most of them headed for overseas jobs, and others to accept wage labour.

As uxorilocal\textsuperscript{15} residence was customarily open to the members, the males of the society tended to marry from nearby villages, so that, they could visit their native houses also. Earlier, after marriage, a man spends his time between his wife’s house and his natal house especially those working abroad.

In the case of Mappila Muslims, deviations in inheritance pattern
If the bride resides in her natal house, after marriage is termed as uxorilocal.

from the general rule can be seen. The females of Mappilas possess land or money in their names which they have inherited from the parents at the time of marriage as dowry. The land after their death goes to their children. Even though, the practice of dowry present among them, generally, it has been paid in the name of the girl and the husband does not have any right over it. Thus, a woman becomes entitled to land or money in her own name when she gets married. Thus, assets and income considerations have a role in determining the household pattern. Naturally for the living at bride’s house, a separate room would be set - a system termed *ara* or *maniyara* – for them. Thus, in a Mappila household one can see several such well furnished ‘independent rooms as symbolic households’ based on the number of female children. Nongbri (2003) has pointed out that, uxorilocal residence provides strong emotional and physical support to women since they do not have to leave their mother’s house at marriage for a new and alien environment at their husband’s.

In short, the post marital residences of Mappilas are always uxorilocal and the uxorilocal changes to neolocal and neolocal changes to uxorilocal during the ‘development cycle’ of the family. Thus, the household structure of the community is framed as uxorilocal.

Generally, the Muslims all over the world follow patrilineal descent system, except in north Malabar. In this region, the Muslims were matrilineal
along with majority of the Hindu castes. Thus, the Mappillas generally exhibit matrilineal features in its typical form.

MARAR

The Marar community usually found residing near to temples. Their main occupation is drum beating in the temple. Accordingly, the households were traditionally seen around the temples. The Marars earlier made marriage alliance with the Variars, Poduval and the Nambisans. Now they also make alliances with the Nayars and the Nambuthiris.

Right to have membership in *taravād* or family: The child would get the *taravād* name of his or her mother’s *taravād*, i.e., the initial or surname shall be the mother’s.

Right to inherit property: Among the Marars, earlier the right to inherit the property was restricted to sister’s children and the brother would get only one share of the property, but no share to his children. However, they can live in the father’s *taravād*.

Right to establish kin relationship: Cross-cousin marriage was the prevalent form of marriage. Exchange marriages of brothers and sisters were also frequent in this community. The scattered distribution of Marar community and low population density resulted in choosing marriage alliances with other communities such as Variar, Poduval, Nambisan, Nayar, and Nambuthiri.
Right to have power and succession: The senior most male member of the family or taravad was considered as the Karanavar of the taravad. The Karanavar possessed absolute control over the taravad affairs. Kizhakketharammal Padinjare kottam is the taravad kshetram (Shrine) of the Kizhakketharammal Padinjaru (K.P) family of the Chirakkal village. The line of descent is passing through the sister’s children. The Karanavar of the taravad has the duty to look after the kottam affairs, daily lightening of holy lamps in the shrine, coordination of the taravad matters etc. While conducting theyyam festival, the Karanavar has to grant an amount, traditionally termed as adayala panam to the theyyam performer at first. Earlier the expenditures of the kottam festivals were met by the nephews of the taravad. But now the income is also mounting from various sources and outsiders are also contributing for this.

Azhome Veettil is another taravad of Marars of Chirakkal. The thampuran of Chirakkal imparted land to the Azhome Veettil family as pattom (lease) land and in return they have to present some paddy and were also assigned duties in the temple. The authority of drum beating was imparted to them by the Chirakkal thampuran and the Azhome veettil family has had the right for beating the drum in the temples of Chirakkal Kovilakam. The position is hereditary from a person to sister’s children. Azhome veettil Ananda Marar and Azhome veettil Balakrishna Marar are the persons holding the position of drum beaters in Kadalayi Sree Krishna temple, Kalarivathukkal Bhagavathi temple and Cherukunnu Annapoorneswari temple. Their nephews A.V. Pradeep and A.V. Sreedhara Marar assisting them in this regard and they will inherit the position. There were around 39 temples under Chirakkal dynasty and the duty was assigned to the particular family and the right is termed as
karaima. Others can perform drum beating in these temples only with the consent of the karaimakkar.

Azhome veettil family is the karaimakkar of Kalarivathukkal Bhagavathi temple and Kadalayi Sreekrishna temple. Sometimes the members of the karaima family have to come from distant places. This mainly happens when there is marriage of the female members with male members of distant areas.

Earlier the Karanavar of the boy first goes for looking the bride. He has the power to decide the matter finally. The financial matters were under the control of the Karanavar. The eldest female member of the family can express their views but not necessary that it may well be accepted by the Karanavar. When the married daughter visits her house, she will have more authority in her house compared to her brother’s wives.

Widow re-marriage was not permitted in the past and was forbidden to come in the public place. After the death of the husband, the widow will be brought back to her home on the thirteenth day of demise. At that time the thali should be returned to her husband’s family.

Right to perform religious and ceremonial duties: If a birth took place in a family, the members of the taravad have to observe balaima (birth pollution) for seven days, and observe twelve days pula (death pollution) when death happens. On the 12th day after the demise, pula murikkal ceremony conducts. For this, all the members have to go to the temple tank for taking bath and are considered fit to enter the temple. The households would be purified with holy water collected from the temple.
Puberty ceremony had conducted elaborately in the past. For this, a shed would erect near the house or it may be an extension of the house.
FIGURE 2.3
GENEALOGY OF A MARAR FAMILY

K.P. Naryanan Marar

T.V. Janaki Amma

V.Jayanjan

T.V. Vinodini

T.V. Dineshan ego

K. Sathish

T.V. Vipin T.V. Jithin

Anand Sagar Aiswarya

T.V. Ammal Amma

Ammakutty Amma

Allakkattilath Padmanabhan Namboodiri
Puberty ceremony is termed as *dhavani kalyanam* or *pudamuri kalyanam*. The girl after taking bath in hot water was adorned with white clothes and the *karanavar* offers *dhavani* to the girl. After that, the girl was shifted to a nearby shed and stays there for four to seven days. In every house there was an attached room, also used for post-natal care.

**Post-marital residence:** After marriage the girl resides with her husband’s family members. Cross-cousin marriage is also permitted as a measure to maintain the property undivided. For delivery, the girl returns to her house in the seventh month of pregnancy. Delivery was usually taking place at the girl’s residence and the news was informed by the girl’s brother to her husband’s relatives. The expenditures towards delivery were given by the husband. *Eettupanam* is the money given to girl’s family after delivery to take care of the mother and child.

**VANIYA**


**Right to have membership in taravad or family:** The children of female members are considered to be the members of the *taravad*. For instance, *Kunnath* is a *taravad* name of a Vaniya family. The *taravad* name, *kunnath* is passing maternally to the descending generations. *Kunnath* Suvrathan
inherited the taravad name, Kunnath from his mother, Kunnath Rohini Amma and she, in turn inherited it from her mother Kunnath Thambayi. But Kunnath Suvrathan’s children will never come under Kunnath, but follow their mother’s taravad name and are thus members of their mother’s taravad.

**Right to inherit property:** Among the Vaniyas, the right to property inheritance was through the female members of the taravad. Females and their children were only eligible for separate share of the property.

**Right to establish kin relationship:** Cross-cousin marriage is prevalent among the Vaniyas, especially marriage with one’s mother’s brother’s daughter.

**Right to have power and succession:** The succession was through the female line. Even in households, where the woman stays with her husband and children, the Karanavar had control over them. On matters of marriage of the nephews, the Karanavar was the authority to take the final decision.

**Right to perform religious and ceremonial duties:** The death ceremonies were done by the sons of the deceased. But the religious performances in the taravad were performed by the sons of female members.

**Post-marital residence:** After marriage, the girl resides with her husband’s family. In case of veedaram keral, (a way of making alliance without the consent of relatives) the girl resides in her house itself and the man visits her occasionally.

**THIYYA**
According to B.N.Nayar, the Thiyyas were subdivided into eight *illams*: Koikkal, Vanmarikka, Nellikkal, Pazhayar, Mankudi, Tenamkudi, Padayankudi and villakudi (in Rajendran 1974). *Illam* is a wider level classification of the community and is exogamous. According to the informants, the *Illams* of Thiyya community are the following: Thalakkodan, Parakka, Nellikka, Padayan Kodi, Bavuthiyyan, Palanthayi (Palakka), Aalodan and Kaithada. The Thiyya community of north Malabar comprises eight *illams* and the members of an *illam* are considered to be close relatives. The position of the *illam* is given priority during marriage negotiations.

**Right to have membership in taravad or family:** The Thiyyas regard the children of females as members of the *taravad* and they follow their mother’s *taravad* name. Male member’s children and wife are not treated as members of husband’s *taravad*. Marriage between members of the same *illam* and *taravad* is prohibited. Earlier, before finalizing the marriage arrangements, they confirm the *illam* and *taravad* identity. *Taravad* is the matrilineal based sub-division of the community and is exogamous.

**Right to inherit property:** Among the Thiyyas, there is no discrimination between sons and daughters in getting the family property. It is equally distributed to both of them, but the children of females also get the same right over the family property (If the property is inherited through the *taravad*) and not the children of male child.

**Right to establish kin relationship:** The children of female members are considered as brothers and sisters and their brother’s children are treated as cross-cousins, and are eligible for making marriage alliances. Generally, *machunan* (male cross-cousin) and *machunathi* (female cross-cousin) are the
words used to denote them. Since the relation between children of brother and sister are considered as potential mates, earlier the first preference shall given to such kins. Only in the absence of such relations, others can marry a girl, but they have to pay compensation known as machunan panam, which was paid to the girl’s machunan. Others can marry the girl without paying machunan panam, if the girl lacks an eligible cross-cousin.

**Right to have power and succession:** The authority and power in the taravad passes through the female line. The Thiyya females, after the marriage, usually live in her husband’s house. But her rights and privileges always rests in her natal family. On important occasions, her presence in the taravad is considered essential. Moreover, even after marriage and delivery of the girl, the relatives and members of the taravad visit her intermittently with presents like rice and vegetables, especially during festive occasions. Still there are cases in which mother’s brothers giving dress items to their sister and children during festive occasions.

**Right to perform religious and ceremonial duties:** In the mother’s taravad the religious rite is bestowed on female member’s children. In the taravad temple and kavu’s (sacred groves attached to taravad) their role is still not disappeared. The ceremonies, rites and rituals related to death and birth are also observed by the children of females. In addition,
FIGURE - 2.4
GENEALOGY OF A THIYYA FAMILY

Palath Kelu △ = Mundachali Kuttipennu

Makis Kunnhraman △ = Mundachali Narayani

Karath Balakrishnan △ = Mundachali Sulochana

Mundachali Shaji

eGo ○ Mundachali Sheeba Ganeshan △ Narath Ganeshan

Arrana Ganeshan △ Amath Ganeshan
the pollution matters of the *taravad* affect them. But the rituals related to the death of a person are generally performed by his or her eldest son. In such cases, sister’s children assist him.

**Post-marital residence** - The post-marital residence among the Thiyya community is always patrilocal, though rare instances of wife residing in her house is also noticed. Generally a Thiyya *taravad* consists of parents, sons, their wives and children. The daughters would visit their parent’s house occasionally.

**MANIYANI**

The male members engage in masonry work (*kalpani*) and females in rearing the cows. According to the caste members, two categories of Maniyanis are there, one, *gopalan* otherwise termed as aayar connected with rearing of cows and the other *eruvan* or *mayan* mainly residing at Edat areas of Payyanur connected with buffalo rearing. In the past, there was no marriage between these two groups. Traditionally the aayar group had the right to give *panchagavyas* (it is a mixture of cow-dung, cow- urine, ghee, milk and curd of cow, used for sacred rituals) in temples. The Maniyanis of Chirakkal fall under this category. The *aayar* group of Maniyani possesses six *kiriyam* or *illam*. These are the following: *Odankara, Madankara, Kumbranam, Karintholam, Edakkavu* and *Poonkavu.*
Right to have membership in taravad or family: The marriage between the same illam groups was not permitted in the past. Among the Maniyanis, after the major division kiriyam or illam, the next hierarchy is taravad. Joint family system was existed among them and after marriage, the girl resides with her husband’s family, without changing her taravad name. The taravad name in each generation is passing through the mother’s line.

Right to inherit property: In the past, the right to property inheritance was confined to sister’s children. Thus, one obtains the property of mother, and not of father.

Right to establish kin relationship: Cross-cousin marriage is an accepted form of marriage among them. Generally, the taravad was occupied by parents, sons, their wives and children. The Karanavar had the role to look after the taravad property.

Right to have power and succession: The senior ladies of the taravad had the freedom to decide on household affairs, if she resides in the same taravad along with the Karanavar. However, the final decision and implementation were done by the Karanavar. The senior male member of the taravad would become the Karanavar. The women are mainly engaged in agricultural activities and the rearing of cows. The Maniyanis used to bring milk to the Sree Krishna temple at Chirakkal and it is a right inheriting through the maternal line.

Right to perform religious and ceremonial duties: In the past, the marriage was conducted at night. Pudamuri marriage was the practice and it was by giving puda or cloth. The groom’s party stays there during night and return in
the morning. Marriage with girl of distant place was also occurred and cross
cousin marriage was widely practiced. Marriage usually takes place at bride’s
house (taravad) under the supervision of the Karanavar. But the father meets
all the expenditures related to marriage. The practice of bride-price and dowry
not existed. The role of the Karanavar has been replaced by the father. Widow
re-marriage was not permitted and the widows have to return back to their
homes after their husband’s death.

*Puthiya Bhagavathi* is their *paradaivam* and *Madiyan koolom* at
Kanhangad is their prime religious centre. The chief person concerned to do
the temple matters of Maniyanis are termed as *palamruthan*.

Earlier the *naduvazhis* (local ruler) took decisions in temple matters. Still,
they have to acquire the right, (acharam) from the Chirakkal Kovilakam before
taking charge as the *palamruthan*. The matters related to temple are still
through the *marumakkathayam* line.

Earlier, the funeral rites were performed by the nephews. Now, the
deceased person’s children and nephews jointly perform it. *Pula* and pollution
concerned to the *taravad* were also observed by the sister’s children in the
past. The pollution matters of their mother’s *taravad*, would affect them.

*Elakyan* family of the Maniyani community has been rendering the
service of giving plantain leaves to the Cherukunnu *Annapoorneswari* temple
for many years and the sowing of paddy seeds in the fields of
*Annapoorneswari* temple is the traditional right of *Ponappalli-Thekkumbadan*
Maniyani family. These rights are inheriting through the mother’s line and still
continuing the practice.
Figure - 2.5
Genealogy of a Maniyani Family

Elambilan Nallankandy Raman Nair

Theeyarath Kunjathi Anana

Thuzhathidath Kunhiraman

Thekkumbadan Veettil Sreedevi

Theeyarath Ramachandran

T.V. Aneesh

Kamoth Painkan Sindhu

K.P. Aadith

K.P. Aadarsh

Thekkumbadan Veettil Santha
**Post-marital residence:** Partition of property was not existed in the past. The girl after marriage resides in her husband’s house and they occasionally visit their natal house.

**PULAYA**

Generally, the Pulayas are engaged as agricultural labourers. They are also referred to as agrestic slaves. The term *pulam* denotes agricultural field. They were landless labourers under landlords and most of their huts were situated at one corner of the *Janmi*’s (landlord) fields or homestead. A type of slavery system was existed and they worked with *Janmi*’s of different communities such as the Vaniya, Thiyya, Nayar, Muslims etc. In the past, the main *janmi* of the area was Raja of Kolathiri *vamsa* or Raja of Chirakkal. The *edajanmis* (landlord mediators) were the people who act in between the *Janmi* and the *Kudiyan* (tenant). The *edajanmis* lease the fields to *Kudiyan* for an additional *varam/pattom* (a local measurement). The *kudiyans* were the people, who mainly work for the *Janmi* and belong to the Pulaya and the Thiyya community.

The female members of the community have been traditionally engaging in different jobs, like mat making and catching of fish, especially prawns. This is termed as *thappal*. For this they are not using any equipment, but with hand only they catch the fish from coastal and riverine areas.

The villagers designate a male member by the term *adiyar*, and female member as *adiyathi*. The households are usually referred to as *chala*. In a *chala*, the girl has importance compared to her brother’s wife. A new *chala*
will be build only with the consent of the janmi. This community got their own land after the implementation of Kudikidappu Act.

In the past, marriage among them was conducted at night. There was no practice of boy seeing the girl before marriage. Father, mother and the land owner first sees the girl. After that, a betrothal ceremony conducts at the girl’s house. The boy’s family carries with them betel leaves, arecanut, rice, oil etc. While reaching the girl’s house, a ceremony called acharaveppu conducts i.e., two plantain leaves are placing on the ground and put all the items on it except oil. Five such heaps would be placed on each leaf. The heaps are symbolically arranged for the five authorities of the community, such as chemmari, naduvan, prathi, polla and for the taravad of the girl. These authorities have right in which the chemmari is controlling the community affairs. Naduvan has the responsibility to accomplish marriage and death ceremonies and prathi is the assistant. These three positions would be adorned by trained persons, not hereditary positions. This serving is a customary token to obtain the girl for the boy’s family. Cross cousin marriage is also allowed among them.

During marriage, the boy’s family gives kanapanam to the girl’s family. The ceremony of wearing the sacred chain was not practiced earlier. But pudamuri was the form in which both boy and girl torn the mundu (loin cloth white in colour) into two. This was done under the supervision of naduvan. The marriage dress for the girl would be brought from the boy’s house.

**Right to have membership in taravad or family:** The Pulaya society is divided into ten illams. In addition to the ten Illams; there are illams which are considered as independent sub-sections of the community. Illam exogamy is
the rule among them. According to the informants, the *illams* are the following: *Aaramban, Ooramban, Mynjiridiyan, Olannadiyan, Pongadan, Thachan, Kallariyan, Mangadan, Poyyilariyan* and *Vaduvathiriyan*.

According to Pallath (1995), the *illams* are clustered together in varying numbers to form the clan. *Thachan, Thalerin, Paramban, Panayan, Koyilerian, Karakkadan, Pullaen, Vellakudiyan, Aringalaen, Kallakudiyan, Edacherian, Chellerian, Nirichan, Noolamban, Thekken, Kallaen, Panayan, madakkudiyan* etc., are some of the sub-*illam* names predominant among them.

The Pulaya families were generally consisting of father, mother, children and grand children. It is very clear from the study that, the Pulayas still strictly following their *illam* identity. They are using the corresponding *illam* names along with their personal names. The *illam* names are matrilineally inheriting. For instance, Kanjan belongs to *nirichan illam* and his wife under *koyilerian illam*. Accordingly, their son Kumaran falls under *koyilerian illam*.

**Right to inherit property:** Regarding the inheritance of property, there was no such distinct type of inheritance pattern as most of the Pulaya families have no land or property earlier. They were settled near to their landowner's agricultural plot. But now most of them own land. In the village under study, the Pulaya families are residing in houses allowed by the State government under *Laksham Veedu* Housing Scheme.

**Right to establish kin relationship:** The *Karanavar* has not much role in a Pulaya household. The household usually comprises the father, mother and children and father is the decision making authority. The traditional households of Pulayas were termed as *chala*. Earlier, married daughters were
not part of parental household. Cross-cousin marriage permitted among them.

**Right to have power and succession:** Traditionally they served their masters as agricultural labourers and were untouchables. Singh (2002:1259) points out that in the past they were the *kudikidappukars* (attached labourers) of the *janmis*. At present also cultivator-labour relationship exists in some parts of north Malabar. Children usually follow their parent’s occupation. Kanjan *poojari*, from this community had worked for the *upperi taravad*, a *Janmi* family of Thiyya Caste. He did *poojas* in a temple, *subrahmanya kshetram* at Mattool area. Now his son is acting as the *poojari* there. His elder son Kumaran is a performer of *theyyam* and *thottam of Dharma daivam, Pottan, Kurathi, Gulikan, Vishnumoorthi, Karinchamundi* etc. The position of *poojari* is not hereditary but goes to the person who is most able to conduct *poojas*. Since they lack property, inheritance at household level is not much stratified.

**Right to perform religious and ceremonial duties:** Madayi *kavu* is a famous temple in north Malabar and *Bhagavathi* is the main deity of the temple. This is the family deity of the Kolathiri *vamsam*. Most of the Pulaya members in the village are still holding some hereditary position in the temple. *Polla* is the religious position detain by the members of the Pulaya caste. The *Polla* is the Pulaya representative position of the temple, and this position is matrilineally transferring to the next generation. The position of *Polla* is still there in temples, which were earlier under Chirakkal *Kovilakam*. While *nira* (ceremony related to harvesting of paddy) ceremony, *Polla* has the duty to bring *kathir* (newly harvested paddy) to the temple, i.e., after *karkkidaka vavu* (during July-August). Like wise, during *puthari kalasam* (ceremony after
harvest, in which the preparation of paddy happens) a ceremony called Avil nivedyam is performing in the temple. Polla has the duty to bring newly harvested paddy on the sankramam (last day of Malayalam month) day to the temple. At that time polla takes an umbrella made of coconut leaves and holds a holy stick. There is a paddy field, known as aandakandam near Puthiyangadi reserved for this by the thampuran. The practice is still following as such.

Traditionally the position of polla goes to the Thekkan illam group and it is passed matrilineally, i.e., the position goes to sister’s children. But a shift happened in holding this position a generation back in which Kanjan of nirichan illam got the position. Kanjan got the position of polla from his father’s elder brother as an adjustment. This was due to lack of efficient persons to take hold of the position. Later on, Kanjan transferred the position to his sister’s son, Gopalan who is the polla at Madayi kavu.

Photograph 2.1 Polla of Madayi Kavu
A traditional practice still existing among the Pulaya is giving *adimapanam* to the temple. The *illam* members were regarded as the slaves under temples within and outside the village and they have to offer *Adimapanam* to the respective temples. The amount was two *Panam* before 1948. Different *illam* groups have their own temples where they can give their *adimapanam* annually, especially on the *sankramam* day of the Malayalam month, *Thulam* (October- November). It is not necessary that the temples are within the village or boundary of their family or household. The *Koyilerians* of Mattool area have to come and offer it at Raja Rajeswara Temple, Taliparamba. The *kula daivam* (family deity) also varies from *illam* to *illam*. The *adimapanam* is not giving where *kula daivams* are placed. Some of the *illams* and the respective temples, in which they offer their *adimapanam*, are given below:

- **Koyilerien** - Raja rajeswara Temple, Taliparamba and Puzhathi Temple, Puzhathi
- **Nirichan** - Anna Poorneswari Temple, Cherukunnu
- **Madakkudiyan** - Cherikkal Kottam, Ezhome
- **Kallen** - Thrichambaram, Taliparamba
- **Aringalaen** - Puzhathi Temple, puzhathi
- **Aaramban** - Puzhathi Temple
- **Edacherian** - Punchavayal Kaniyil Kshetram.
Post-marital residence: After marriage, the Pulaya women live in their husband’s house. But delivery takes place in the girl’s house, and husband bears all the expenses. After marriage the illam or taravad name of the girl will not be changing. The children born out of a union are known in terms of their mother’s taravad name.

When the husband dies, the widow has to return to her house, after performing the rituals which were conducted at the time of marriage. It is essential that the rites should be performed as such before leaving to one’s own house. This is still practising in the society whether the widow has child or not.

CHALIYA

The Chaliya are traditional weavers and live in settlements, known as therus. They are generally termed as Pathinalillam (14 illam) group. The illam names are as follows:

Kizhakkedathillam, Padinjadillom, Puthankudiya illom, Thorappanillom, Thampurattillom, Ancharillom, Kottarillom, Choyiranillom, Narakappachyillom, Konginillom, Vadivariyillom, Njadiillom, Kottilaveedillom, Koovakattiillom.

Right to have membership in taravad or family: Among the Chaliyas after marriage, there was the practice that, the girl adopts her husband’s family name to denote her surname; instead of her taravad name. The children are also identified by their father’s family name. In short, the paternal side has got importance in inheriting the surname of the child.
Earlier, joint family system was existed. After marriage, the woman leaves her house and resides with her husband’s family. Traditionally, a person belonging to this community bears two names-achan peru, meaning father’s name, and taravad name. Traditionally, they followed father’s house name as achan peru for both male and female children and now also giving priority to father’s family name. Actually, the achan peru is passing from father to children and taravad name is always through the mother’s line.

For example, if thekkkan is the house name of the father, and arayakkichi as mother’s taravad name, the children always known in terms of their father’s family name. The taravad has relevance during religious and marriage occasions. This shows a mixed existence of paternal and maternal inheritance.

**Right to inherit property:** The children were looked after by one’s own father. Dowry practice was not prevalent among them, but the women usually get share of the parental property while partition.

**Right to establish kin relationship:** Cross-cousin and exchange type of marriages are prevalent among them. The custom of machunan panam is not in practice, but the relationship established with father’s settlement and kin members are very high compared to mother’s.

**Right to have power and succession:** The authority of females in the household is very restricted. The succession to the position of uralan (temple authority) is still passing through marumakkathayam streak. However, the father occupies control over the children at household level.
**Right to perform religious and ceremonial duties:** This right always goes to sister’s children or inherits through maternal line. Death pollution or *balaima* in a *taravad* always affects sister’s children. One’s own children are not captivated to *balaima* of father’s residence. This is inheriting through the mother’s line.

The male members could marry only after attaining the position as *valiakkar*, which means becoming a member in the temple. This is especially after 16 years of age. For becoming *valiakkaran*, one has to pay one *panam* to the temple and has to take the blessings of the *Karanavar*. After that, he will also get a right in the *bandaram* (a repository erection in which offerings for the temple can be made) and two *pappad* (a crispy dish) during feast. The children of both male and female members can become *valiakkars*. During important religious occasions, all the *valiakkars* of the *therus* (settlement of Chaliya) would be invited.

The position of *Mootha chettiyar*, goes to one’s own brother or sister’s male children depending on seniority. *Pula* (pollution) was observed by the sister’s children in the past, and will not affect the children and the wife of the deceased.

**Post-marital residence:** After marriage, the woman always resides with her husband’s family and the advent of the girl to her husband’s house by groom’s family members is termed as *panikazhichu konduvarika*, means, bringing the girl after completing the pursuits. The delivery of the girl usually takes place in her parental house. After the death of the husband, the girl returns back to her house. However, widow re-marriage was permitted.
VALLUVA

Traditionally Valluva were mainly engaged in inland fishing and spinning of fish nets. Now some of them are engaged in charcoal making and collection of sand. The Valluva do not have or rarely own temples. They consider *perumpuzhayachan* as their forefathers. The four *illams* of Valluva are *Kalloori Illam*, *Puluvappay illam*, *Aayippi illam* and *Edacheri illam*.

**Right to have membership in *taravad* or family:** As far as their settlements are concerned, they live in colonies especially near to riverside or on the banks of small tributaries. Their houses are known as *chala*. Earlier, they do not have their own houses and land. Due to this, membership in particular *taravad* not obviously demarcated among them.

**Right to inherit property:** The Valluva resides patrilocaly and matrilocaly. Household, land ownership etc., are the important factors which determine the inheritance pattern. Due to the lack of these, they followed mixed type of lineage system. However, it is found that land owning families followed *marumakkathayam* system.

**Right to establish kin relationship:** Cross cousin marriage is permitted among the Valluva. Joint family system was totally absent. Usually, after marriage, they construct new *chala* (household), and reside in settlements or colonies nearby riverine areas.
**Right to have power and succession:** Traditionally, among the Valluvas, both father and Karanavar (maternal uncle) exercise power in the family according to the type of lineage system practiced by the family members.

**Right to perform religious and ceremonial duties:** Valluvas followed mixed type of inheritance pattern. In the observance of death rituals, one’s own children and sister’s children have equal status. The delivery, especially, the first delivery of the girl usually takes place in her mother’s house. But the expenditure shall be met by her husband’s family.

**Post- marital residence:** In the past most of the Valluvas were slaves of land owners of the area and owned no property. They followed a mixed inheritance pattern. After marriage, the girl resides in her husband’s house and lives independently.
Figure 2.6
Genealogy of a Valluva Family

Nadaville Parayil Charaninitan

= =

Pathiyapurayil Chemeerathi

= =

Pathiyapurayil Kelappan

= =

Hammankodathil Madhavi

Kovanvalappil Charukandan

= =

Pathiyapurayil Chexyya

Pollarji Kunthaman

= =

Pathiyapurayil Kabyani

Pathiyapurayil Padmini

= =

Hanumankundathi Govindan Ego

Pathiyapurayil Manoj

Pathiyapurayil Babu

Pathiyapurayil Rajeevan

Pathiyapurayil Sajeevan

Pathiyapurayil Bindu
MALAYAN

Traditionally the Malayans were engaged in theyyam performance and magical practices. Both men and women actively participated in the magical practices. The male members insisted the knowledge in such aspects as qualification for a bride.

The Malayans are divided into four Gotras (swaroopam), each of which is further divided into nine clans (kiriyams). The Malayan is a nine illam group. The illams or kiriyams of the Malayan are the following: Kallyat illam, Palam kiriym, Chenni kiriym, Veluppan kiriym, Kottukudi, Uthrani kiriym, Thenam kiriym, Pana kiriym and Pullanji kiriym.

Right to have membership in taravad or family: During marriage occasion, the illam names of the bride and groom shall be announced publically. The family of the Malayan was of extended type consisting of male members and their children. Married daughters are not part of the family. Their position is in the husband’s family. The surname or the family name of the children would be through the father’s line, and are known in that term. More than that, the family name of the girl dissolves after marriage and shall be treated as part of husband’s family. This is an age old system still prevalent among the Malayan of Chirakkal.

Right to inherit property: Traditionally, the Malayans did not have any landed property. The households were occupied by the male members of the family. The inheritance of property is always confined to the sons. The females had no right over movable and immovable properties of the family. But it was also reported that, families of Malayans, who have owned vast lands, contribute
small section of property to the women also. But it is not customary. In addition to the property, the son also inherits the position and occupation of the father.

Among the Malayan community, *cherujanmam*\(^\text{16}\) is always inheriting from father to son or brother. The rite to performance at a specific region (to perform *theyyam*) and also the right to collect some items from a specific area has been termed as *cherujanmam*. In each *desam*\(^\text{17}\), there may be one or two families associated with *theyyam* performance and they are permitted to perform *theyyam* only in that place. Malayan’s *cherujanmam* goes to his son. In case of absence of a son; his brother or brother son’s would be responsible for the performance. Others can perform within the boundary only with the consent of the *janmakkar*.

**Right to establish kin relationship:** This indicates a person’s relationship and alliance with family members of father and mother. The marriage alliance with parallel and cross cousins are determined accordingly. Through marriage, a girl makes new alliances of permanent nature.

**Right to have power and succession:** The Malayans do possess the right called *cherujanmam* or *janmadhikaram*. For instance, the *janmadhikaram* area of the Malayans of Chirakkal village (*Aramana*.

\(^{16}\) *Cherujanmam* indicates traditional right; type of tenure in which no rent or tax is paid.

\(^{17}\) Traditionally, the term *desam* denotes a village.
Valappil family of Malayans), extends from Puthiyatheru to Arayambeth and from Kattampalli to Keeriyad. The *janmadhikaram* right also refers to the right to occupy some paddy from the area. Traditionally they (both Malayan and Peruvannan families) do not own any land, but have the right to collect seven *kattas* (seven bundles) during harvest from the landlords of the area. Now, this practice has almost vanished due to the diminishing of agricultural fields.

The actual inheritance and succession of family property and family name is from father to son. The traditional occupation also passes from father to male children.

**Right to perform religious and ceremonial duties:** The right to perform *theyyam* is equally shared among all the male members of the family. Those who perform *theechamundi* will get the designation as Panikker. A male child of the Malayan community learns to perform *theyyam* before the attainment of adolescence. The female child can perform as *vedan* before the attainment of puberty. This may be done only in absentia of a male child.

**Post-marital residence:** The settlements of the Malayans are very important and significant in the traditional village social structure of north Malabar. In north Malabar, the Malayans are not found in clustered settlements, but evenly distributed across desams and are found possessed with *janmadhikaram*. The residence after marriage is patrilocal, i.e., the bride after marriage resides with husband’s family.
The Chirakkal thampuran (ruler) had melkoima (authority) over them in the past. During kaliyattam (temple festival) at Kalarivathukkal temple, the Peru Malayan (honorary position given to Malayan by the local ruler) of Puzhathi desam (traditional village) has had the right to perform kuzhaloothal (performance with a musical instrument).

The Malayan still follow makkathayam system in their residence pattern, in religious matters and family and kinship organizations. The main change happened is in the realm of division of property. Now, both male and female members have the right over their parental property.

VISWAKARMA

The Kollan, Asari, Moosari, Thattan and the Chempotti are the five communities coming under the general category of Viswakarma.

The female members of the Kollan (blacksmiths) and Thattan (goldsmiths) communities did not enjoyed property rights in the past, as they had not owned any landed property. The marriage between Thattan and Kollan was of frequent type. The opinion of the girl was not at all considered in marriage negotiations. The community deity is Bali of Ramayana. Patakkathi Bhagavathi is one of their theyyams, which is a cult of Parvathi and Siva. Under Chirakkal Kovilakam dynasty, the Kollan enjoyed the privilege to enter into all the temples, because of the nature of occupation. According to the informants, there are about eighteen to twenty two kiriyams or illams among the Kollan.
The distinctive community identity of the Kollan and Thattan had almost lost due to the frequent intermarriage between them. In Chirakkal, both are considered as one and the same.

**Right to have membership in taravad or family:** They follow the name of father’s *illam*. After marriage, the girl is typically known in terms of her husband’s family name, and becomes one of the members of her husband’s family. The children are known in their father’s family.

**Right to inherit property:** In the past, the property of the family was always inherited by the male members. Females did not have the right in the landed property or immovable property of her parental house. After marriage, when the girl departs her parental house, few household utensils were given. Customarily the utensils include four *kinnams* (traditional bronze vessels), one *kindi* (bell metal vessel with tail), one lamp (wick lamp) and one *kolambi* (bronze vessel for menial use). In addition to this, the girl also wears the ornaments given by her family members.

**Right to establish kin relationship:** Extended family system was the earlier form of family organization among the Viswakarma. The extended family consists of father, mother, male children, their wives grand children and also unmarried females.

**Right to have power and succession:** The decision regarding marriage is usually taken by the father of the girl and not by the *Karanavar*. The parents of the boy look the girl, and the father decides on the matter. Usually, the boy is not taking any initiative in searching a girl. Both males and females of the close relatives go for betrothal ceremony. They carry along with them betel
leaves and arecanut. After marriage, the girl can visit her house occasionally, but their brother’s wives enjoy the authority of the household. The final decision in family affairs and disputes in the family were settled by the eldest male member.

The blacksmith (Kollan) has the right to give knife and iron implements to the thampuran and in return the thampuran offers him paddy, rice or money especially during Onam and Vishu festivals. This is termed as kanipanam. Perum Kollan is the honorific title offering to the best blacksmith by the Chirakkal thampuran. Along with the title, a honorary bangle and a pattu (cloth) was also giving to the person. For instance, Valiya purayil Raman of Neruvambram at Payangadi has been honored by the thampuran, a few years back.

Patakkathi Bhagavathi Kottam situated at Neruvambram area of Payangadi is a kottam (shrine) of the Kollan community. Here theyyam performance is conducting in the Malayalam month of vrichikam (November-December). The main theyyams are Patakkathi Bhagavathi, Vishnu moorthi, Bali, Kannikkoru makan, Dharma daivam, Gulikan, Kundor Chamundi and Kurathi. In this shrine, the Malayan, Velan and the Vannan community members perform the theyyam. In this kottam, fourteen families of the area have had the right associated with the functioning of festivals. They are known as adiyanthiradhikarikal or avakasikal. Now their number has reduced to twelve. The reduction in number is due to the inability of the family members to conduct the ceremonies and also because of the shift of residence from the area. The right (avakasam) also ceases in the absence or lack of male members in the family.
To illustrate this,

*Puthiya purayil* and *Valiya purayil* families of the Neruvambram area have the right in the *kottam* (shrine). Originally they were members of the same family termed as *thekkini* and *vadakkini* based on the right and left side residents of the same house. The marriage between the *thekkini* and *vadakkini* had been forbidden since they belong to the same family. Among the Kollan, the males and their children have had the right in the *kavus* and households.

The following are the family members, presently enjoying right in the *kottam* (shrine):

**Valiya Purayil family**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thekkini</th>
<th>Vadakkini</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valiya Purayil</td>
<td>Valiya Purayil Narayanan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhaskaran</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valiya Purayil</td>
<td>Valiya Purayil Krishnan</td>
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In addition to the *Valiya Purayil* family members, *Puthiya Purayil* Govindan, who belongs to a different *taravad* also has position in the shrine. Here, all are children of the male members of the *Valiya Purayil* family, except *Pattuakkaran* Rajan. He is actually *Valiya purayil* Bhaskaran’s father’s sister’s
son. Actually, he became part of the committee because of the help he had rendered to others. In the past, the property of the kottam was leased (Kanam, Kuzhikkanam) to a Muslim of the area due to financial crisis. This is also known as nottezhuthal or viswasa theeru. This is a type of exchange by giving the original documents and whenever the person wants it back he can pay the money and gets back the property. But at the time of return of the documents, due to some financial crisis among the members, Pattuakkaran Rajan helped them by offering money for the purpose, and the members included him as one of the members to express their gratitude.

Right to perform religious and ceremonial duties:

After fixing of marriage or betrothal, the male’s family gives an amount of 41 panam to the bride’s family to meet the expenditure of the girl from the day of betrothal to marriage. This is termed as nalukulikkal chilav. The girl’s family has to take the consent of the boy’s family, if the girl wants to make distant movements for any purpose. The ceremonies connected with marriage starts 7 days before the marriage.

The practice of giving Ammayi panam to the girl’s family was prevalent among them. Cross-cousin marriage is permitted. Machunan mothiramidal or kappukettu (ring tying) is an important ceremony on the day of marriage and the cross cousins exchange the ring. According to them, this actually indicates the consent of the machunan to marry her. The practice of bride-price is absent. The handing over of the bride to the groom is done by the girl’s father. At the time of marriage, a type of payment along with the pudava is also giving to the mother of the bride by the groom’s family termed as vattipanam. In the past, after marriage, the girl has to take an eerkkil (rib of coconut leaves) from
the roof of the house. This remarks that her attachment and relationship with her family members ends there and there after she has to consider her husband’s family as her own. Earlier, the thali (chain of wed-lock) for the marriage was given by the karanavar of the bride. Later on, the groom’s family began to bring the thali. Afterward the sanghakkuri (caste association) took important decision regarding the thali that it should be given by the girl’s family, mainly to avoid easier marriage dissolution.

They observe pollution for thirteen days when a death happens. The married girl observes pollution of both sides, more importantly that of husband’s family. She is the authority to make rice for the function. There had been instances in which the girl’s name had changed after marriage and giving the name of husband’s sister, who had already married and living with her husband’s family.

Puberty rituals last for five days. The girl has to stay outside the main house, in an extension. Cow-dung water is used to ward off touch pollution. The position of velichapadu in their kavu is hereditary from father to his son. Whenever the religious position changes, they had to report it before the Chirakkal thampuran and the next person takes charge after a ceremony, termed as acharappeduka. A turban, a sword and paricha (defense shield) are the items transferring on this occasion to the newly appointed person.

Post-marital residence: The residence of Kollan is termed as pura. In the past, after marriage, the girl’s position in the parental house dissolves. There was an adage that, eerkkil valichu pokuka (leaving the house after taking the rib of coconut leaves) to indicate the complete residential change after marriage and they can only visit their house, if necessary. Earlier, the delivery usually
happens at husband’s house. The girl was not brought to her house for delivery. During the 7th month of pregnancy, a function termed *pungan* is arranging at husband’s house by the bride’s family. They bring all the required items for the function and arrange a feast there. The feast would be served to the carrying mother at the left side of the *padinjatte* (main room) in front of a holy lamp.

When birth of a boy happens it would be announced by beating mid rib of coconut leaves on the ground and girl’s birth by beating *kinnam* (Traditional Bronze vessel). Traditionally, male child was given the name of the father. The widows naturally were not been brought back to her house after her husband’s death. If they have children they stay with husband’s family. The place where the members do their traditional occupation is known as *kottil*. The male members were assisted by the females in the *kottil*, mainly in rotating the wheel.

**NAMBUTHIRI**

According to Iyer, the name Nambuthiri has been derived from the words *nam* (knowledge) and *purikka* (to impart) (in singh, 1998: 2577). Singh (1998:2577) states that traditionally the Nambuthiri were confidential advisors and trusted friends of the rajas and chiefs.... The traditional occupations of the Nambuthiri were settled cultivation and priesthood.

**Right to have membership in taravad or family:** The Nambuthiris follow *gotra* system and was related to the saints. For example, Vasista *gotra*, Viswamitra *gotra*, Kashyapa *gotra*, Angirassa *gotra*. They follow *gotra* exogamy. In a
gotram various families are present. The child’s gotram is always counted to be their father’s and not that of mother’s. However, marriage with mother’s relatives is also allowed.

**Right to inherit property:** They followed inheritance of property through the father’s line. Among the Nambuthiris widow remarriage was completely prohibited in the past. After marriage, the woman spends rest of the years in her husband’s family and through marriage; she is getting the rights in that family. A widow woman stays in her husband’s family only and had no right in her natal family.

**Right to establish kin relationship:** Marriage with mother’s brother’s daughter is permitted among the Nambuthiris. But marriage with father’s sister’s daughter is not permitted or allowed.

**Right to have power and succession:** Among the Nambuthiris, eldest son’s male children only had the right to inherit their father’s property. Moreover, only the eldest member is entitled to marry within their community and others marry from castes such as Nayars and Varmas.

**Right to perform religious and ceremonial duties:** In the case of Nambuthiris, while conducting the ritual performance, the presence of son is important. Traditionally among the Nambuthiris, daughters had no right over the family property. However, daughter’s son can participate in the ritual performances. The practice of paying dowry was prevalent in the society. After marriage, the illam name or family name of the girl gets changes. Even among the patrilineal groups, some role is restricted to the sister’s children. Daughter’s eldest son
participates and involves during the death ceremonies of grand father, but not enjoying the full right.

After marriage, a woman has to participate and observe pollution connected with her husband’s family. But if a death happens in her natal family, the frequency of pollution is very less or she is not necessary to observe pollution. A woman observes pollution when nearest relatives, especially the demise of primary kin’s may happen.

**Post-marital residence:** Post-marital residence is strictly patrilocal among the Nambuthiris. Even today they are following patrilocal residence pattern. The family house of the Nambuthiri (*illam*) still goes to the male member. Females seldom visit their parental house after marriage.

The present study reveals that both matriliny and patriliny co-existed in Kerala few decades back. However, the system functioned in an organized way in the traditional social milieu. According to Iyer (1968), though no separate zone of matriarchy and patriarchy organizations exists, matriarchy had greater incidence in North Kerala where most people, including the Mappilas, were matriarchal.

Robert K. Merton argues that in complex societies, functional alternatives are abundantly present in almost every situation. In Social Theory and Social Structure, he defines, Functions are those observed consequences which make for the adaptation or adjustment of a given system, and dysfunctions are those observed consequences which lessen the adaptation or adjustment of the system (1957 rpt 1968). From these observances, it can be concluded that if any institution, unit, element, custom or social structure
creates obstacles in adaptation or adjustment, that unit or institution will be referred as dysfunctional unit or institution.

Merton says that it is important to note that one social fact can have negative consequences for another social fact. ... Just as structures or institutions could contribute to the maintenance or other parts of the social system, they also could have negative consequences for them.... A structure may be dysfunctional for the system as a whole and may continue to exist....because it is functional for a part of the social system....Thus, in structural functionalism, disjunctions between culture and structure have the dysfunctional consequence leading to deviance within society.... Merton contended that not all structures are indispensable to the working of the social system. Some parts of the system can be eliminated. Structural functionalism of Merton thus opens the way for meaningful social change (in Ritzer, 1996).

Merton (1957) thinks that there are acts that have ‘consequences which lessen the adaptation or adjustment of the system’. Such acts have harmful consequences, the technical term for which is ‘dysfunction’. The fact is that, the institution which can be functional in one context and dysfunctional in another context. Thus, all social institutions are expected to have some mix of functions and dysfunctions. The dichotomy of function and dysfunction explains that the institution tilts to the pole of function or dysfunction in a continuum will depend upon the net balance between the functional and dysfunctional consequences.

The marumakkathayam system has vanished from Kerala for various reasons. The legal and social reforms in land use patterns and the
modern enactments intended to change the traditional family, marriage, kinship organisations resulted in the transformation of society. Thus, the communities who have followed matriliny had changed to the patrilineal form of inheritance. The Marumakkathayam Act of Malabar, 1933 gave the children of a man the right to inherit his self-acquired property. Disintegration of matriliny has taken place mainly because of the enactment of the Nayar Regulations and the Hindu Succession Act of 1956. The Hindu Succession Act and the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956, make the husband legally responsible for the maintenance of his wife and children (Govt. of India, 1969). The Joint Family System (Abolition) Act, passed in 1975 by the State Legislature of Kerala, abolished this type of inheritance pattern. The disintegration of joint family system opened the way for individual freedom and laid the foundation for a more dynamic society.

Though, the system had changed, there are still some elements, which reflects the matrilineal system. The taravad names are an important part of collective reckoning. Most of the community members, who have followed matriliny earlier, still carrying the taravad name of their mother and are distinguished as part of their mother’s taravad. In all the religious performances and rituals, the tradition bound pattern of inheritance is surviving. More than that, the sentiments of the Karanavar as matrilineal authority towards his sister’s children are still operative in most of the cases.

As a result of the urge for social change, especially the inheritance pattern, and the laws endorsed over the years, made the society to accept makkathayam (inheritance through male line) system of inheritance. Thus, by the middle of the 20th Century, nearly all of the communities in the area
accepted the new system resulted in the gradual disintegration of the joint family system, joint ownership of property and the formation of independent households of their own. In addition, the position of Karanavars of the taravad has been replaced and fathers took the position. The gradual shift in power and authority in turn led to the prevalence of nuclear family organization. But it can be seen that, the legislative enactments have not disintegrated certain matrilineal elements and traditions. The most noticeable thing is that, the communities, who had been following patrilineal system of inheritance is still following the pattern as such.

However, even after the transformation of matrilineal communities to patrilineal system, the concerned societies even today show some of the traditional elements in their customs, practices and religious observances. Even after the transformation it would seem that in all religious matters, matriliny remains functioning.

This shows that a continuum is there in between matrilineal and patrilineal system of inheritance. Matri –patri co-existence at the wider societal level was there in the past. But today only the co-existence of matri-patri elements in each of the communities can be seen. The division of the continuum into two mutually exclusive dichotomic parts as matriliny and patriliny emphasizes the distinctive features of these. The system of bilaterality is thus introduced as a hypothetical construct or pertinent as a new system or as a universally accepted principle in future. According to Dube (2001: 225), in bilateral societies a child is reckoned to be the child of both its parents equally …. Social identity is derived from both the parents.
The societies which followed patriliny in the past, still maintain most of the patrilineal features as such. In fact, change may happen slowly and continuously between the two extremities. The social institutions undergo change in an evolutionary manner. But the process of cultural evolution is very slow and continuous which results in structural changes in the society.