

Identity through Nature-Man Interaction: A Synthetic Definition Based on the *Teyyam* Performance in North Malabar

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ABSTRACT Kerala is known as ‘the god’s own land’. Its environment, culture and practices made this, and are true, because Kerala is blessed with a plural culture, marvelous natural setups, and beautiful people. The life of the people shows high adaptability to its natural conditions to cope with ‘man-nature interaction’. The very word, *teyyam*, can bring forth a fascinating as well as a colourful picture. But for the people of North Malabar the word has more than one meaning. The devotees worship and perform *teyyam* as an indispensable part of their religion, magic, etc. The followers strictly follow its code and conducts because, they fear its anger and destruction, and believe at the same time, its pleasing yield well being. The very uniqueness of *teyyam* is that it stands on the ‘interaction’ between man and man, and to his surroundings, i.e. man’s dependency over environment, both the physical environment and the socio-cultural environment. This pattern of relationship also makes the people to treat *teyyam* as their ‘science’ and ‘culture’ inherited from the past, and further their limited technology and know-how insist them to trust heavily in *teyyam* for the common good of the people. It puts the people on a single platform with a common feeling, and that also helps the people to keep their *identity* as a member of this unique ‘social network’.