

IGNCA INVENTORY ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

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IGNCA

Name of the Element: Chettikulangara Kumbha Bharani Kettukazhcha.

Community: It's a common practice in thirteen villages of the Chettikulangara region. The Sree Devi Vilasom Hindumatha Convention, a not-for-profit organization since 1957, acts as the authorized umbrella organization on behalf of the 13 villages to conduct the festivities related to the Chettikulangara temple.

Region: The thirteen villages of Chettikulangara spread over Mavelikara and Karthikapally sub-divisions (taluks) of Alleppey district and the Onattukara region in the Alleppey and Quilon districts of Kerala State. These villages are Erezha South, Erezha North, Kaitha South, Kaitha North, Kannamangalam South, Kannamangalam North, Kadavoor, Pela, Anjilipra, Mattam North, Mattam South, Menampally and Nadakkavu.

Brief Description: Chettikulangara Kumbha Bharani Kettukazhcha, a post-harvest float festival, is a spectacular confluence of art, culture, architecture and the dedicated human endeavour of approximately 50000 people. The festival is held as thanksgiving to the Goddess Bhadrakali, for the rich harvest gathered in, and protection from diseases and calamities. It begins on the day of Shivarathri and concludes on the 'Bharani' day of the Kumbha month of the Malayalam calendar (during February or early March). Over half-a-million people participate with passion and devotion in the two-week long festivities. In the evenings, devotees conduct a unique dance-song ritual named Kuthiyottam where the entire village is in attendance. Sumptuous community feasts are served thrice a day as part of the celebrations.

The grand finale of the festivities is the dragging of decorative floats to the local shrine of the Goddess. The floats weigh hundreds of tonnes and stand 20-30 metres tall, with a square base of 16 (4X4m) to 25 sq. meters (5X5m) approx, tapering to the top in a pyramidal form. The framework of these floats harks back to Buddhist tradition and to Kerala's traditional temple architecture. The wooden structures are made using wood, coconut and arecanut tree poles, coir, and are covered with colourful embellishments and ornamental 'torans' or fringes. Two huge wooden sculptures of the epic figures of Bhima and Hanuman are included in the group of floats.

The event is possibly among the largest mobile float festivals in the world, in terms of size of the floats and participation of communities concerned.

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