2.1.1. The Setting

The locale of the study is in the northern district of Cannanore in the State of Kerala, India. This area comprises the villages: Cherukunnu, Padyil, Kizhara, Kattukulam, Pallikara, Mattul, Madayi, Payyangadi, Kungimangalam, Pilathara and Pattuvam (see map). These villages fall under the jurisdiction of Chirakkal Taluka and Taliparamba Taluka in Cannanore Dt. The Bombay-Trivandrum National High-Way passes through this area. Parallel to it is the railway line linking this area to Mangalore in the North, Trivandrum in the South, Madras in the east. (The area will be referred to in the thesis as Chirakkal region).

2.1.2. Flora

Northern Kerala is a beautiful blend of hills and valleys. Rivers, rivulets and salt-lake, criss cross this area with paddy fields and coconut groves bordering on the coast of Arabian Sea. The fields often merge into the back-waters which open to the sea through several rivers and whose water level rises and falls with the tide.
The soil is not very fertile, especially on the hill-tops which look barren with hardly any trees or bushies growing on them. The historically important Ezhimala hills bordering the Arabian sea, cover the area on the eastern side. The Government of India has acquired this area to start a naval academy. The field on the banks of rivers and lagoons are very fertile and the entire area looks lush and green. The pulayas are found living in the fields near lagoons, in clusters away from the din and bustle of the highways.

2.1.3. Fauna

The area is rich with variety of fish especially prawns. The area is even today rich with marine life, crocodiles are known to inhabit the lagoons where they join the river. We find all kinds of domestic animals as we see them in other parts of Kerala. Some time ago the pulaya slaves were not allowed to own animals as they did not have time to look after them being busy with the works of their masters.

2.1.4. Caste and Communal Composition

In north malabar hindus and muslims live side by side, the majority being hindus. The hindus are
divided into endogamous caste groups. Some of the important caste groups or jatis in this area, are Brahmins, Nairs, Maniani, Makkutti, Kakkutti, Kusavan, Chaliya, Vania, Tiyya, Malaya, Vannan, and Pulayas. Brahmins and Nairs are considered to be high castes (Savarna Jati). There is hypergamous relationship between these two groups. Others are low caste (Avarna jati), of which pulayas are considered to be the lowest. They are traditionally untouchables, to be kept at least 64 feet away, from the caste hindus. With the conversion of a number of pulayas into Christianity, the three religious communities, hindus, muslims and christians live side by side in the same locality.

2.1.5. The Pulayas

The word pulaya etymologically has two meanings: pulam means the paddy field; pulaya, therefore, means man of the field. In the ancient times people were known after their work. As the pulayas were working in the field (pulam) it is convincing enough that they came to be known as pulayas. The pula also means pollution; pulayas means polluted. The pollution was so abominable that even their shadow polluted the caste hindus (Vishnunamboori: 1983:9).

Kerala historians, particularly the recent ones, (Balakrishnan, 1983), (Gopalakrishnan, 1974), agree
that the original inhabitants of Kerala were the tribals of this place. "Upto the 8th century A.D., the natives of Kerala must have been most primitive food gathering and hunting tribes" (Balakrishnan, 1983:260).

Northern Malabar was known as Kolathu Nadu and Chirakkal was the head quarter of Kolathiris, the rulers of Kolathunadu. They did not belong to the local population. Kolathu nadu was under the influence of Tamil and Kannada rulers (Balakrishnan, 1983:259).

Theyyam, the special religious art of Kolathnadu lends support to this position. The theyyam greatly resembles the Bhutas of Karnadaka in decoration, and the dialect of theyyam thottam is very similar to Tamil language.

Travellers tell us that kolam decorations very similar to theyyam, are found all over Polynesian Islands, Bali Island groups, Mediterranen, Ceylon, Australia and Peru. There appears to be a link with all these people who belong to the Proto-Austroloid race (Gopalkrishnan, 1984, p.49).

The collective myth of the hindus of Chirakkal speaks of a certain Annapoorneswariamma, dreaming about Kolathunadu she set sail on a ship from
Aryianadu with a thousand children of *sutras* and thousand *Kongani* children and thousand *Choti* children. They first landed in *Airaamthengu* near Tellicherry. The myth tells in detail the route of *Aama's itenary* to the palace of *Cherukunnu thampuran*. All the *Jatis* of Chirakkal have this journey as their myth. Given the matriarchal system of the high caste at Chirakkal it is not impossible, historically, that they may have immigrated to Chirakkal under the leadership of a prominent woman. As the powerful high caste enslaved the original inhabitants of the place, they must have incorporated the natives into their history by way of domesticating them, this later developed into a collective myth.

Some of the Kerala historians, particularly the older ones took the myth literally and even concluded that aboriginals are immigrants (Balakrishnan, 1983:244). Evidence is much in favour of the hypothesis, that *pulayas* are the original inhabitants of the place and the immigrant high technology people enslaved and declared them as untouchables (Padnabhamenon, 1912:12).

According to L.K.Krishna Iyer (1909, Vol.1:87) *pulayas* are found in Cochin, Tranvancore, and Malabar (i.e. all over the present Kerala State), and their origin is undecided. He described the *pulayas* of
Malabar as *cherumas*, and *pulayas* of southern part of Kerala as *Tanda pulaya*.

*Cherumān* or *Cherumakkal* (*cher* = mud, *makkal* + sons) means 'the sons of mud'; and *cherumakkal* also means, 'little children' (*cheru* = small). It is said that the legendary figure Parasurama directed his successors to treat them 'small' and also to take care of them. We still find that the ancient Chera kingdom (*Cheranadu* = country of *Cherumas*) is preserved. Cheranad, part of Ernad Taluka and its neighbourhood, appears to have been the most thickly populated parts of the country. Ernad, Valluvanad and Ponnani are the three talukas of Malabar from which converts to Islam have been drawn from the slave population, which must have been denser in these talukas than elsewhere. There is, therefore, something in the view that *pulayas*/*cherumas* were the aborigines of Malabar (Iyer, 1909, Vol. I: 88).

As untouchables the *pulayas* received exceedingly degraded and abhorring treatment in the hands of the caste Hindus. Early historians have all left moving descriptions of those inhuman treatments. During the field work too, older members of the *pulayas* community recalled with unusual clarity the beastly behaviour accorded to them. We are tempted to feel that these are nightmares of the dark era, but
studies show they are there still prevalent in attitude if not in practice. 'Pulayan', they said, 'is a pulayan despite his good dress, money and education. He cannot rid himself of his silam (habit). He cannot change his jatigunam (conduct of his caste). How can one eat what is cooked by a pulayan? Some of the women said, 'I cannot become the wife of a pulayan. I cannot think of it.' 'I do not like a Chaliya or Vania marrying a pulayan. Other jatis-s I do not mind.' (Abraham Ayrookuzhiel, 1983:95).

All concerned agree on one thing, that the status of the pulayas in the chirakkal region, raised their status in practice due to the conversion to christianity. We are told, the practice of caste-system continues undisturbed in the interior further north of Chirakkal taluka, in the present district of Kasarkode. The attention of the politicians turned to the pulayas due to their bargaining power which was supplied by their being christians.

2.1.6. Economic Activity

The pulayas are now integrated into the main stream of social life. They are employed in all sections of bureaucracy. There are even IPS and IAS officers from the pulaya community.
The Christian pulayas are comparatively more educated and, a fairly large number of them are in the teaching profession. As tribals, the Christian pulayas were entitled for reservations in Government jobs. When they were convert into caste in 1976 under the cover of emergency, the Christian pulayas lost their privilege of reservation. The scheduled castes do not come under the purview of the benefit of reservation when they change their religion. Now there are as many unemployed youth among the Christian pulayas as in any other section of people in Kerala. In fact, the Hindu pulayas as a community stand out in better position as they continue to enjoy the scheduled caste reservation. Their infra-structure is such that the children are not motivated enough to go for education and among those who do, the drop-out rate is very high.

For those who are willing to work as day-labourers there is no difficulty in finding work. During the season both men and women are fully employed in paddy fields and in the off season there are construction jobs for them.

In olden times the men went to Coorg for work in the off season, and women stayed back at home. The women used to supplement the household income by fishing, especially by catching prawns from the
lagoons in a special way by hand. Even today, catching prawns is a means of income for women. Some of the men too, engage in inland fishing.

The basic economic activity of the pulayas in ancient times appears to be inland fishing. They must have been a fishing tribe, though not fishermen by profession. It seems they became agriculture labourers when enslaved by the immigrant agricultural group. Apart from planting and harvesting of the fields, the women engage themselves in weaving mats and in basket making.

Until the land reform in Kerala was implemented the pulayas were a landless people and they had no ancestral property to inherit. They are born in bondedness and die in debt. Fr. Taffarel (1981:40), one of the missionaries, speaks about their bondedness:

These incredible social and economic conditions of the pulayas were much worse in those days. I myself, when I joined the Missions with Fr. Caironi in 1944 saw the ravages of their condition. A poor woman of pallikara was working for a Hindu landlord. She had borrowed Rs. 5/- some time back. She used to remit some cash periodically and even then, in the landlord’s account she owned him Rs. 700/-. The small amount had become bigger, owing to the fabulous rate of interest, all accumulated. That was the fashion of the money-lenders of all types in the Mission area.

Surprisingly a few pulayas possess ancestral property. On inquiry, they said, that it was
gift from landlords in exchange for beautiful pulaya girls they had taken as their mistresses. Sometimes even beautiful wives of servant pulayas were taken away by the landlords in exchange of land.

At present almost all pulayas have their own land and house. Christian pulayas are a little better off as they are looked after by the missionaries. Every Christian pulaya owns almost an acre of land. If the land is very fertile in some place, it may be less than an acre, and a rather good house with tiled roof is given to every Christian pulaya. Hindu pulayas get house loan from the government, along with the scheduled caste benefits. On the whole, financially, both the communities of pulayas are more or less on equal footing.

At the time of conversion the pulayas were living in huts (chalas), in the fields, away from the caste Hindus. These chalas were just one room huts made of mud walls and dried coconut leaves. They are made with no planning and so looked very crude and shabby. We can still see such chalas in very interior villages a little farther north of Chirakkal.

2.1.7. Political Affiliation

Pulayas show high political consciousness, along
with others in the State. The Hindu pulayas are mostly the followers of the Marxist Party. Whereas, the Christian pulayas by and large are the followers of Congress (I), naturally in tune with the allegiance of the Church leadership in the State. The situation is rapidly changing with the younger generation shifting its allegiance to the Marxist Party by joining its youth wing, the Students Federation of India (SFI) and Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI). Only the older christians still go around in Khadi proclaiming their absolute loyalty to the Congress Party.

At the time of conversion, the pulaya tribal chieftan was the supreme authority. He was known as Chemmari. Permissions had to be obtained from the Chemmari, for all kinds of ritual observance and performance of rites. The officiating pulaya at important rituals are known as Prathi.

At times, the greatful landlords or minor kings, honoured pulayas with various titles and thus the honoured pulaya is known as Polla, was much respected in the pulaya community. Community and family quarrels and disputes were settled in the presence of the chieftans and honoured people of high repute. This was done in a common place where kottam, the special structure of the deity was enthroned. The
common issues of the community was usually discussed at this place of worship.

2.1.8. Social Structure

With the entry of Christianity in the pulaya life, its clan structure was dismantled and the CP began to follow the nuclear system of family characteristic of complex society. This, of course, disturbed the clan structure of the parent community - the hindu pulayas. With independence and the legal abolition of untouchability they too leaned towards accepting the nuclear family system. Strictly speaking at present there is no clan structure in the pulaya way of life. Remnants of this is mostly found in the realm of religious practices and customs. A type of totemic organization of the clans under different theyyams, each clan having their own kottam are some such examples.

At the time of conversion the pulaya social structure was very clan-like. They were known as pathillekkar (path = ten illem = clan). Tiyyas, Ettillekkar (eight-clan-people); the vaniers were known as Onpathillekkar (nine-clan-people). Though the pulayas are known as ten-clan-people there are several subclans within the major clans. Some of them are given below:
It is interesting to note that names of many of the clans sound funny and derogative. They all end in 'yen', signifying slavery. The pulaya clans are exogamous and there is no marriage within the same clan.

The illems are clustered together in varying numbers to form the clan. Some clans consists of ten-illems and others three, four etc. The biggest number seems to be ten. This may be the reason they are known as 'pathillekkar'. Some examples are:

1. Madan
   Madakkudian
   Miniyan — Form one clan
   Mangadan

2. Mummunian
   Minyyadan
   Myngaladian — Form one clan
   Mynniladiyan

3. Aramban
   Ooramban
   Thachan
   Thallarian
   Oinadian — Form one clan

4. Karnnadian
   Kanicherian — Form one clan
   Kayankudian
   Oinadian — Form one clan
   Poirian — Form one clan
There is a special relationship between the illems within the clan. There is a superiority feeling and therefore slight animosity between clans. The 'pathillekkar' claims themselves superior to others, this may be due to their number.

There are several ways of gaining clan superiority. Each pulaya illem is known prefixed by their master’s illems. For example, Chittoth Pongadan means, the Pongadan pulaya who is a slave of Chittoth mana, which of course, one of the landlord’s family name. The personality of a slave is the extension of his master’s personality. The slave of an important mana naturally assumes some superiority among other slaves. This can be illustrated from the theyyam myths. In one of the theyyam myths, aipally theyyam and Embran Kurukkal, Nair soldiers refused to shoot the pulaya slave inspite of orders from the kings, because they knew that they were from an important family called Chalattu Thara.

The second factor for the clan superiority comes from the fact that some people from certain pulaya illems becomes legendary figures. Such illems are proud of their rich heritage. There are numerous pulayas mentioned in the theyyam myths who became
immortal through their acts of bravery and loyalty. (Eg. Vaithoor Panayan; in the theyyam Panayarkurukkal and Sampradayam).

Each illem had a place of worship which is known as kottam. Their Gods and Goddess are installed in the Kottam. Kottams are situated in the fields. Its structure is very simple. A very small construction with four walls and a roof. The roof is often made of dried coconut leaves.

Each pulaya clan has their own special theyyams and they are installed in their own kottams. The main theyyam of one clan may be the subsidiary theyyam of another clan. There is no restriction for the number of theyyams belonging to a particular clan.

As the clans have particular theyyams, the illem too have their own special theyyams. The clan in the illem of the pulayas must have originated due to the posteriong of relations that existed between their masters. In keeping with the family affinity of the land lords their slaves too had allegiance among themselves and this may have given rise to clan structure among the pulayas.

The 'Clan-feud' and enmity between clans also appears to have originated in relation to the vendetta of their masters' families.
Herebelow are some examples to show the relation between *illem*, *theyyam* and *kottam* of pulayas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illem</th>
<th>Theyyam</th>
<th>Kottam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>velladudian</td>
<td>bharibal bhagavati</td>
<td>pattuvam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>panayan</td>
<td>potten</td>
<td>kavumpai kottam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koilarian</td>
<td>madayil chamundi puthia bhagavathi nagakannika</td>
<td>pattuvam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thachan</td>
<td>vishnumurthi potten</td>
<td>mundayad kottam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gulikan kurathi gurudeivam gurudeivam pulimaringna-thondachan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paithalen</td>
<td>gulikan korathi potten</td>
<td>pallikara kottam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gurudeivam cheelath bhagavathi kurathi gurudeivam gurukkal</td>
<td>chirakkal kottam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>potten sampradayam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>chittoth bhagavathi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pongadan</td>
<td>gurukkal pattuvam sampradayam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.9. Kinship Terms (Relational Symbols)

The father and father-in-law are addressed as *Aiyan*. The younger brother of the father is
addressed as Kunjaiyan and the brother elder to the father is addressed as Thodaiyan. As the names of their illems are derogative, so are their relational terms. The male relational terms end in yan, reminding the term adiyam meaning slave, and of the female terms ends in chi or mi, which is the endings of the feminine gender of Adiachi, meaning the female slave.

Some of the relational symbols are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relation</th>
<th>Relational terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>AIyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr's Younger br.</td>
<td>Kunjaiyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr's Elder br.</td>
<td>Valliayian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand-Fr.</td>
<td>Thondiyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-Fr.</td>
<td>Manyian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Ommi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand-Mr.</td>
<td>Ommirommi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr's Mr.</td>
<td>Achommi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Mr.</td>
<td>Manommi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr's elder sr.</td>
<td>Moothommi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr's younger sr.</td>
<td>Kunjammi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr's younger sr.</td>
<td>Elayommi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Br.</td>
<td>Achan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder br. of husband</td>
<td>Vallachan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband's elder sr.</td>
<td>Vallachi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband's younger br.</td>
<td>Kunjachan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger sr. of husband</td>
<td>Kunjachi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives elder sr.</td>
<td>Ammai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder br's wife</td>
<td>Ammai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands younger sr.</td>
<td>Nathoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wife's younger sr.</td>
<td>Cheriyolu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr's br.</td>
<td>Maman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr's sr or Mr's br's wife</td>
<td>Mami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Angala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>Pengalu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand-grand Fr.</td>
<td>Moothor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>little girl</td>
<td>Kunji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>little boy</td>
<td>Kuttan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.10. Honerific Titles and Positions

The pulaya chief who is recognised by the pulaya
The community is known as *Chemmari*. Ritual ceremonies and life-cycle observances should be performed with the permission of the *chemmari*. The one who performs the real ceremony of rituals and rites is called, *velan*. The one who officiates at the funeral rites and for the *thirandu mangalam* (onset of mensus) is known as *prathi*. The title given to *pulayyas* for outstanding display of valour, by the *Naduvazhy* (ruler) is known as *polla*.

The officiating priest at the *kottam* is known as *kayatandri* or *kudiyan*. The one who regularly put deepan (light) in the *kottam* is called *munnan* and the *velichappadu* is known as *kolakaran*. The one who perform the *theyyam* dance is know as *muthrathan* and that of the singer is addresed as *kottumutharathan*. The chief of the *muthrathan* i.e. the high-priest is known as *guru*\(^2\). All magic performance are done by the *gurukkal*. The one who holds the *choottu* (light) in front of the *theyyam* is know as *muchoottukaran*.

2.1.11. The Relational Symbols for Other Communities

To address other caste people the *pulayyas* have special terms. They address the high caste Brahmins as *Chovor/Chovothi*. The Maniyani as *macharu*. The *pulaya* call the *malayan* and *Vanian* as *marathinaru*. The *pulayyas* call the muslims as *koilu pongilu*. 
2.2. LIFE - CYCLE CEREMONIES OF PULAYAS

2.2.1. Rites of Pregnancy

2.2.1.1. Kenthron Pattu

This ceremony is a theyyam performed for child-bearing. It is the belief of pulayas that evil spirits, pillathunni, karuvilakki, udalvartti, are responsible for barrenness. The ritual performance with the accompaniment of kadumthudi (proto-type of drum) has the efficacy to drive away the spirits. The officiating priest is named by the diviner.

The branch of a pala tree (palakkombu) which has an important place in the celebration is planted in the centre of the courtyard and other offerings such as beaten rice, popped rice, coins, lime, turmeric new earthen vessel, tender coconut, toddy and the fowl to be offered are arranged on the branch.

For a full ceremony the thottam of nine theyyam are recited. Some of them are paravakali, uthirakali, karuvachu, ayyinkol, anchu, mothiyam parava. Towards the end of the thottam the woman gets into a trance and starts dancing with the theyyam, thirupalakkidavu. As the dance reaches its climax, the theyyam offers a fowl and gives the blood to the woman. At the dawn, the palakkombu is taken to
the riverside in a procession with the woman. The guru orders the evil spirit to come out of the woman and she is made to take an oath holding the deepan (oil lamp) and gold, that she will not entertain the evil spirit. At the end of the ceremony a second fowl is offered and its blood is given to the woman and then, she is pushed into the river for a ritual bath. The ritual celebration concludes with a ceremonial return to the hut.

2.2.1.2. Kannalkalam Pattu

This ceremony is conducted at the 5th month of the first pregnancy. The pulayas believe that the women are most beautiful at the 5th month of the pregnancy. The purpose of this celebration is to appease the spirits as well as to prevent the evil spirits from attacking the woman attracted by her good look during the 5th month of pregnancy. This is also a celebration of joy of the first pregnancy. The main feature of this ceremony is the theyyam performed in the kottam of the concerned manifestation (murthi). parava, vairon thira, uthirakali, karuvvali, palochandran, kethron and the evil spirits such as chothiyan, chothichi, mavilathi, mappila, chudala are some of the effigies (kolams).

The branch of pala tree has an important place in this rite too. It is planted at the courtyard
under which magic circles are drawn with rice powder. The tree branch is decorated with betel leaves, arechut, tender coconut and tender coconut leaves. The effigy (kolam) thirupalakidavu dances around the branch. At the end of the dance the branch is taken as a procession to the riverside. The theyyam, the pregnant women and other females in the community follow the procession. With the ritual performance at the riverside, the ceremony concludes. The woman is pushed into the river for a ritual bath and she is taken back to the hut ceremoniously.

2.2.1.3. Celebration at the seventh Month

At the seventh month of the pregnancy the woman is ceremonially escorted to her parental home. The important persons in this celebration are the uncle and the mother of the girl. They go to the husband's house and finalise the day of the event. On the appointed day they go to the husband's house to escort the woman. The important item in the husband's house is the meal. After the meal they get ready to go away and the girl is given new cloths, rice, one measure of coconut oil. These are gifts from the husband for her to use after the delivery. As they reach home the girl is received at the entrance in the western side with oil lamp.
2.2.2. Child Birth

The pulayas construct separate huts for delivery and this is known as ittupura. The one who does the mid-wifery is called malai or ittichi. If there is any delay in the child birth, the ittichi performs certain rites. She uses herbal medicines as well as other methods to induce birth-pang and speed up the childbirth.

If the child is a boy, the pulayas observe anchupula (five days of pollution) and if the child is a girl, ezhampula seven days pollution). Upto the 14th day, the mother is given regular hot-water bath after applying turmeric and oil to the body. Dried up bark of a tree, called thali serves as the soap. From the 14th day onwards the mother bathes in cold water.

After child birth, a messenger goes to the husband's house for informing the family officially, receives some presents for conveying the good news. Fifty measures of rice, one measure of coconut oil, pepper, gingili oil, sweets, geera, omum, and fenu greek are sent to the girl's family. These are meant for the mother.
2.2.3  Hoolukettu Ceremony

On the 30th day, the child is given ponnum neerum (gold dissolved in water). On the 40th day the husband's family members participate in noolukettu celebration. It is a simple ceremony of tying a string around the waist of the infant.

2.2.4  Naming the Child

The naming ceremony takes place when the child is about one year old. The ceremony is finalised at an auspicious time determined by the diviner. When the sun rises about 12 feet the grand-father, mother and elders assemble for the naming ceremony. The rites begin by tying a ring around the neck of the child. The child is given milk and rice. The grand father names the child according the position of the stars. With the meal the ceremony gets over. As the invited relatives return to their huts, there is the custom of giving all people who attended, betel leaves as a gift for their generosity in participating in the ceremony.

2.2.5  Ear Piercing Ceremony (Kathukuthu Mangalam)

The ear piercing ceremony is an important ceremony among the pulayas and takes place when the child is 5 years old. It is done at an auspicious
time determined by the diviner. The saying among the pulaya is that after the ear piercing ceremony the child becomes 'quarter of a pulayan'. Four 'friends' of the boy should be near him during the ceremony and all should be in new clothes. Elders and the close relations, are invited for the function. The rites are performed in the centre of the courtyard. An oil lamp and niranazhi (rice) are placed on a mat and the guests bless the child by throwing rice on him. The actual piercing is done with a sharpened twig of lemon tree. For boys, the bottom part of the earlobe is pierced, and for girls any part of the earlobe, and at times the nose too is pierced. The women use ornaments of lead and brass.

2.2.6. Initiation Ceremony (Arangattu Mangalam)

Only boys undergo arangattu mangalam. It is held when the boy is around 15 years old. After the ceremony the boy is considered to be a youth and expected to behave like a youth. After the initiation ceremony the pulaya becomes 'half pulaya'. This also conducted at an auspicious time determined by the diviner. The presence of the 'friends' is imperative here also. The chempdas gurukkal is the officiating person in the ceremony.

Following are the offerings for the pooja: oil
lamp, rice, coconut oil, new cloth, tender coconut, beaten rice, popped rice, kadukka, bear, green peas, ududdal, horsegram, toddy.

The important ritual of the function is the arangattu theyyam which the boy himself performs. The dressing and make-up of the theyyam is done by the guru himself.

Before the theyyam begins, the boy offers coins to the guru to get his blessings. After the function the people have a meal, and then disperse.

After the initiation the pulaya youth starts working in the field. With the blessings of the elders and in new clothes, he comes to the field. He is made to promise that he will work selflessly in the field, in rain and sun, always to help out his friends. After the initiation the pulaya boy is entitled to get half the daily wage.

2.2.7. Tirandu Mangalam

This is an important event in the life of a girl. At the occurrence of the first menses she is kept in isolation and on the seventh day the ceremony is held. In fact, this celebration is an announcement that the girl is ready for marriage.

The ceremony is performed under the branch of a
A gulmohur tree that is planted temporarily in the courtyard. As in the case of boys, the girl too should have six virgins as 'friends' (changathis).

The offerings are arranged, under the gulmohur branch and they are mainly household utensils and implements (ayutham). The girl takes three rounds of the branch with the offering and then offers them in front of the oil lamp at the centre. One of the 'friends', comes forward and takes some rice in a plantain leaf and goes round the branch and offers it. She then, peels out the bark of the gulmohur branch. This is repeated by all the 'friends' (changathis) and the girl at the end. The bark thus collected is ground and with this powder they go for their ceremonial bath known as therandu kuli.

They, then, fish fifteen times in the river with the new cloth. The belief is that the girl will have as many children as the number of fish caught.

Meanwhile the officiating priest, velan purifies the place and takes rice in a new pot and divides it into seven parts, to be given to the girls to be cooked by them separately. The belief is that if the rice splits on cooking the first child will be a girl, if it doesn't, it will be a boy.

The pulaya women observe pollution and isolation during the mensus and stay in separate hut.
places where there are no separate huts, at times they go to the neighbouring Muslim house where such pollution is not observed.

2.2.8. Marriage (mangala)

The initiative for the marriage is taken by the boy's family. The boy's maternal uncle and other elders go to the girl's house to make the proposal. On getting the consent from the girl's side, they approach the chemnari for his permission. From then on at every stage of the celebration the chemnari will be present.

Chemnari together with the heads of the both families approach the fortune teller (prasanakaran) to find out the compatibility of the proposal which is followed by the finalising of the date. Usually 22 people go from the bride's house to the groom's house, as special guests, among whom nine should be women.

The things to be taken along with the bride are, a piece of new cloth (about 14 ft. long), coconut oil, 250 arechsut, seven measures of rice, betel leaves (22 'bundles'), tobacco and nine rupees.

As soon as the groom's party arrives the chemnari counts things brought, and then he and the
polla sit facing the audience. The bride groom in his best new cloth and a cane rod in hand, is lead to the audience by one of his 'friends'. The bride is escorted by her own mother. Naduvan (master of ceremony) goes round the oil lamp seven times with the couple, with the new cloth and lamp in their hand, and they are asked to stand facing the east. The naduvan then asks the bride groom, "why are you standing with a rod, have you come to steal at night? Are you a thief?" There upon the rod is taken from him and kept on the mat along with the offerings. The blessing of the couple follows, people bless them by throwing rice on them. This is done in the order of seniority, starting from chemmari, polla and the elders in the clan. Again the naduvan asks the bride groom, "when your changathι goes to work in the field are you willing to go and replace him?" the same ritual is repeated with the bride and then, the exchange of articles follows. The prescribed amount of money i.e. nine rupees is given to the mother and brother of the girl and it is known as karavapanam and kanappanam respectively. Then, the new cloth is cut into two pieces. One piece is given to bride groom's mother and the other to the bride's mother, and a solemn meal follows.

After the meal all the invitees present the couples with cash in the form of coins according to
their ability. This money is meant for the expense of the marriage and should be repaid when they in turn conduct marriage ceremonies. Towards dusk the newly married couple and the guests go back to the bride-groom’s house. The auspicious time to take the bride back is during the high tide.

The couple is received, in the bride-groom’s house, by the mother washing the feet of the girl. They are led to the house with lamp and plate. The bride is taken to a room in the western side of the house. The women in the room serve the girl with sweets in a ritual manner.

The naduvan, then, invites all the guests for a meal after which the guests put thalipanam (wed-lock-money). After fixing date for the 14th day celebration (painai) all disperse.

2.2.9. Funeral Rite

As soon as the person is pronounced dead, the relations especially the women start crying and narrating the main events in his/her life. The spirit ‘gulikan’ is supposed to have taken away the spirit of the dead man. As the relatives and the neighbours get together, the first thing they do is to make a kind of coffin using bamboo and it is called ittany.
The dead body is given a hot-water bath, and the nails and hair are trimmed before being laid on the ittany. The coffin is placed in the middle of the courtyard for paying homage. According to practice, the relatives put a new cloth or silk-shroud on the dead body. A quarter measure of unhusked rice, ashes, rice on the pepper leaves and water in the new earthen pot are placed at the foot of the coffin.

The rightful elder in the house takes the new earthen pot on his shoulder and takes three rounds of the house and the water is poured out on the northern side. The main officiating guru first throws rice facing the west and then takes three rounds of the house with the ashes, and at the end throws away it over the house. The funeral procession, then, follows.

Prathi makes an offering to the goddess of the grave (chudala bhadrakali). Toddy, popped rice, beaten rice, tender coconut, turmeric powder, are offered.

After the burial or cremation the prathi makes an image of a person and performs some rite on the image. The rite is: popped rice, beaten rice, panchamasi and coins are put on plantain leaves and placed in four directions and they are covered with other leaves. Coconut water is poured on the image.
A new earthen pot is covered with a new cloth and a hole is made. All those who are present there are given rice and oil lamp. The prathi then, proceeds to enclose the spirit in the new pot and covers it with another new cloth and it is given to the immediate successor.

All those who attended the funeral go to the river and take a purifying bath. The one who carries the new pot goes to the house in wet cloth. The pot is placed in the eastern side of the house.

All return to the house to decide on the date of the funeral meal after which all disperse taking some toddy.

Pulayas practice both burial and cremation. If an immediate elder of the deceased is alive the practice is burial. In the case of burying the dead, the branch of a tree called nochil will be planted as the grave is filled in. After two days, they pull out the branch and pour in tender coconut water through the hole. This is known as veerpuvili.

2.2.10. Fourteenth Day Celebration of the Dead

On the third day after the death, offering to the spirit of the dead persons begins. The spirit of the dead person is ceremoniously 'enclosed' in a
decorated coconut and is taken as a procession from the burial ground to the place that is prepared for the ceremony. This place is known as Belikalām, and it is dedicated mostly to the goddess Bhadrakali. The offerings are coconut, boiled rice and flowers. Elders stand around the belikalām and take a ritual bath together by pouring water on them together. After the sacrificial bath the sacrifice is performed and the offerings are placed in an appropriate place where the crows can come and take. The elders find out the likes and dislikes of the dead person it away. From the way the crows take away the offerings. This ceremony will continue every day till the fourteenth day. The concluding ceremony is a theyyām celebration and during which the theyyām offers a fowl cutting and offerings its blood to the dead person's spirit.

2.2.11 Koolikethu

Depending on the importance of the dead person his theyyām is performed within a year of his death. The theyyām will be an effigy of the dead person. The informants told the investigator that the dead person will speak through the mouth of the theyyām and in fact, in the presence of the investigator, the theyyām inquired about the well-being of the living and gave some guidance for the
close relatives. The ceremony is conducted at night. Different versions of the same ceremony is conducted in different parts of north Malabar.

2.3. Theyyam the calendrical Celebration of chirakkal Region

2.3.1 The season of theyyam

From September to May (according to the Malayalam months: Thulam – Edavam) are the season of the theyyams. The peak time for celebration is the period between the February middle to middle of May (kumbam, meenam, medam). The lean season for the celebration of theyyam are the monsoon months: June, July and August (karkidakam, chingam, kanni). Even in the most lean season theyyam does not come to a halt, the professionals will go from house to house in the theyyam make-up for their livelihood. Thus in fact theyyam is a round the year celebration for the Theyyam dancing caste of the Chirakkal region.

We have seen earlier in the caste composition of the Chirakkal region that there are about twelve caste-denominations. The high caste only sponsor theyyam in their respective places of worship or temples. Vettiya, Vannan and malayan perform theyyam for the high caste such as Brahmins and Nairs. Pulaya will perform theyyam only for themselves.
the pula ya theyyam everything from make-up to theyyam performance are done only by pula yas except for playing drum; Malayans play drum for the pula ya theyyam.

2.3.2 Theyyam celebration in the chirackal region

Each caste in the area has several temples, sacred groves and other small public and private places of worship. All these sacred places have their calendrical theyyam celebration every year. About twelve different castes criss-crossing the region have certainly a number of celebrations. In the peak time of the celebrations there are days when six theyyam performed at different places in a small locality. There are days the investigator attended three theyyam celebrations one after another at different places in the same night.

There are private theyyams too at the houses of important families for their private devotions. Theyyams are performed as gratitude for the favours received and also for getting special favours. Thus when you go round the region in the season of theyyam, you cannot miss watching a theyyam either dancing in the sacred place or going from house to house.

June, July, August are the lean months for the
theyyam celebration. These are the monsoon months of Kerala and the time for paddy cultivation. The theyyam professionals performing theyyam connected with cultivation to make their both ends meet.

The pulayas perform the theyyam of kalichan (kalichakon). This goddess is associated with particular tree locally known as kanjirama, and she is the protector of cattle. Pulaya perform kalichan theyyam for the protection of cattle as well as for good crops.

During the lean months after the paddy cultivation, the pulayas perform the Uchar theyyam and maritheyyam. These theyyam protect the paddy field, cattle and people from the excess of rain and flood and other natural calamities. The important Uchar theyyam are: Uchar potten and Uchar gulikan. Important Maritheyyam are: Marikaliyan, Mamarikaliyan, Mamarikalichie etc.

2.3.3. Kottam and other Sacred places of Pulayas

In all the places where pulayas are living we can see their kottam. Where there are no kottam, sacred groves can be spotted. In places where even groves not possible, say extensive paddy fields, the deity will be installed under a sacred tree such as kanjirama or pala.
2.4. Kottam (shrine)

The kottam (fig. 4.2.1 & 4.2.2) is the place of worship, where the pulayas formally install their deities and it is the place where theyyams of the installed deities are solemnly performed every calendar year according to lunar calculations. Each clan in the pulaya tribe has its own kottam. The deity in the kottam is installed under some simple symbol of the weapon (ayutam) (fig.4.1) of the deity, often enough it is the trident (trisula) There is one main deity in every kottam and several other subsidiary deities. A subsidiary deity in one kottam may be the main deity in another and vice versa. The installation of the main deity will be at the centre and the thara will be higher and bigger than the others. (thara is an elevated floor of the shape of cube of one meter length, with no roof. (fig 4.1.2). The investigator is told that originally these platforms were not roofed, but were under a grove, one with nature. Almost all the modern kottam, new as well as renewed, are little concrete structures with terraced roofs. (fig 4.2.2). The investigator is told that originally these platforms were not roofed, but were under a grove, one with nature. Almost all the modern kottam, new as well as renewed, are little concrete structures with
The theyyam dance as such is ephemeral in nature, but the kottam is their permanent uniting centre of each clan of pulayas. The elders told that the investigator it is their place of worship, the court of justice, place of entertainment and annual get-together.

Some of the important pulaya kottams are: Kaiyath kottam, Muyiath kottam, Mushangath kottam, Mungath kottam, Kavumpaie kottam, Pattani kottam, Manathanakkavu kottam, Parangi kottam.

2.5. The Spirit world of the Pulaya

Pulayas believe in magic spirits and magic rituals. They are experts in performing black magic such as Odi, Mushti, Maranam, Mari. Kumaran Gurukal: a black magic man told the investigator that human beings can be possessed by ghosts, devils, and evil Spirits and they can be expelled through proper rituals and mantras. He also said that pregnant women are a favourite object of evil spirit such as Udalvaratti, Karukalakki, Karuval, Palochandran, Kentron, Chudala etc. They believe that the cause of famine and epidemic are the Evil Spirits such as marisani and Mamayasani and they can be dispelled by the theyyam Marippattu.

Several of the informant told the investigator
that they believe in ancestor spirits and perform ancestor worship to appease them. This is often done by performing their theyyam. Kurikal, Thondachan theyyams are a few of them.

Pulaya believe in tree worship and they worship the tree in association with spirits such as, Gulikan and Bhairavan etc. They also worship animals; tiger, serpent, and some category of fish.

Pulayas worship Siva and Sakti. Theyyam such as potten, Kurathi are some example. Pulayas worship Bhagavati, most of the pulaya theyyam are Bhagavati theyyams. They worship vishnu too, Vishnu murthi is a favourite theyyam of pulayas.

Pulayas also go to the temples of the caste Hindus, though they are not allowed to enter into the temple premise. In the olden times, the elders told the investigator, there used to be a stone far away from the temple gate and the pulayas were allowed only upto that point. The informants told the investigator that the situation hasn't radically changed, they are still made to feel that they are pulayas in the temple prâcînts. The origins of some of the high caste temples are associated with pulaya, for example Madai Kavu Paiyyar Mala temple.
CONCLUSION

From the description of life-cycle ceremonies, it is clear that in the important life-cycle ceremonies such as child birth, initiation and death and burial are celebrated with theyyam. Calendrical as well as devotional celebrations of theyyam almost determines the life of people, particularly the pulayas. The decisive role of the spirit world. The prestige and position and honourific titles of the elders is determined in relation to theyyam. It appears from all these that theyyam is their life ritual.