



CHITTUR KONGAN PADA, Chittur Kavu



LOCATION

Panchayath/
Municipality/
Corporation

Chittur Municipality

District

Palakkad



ACCESSIBILITY

Nearest Town/
Landmark/ Junction

Anicode junction -550 m

Nearest Bus station

Anicode bus stop– 550m

Nearest Railway
station

Palakkad Railway Station – 11 Km
Pudunagaram Railway Station – 7.1 Km

Nearest Airport

Coimbatore International Airport – 62 Km



CONTACT

The Executive Officer
Chittur Kavu
SH25,Anicode
Chittur,
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Kerala -678101



TIME

DATES

February-March (Kumbhom)

FREQUENCY

Annual

DURATION

2 days



ABOUT THE FESTIVAL (Legend/History/Myth)

Konganpada, the only war festival in the state of Kerala, combines religion with mythology and history. It is held every year on the first Monday after the new moon night in *Kumbhom* (February-March), to commemorate the victory of Nair's of Chittoor over the militia of Konganadu (Coimbatore) led by the Chola King, Rajadhi Raja.

The celebrations commemorate the victory of the Chittur Nairs over the militia of nearby Konganadu during 918 AD. During those days Chittur was a very fertile land, plush with resources. It was also a trade hub. People from across the mountains, especially the Kongu country, which includes parts of the present-day Coimbatore District, used Chittur frequently for trade. Skirmishes were normal. And these skirmishes form the roots of the present day Konganpada festival.

Once, the king of Kongu country decided to attack Chittur and sent an ultimatum. The people of Chittur were scared and approached the Mother Goddess at the temple in Chittur and it is said she agreed to lead the Nair warriors in the war. And unlike the wars of today, the Kongu King stuck to the rituals of war, which is reenacted zealously by the devotees. The first ritual is the *Chilambu* where the Nair chieftains receive the letter; gather at the *kalari* or the gymnasium of the ancient family called the 'Sreekandath'. They then perform a dance and try to appease the goddess. A couple of days after that, a *kaniyar* or an astrologer is called in to predict the outcome of the war and the festival. After that comes the kummatti-young men from across the village who arrive to take blessings from the goddess and take a pledge to fight for their land. These warriors gather for *Arippaththu* and then proceed to Poovathum Kavuu, which is the battleground. At midnight, they come back to the temple in a procession. The fight begins when 101 firecrackers (*kathinavedi*). A procession starts from the temple with various groups of people decked out in a war like outfit. Small girls are dressed up as boys and small boys are dressed up as girls and taken around on the shoulder of their fathers or uncles. This is known as the *Kuttikolam*.

At night, the villagers assemble at the house of the Chittedathu family and one of the members is dressed up as the Kongan. He then travels to the temple on a horse for the traditional *olavayana* (reading the declaration of war). Rival groups run horses on the street in a mock war. Few of them feign death and are taken back to their wailing relatives. Men engage in mock fights wearing buffalo head masks to symbolize the dead buffaloes of the Konganpada (Kongan militia). A lot of traditional art forms like the Parisamuttu kali find a stage here during the war. Fireworks mark the victory over the Kongan army. And the festivities end with *Pallu* where four major Nair family members come to thank the goddess for victory.



RELEVANCE-
(Local / National /
International)

Local



**NO. OF PEOPLE
PARTICIPATED**

Approximately 40000

EVENTS/PROGRAMS

Chilambu
Arippathattu
Kadinavedi
Kuttukolam
Ezhovela
Thattinmel Koothu
Sinki Nadakom
Olavana
Pothottam

DESCRIPTION (*How festival is celebrated*)

The festival starts with 'Chilambu' on Sivarathri in Kumbham, which reminds Kongan's (Chola King's) declaration of war and the frightened people worshipping Bhagavathy beseeching her help. On the second day a flag is hoisted to indicate their preparedness for war. In the evening, they set out for war. This is called 'Arippathattu". All the people assemble at the temple. After three popgun shots, the procession starts. Clad in silk, wearing gold ornaments and trinkets and with a shining sword in hand, the Velichappadu (oracle) goes in front while the people, full of exultation follow him with torches held aloft. At midnight the procession returns to the temple with elephants and chariots. Next day is the day of Konganpada. On this day, even the penniless will hold a grand feast. In the morning, popguns would fire 101 rounds. Of the festivities during the day, *Kolam* procession is significant. Children are made to wear 'kolam' in response to certain vows made by their parents to Bhagavathi. Girls are paraded in men's wear (kolam) on the ground that the Goddess encountered the Konganpada in man's robes. The procession starts from a nearby Vettakkorumakan Kavvu, this time with colour and festivity. Cultural programmes are also staged in the pageant. There are various forms of entertainment like *Ezhovela*, *Thattinmel Koothu*, *Sinki Nadakom* etc. The *Kolam* procession would reach the temple by dusk. This is followed by a ritual called '*Olavayana*', when the messenger of Kongan reads the declaration of war. About 10 O'clock that night, Kongan makes his appearance. At Poovathunkavu, people driving the horses hither and thither would enact a mock fight. This is followed by '*Pothottam*' in which some people rush forward with the head of a buffalo reminding one of the head of the dead buffaloes of the Chola king. A few persons feign death whose bodies are taken back to their wailing relatives (Called '*Kattil Savam*'). Later the festival ends with an hour-long percussion. This may be one of the bizarre festivals in the state.

