



In God's Mirror **The Theyyams of Malabar** **Pepita Seth**

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- Extraordinary photography of an ancient ritual in South India
- Unprecedented insights in words and pictures into one of India's richest and least documented cultures
- The author is a British woman who lives in Kerala and was granted unique access over many years

Theyyam is an extraordinary 2,000-year-old ritual of worship found only in the northern region of India's south-western state of Kerala. It is in this myth-wrapped land that empowered men become temporarily transformed into deities. Whilst the process is an internal one that obliterates the practitioner's human persona, on an external level his face is transformed by intricate make-up and his body fantastically costumed.

The word 'Theyyam' is a corruption of daivam, meaning, quite simply, God. The practitioners of Theyyam perform specific rituals and dance to express their joy at seeing their devotees, whilst the last stages of their manifestation involve them blessing, healing, exorcising, answering questions and maintaining the link between humanity and the divine.

Pepita Seth's decades-long association with Theyyam's practitioners gave her unprecedented access to their unique culture. ***In God's Mirror: The Theyyams of Malabar*** is the culmination, in her words and photographs, of her commitment to this extraordinary subject.

Pepita Seth first visited India in 1970. After several years she became drawn to Kerala and eventually based herself in Thrissur, where she now lives. She has written and lectured extensively on Kerala's traditions and had exhibitions of her photographs in India, Britain and the United States. In 1981 she received official permission to enter Kerala's temples, and she has been photographing Theyyam since the early 1990s. Her book *Heaven on Earth: the Universe of Kerala's Guruvayur Temple* was published in 2009. In 2012 the Indian Government awarded her the Padma Shri. She has also published two novels, *The Spirit Land* (1994) and *The Edge of Another World* (2015).