



PONKALA MAHOTHSAVAM

CHAKKULATHUKAVU SREE BHAGAVATHI TEMPLE



LOCATION

Panchayat/
Municipality/
Corporation

Thalavady Panchayath

District

Alappuzha



ACCESSIBILITY

Nearest Town/
Landmark/ Junction

Thiruvalla Town – 9 Km

Nearest Bus Station

Thiruvalla Bus Station –9 Km

Nearest Railway
Station

Thiruvalla Railway Station –10 Km

Nearest Airport

Nedumbassery International Airport –92 Km



CONTACT

Administrator,
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TIME

DATES

November/December (Vrishchikam)

FREQUENCY

Annual

DURATION

1Day, Karthika asterism

ABOUT THE FESTIVAL (Legend/History/Myth)

The origin of this ritual dates back actually to the origin of the temple itself. Legend goes that once a hunter and his family came to the forest for collecting firewood. On seeing a serpent, the hunter tried to attack the serpent, but it slipped away. He went in search of the snake and reached near a lake. The hunter saw a chithalputtu (sand mount) which looked like a decorated golden chain and saw the snake inside it. He thought it was the same snake and again tried to hit it with the axe. This time also the snake disappeared. Sage Narada (a divine sage from the Hindu tradition) appeared before the hunter in the form of a stranger and asked him to break the shell. The hunter followed the words of Narada and found the image of Goddess Vanadurga inside it. Since then, the place has gained significance. The hunter and his family members cooked their food in earthen pots. They always set apart a part of their food as an offering to their Goddess. One day they were very late to return home after collecting wood in the jungle. They felt extremely sad that they could not submit the daily part of their food to the Devi. Overtaken by unbearable sorrow they fell upon the feet of the Goddess and asked pardon for the delay. Then they rushed immediately to cook the food. But they found to their utter surprise that all the earthen pots were filled with cooked food and fruits. They knew for certain that it was the Goddess Herself who cooked the food for them. They heard a voice in the atmosphere. "My Children, I have prepared this food for you. I will always be near to those who are devoted and pure. Take this food and have rest". Goddess herself prepared food for the devotee. The Pongala in the temple is a symbolic reminder of this age-old incident. Devotees prepare the food as humble offering to the mother. It is believed that the Goddess herself offers her presence near each Pongala hearth as the cooking is done. It is also a symbolic reminder that devotion reaches the full circle through complete submission and total surrender at the lotus feet of the Devi.



RELEVANCE-
(Local / National / International)

National



NO. OF PEOPLE PARTICIPATED

Approx. 2500000

EVENTS/PROGRAMS

Pongala

DESCRIPTION *(How festival is celebrated)*

Chakkulathukavu Pongala Mahothsavam falls in the Malayalam month *Vrischikam* (November/December) on *Karthika* asterism. This is the time when the glory of the Goddess is at its peak. Lakhs of women devotees gather around the temple as early as even one week before the function. The temple premises are overcrowded. The devotees arrange their place for offering the *Pongala* on both sides of the main streets. The queue usually extends to a surprising length of 40 km to 50 km. Rice, coconut and jiggery are bought by women devotees along with round earthen pots for cooking. The Chief Priest lights the main hearth from the divine fire inside the sanctum sanctorum. This fire is exchanged from one over to another. Every year at the time of lighting the main hearth, an eagle is found to circle far above the sky. This is an unfailing blessing of the Goddess. The sight of the bird drives the devotees into an inexplicable feeling of ecstasy. They utter the divine names of the Goddess and the atmosphere echoes and reverberates with a thousand names of the Goddess. Government also declares local holiday on the major areas which cover *Pongala* festival.

