Chapter VI

Conclusions
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In all societies, everyone does something for others or shows obligations to help others for the common good of humankind. It is a fact that a society cannot survive unless its members live in cooperation by helping each other. In ancient time, this was found among the tribes since their survival was depended upon mutual solidarity. The same is true even today with many of the tribes as well as other simple societies.

Another important fact to be noted here is that the members of a community, living with in the social geography cannot live as an isolated social group. They have to serve for others, by their contributions, while serving for others they also work for their own well being. The Malayans of North Malabar in Kerala is an example to this phenomenon.

The Malayans play a dual role: one as a member of the community, and the other as a member of the society, which consists of heterogenous populations. The foregoing pages narrate the first detailed ethnography of the Malayans of North Malabar of Kerala State. The Malayans are a major and important caste who performs teyyam, one of the magnificent rituals and religious customs of the people of Kerala. This group of people till today has been able to retain much of their cultural identity, because of the fact that they were considered as an endogamous caste, whose social position in the multi-caste village was fixed and unaltered. The social structure of North Malabar strengthened and more or less perpetuated the socio-cultural isolation and age-old customs. This has evolved primarily through mutual interaction between nature and man. That
is to say, the customs and practices of the area have been produced by a pattern of interaction or relationship between man and his ecosystem. The interdependent interaction, between individuals, individual and culture, which is called as mutualism or symbiosis, shows a two-way interaction and coexistence. This becomes possible for the Malayans through the performance and preservation of teyyam. The performance of teyyam in a way has shaped the social structure of North Malabar, and thus has influenced its history. The present study of the Malayans, and their religious-ritual performance teyyam, essentially and necessarily reviews the history of North Malabar.

The present study is an outcome of eight years of intensive, as well as systematic research. Anthropological research techniques have been used for data collection. Functionalism of Malinowski and structural-functionalism of Radcliffe Brown have been used for interpreting data. Further, the teyyam and its performance are being looked through the concept of 'nature-man-spirit complex' (Vidyarthi 1961, Sahay 1975, Mann 1978).

As many as 325 households, spread in 51 villages in North Malabar was selected as sample. Various scientific research tools, both quantitative and qualitative namely, observation, interview, case study, survey, genealogy, statistics, etc were employed to generate the data. Written documents, printed materials, including periodicals, were also used as the secondary source of data. The information thus gathered were systematically synthesized and analyzed according to the objectives adopted for the study. As part of the study, computational analysis has also been employed.

As with the case of any other aboriginal, the origin of the Malayans, one of the Scheduled Castes of North Malabar, could not be
historically reconstructed but, the local myths and legends tell us the story that they have direct relations with their surroundings—the hills and forests. The story of incarnations that revealed during magico-religious chants (kanneru pāṭtu) establishes this fact. Thurston (1909), and Singh (1996) also propose the same. In fact the word, 'Malayan' means, 'a man of malai (hill)', and thus, refers to their ancient past.

North Malabar, the northern tip of Kerala State, is famous not only in India but also abroad for its unique socio-cultural diversity and richness of flora and fauna. The topography is ideal for bio-diversity and the environment such as, thick forests, hills, rivers and valleys, mould the thinking of man and his activities directly or indirectly.

In respect of dress and ornaments, the Malayan had their own fashion and style of wearing. Both men and women exhibited simplicity. The culture and life style had also marked some difference. The time has changed. At present, we cannot distinguish a Malayan from others because, they freely use modern dresses and ornaments without any hesitation.

The Malayans are non-vegetarians, and very fond of fish and meat. The practice of teyyam and magic provide them with the opportunity for acquiring the essential commodities to prepare food. They mostly boil and roast the food items. They also drink alcohol, and their favorite choice being toddy. It is taken almost regularly by most of the adult males, and ceremoniously and occasionally by the youngsters. Generally, the females do not consume alcohol but, rare cases have been reported.

The Malayans of North Malabar show high literacy rate, and were able to achieve cent percent primary basic education. However, they have never shown interest to improve their skills and temperaments
to a higher level. The lack of motivation and material infrastructure has made these people mere school dropouts. The parents do not pay any attention to improve the educational standard of the children, who only mechanically visit the schools and become unsuccessful in getting higher level of education. It is possible that poverty, and a long period of hereditary profession of teyyam have prevented them from looking beyond their traditional social pattern.

The society of the Malayans is stratified into clan, lineage and family. Family is the basic and smallest unit of the Malayan's social as well as religious set up. In olden days, taravādu, a kind of laterally/horizontally extended joint family, was used to refer the family. Recently, the number of nuclear families is increasing. Since they live in a patriarchal society, the father or an eldest male leads the major activities in the family. The power of the head of the family is passed on to the eldest male after the head's death. The females enjoy less power, even though they have their influence in day-to-day matters. The young ones grow up under the control of elders.

Marriage meets the biological and social drives of the Malayan, and also serves as an institution for acquiring family and sustenance. The general norm accepted for marriage is monogamy and clan exogamy. A few incidents of polygyny have been reported but, polyandry is not reported. Child marriage is strictly avoided. Divorce is less in frequency, and remarriage is very common. Normally the ways of acquiring a mate is through negotiation. They strictly avoid parallel cousin-marriage. However, cross-cousin marriage is allowed. Elopement is also prevalent but, less in number. Inter-community and inter-religious marriages are also reported. The people consider the marriage between close relatives as incestuous, hence, it is forbidden. Practice of dowry or bride price in cash or kind is totally absent, but the groom has to pay a fixed amount (ardhakannam) to
the bride’s brother and mother. The residence, after marriage, is either virilocal (patrilocal) or, neolocal.

The kinship ties of the Malayan shows the bond between person to person, either consanguineally or affinally. These ties express through kinship terminology, and the terminology shows more or less a difference between terms of address and terms of reference. There are denotative and classificatory terms. The rule of avoidance and joking relationship along with teknonymy is also present among the Malayans.

They are mainly animistic and believe in spirits, souls, ghosts and other unnatural powers. The religion of the Malayans always keeps a close touch with magic. It is in accordance with their religion that the belief system and the worldview of the Malayan are formed. They worship local deities in the form of teyyam like the others in this area. Change is noticed in religion. The people seem to be much impressed with Hinduism after the influence of the Hindu philosophy in this area. They also believe in all kinds of Hindu pantheon.

As far as their religious affinity is concerned, the Malayans, in addition to teyyam performance, celebrate all festivals and ceremonies of the Hindus. The people believe in casteism and observe untouchability, purity and pollution in addition to hierarchical demarcation. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the caste ties loosened due to the progressive socio-political movements by the efforts of great leaders, political parties, organizations and social reformers of Kerala.

The Malayan has a traditional caste council known as, sangham. Eminent personalities are selected from them to lead the council. The council is responsible for maintaining law and order in the society, and acts both as caste and political council. The political set up of
the Malayan is not well developed. It is submerged in the religious set up. Like religion, the political set up has no supreme head. Women are not competent, according to them. The council functions for the welfare and development of the society and enjoys judiciary powers. The council looks after the arbitration and settlement of social offenses. Change is also noticed in the traditional political set up. They trust the Indian Constitution and judiciary. The people have adopted the modern political set up, i.e. the party politics.

The economy of the Malayans shows different stages of development. In the distant past, it depended on nature. The eco-system then was very ideal for minor hunting and gathering. The Malayans usually go for minor games. Fishing is another favourite deed. The rivers, gullies and ponds that are, present everywhere in the area, provide good stalk of fish fauna. They also gather minor forest products such as, honey, tubers, roots, vegetables, fruits, seeds, medicinal plants and their parts. The materials used for making the attire of teyyam are also obtained from the local surroundings. The myth of origin, and their love for hunting and fishing, even today, expresses the glimpses of their attitude toward once prevalent hunting-gathering economy. Their religious belief, i.e., animistic, the worship of nature, plants and animals in the form of teyyam, tell us with clarity that once they were forest dwellers.

In the second stage, they depend on service-return economy. In this stage of economic development, the source of income can be divided into two, primary and secondary. The performance of teyyam, magic and midwifery supplies more income and other essential commodities, compared to hunting and gathering. Caste, being the base of socio-cultural activities, instigates everyone to extend certain services to others. In this service-return economic system the Malayan has to perform teyyam, magic and midwifery for the
common good of others. They receive cash and other goods, as gift and wage for their service. In addition to this, the Malayan also earns from secondary sources such as, minor hunting and gathering, and as a coolie. The shift of religious feeling, animism to polytheism or, 'primitive' religion to Hinduism, establishes casteism and encourages caste-based occupation that enforces the society to execute the service-return system, instead of nature-dependency. The popularity and universalization of teyyam, magic and midwifery all over North Malabar give the Malayan a space to practise the same within the service-return economy. In other words, the change in habitat and environment, i.e. from hills to plains, has forced these people to adopt a new economic system. Possibly this leads to the emergence of service-based economy.

In the present stage, the third stage of economic development, the Malayan heavily depends on market instead of nature. Recently the traditional income generating practices other than teyyam such as, magic and midwifery have become defunct. The Malayan earns more from non-traditional jobs in government and private sectors. The hunting and gathering, and fishing are modified into leisure time activities, which could not be nourished by the Malayan any longer. Industrialization, modernization, and the increased facility in transport disturbed the 'production-distribution-redistribution-consumption' equilibrium of this area. The establishment of market in front of the door started supplying everything the people need. The Malayan buys goods from market by paying money. The collapse of caste-based feudal system gave a new force to modify the insignificant service-return based economy. The nation's independence had much to contribute to all these developments. The influence of money as the unit of exchange also enriches the market economy. The division of labour among them is based on sex and age. The income of man is more than that of woman but, the
consumption of alcohol by men minimized their income and disallowed their economy to achieve a stable growth. As mentioned earlier, the people of this area got absorbed into the modern means of labour, and it has seized, almost permanently, any scope for midwifery now. The modern education and the recent developments in science and technology have succeeded in altering the outlook of laymen. The thinking process of them is said to acquire a 'more scientific' nature than ever before. Due to this new awareness, the importance of magic too has reduced. In this sense, the present study reveals the fact that even if the majority of the Malayans still depend on teyyam, they have readjusted their economic resources in tune with modern trends. Their increasing involvement in employment, other than teyyam, in private and government sectors can clearly explain this change. The change also indicates the evolution of the Malayan’s economic organization, starting from hunting-gathering to market through a system of service-return economy, i.e., a shift from the practice of subsistence economy to the market economy.

The Malayan never shows interest in agriculture, horticulture, and animal rearing at any stage of economic pursuit, because, these practices are not fit for their day-to-day activities. Moreover, they do not get any opportunity other than that of teyyam, magic and midwifery to participate in the social and cultural fields. Although the practice of cultivation and pastoralism need hard manual work, the Malayan is not willing to do such activities like tilling and other works related to agriculture. The other important reason for their dislike towards cultivation and animal rearing is the lack of land. Traditionally they are landless people but, the sample survey shows that many families have small holdings. Laziness as well as mismanagement of land gradually minimized the possession of land by the Malayans.
Concept of property was not developed well in the past but at present, the Malayans have their own property. The caste as well as the ritual isolation has led them to maintain a life of material simplicity. Their dress, utensils, furniture, house, etc. all speak of simplicity. The household utensils and other implements are very few. The materials connected with teyyam and magic are shared either by the taravādu or by the family. But in the case of individual property, it is inherited by the male successor, and the daughters have no right over it. In the absence of sons, the same will become the property of the next nearest male successor.

The Malayans are experts in teyyam, magic and midwifery. Their aesthetic and artistic sense can be seen in the beautifully decorated teyyam. The aniyalam (costumes and wearing of teyyam), mainly made of wood, bears the evidence of their mastery in woodcarving. The excellent facial art explains their great skill in drawing and painting. The töttam pāttru, vadyam, kalasam, etc express their talent in music and dance. The counselling and guidance that they use to give during the performance of a teyyam shows their temperament in psychosocial analysis. It is true the whole life activities of the Malayan, especially in connection with teyyam performance, confirm again and again the fact that the Malayan is a ‘Master of many things’.

Celebrations and festivals go in tact with the Malayan’s life. They ceremoniously celebrate the life cycle rituals. The Malayan’s life is marked by different phases of life-cycle rituals through various rites, rituals and prohibitions. However, nowadays no importance is given to puberty, ear boring, name giving, hair cutting ceremonies, and pollution in connection with menses, birth and death. They are very keen to observe marriage, but it is performed just in a single day, instead of seven days in the past. No change is noticed in initiation
and death ceremonies, and ancestral worship. The Malayan celebrates all Hindu festivals in addition to local festivals. Besides this, these people also celebrate teyyam with more importance, dignity and respect.

Sex differentiation is well marked. Besides the household work, women contribute a decent share through the practice of magic and midwifery. Although women play vital roles in socio-economic spheres, their status is not high compared to that of men. The Malayan considers women as valuable but at the same time, keeps them indoors.

Teyyam is one among the different indigenous performances of the Kerala State. The performance possesses great socio-cultural values in the highly stratified society of North Malabar. It is inseparably tied with magic and religion. In accordance with the religious feelings, the people of North Malabar worship the nature, spirits, heroes and gods through teyyam. They find in each teyyam their different local deities. In the given ecological set up the Malayan has evolved some adjustments with nature through various sets of arrangements at social as well as religious levels to ensure their survival. In their struggle for existence and survival, the people of North Malabar interact continuously with their environment. The social arrangement and the world of religion put together, provide a well-adjusted plane. The religion has played an important role in shaping their life by providing a balance in their approach to meet the challenge of ecology of the area.

The two-way interaction between man, nature (environment) and religion led the people of North Malabar to a belief system according to which they believe that their destiny is guided and controlled by supernatural powers, locally known as teyyam. The teyyam is
invoked and propitiated by worship and performing. Several myths and rituals are submerged into it. The people consider *teyyam* as their local deity with a strong belief that it may bring peace and prosperity. *Teyyam* is treated as ‘sacred and profane’ and the performer necessarily occupies the position of a middleman in between men and *teyyam* or, nature and culture. Thus the interaction between man and his environment, the performers and *teyyam*, and the religion and worship exhibit a complexity that becomes the part of a whole, i.e., ‘sacred complex’ (Vidyarthi 1961). In other words, *teyyam* is emerged in a given space and time as a part of the whole culture; ‘sacred complex’, the ‘nature-man-spirit complex’ (Vidyarthi 1961, 1963; Sahay 1975, Mann 1978).

The people always widen their territorial boundaries in accordance with growth of population. It always resulted in the spread of human settlement far and wide all over North Malabar. This also necessitated the spread of *teyyam* over this area in every nook and corner of North Malabar. The people designed certain places for worship in tune with their eco-system. Naturally, the *teyyam* deities are wander everywhere but, the devotees opine that the deities always exist in their sacred centres. These centers are identified as *kāvu* (sacred grove), *ara* or *palliyara* (holy chamber) and *kottil* (a room of the house). Generally a family, group of families or a community owns a sacred centre, or more. All Hindus trust in the power of *teyyam* but, performers always belong to a low caste, and the Malayan is one among them.

Although the ritual significance of *teyyam* is fading due to the influence of modern science, technology and education, it still performs certain functions in the society. This includes religious, economic, political, communicative, cultural and psychological functions. By observing these functions, *teyyam* brings harmony and
solidarity to the highly stratified and segmented society. It also helps to maintain law and order among the members of the society. Each and every one of North Malabar has his own role in connection with *teyyam*. The performers perform and the devotees make arrangements and worship their deities. The performance is incorporated with numerous rituals and rites. It starts and ends in worship via performance. The people of North Malabar ceremoniously celebrate *teyyam* performance according to calendar or, whenever they find a necessity. The term *kaliyattam* is used to denote *teyyam* performance. There are three categories namely, *kalpanakaliyattam*, *prarthanakaliyattam* and *perumkaliyattam*. The period of a single celebration lasts from half a day to a few days.

The devotees give offerings to their deities. The materials used for offerings are easily available in their surroundings. Rice is considered to be the main item, which is largely cultivated in this area. Alcohol is inevitable. Fowl sacrifice is also essential. The core of the celebrations is the *teyyam* performance. The performance is somewhat amazing and enchanting. The performer has to disguise into *teyyam* by using specially designed *aniyalam* (attire) all over the body. The *aniyalam* is of two types, permanent and temporary. A single performance needs both temporary and permanent attire. The headdress is of different size and shape. Huge *mudi* (headgear) of thirty to fifty feet long is to be used for certain performances. Some *teyyams* use small gears. The shape is more or less geometric, i.e. circular, semi circular or, triangular. The face is painted with red, yellow and black colours. The performers use certain patterns that are borrowed from the local eco-system. *Pottan teyyam* and *Gulikan teyyam* use *mughapala* (facemask) instead of *mughathezhuthu* (facial writing).
The body decoration has great vividness. For this purpose white and red coloured clothes are used in plain and folded form. Tender coconut leaves are also used in plenty to make dress. The costumes and wearing of teyyam express different faces of development in a line of simple to complex, and from nature to market.

During performance, each teyyam performs certain kalasam (steps) in concord with the rhythm of the beating of chenda (a percussion instrument-drum). There are different kinds of steps for the dance. The steps are systematized with the myth of each teyyam. Occasionally the performer observes rituals and rites. Ayudham (weapon) is treated as an integral part of teyyam. It assumes importance, as the people believe that all weapons represent the respective deities. Exercise with ayudham is common during kalasam. The ritual, kuri kodukkal (the act of blessing) has psychological significance. Through this the society accomplish the scope of traditional counselling and guidance. It brings satisfaction, self-confidence and helps to relieve the tensions of the devotees. In return of their service, i.e., performance, the performer gets economic benefit in cash, kind, and recognition.

There is a growing tendency among the Folklorists to see teyyam performance as a 'folk-art'. Their inference is not true. It only seems to be true. It is mainly done because, they do not observe teyyam in its totality. Without bothering about its socio-cultural contexts, they simply consider its aesthetic aspects and make the Himalayan blunder. In reality, teyyam possesses great artistic beauty but, as far as the people of North Malabar are concerned, it is their 'science' and 'technology' of the past as well as the present.

As a social etiquette, the people of North Malabar observe teyyam as the creator and destroyer. Its rampage causes destruction and its
blessings bring happiness. In a simple society with less advanced technology, *teyyam* takes its origin as the 'science of the primitive'. Thus the people estimated it as their boon, 'adaptation' (Steward 1955, Rappaport 1968), to overcome life hazards. The life itself being a struggle, a struggle for existence and survival, the interaction between nature and man is inevitable. This interaction syndrome depends heavily on technology (here in this case, the belief system, religion) lead the emergence of a novel product, a defense mechanism, *teyyam*, a system with socio-cultural adaptability.

No doubt about the fact that it is its aesthetic beauty that is widely appreciated. Some years ago, the people or the devotees never paid attention towards the aesthetic beauty of *teyyam*. They only worshipped its super power and divinity but, at present, the magico-religious power being diminished, the aesthetic beauty of *teyyam* is given appreciation. While analyzing the future of *teyyam*, I have come across rather a surprising fact that the intensity of *teyyam* performance is increasing day by day. I have not been furnished with any satisfactory explanation by anybody but, my experience with this matter leads me to the conclusion that the mechanized life of the people badly needs a companion; a powerful superhuman. This search essentially ends in *teyyam*.

Further, in fact, *teyyam* is not an 'art' but a 'social system', a system of worship. It is not a 'lore' of any 'folk', but it is the common wealth of this area. Moreover, it is a social etiquette, a critique that controls the society. Although the magico-religious significance is fading due to the interventions of modern education, science and technologies, what *teyyam* did before is still done by it. This is why, the capacity of bringing social solidarity and harmony among the people induces a new dimension to this traditional performance. As said earlier, its attributed artistic value increases its divinity. The artistic skill and
beauty seen in the facial writings, attire, dance, and music of *teyyam* is appreciated as part of aesthetic enjoyment. This shift in the level of appreciation of the people, but not by its dedicated devotees, turned the attention from 'performance' to 'useful art' and made them 'audience' or 'observer' rather than 'active participants'. This is an adaptation, an 'artistic adaptation', and a re-adjustment to the altered society. The change from 'magico-religious-performance' to a 'ritual useful art' or 'ritulistic art' has further strengthened the establishment of more sacred centres and the frequency of performance.

Another reason for the increase of performance is simply due to the influence of existing political set up of this area. North Malabar is well known for much protest movements against the socio-cultural discriminations and feudal oppression. In the present day party politics, the Communist Party of India – Marxist, CPI (M) has occupied a dominant position in this region. This is achieved by the active involvement of the party men in every walk of the day-to-day life of the people. Recently, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) have decided to pay attention to increase their power in this region. The CPI (M), and the BJP-RSS combination stand in opposite poles with reference to their ideology and philosophy. The effort of the BJP-RSS coalition aimed at capturing the political supremacy usually leads to strife between them and the CPI (M). To win the battle for supremacy the support of the people is essential. Both the parties have correctly assessed the fact that the cultural supremacy will give political dominance. Therefore, they try their best to achieve dominance over culture. As the culture of North Malabar is still inseparably tied with *teyyam*, the parties mentioned above consciously encourage *teyyam* performance to win supremacy over the culture. The party men take part more actively than before in all events, which are related to *teyyam* with all
possibilities to attain their goal. The conflict is still going on. The analysis of the socio-cultural set up of this area reveals that this will certainly enrich the performance in the future. In other words, the special features of teyyam, i.e. the aesthetic element, the status of a superhuman, and the projection of culture surely give teyyam enough fuel to survive, and blaze more and more in the future. In short, these infrastructural forces will definitely favour the growth of teyyam in the days to come.

In addition to this, I have observed an important feature, an interesting one which I have experienced during my fieldwork, that the colour manipulation of the Communist parties, CPI (M) in particular. The red symbolically represents revolution and struggle. The extensive use of red colour in teyyam performance has created a positive attitude towards revolution and struggle in the unconscious mind of the people. Taken red as the symbol to convey the same message that it stands for revolution and struggle, the CPI (M) is very much effective to attract the people of this region.

The social set up of North Malabar also nourishes teyyam performance. The society is highly stratified and segmented according to the existing castes. The caste system being in practice, caste hierarchy is an integral part. Ideologically, this hierarchy consists of four major grades, i.e. Chathurvarna—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra groups. According to the Hindu scripture, all Hindus are placed in any one of these above said varnas. An individual’s varna is determined by a descent rule, which is based on heredity and traditional occupation. Nobody is allowed to violate this descent rule. The members of each varna have to do their own occupations.
The Brahmins engage in priesthood; Kshatriyas rule the territory and occupy the position of warriors; Vaisya executes trade, and the Sudras extent their service to the other three varnas. Each varna is internally stratified into subdivisions known as jathi (caste). Caste or, Jathi is endogamous and assigned to traditional occupations (Hutton 1951, Dutta 1968, Mandelbaum 1990, Ghurye 1993), and is further divided into exogamous clans and lineages. In the present study, the Hindu society of North Malabar is divided into three segments: Brahmins, Non-Brahmins and Adi-Dravidas. It is this classification which is adopted from Beteille (1966) who used to classify the society of a Tanjore village-Sripuram, a working one, which prevails in this area rather than the traditional four folded varna system. The Brahmins occupy the upper position and the Adi-Dravida is placed at the bottom, the Non-Brahmins being in the middle. By possessing land ownership, the Brahmins acquired both religious and political power. They also control the society with their magic and tantric rites. The priesthood has given them a position of mediators between the god and the people.

The Non-Brahmins are the dominant population. They too have internally stratified subdivisions. The Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras are included in this compartment. Among them the rulers, warriors, traders and servicing castes are present. Tenants and cultivators also come under this category. The Adi-Dravidas are placed at the bottom. All of them belong to the division of Sudras. This stratum includes teyyam performers and agricultural labourers. They are landless and always render their service to the upper castes. They have dark complexion and short stature and are broad-nosed. By and large, they possess the Dravidian elements in their culture. All of them are scheduled under the Indian Constitution. The society perceived them as ‘slaves’, and as the ‘most polluting’ caste.
Purity and pollution are two major characteristic features of the caste system. The upper caste people treat the lower caste as impure and polluting (Kapadia 1947, Srinivas 1952, Ghurae 1961). In this regard, they observe untouchability. A person’s purity is considered to be lost, if he comes into contact with a lower caste person. The upper caste always refused to dine or to drink water from the lower caste people. If they do so, they would suffer pollution. Inter-caste marriage is also not allowed. Although the caste regulations and rules were unchangeable, mobility is experienced. The cases of caste fusion and fission have been noticed, i.e., the existence of small cohesive groups within the caste (Dhillon 1955, Lewis 1958, Gough 1960, Mandalbaum 1970). The formation of these factions is recent and their emergence is closely linked with the occupational mobility and economic changes.

As a part of the society of North Malabar, the Malayans contribute their share. Though they are placed under the group of untouchables, all upper castes including the Brahmins receive their service, i.e., through teyyam, magic and midwifery. They render their service by hereditary obligation in a system of ‘bonded labour’. The server receives compensation in return for their subsistence. The upper castes are very opportunists in the sense that they allow the Malayans to enter anywhere in their home and permit them to touch them during the performance. And on other occasions, the upper castes deal with them unfairly just as they treat other untouchables, who are only victimised by injustice and discrimination.

The intra and inter community interactions have two ways. The first is social in which all caste Hindus exchanges their services to the others directly or indirectly in the order of economic and religious norms and formalities. Secondly, it is fully cultural where interaction is possible. The concept ‘sacred’ has made everyone to associate with
one another. The traditional social structure of North Malabar further exhibits another set of cohabitation, a set of interaction between sacred, religious, and political sub-sects.

Traditionally, the society of North Malabar stands static and exhibits less dynamism but, the present study has emphasized the fact that the social set up of North Malabar is changing in accordance with the new trends and innovations. The change is visible both in structure and in function. Anthropologists argue that a single reason cannot be attributed for socio-cultural change (Evans-Pritchard 1940, Srinivas 1952, 1955; Mead 1953, Leach 1954, Firth 1959, Epstein 1962, 1973; Mandalbaum 1970). I have done a detailed investigation and found some interesting and important inference with respect to the life and culture of the Malayan, who is taken as an ideal example to study the culture, custom and society of North Malabar. And this has been examined in the light of ‘nature-man-spirit’ interaction (Vidyarthi 1963, Sahay 1975, Mann 1968).

Looking to the life in the North Malabar in general and teyyam in particular, the world of spirits is found to have a very close interaction with man, his social structure and the environments. It has long been established that ecology places a vital role in conditioning the culture of a given area (Steward 1955, Rappaport 1968). The people of North Malabar live in a harsh environment, which implies ecological features such as, hilly terrine, forest, excessive rain, thick flora, fauna etc.

The people consider that the forest is not only the source of food, fuel, medicines, materials for building houses, etc. but also, the abode of their patron spirits. Such is the attachment towards the forest that they preserve a ‘part of the forest’-sacred grove, kavu in some place in accordance with the present situations. And assign
these sacred groves, kavu to be the abode of their teyyam deities. It may be observed that the life of North Malabar has been traditionally dependent upon the forest for subsistence and the people have developed a belief system in harmony with their ecological setting. Thus, the 'nature-man-spirit' complex (Vidyathi 1963, Sahay 1975, Mann 1978) gets prominently reflected in the life and culture of North Malabar society. This fact gets substantiated when the deities associated with their forest-based agriculture nourished economic life. The economic system creates specific situations when the people need help and interference of spirits. The forest, hills and sacred groves are believed to be the abode of spirits and deities on the one hand and the sacred performance need certain fruits, nuts, leaves or other agrarian products, which are locally available on the other hand. At present, modern forces of change have affected the working of the traditional sacred complex over the life and culture and weakened their interrelations. It is also true that, at the same time, the complex also exhibits high degree of flexibility and dynamism which has given it an extraordinary capacity, to re-adjust in tune with the new trends.

A serious examination has advanced a view that directly points towards the social structure of North Malabar. This social structure, in fact, did not favour the spread of teyyam beyond its territorial boundaries. This has happened due to the force of a caste, based social stratification. The caste-bound economy has also given its share. The caste-oriented feelings never allowed the people, Malayans in particular, to cross the boundaries of North Malabar. If anybody does that, he is punished for the violation of the caste rules. The person will be treated as an outcaste.

The self-sufficiency of this area has also not favoured the interaction with outsiders. The interactions were limited to the field of trade. The
rare opportunities to contact the outsiders decrease the chances for the spread of teyyam beyond its native area.

Teyyam did not take its origin as an art. Instead, it originated as a social etiquette, one of socio-cultural significance. It emerged as a 'primitive science', 'technology' to overcome the life hazards. It came into practice only on the basis of 'nature-man' interaction. The nature, i.e., the local eco-system, is not uniform in character in all places. In that sense, the environment of North Malabar is different from that of its adjacent places. Hence, the 'nature-man' interaction too is not uniform in North Malabar and in other places. In other words, the environment beyond North Malabar is not fit to teyyam for its survival and existence.

The worldview and the belief systems of North Malabar, and other places are not identical. In this sense too, teyyam is not able to exist in those places that live with a different value system. Hence, teyyam exists only in North Malabar.

The above arguments that point to the limitations of teyyam to spread beyond a fixed territory did of course stand against the thoughts of 'cultural diffusion' (Kroeber 1944, Wissler 1926, etc.). Upadhyay and Gaya Pandey opines that,

Cultural diffusion is the process by which cultural traits, discovered or invented at one place or society, are spread directly or indirectly to other societies or places. (1993:97)

One of the cultural traits of North Malabar, teyyam, is a product of the society and its value system did not allow it to spread beyond the boundaries. The very existence of teyyam within a boundary strongly opposes the idea of cultural diffusion.
The Malayan of North Malabar has faced diverse social, economic, political and educational problems. The sufferings of the Malayan's community from time immemorial for no fault of theirs are part of commonplace knowledge now. Their problems have aggravated the situation over years, and pushed the unfortunate masses of the community to total subjugation and exploitation. One thing is certain: in the caste-ridden society in North Malabar, social and economic statuses are the necessary prerequisites for any individual to progress. An analysis of any part of the Indian society that does not take caste into consideration is therefore incomplete. Almost all socio-cultural activities, economic, political, educational, etc., revolve around the notions of caste. The structural form and relationships in rural areas have continued almost intact in the post-independence India.

Land is the basis of rural economy, and its ownership determines the wealth, income, status, and also indirectly the structure of the society. Only Brahmins and other aristocratic upper caste people own land in this area. Majorities of the people, including the Malayans, do not possess land by any means. The picture is now changed. The successful implementation of the 'Kerala Land Reform Act' by the state government has given everybody in this area at least some land to possess as his or her own.

Patterns of semblance and difference exist between the old and the new habitats of the Malayans. The new habitat has not encouraged the traditional source of subsistence such as, hunting and gathering. The new habitat has to rely heavily on wages or employment. Earlier the forest or the local surroundings supplied enough materials for the construction of houses, and the new settlements are scarce.
Now the Malayan’s family is fully nuclear and patrilineal. The male head has acquired more authority because, he is now the main breadwinner. The increased economic dependency of women has led to greater stability of the marital bond and the relation between the parents and children have become stronger. In a changed situation, the family has ceased, to some extent, to be the unit of production. The participation of women folk and children in daily labour, has declined now. The service-return based economy now plays a very minor role. The Malayan has responded to the opportunities of occupational mobility that offers a higher income. The people readjusted their traditional economic system from subsistence to the market-based one. Thus, the material necessities of life tend to be purchased from the shops. They have pruned many of their old rituals, practices and feasts, and abandoned many of the ceremonies and gift-making rituals that characterized their lives in the past. In this manner, the people do not give any importance to life-cycle rituals such as, puberty, name giving, hair cutting, ear pricking, pre-natal and post-natal rituals. The social organizations such as, religious and political institutions are also insignificant now.

The Malayan used to attribute high value to the service-return economy viz, teyyam performance, practice of magic and midwifery. However, in the present environment the magic and midwifery attach no value because, there are no adequate opportunities to carry on such activities. Recently, the need to think about tomorrow has begun to find a place in the Malayan’s mind. As a result, the recreational activities are not given due attention nowadays. The custom of visiting one’s relatives and friends has also become less frequent. The increased importance of labour has taken away the leisure time and energy.
In the past, the Malayan used to partake in the multifarious nature-man associations. The present day situation has forced them to weaken those ties and has led to many adjustments and compromises with their new 'environment'. Certainly it has contributed to their substantial integration into the changed society and culture from the extremes to the centre. It also shows the Malayan's potential for adaptations.

The democratic political system and 'protective discrimination' have not made much headway, nor are they meaningful in the case of communities like the Malayans. The notions of equality and equality of opportunities and democratic values over the years have all been interpreted only relatively. The result is that those who were economically poor and socially and ritually inferior have remained backward and continue to be considered inferior by others. Efforts made by the government by implementing the statutory provisions of 'protective discrimination' enshrined in the Constitution of India to the Scheduled Castes have not yielded the desired and expected results. Experience in the past years shows a different situation where exploitation of the Malayan has increased at least in the sheer economy that is related to teyyam performance. They are born with high skill and temperament. But none of them gave any attention to improve their abilities other than that of teyyam and its allied fields.

To conclude, the study was conducted in the North Malabar, Kannur and Kasaragod district of Kerala State, where the individuals, culture and society interact each other in accordance with the environment in a given space and time. The ethnography of the Malayan and the social structure of North Malabar and its sacred and profane 'teyyam' clearly reveal the fact that the life and practices of this region exhibit great degree of flexibility and adaptability.
Teyyam possesses great socio-cultural value in a segmented society of North Malabar. It is tied up with magic and religion. In accordance with the religious feelings, the people interact with their nature and spirit in a given space, the ecological set up, to ensure the survival and existence. This two-way interaction between man, nature and religion, the struggle for existence and survival exhibits a complexity-'sacred complex', the 'nature-man-spirit complex', according to which, the people of North Malabar believe that their destiny is guided and controlled by supernatural powers, in the form of teyyam. As a social etiquette, the 'science of the primitive', teyyam is part and parcel of life. As a common wealth of this area, teyyam acts itself a social critic that controls the society. Like any other social system, it performs certain important functions within the threshold of divinity.

The life and culture of Malayans reflect the multifarious association between man and nature. The influence of modern education, science and technology forced them to many re-adjustments and compromise with the new 'habitat', which exhibits high capacity of flexibility and dynamism to re-adjust, i.e. the potential for adaptations. All activities of the people in North Malabar are more or less shaped in tact with man-nature interactions. Whenever and wherever these man-nature relationships get alteration, the structure and function of all human activities are re-adjusted. In a given space and time, the people continuously interact with their environment for their survival. In short, the society and culture, the Malayan and teyyam in particular, exhibit high degree of adjustments in the given ecological set up with nature through various sets of arrangements, i.e. the struggle for existence, to ensure their survival by providing a balance approach to meet the challenge of ecology of North Malabar.