

***Teyyam* is the Best Tool for Reconstructing the History of North Malabar**

M. P. Damodaran

Department of Anthropology, University of Madras, Chennai 600 005, Tamil Nadu, India

Telephone: +91 44 25368778 Ext: 329 Mobile: 9840245078

E-mail: damodaran68mp@yahoo.com

KEYWORDS Caste. Deity. Jajmani System. Performanc Reconstruction

ABSTRACT *Teyyam*, one of the popular folk traditions in North Malabar, Kerala is famous for its vividness and the peoples' passion over it. The gods and goddesses, spirits, heroes and heroines, animals and ancestors are worshipped in the form of *teyyam*. Such divine powers are worshipped in 'special kind' of performance in sacred centers. The devotees and believers, who worship *teyyam* as god, certainly include all the four *varnas* of the Hindus. All the performers are akin to Scheduled Castes, the so-called 'untouchables'. The magico-religious ritual of North Malabar has attracted me more towards it not because of its wonderful world of fantasy but because of its references on real life actions. Myths and legends are the backbone of *teyyam*. Each *teyyam* tells us about his-story, the history of the North Malabar. And all these stories narrate the actions of life. For example, the story and performances of *teyyams* like *Chonnamma*, *Iepalliteyyam*, *Kurikkal teyyam*, *Kuttychathan*, *Maruthiyodan kurikkal*, *Muchilottu bagavathi*, *Pottan teyyam*, *Palenthayikannan*, *Pulimaranja thondachan*, *Vishakandan*, *Vishnumurthi*, etc, express glimpses of peoples' life and culture. Some of them point towards social discriminations, purity and pollution, and practice of untouchability. *Kathuvanur veeran* and *Makka pothi* narrate the family life. *Teyyam* like *Kuttychathan*, *Vishnurmuhu*, *Muchilottubaghavathi*, etc, reveal the economic pursuits of the society. So, over all, *teyyam* provides a real portrait of socio-political, and economic activities of this area.