

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala>



1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/introduction>

Introduction

Theyyam, a ritualistic performance related to myths and tales, is the most prominent and spectacular form of art in Malabar (the northern region of Kerala, southern India). Theyyam is a form of worshipping gods, goddesses, and legendary heroes that is based on a relatively straightforward idea following appropriate pre-performance rituals, the god or goddess of a temple temporarily manifests itself in the body of a powerful man (the performer), elevating him to divine status. One of North Kerala's most ancient indigenous and mystical ceremonial art forms is this one. It's known that there are 400 varieties of Theyyam in northern Kerala. Pottan Theyyam is one of the major kinds among them. It stands out from this crowd due to a lot of intriguing and entertaining factors of it.

The project's goal is to gain a thorough understanding of Pottan Theyyam in particular and various aspects of Theyyam, in general. It also aims to develop a brief graphic novel for children between the ages of 8 and 12 that can depict the actions of Pottan Theyyam who gave their life in defence of a social cause.



(Image source)

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/theyyam>

Theyyam

Theyyam - The human god

Kerala, a beautiful state, has more variety of cultural traditions in the nation and the state hosts a variety of events and celebrations to highlight its rich culture and traditions. The vibrant and varied festivities of Kerala are incredibly well liked and draw visitors from all over the world. Ancient mythology about gods, goddesses, saints, heroes, and devils who once roamed this wonderful region is revived via Kerala's annual celebrations.

Theyyam, a religious and ritualistic dance drama that originated in Malabar, Kerala's northern region, is one of the most unique and amazing events one may experience there. Theyyam is a visual delight with its vibrant pagantry and energetic dance maneuvers as well as a feast for the ears with its mesmerizing chants and rhythmic drumbeats. From October through March, Theyyam is celebrated with pomp and rigor.



(Image source)

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/theyyam>

Theyyam reveals the pasts and stories of ancient times by combining mime, music, and dance. Theyyam is not just a performance but a possessed performance. This appearance is typically a locally revered form of a significant Hindu deity Vishnu, Shiva, Bhagavati, etc. or occasionally a historical figure or mythological hero. Since the effects of the possession on the medium's body can be highly taxing, each performance is preceded by a ritual fasting and purification period.

There are 400 different forms of Theyyam, each with its own distinct style, melody, and choreography. The extravagant clothes and heavy makeup worn by the performers give them a distinctive appearance that draws viewers' attention. The ornaments, headgear, and choreography are so magnificent and powerful that they evoke awe, dread, and astonishment in the audience. Some Theyyams involve blood sacrifices in addition to strenuous movements and noises. An entirely distinct society and set of beliefs are revealed through this ritualistic art form.



(Image source)

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/theyyam>

Where does Theyyam performance happen?

Theyyam rituals are typically performed in the vicinity of a small shrine known as a Kaavu, Kazhakam, Muchilotu, Mundiya, or Sthanam, in the yard of an ancestral home, or in an open area with a temporary shrine known as a "Pathi" or Sthanas ." Villagers gather to see the ceremony as the dance is performed in front of the Sthanas, where the spirits once lived.



(Image source)

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar
by
Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/how-%E2%80%98kaavu-%E2%80%99-different-temples>

How is 'Kaavu' different from temples?

In the past, low-caste individuals were prohibited from entering temples that were primarily managed by orthodox upper-caste individuals. Therefore, the disadvantaged people worshipped various sorts of important deities to support their beliefs and their way of life. They built private or communal shrine houses called 'Kaavu', outdoor gathering places, or locations specifically designated for worshipping these gods. High-caste individuals, such as Brahmins, may attend a Theyyam performance and seek blessings from Theyyam along with everyone else, but the distinction between temple devotion and Theyyam performances was evident.



(Image source)

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/how-%E2%80%98kaavu-%E2%80%99-different-temples>

Beauty of 'Kaavu' is that it is in the middle of nature. The lush, untamed trees and vegetation that surround 'Kaavu' add to its beauty and demonstrate how closely connected people were to nature.



(Image source)



Animal sacrifice in kaavu (Image source)

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/how-%E2%80%98kaavu-%E2%80%99-different-temples>

One sign of this is the frequent inclusion of an animal sacrifice typically a cock and alcohol consumption by the performer in a Theyyam. These customs are accepted in Indian rural shrines all over the country, but they are forbidden in orthodox Keralan temples.



(Image source)

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar
by
Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/performers>

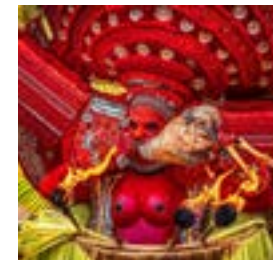
1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
 - 4a. Classifications in Theyyam
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

The Performers

The oppressed people made the Theyyam deities subject to the temple deities. Since the caste system was so rigorous, it was necessary to develop temple worship because lower caste people were not allowed to enter them or worship the Aryan Gods. So they built little shrines and performed the embodiment of God as Theyyam in their shrines for their religious practices and rites. Castes like Thiyya, Vaniya, Maniyani, Kammalar, and others have their own shrines and deities, and each year they perform "Theyyam Kaliyatam" to please God. Peruvannan, Perumalayan, Panan, Anjootan, Munnootan, Kalanadikal, Mavilan, Kappalan, Nalkithaya, Thulumalayala Velan, and Pulayar are the castes that conduct the Theyyakolam. They are frequently referred to as "Theyyakaran."



Theyyam, Shagil Kannur;c.2021; Wikimedia
(Image source)



Classifications in
Theyyam

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/performers/classifications-theyyam>

Classifications in Theyyam

North Kerala has 400 different varieties of Theyyam. Throughout the region of Northern Kerala, there are numerous shrines dedicated to each of them. The majority of shrines are dedicated to the goddesses, who serve as the clans' primary deities. They can be categorized as heroines, village ruler goddesses, goddesses of disease, goddesses of grain fields, and goddesses who destroy enemies. Hero's forefathers Theyyams, Theyyams that favour hunting, and Mantra Moorthi are the other categories of Theyyams.



(Image source)

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
 - 4a. Classifications in Theyyam
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/performers/classifications-theyyam>

Heroe's Forefathers

The believers view famous warriors and men with special abilities as heroes. After passing away, Kadivanoorvveran, Kannik korumakan, Kudiveeran, Vayanattu Kulavan, Karinthiri nayar, Vishakandan, Kandanar Kelan, Kanaman, Thuluveeran, Perumpuzha Achan, and Kari Gurukkal become deities (Theyyam). Kuttisasthan, Padarkulan Veeran, Patarveeran, Vellur Kurikkal, Koragathaniyan, Sreekanthan, Kallidil Kannamman, Kandamath Kannamman, etc. are some examples belong to this category.



(Image source)

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
 - 4a. Classifications in Theyyam
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/performers/classifications-theyyam>

Heroines

Villagers revere as goddesses in their own shrines women who have displayed tremendous bravery and amazing feats in their own lives. Some of these include Kelankulangara Bhagavathi, Kadangottu Makkam, Thotumkara Bhagavathi, Vannathi Bhagavathi, and Maniyara Unnanga. People think that by participating in this worship, followers would get the strength needed to overcome whatever challenges they may face in life.

Animal Shaped Theyyam

Gods will disguise themselves when mankind engages in bad thoughts and deeds. It is said that various gods have taken the forms of a monkey, leopard, lion, and pig. The Pulitheyysams include Puliyoorkali, Puliyoorkannan, Pullikkarinkali, Kalappuli, and Puimakal. They have ritual dance and shape that resembles leopards. According to tradition, Siva and Parvathi gave birth to Pulipooram on Earth (animal leopard). Neduvalian Theyyam is yet another creature like God. The clan god of the Vishwakarma Community is the Bali Theyyam.



Theyyam, Shagil Kannur; c.2021; Wikimedia (Image source)

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
 - 4a. Classifications in Theyyam
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/performers/classifications-theyyam>

Manthra Moorthi Theyyam

There are specific Theyyams that appear before worshippers and bestow blessings on them. If there is any error in the Mantram, he should be chastised; otherwise, he would be presented with strong strength. This can only be accomplished via continual Mantra Japam (ritualistic uttering of the god's name). Manthra Moorthi Theyyams include Pulapottan, Kurathi, Bhairavan, Kuttichathan, Uchitta, Gulikan, Karival Amma, and Dooma Bjugavathi. There are numerous shrines dedicated to these Theyyams in northern Kerala.

Hunting Gods

Theyyams are thought to assist hunters in large numbers. The sacred weapons of these religions are the bow and arrows. Before beginning to hunt, our ancestors used to pray and make offerings. Kulavan Vayanattu Hunting gods include Vishnumoorthi, Veerambinar, Sree Muthapan, Puthichon Theyyam, Malappilan, Pooloon, and Vettechekon, among others.



(Image source)

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
 - 4a. Classifications in Theyyam
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar
by
Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/makeup-and-costumes>

Makeup and Costumes

Theyyams are thought to assist hunters in large numbers. The sacred weapons of these religions are the bow and arrows. Before beginning to hunt, our ancestors used to pray and make offerings. Kulavan Vayanattu Hunting gods include Vishnumoorthi, Veerambinar, Sree Muthapan, Puthichon Theyyam, Malappilan, Pooloon, and Vettechekon, among others.



Ornaments



Costume



Makeup

1. Introduction
- 2, 3
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
 - 5a. Ornaments
 - 5b. Costume
 - 5c. Makeup
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/makeup-and-costumes/ornaments>

Ornaments

All Theyyams are not created equally. Depending on the character and emotion of the Theyyam, different cosmetics are used. Theyyam is more attractive with makeup. This cosmetic is referred to as Aniyalangal. Theyyakkaran and team produce what is referred to as Aniyalangal. This denotes “accessories to be worn.” These are worn on the neck, chest, legs, and hands. The aniyalangal consists of the following species: kaivila, katakam, cūdakam, kaiyyura, chennipathi, chilambu, pattu and ppā dakam, thalaphthalapā li, manikayalu etc. To keep the aniyalam safe and to carry it, a rectangular box is used which is made by the vēlans. This box made out of a kind of bamboo is called Pe1ya Pelika).

On the legs, Chilambu is worn. Every Theyyam typically utilises Chilambu, with the exception of Thekkumbad Kulom's Devakkutt or Theyyakkutt. Hands are adorned with Cudakam, Kaivala, Katakam, Tandavala, etc.



Chilambu (Image source)

1. Introduction
- 2, 3
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
 - 5a. Ornaments
 - 5b. Costume
 - 5c. Makeup
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/makeup-and-costumes/ornaments>



Cudakam, Kaivala, Katakam, Tandavala - Naveena Mohan, Gods play in God's own country
(Image source)

Talapali is one of the crucial elements of makeup. Talapali is a garment worn on the head. ad. On the front of this, a thin metal strip shaped like a petal is suspended. It is imperative that the Theyyam wear Talapali. Other jewelry includes Chenni, Pathi, and others that are worn on the sides of the head.



Talapali (Image source)

1. Introduction

2, 3

4. The Performers

5. Makeup and Costumes

5a. Ornaments

5b. Costume

5c. Makeup

6. Instruments

7. Thottam

8. The Rituals and Performance

9. Blessings from Theyyam

10. Pottan Theyyam

11. Illustrated Book

12. Video

13. References

14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/makeup-and-costumes/ornaments>

1. Introduction

2, 3

4. The Performers

5. Makeup and Costumes

5a. Ornaments

5b. Costume

5c. Makeup

6. Instruments

7. Thottam

8. The Rituals and Performance

9. Blessings from Theyyam

10. Pottan Theyyam

11. Illustrated Book

12. Video

13. References

14. Contact Details



Ornaments - Chilamb, Katakam, Tandavala (Image source)

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar
by
Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/makeup-and-costumes/costume>

Costume

The Theyyams' attire is highly unique Pattu, Vitanathara, Kannimundu, Chirakuduppu Velumban, etc. The outfit made to look like a floor is referred to as a Vithanam. The Kuruthola dress. The delicate coconut leaves are separated from their stalks and wrapped around the waist as a dress. The Theyyam who wear delicate coconut leaves Kuruthola are Chamundi Guikan and Pottantheyyam (wearing a mask on their faces). These outfits, which are created from fragile coconut leaves, are also referred to as Oliyuduppu or 'Olayuduppu' (dress made from coconut leaves). In this instance, Theyyam transforms into two distinct levels of representation of the same image, indicating that Theyyam is created by the fusion of different objects and colours from nature. The ceremonial adornments and artefacts for Theyyam are collected from nature only.



(Image source)

1. Introduction
- 2, 3
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
 - 5a. Ornaments
 - 5b. Costume
 - 5c. Makeup
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/makeup-and-costumes/costume>



The ceremonial adornments and artefacts for theyyam are collected from nature only and is prepared and arranged by the theyyam troupe. (Image source)

1. Introduction

2, 3

4. The Performers

5. Makeup and Costumes

5a. Ornaments

5b. Costume

5c. Makeup

6. Instruments

7. Thottam

8. The Rituals and Performance

9. Blessings from Theyyam

10. Pottan Theyyam

11. Illustrated Book

12. Video

13. References

14. Contact Details



(Image source)

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/makeup-and-costumes/makeup>

Makeup

Nothing but natural ingredients are to be utilised in Theyyams, according to an unwritten rule. The performer, or Kolakkaaran, is prepared for cosmetics by being placed on a handmade carpet made of coconut leaves in the backstage area. Here, the spiritual karma of uniting the body and soul with nature is being fulfilled. The forefathers stipulated that pictures of animals, reptiles, and wildflowers should be used as face ornamentation. In addition, several types of eyewear can be seen depending on how the face is described; for instance, some Theyyams have beards. Female Theyyams like Bhagavati and Chamundi wear these items, whereas male Theyyams like to sport beards.



Left: (Image source) Right: (Image source)



(Image source)

1. Introduction
- 2, 3
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
 - 5a. Ornaments
 - 5b. Costume
 - 5c. Makeup
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/instruments>

Instruments

For Theyyams, a variety of musical instruments are employed, such as the drum, conch, Udukku, and Cherman-galam. While the play progresses, the beat of the instruments varies, making it exciting to observe the Theyyam performance as the instrument is being played. The performance is greatly enhanced by the continuous playing and the deliberate interludes. There will be a specific troupe for performing the Theyyam song known as Thottam. The same musicians who play the instruments also recite “ Theyya Thotams “ for the Theyyam deity in time to the rhythm of the instruments. The performance is captivating due to the rustic singing and quick, fluid movements of the body.



(Image source)

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/thottam>

Thottam

The hymn of Theyyam

One of the main components of Theyyam is the Thottam songs. It begins before the performance itself and is a hymn that is sung together with the performance. It begins in the evening and can go on until midnight. In this hymn, the god is worshipped, called, and shown happiness. Along with this, songs will also be performed on the cause for coming to Earth, brave acts, and dwelling there. Thottam is chanted in rhythm with the drumbeat in a way that is entrancing and even meditative to the audience.



(Image source)

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/rituals-and-performance>

The Rituals and Performance

The process and flow

- Theyyam preparation requires fasting for three, five, or seven days. The performer must remain at home and is not allowed to consume any non-vegetarian food during this time.
- Next is Theyyam ceremony's opening ritual. Setting a date and transferring the privilege to wear the Kolam. For doing this, they give the person who would wear the Kolam Kolakkaran, betel leaf, areca nut and money and entrust him with the Kolam's ritual name.
- The musicians and Theyyam performers arrive at the location one day beforehand. The ceremonies begin with the beating of the drum just before dusk falls.
- After the ornamentation and all, Theyyam has a custom of looking in the mirror. There are various degrees of significance in this. The Kolakkaran (the person who performs) internalizes the idea that he and god are inseparable when he sees god's image in the mirror. This aids in his possession.
- The Theyyam performance begins with Vellattam or Thottam. It is performed with only a small red headdress and no proper makeup or any decorative costume is used during this occasion.
- The musicians recite a specific ritual song that tells the stories and traditions of how the deity of the shrine came to be worshipped while being accompanied by drummers. At this time, traditional musical instruments are also accompanied.
- The dancer completes the main ritualistic portion of the chant before heading back to the green room.
- After a brief break, the dancer enters the temple ritualistically wearing elaborate costumes and makeup. He then takes a seat in front of the shrine, dons the headdress, the most sacred component of the outfit, and gradually changes into the specific deity of the shrine.
- The Theyyam dances, and performs around the temple and its courtyard. Last but not least, the dancer blesses the crowd by doling out turmeric powder and rice. He is regarded as divine as long as the headpiece is on.

1. Introduction

2. Theyyam

3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?

4. The Performers

5. Makeup and Costumes

6. Instruments

7. Thottam

8. The Rituals and Performance

9. Blessings from Theyyam

10. Pottan Theyyam

11. Illustrated Book

12. Video

13. References

14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar
by
Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/blessings-theyyam>

Blessings from Theyyam

Following that, rituals such as the Sthanam Parayal, Kurikotukkal, Nercha Vangal, and Anugraham Koukkal are performed. Some Theyyams use music to describe the account of creation as well as the exploits of the individual gods. The term 'Sthanam Parayal' refers to this rhythmic storytelling. However, some Theyyams discuss the dynasty. This sheds information on the Keralan dynasties. Additionally, Theyyams get offerings (nercha) from the faithful. They offer Kuri as Prasadam . Manjalkkuri, a rice and turmeric powder mixture, is served as Prasadam.



(Image source)

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/blessings-theyyam>



Painting of 'theyyam' done by myself Year 2021

Medium: Acrylic on canvas

Size: 60X40cm

View on behance: ([Image source](#))

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/pottan-theyyam>

Pottan Theyyam

The Pottan Theyyam is regarded as having the most powerful and angry thoughts among all the Theyyam forms performed in the Sacred Groves of Malabar, strong enough to topple the oppressive walls of caste systems and other social ills that have infiltrated society. The concept of secularism and humanistic ideas is known as Pottan. Theyyam in North Kerala folklore in what is known as the Ara or little shrines. Pottan Theyyam is worshipped in Sacred Groves, Temple Shrines, and a few Ancestral Houses all across Kannur.

In Malayalam, Pottan denotes an idiot. Some people think that Pottan Theyyam gets the nickname Pottan because of the way he portrays divinity with a blend of sarcasm and oddly amusing yet intense playfulness. Pottan Theyyam's performance is nicely supported by an element of unintentional fun and entertainment, yet it never uses a comedic persona to draw in the audience. The simple idea of justice and secularism is only the most basic expression of the all knowing Lord Shiva from Hindu mythology.



(Image source)

1. Introduction

2, 3

4. The Performers

5. Makeup and Costumes

6. Instruments

7. Thottam

8. The Rituals and Performance

9. Blessings from Theyyam

10. Pottan Theyyam

10a. Historic Story Behind Pottan.....

10b. The Performance

10c. Elements of Pottam Theyyam.....

11. Illustrated Book

12. Video

13. References

14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/pottan-theyyam>



Historic Story Behind Pottan Theyyam



Elements of Pottam Theyyam and its Significant



The Performance

1. Introduction

2, 3

4. The Performers

5. Makeup and Costumes

6. Instruments

7. Thottam

8. The Rituals and Performance

9. Blessings from Theyyam

10. Pottan Theyyam

10a. Historic Story Behind Pottan.....

10b. The Performance

10c. Elements of Pottam Theyyam.....

11. Illustrated Book

12. Video

13. References

14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/pottan-theyyam/historic-story-behind-pottan-theyyam>

Historic Story Behind Pottan Theyyam

Adi Shankaracharya the Saint and Scholar who spread Advaita Vedanta in India, is thought to have been tested for his moral character and spiritual prowess by Lord Shiva. And lord himself appeared as a Chandalan an untouchable from a lower caste. According to the tale, Shiva encountered Adi Shankaracharya while posing as a Chandalan as he travelled towards the highest point of knowledge. Lord Shiva put Shankaracharya to the test to see if he was trustworthy when it came to his knowledge and insight. Three Chandalans came to Shankaracharya in a gang and were very confident. Shiva is one of the Chandalans as Pulapottan while Parvathy and Nandikeshan are the other two. The Vedic and Brahminical Ideologies trained scholar Shankaracharya told the untouchables to get out of his way when he saw them across the street. According to the Varna System or Caste System, it was thought that having people from lower castes close to those from higher castes would upset them and defile their holiness. Most of the social ills that persisted in society could be attributed to this idea. After the group disregarded Shankaracharya's instruction, Lord Shiva and Shankaracharya got into a series of discussions in which the former exposed the absurdity of the caste system, which divides humanity and civilization into disparate parts. These arguments make up the bulk of the Thottam which also carries important societal lessons.

“Neenkale Kothiyalum Choralle Chovvare Naankale Kothiyalum Choralle ...”

During his debate with Shankaracharya, Lord Shiva emphasised this point again. The inquiry, which was translated as

“It is blood red blood, that flows out of you and me when cut open!”

This was put before the scholar as a fantastic idea and this blood has the same colour don't you think, master? In the simplest language possible, social ills like racism and casteism were discussed. Shankaracharya came to understand that he was more than just an untouchable man. As a result of Lord Shiva's persuasive arguments and strong beliefs, when Shankaracharya gained enlightenment, he realised that Lord Shiva was actually testing his intelligence and humaneness by appearing in front of him in disguise. Lord Shiva bestowed upon him the light of the fundamental human truth that regardless of caste, creed, gender, or religion, all people have red blood coursing through their veins as he travels towards the supreme knowledge.

1. Introduction

2, 3

4. The Performers

5. Makeup and Costumes

6. Instruments

7. Thottam

8. The Rituals and Performance

9. Blessings from Theyyam

10. Pottan Theyyam

10a. Historic Story Behind Pottan.....

10b. The Performance

10c. Elements of Pottam Theyyam.....

11. Illustrated Book

12. Video

13. References

14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/pottan-theyyam/performance>

The Performance

Details of the performance were obtained from a phone call interview with Mr Raghavan who has been performing Pottan Theyyam for the past 22 years in Kannur district.

- **7 days before the theyyam performance:** The performer starts with one-week Vratam. He won't be eating any outside food nor any meat and alcohol consumption as a part of the event is allowed.
- **5 pm on the day of performance:** Theyyam troupe will arrive at the Kaavu and settle there with all the props they have packed and brought.
- **6 pm:** The performer prays at the Sthanam where the god shrine is located and is then given holy oil and a Mund which is a piece of hand-woven pure cotton cloth that men wear around their waists. The performer then bathes in the oil, wears the Mund and returns to the shrine.
- **6:30-7:00 pm:** The performer is given the holy weapon and will take three Parikramas with the weapon around the Sthanam.
- **7:00 pm:** The performer starts the pooja along with the Kaavu authorities and the troupe. Meanwhile the wood logs for 'Agnipravesham' will be getting arranged by the people.
- **10:30-11:00 pm:** The wood logs for the Agnipravesham performance are taken and prayed and the starting fire is given to burn the pile of wood.
- **3:30 am:** Thottam starts and the Theyyam starts performing with the first face mask which is of Nandikeshan.
 - The Theyyam also enjoy playing jokes on each other in front of onlookers, which adds fun. It is a main draw while the performance is going on.
 - The Theyyam after a few performances in his first face mask goes back to Aniyara where the makeup is being done and changes his mask to the second which is Parama Shivan.
- **4:30 am:** In the second form of Pulapottan, Shivan the main attraction is Agnipravesham. As part of the Agnipravesham, the Theyyam foolishly throws himself upon the burning pyre while performing. This is a huge highlight of the possessed dance.

1. Introduction

2, 3

4. The Performers

5. Makeup and Costumes

6. Instruments

7. Thottam

8. The Rituals and Performance

9. Blessings from Theyyam

10. Pottan Theyyam

10a. Historic Story Behind Pottan.....

10b. The Performance

10c. Elements of Pottam Theyyam.....

11. Illustrated Book

12. Video

13. References

14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

- The Theyyam after the Agnipravesham goes back to Aniyara to change to his third mask which is of goddess Parvathi.

- **5:30-6:00 am:** The Theyyam is a female now and the rest of the performance is in a feminine manner.
- **6:30 am:** Theyyam's performance comes to an end after this final form of Parvathi. Theyyam sits on a Peedam (stool furniture used by the Theyyams to sit and bless the devotees) and gives blessings to the devotees. He talks with them and cracks jokes with them. He will offer Kuri as Prasadam. Manjalkkuri, a rice and turmeric powder mixture, is served as Prasadam.

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/pottan-theyyam/performance>

1. Introduction

2, 3

4. The Performers

5. Makeup and Costumes

6. Instruments

7. Thottam

8. The Rituals and Performance

9. Blessings from Theyyam

10. Pottan Theyyam

10a. Historic Story Behind Pottan.....

10b. The Performance

10c. Elements of Pottam Theyyam.....

11. Illustrated Book

12. Video

13. References

14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/pottan-theyyam/elements-pottan-theyyam-and-its-significant>

Elements of Pottam Theyyam and its Significant

Fire

Fire is one of the major elements in Pottan Theyyam's performance. As part of the Agnipravesham, the Theyyam foolishly throws himself upon the burning pyre while performing. The Pottan Theyyam who is lying erect on the fire, yells and laughs as he mocks society's unhealthy habits. The Theyyam also enjoy playing jokes on each other in front of viewers, which adds a fun factor.

The Theyyam's declaration of Enikku Kulirunne which translates to "I am shivering with coldness," while lying on the scorching pyre during the performance is a huge highlight. In truth, The Theyyam is viewed as a social/spiritual satire that is typical of Lord Shiva's nature. It re-enacts in ceremonial expressions the lives of those persons who had sacrificed their lives for a societal cause. It is said that the dance of the Pottan Theyyam will remove problems and provide prosperity and good health. All worship Pottan Theyyam because he is beyond caste and religion.



(Image source)

1. Introduction

2, 3

4. The Performers

5. Makeup and Costumes

6. Instruments

7. Thottam

8. The Rituals and Performance

9. Blessings from Theyyam

10. Pottan Theyyam

10a. Historic Story Behind Pottan.....

10b. The Performance

10c. Elements of Pottam Theyyam.....

11. Illustrated Book

12. Video

13. References

14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/pottan-theyyam/elements-pottan-theyyam-and-its-significant>



Pottan theyyam throwing himself on the burning pyre (Image source)



(Image source)

1. Introduction

2, 3

4. The Performers

5. Makeup and Costumes

6. Instruments

7. Thottam

8. The Rituals and Performance

9. Blessings from Theyyam

10. Pottan Theyyam

10a. Historic Story Behind Pottan.....

10b. The Performance

10c. Elements of Pottam Theyyam.....

11. Illustrated Book

12. Video

13. References

14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/pottan-theyyam/elements-pottan-theyyam-and-its-significant>

1. Introduction

2, 3

4. The Performers

5. Makeup and Costumes

6. Instruments

7. Thottam

8. The Rituals and Performance

9. Blessings from Theyyam

10. Pottan Theyyam

10a. Historic Story Behind Pottan.....

10b. The Performance

10c. Elements of Pottam Theyyam.....

11. Illustrated Book

12. Video

13. References

14. Contact Details

Holy Weapon

The holy weapon of Pottan Theyyam is another major element in this performance. What the Theyyam do first is to make obeisance to the holy weapon and to pray for it.

Pottan Theyyam's weapon is a wooden stick which is adorned with tender palm leaves on one end and he uses the tool while talking to the audience and while performing. He uses the same for blessing the devotees while the performance goes on.



(Image source)

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/pottan-theyyam/elements-pottan-theyyam-and-its-significant>

1. Introduction

2, 3

4. The Performers

5. Makeup and Costumes

6. Instruments

7. Thottam

8. The Rituals and Performance

9. Blessings from Theyyam

10. Pottan Theyyam

10a. Historic Story Behind Pottan.....

10b. The Performance

10c. Elements of Pottam Theyyam.....

11. Illustrated Book

12. Video

13. References

14. Contact Details

Face Mask

Pottan Theyyam wears three kinds of masks which depict three forms of the Theyyam, which are Nandikeshan, Shivan and Parvathi. The mask is worn by the same performer one after the other to show different forms. And the performances in these different forms also differ.

The mask is an abstract comedic face created for this Theyyam which has a sarcastic persona that makes fun of people's problematic caste and religious beliefs.



(Image source)

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

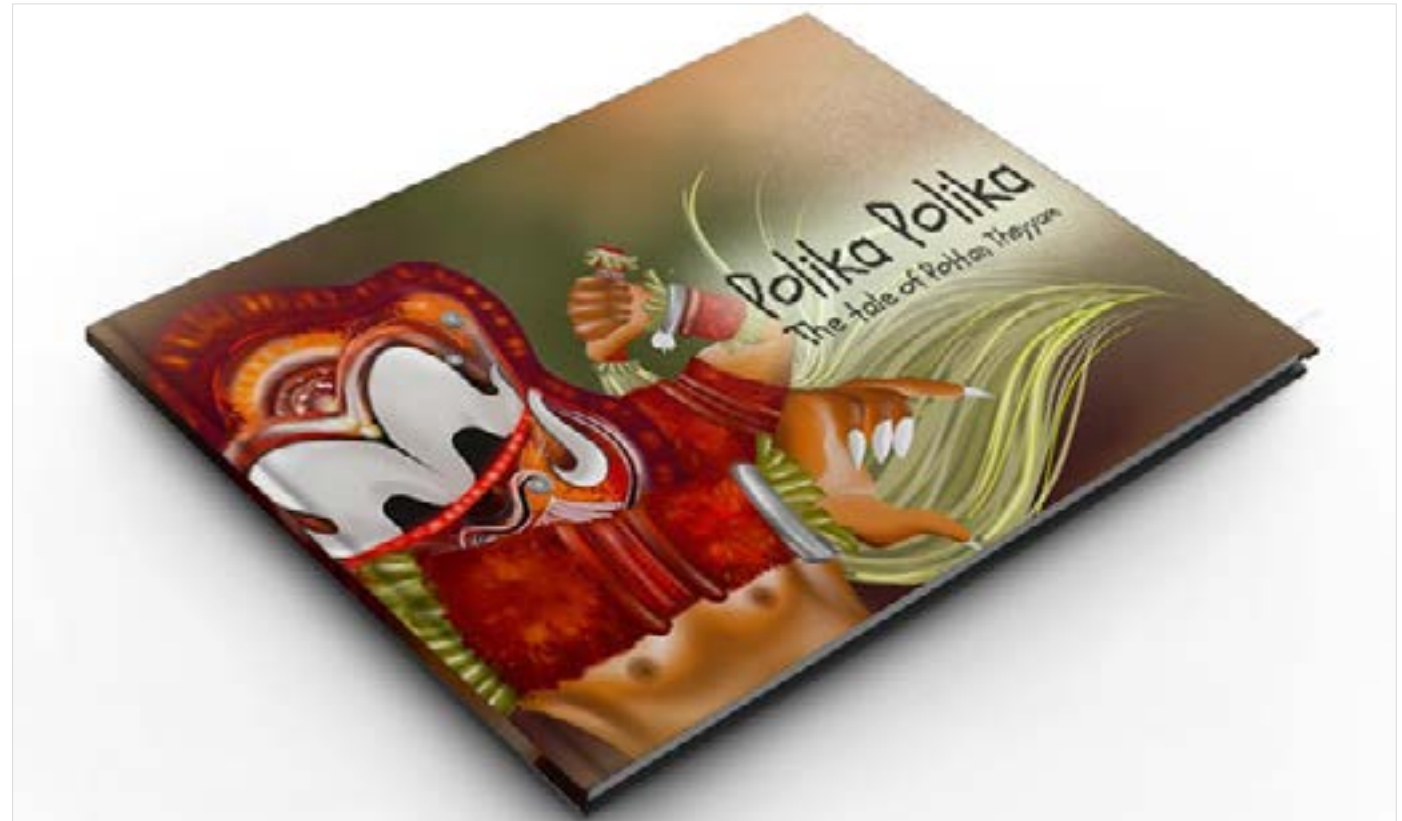
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/illustrated-book>

Illustrated Book

Polika Polika - A brief graphic novel on "Pottan Theyyam"



Why an illustrated story book?

Pottan Theyyam is regarded as the one with solid and fierce thoughts strong enough to shatter the ugly walls of caste systems and social evils. The sarcastic talks during Pottan Theyyam's performance are always fun to watch but the younger generation is not aware of the context of the banter. A graphical form was chosen to convey the defence of Pottan Theyyam for a social cause in a more effective way.

Polika which means Rise and Celebration.

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/illustrated-book>

Few Pages from the Book



1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

E-book Download:

- [Polika Polika.....](#) 

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/video>

Video



Theyyam - Kerala

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/references>

References

- <https://asdnyaneshwar.com/StoryDetails.aspx?Id=b75987cc-acfc-4f34-908d-1010f27f95da&page=1>
- <https://mapacademy.io/article/theyyam/>
- <https://kerala.me/specialities/art-and-culture/theyyam>
- <http://explorealongme.blogspot.com/2016/10/theyyam-ritual-art-form.html>
- <https://medium.com/@incrediblekerala2018/theyyam-festival-a-complete-guide-about-theyyam-festival-in-kerala-8f305e2e92f0>
- <https://sreejithpnair.wordpress.com/2018/12/15/the-story-behind-theyyam-makeup/>
- <https://medium.com/bgtw/take-time-for-the-theyyam-6178698ee159>
- <https://unstumbled.com/experience-theyyam-in-kannur-kerala/>
- https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:MTheyyam_at_Muzhappilangad_Porkkali_Kavu
- <https://theyyamkerala.wordpress.com/tag/myth-behind-pottan-theyyam/>
- <https://www.discoveredindia.com/kerala/festival-in-kerala/theyyam-festivals/#:~:text=Theyyams%20can%20be%20classified%20into,Malayan%2C%20Vannan%20and%20other%20castes>

1. Introduction

2. Theyyam

3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?

4. The Performers

5. Makeup and Costumes

6. Instruments

7. Thottam

8. The Rituals and Performance

9. Blessings from Theyyam

10. Pottan Theyyam

11. Illustrated Book

12. Video

13. References

14. Contact Details

Design Resource

Theyyam - Kerala

A Ritualistic Performance in Malabar

by

Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/theyyam-kerala/contact-details>

Contact Details

This documentation and content was done by Athira E and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah at [IDC, IIT Bombay](#)

You can get in touch with her at [athiraaichu\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:athiraaichu[at]gmail.com)

You can write to the following address regarding suggestions and clarifications:

Helpdesk Details:

Co-ordinator

Project e-kalpa

Industrial Design Centre

IIT Bombay,

Powai

Mumbai 400076

India

Phone: 091-22-2159 6805/ 091-22-2576 7802

Email: [dsource.in\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:dsource.in[at]gmail.com)

1. Introduction
2. Theyyam
3. How is 'Kaavu' different from.....?
4. The Performers
5. Makeup and Costumes
6. Instruments
7. Thottam
8. The Rituals and Performance
9. Blessings from Theyyam
10. Pottan Theyyam
11. Illustrated Book
12. Video
13. References
14. Contact Details