

REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY

**Deadline: 31 March 2026
for possible inscription in 2027**

*Instructions for completing the form are available at:
<https://ich.unesco.org/en/forms>*

A. State Party or States Parties

Kerala, India

B. Name of the element

B.1. Name of the element in the languages and scripts of the community(ies) concerned

തൃശ്ശൂർ പൂരം

B.2. Name of the element in English

Thrissur Pooram

C. Name of the communities, groups or individuals concerned

Thiruvambadi Devaswom, Paramakkavu Devaswom,

1. General information about the element

For Criterion R.1, States shall demonstrate that 'the element constitutes intangible cultural heritage as defined in Article 2 of the Convention'.

1. *Provide a brief description of the element that can introduce it to readers who have never seen or experienced it.*

Not to exceed 300 words

In the heart of Kerala, where spirituality and tradition intersect with exuberance and celebration, stands Thrissur Pooram - the festival of festivals. Widely regarded as one of the grandest and most colorful temple festivals in India, Thrissur Pooram represents a rich blend of devotion, art, community spirit, and cultural heritage. Set against the majestic backdrop of the Vadakkunnathan temple, widely known as Dakshina Kashi, the Kashi of South India - a revered Shiva shrine and salient witness to one of South India's grandest festival: Thrissur Pooram. Its roots run deep in the soil of Kerala, drawing from centuries of tradition, royal patronage, and the unbroken thread of local participation. Also it is the grand finale of many other poorams held in different parts of central Kerala, and can therefore be called the 'mother pooram' of the smaller sub-poorams that begin around January each year and culminate in Thrissur in May.

2. *Who are the bearers and practitioners of the element? Are there any specific roles, including gender-related ones or categories of persons with special responsibilities for the practice and transmission of the element? If so, who are they and what are their responsibilities?*

Not to exceed 100 words

The Thrissur Pooram, is borne by temple authorities, communities, and specialists. The key organizers are Paramekkavu Bhagavathy Temple and Thiruvambadi Sri Krishna Temple, supported by other eight participatory regions representing their temples. Practitioners include percussionists performing *Melam*, artisans making ornaments, caparisons, and colorful umbrellas, mahouts guiding elephants in processions, and fireworks experts handling displays. Roles are transmitted through hereditary and community traditions, with percussion and craft skills often passed within families or communities. Devotion transcends caste, creed, and social status as millions of people gather to partake in this grand ritual, whether as active participants or spectators.

3. *How are the knowledge and skills related to the element transmitted today?*

Not to exceed 100 words

The knowledge and skills of Thrissur Pooram are transmitted through hereditary traditions, ritual practices, and community participation. Temple authorities, priests, and puja stakeholders preserve and transmit ritual knowledge tied to the Vadakkunnatha Temple and the ten participating temples. Percussionists inherit and refine musical traditions through family lineages and apprenticeships under masters. Artisans making caparisons, ornaments, and umbrellas pass down craft skills within hereditary groups. Mahouts gain practical training in elephant care through generational knowledge, while fireworks specialists inherit expertise within families. Younger members learn by assisting elders, and modern documentation, temple committees, and cultural organizations further support continuity and preservation.

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4. *What social functions and cultural meanings does the element have nowadays for the communities concerned?*

Not to exceed 200 words

Thrissur Pooram today serves as a unifying cultural and social event that reinforces community identity and collective pride. It brings together diverse temple communities, especially Paramakkavu and Thiruvambadi, along with ten participating regions, in a spirit of friendly rivalry and cooperation. The festival provides space for ritual devotion, artistic expression through percussion, crafts, and fireworks, and social interaction across castes, genders, and generations. It strengthens intergenerational bonds through hereditary transmission of knowledge and showcases Kerala's living traditions to wider audiences. Beyond religious significance, Pooram has become a marker of Thrissur's identity, promoting cultural tourism, economic activity, and civic solidarity.

5. *Can the State Party or States Parties confirm that nothing in the element is incompatible with existing international human rights instruments?*

Not to exceed 50 words

Yes, the Thrissur Pooram is a collective cultural celebration rooted in devotion, ritual, art and community participation. It does not involve practices incompatible with international human rights instruments. Instead, it fosters inclusivity, intergenerational transmission, and cultural pride while respecting freedom of belief, expression, and peaceful assembly.

6. *Can the State Party or States Parties confirm that nothing in the element could be perceived as not compatible with the requirement of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals?*

Not to exceed 50 words

Yes, the Thrissur Pooram is a collective cultural celebration rooted in devotion, artistry, and community participation. It does not involve practices incompatible with international human rights instruments. Instead, it fosters inclusivity, intergenerational transmission, and cultural pride while respecting freedom of belief, expression, and peaceful assembly.

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7. *Can the State Party or States Parties confirm that nothing in the element could be perceived as not compatible with the requirement of sustainable development?*

Not to exceed 50 words

Yes, the State Party confirms that the practices associated with Thrissur Pooram align with the principles of sustainable development. Efforts are made to ensure environmental care, animal welfare, and community well-being. The festival promotes cultural sustainability, supports local artisans and economies, and encourages responsible preservation of traditional knowledge and resources.

8. *Are there customary practices governing access to the element? If yes, describe any specific measures that are in place to ensure their respect.*

Not to exceed 100 words

Yes, Thrissur Pooram follows customary practices that govern access and participation. Ritual performances and temple ceremonies are primarily managed by authorized temple authorities, priests, and hereditary communities with traditional rights. Access to specific rituals within the Vadakkunnatha Temple and participating temples is guided by long-established temple customs and religious protocols. However, the festival as a whole remains open to all devotees and visitors, reflecting its inclusive nature. Temple committees ensure that traditional roles and ritual hierarchies are respected, while coordinating with civic authorities to maintain order, safety, and cultural integrity during the public celebrations.

2. Contribution to visibility, awareness, dialogue and sustainable development

For Criterion R.2, the States shall demonstrate that 'Inscription of the element will contribute to ensuring visibility and awareness of the significance of the intangible cultural heritage and to encouraging dialogue, thus reflecting cultural diversity worldwide and testifying to human creativity'. In addition, States are encouraged, with reference to Chapter VI of the Operational Directives, to recognize the interdependence between the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and sustainable development.

Given its extensive nature, criterion R.2 will be assessed based on the information provided in the nomination file as a whole including the answers provided in this section.

1. Do communities concerned consider that the element contributes to the following?

Ensuring visibility and awareness of the significance of intangible cultural heritage

Encouraging dialogue

Reflecting cultural diversity and testifying to human creativity

2. Do communities concerned consider that the element contributes to the following? (select only relevant options)

Quality education

Gender equality

Inclusive economic development

Environmental sustainability including climate change

Peace and social cohesion

Others (please specify):

3. Provide explanations in support of the statement(s) made above, as appropriate.

Not to exceed 200 words

Thrissur Pooram contributes to several aspects of community well-being and sustainable development. Economically, it promotes **inclusive growth** by engaging artisans, percussionists, vendors, and local businesses, generating seasonal employment and sustaining traditional crafts such as umbrella-making, ornamentation, and percussion artistry. In terms of **education**, the festival serves as a living learning environment where younger generations acquire cultural, musical, and ritual knowledge through apprenticeship and participation. **Gender equality** is gradually strengthening, with women increasingly involved as organizers, craftswomen, and cultural coordinators. The festival reinforces **peace and social cohesion** by uniting communities from diverse social and religious backgrounds, particularly through the collaborative participation of Paramekkavu, Thiruvambadi, and the ten associated temples. **Environmental sustainability** is being promoted through the adoption of eco-friendly practices, waste management initiatives, and campaigns for reduced noise and air pollution. Importantly, **elephant health care** has become a central focus, with veterinary supervision, welfare guidelines, and rest protocols ensuring the well-being of elephants used in processions. While not directly linked to **food security or healthcare** in a broader sense, the festival indirectly supports both through livelihood generation and communal welfare. Overall, Thrissur Pooram exemplifies how living traditions adapt to modern values of inclusivity, sustainability, and cultural continuity.

4. States are encouraged to submit audiovisual materials that convey the communities' voice in support of the statements made above (optional).

Materials (written, audiovisual or any other way) are submitted (referred to as 'R.2 materials')

3. Safeguarding measures

For Criterion R.3, States shall demonstrate that ‘safeguarding measures are elaborated that may protect and promote the element’.

What safeguarding measures are put in place to protect and promote the element?

Include in your answer:

- *the description of the safeguarding measures;*
- *the communities' role in the planning of measures described;*
- *the communities' role in the implementation of measures described.*

Not to exceed 500 words

A range of safeguarding measures have been established to protect and promote the cultural, ritual, and artistic heritage of Thrissur Pooram while ensuring its sustainable continuation. These measures are planned and implemented jointly by temple authorities, local communities, government departments, and cultural organizations.

Key safeguarding strategies include the documentation and preservation of traditional knowledge systems related to percussion music, elephant management, ritual practices, and craft traditions such as umbrella-making and ornamentation. Training programs and workshops are conducted to support the transmission of hereditary skills, particularly for young percussionists and artisans. Efforts are also made to maintain the authenticity of rituals while ensuring public safety and environmental sustainability. Elephant welfare has become a major concern, with veterinary monitoring, rest protocols, and guidelines established to ensure ethical treatment and health care. The festival committee and local administration have also introduced measures for crowd management, waste reduction, and eco-friendly celebrations. Additionally, cultural institutions and local media actively promote awareness about the festival's heritage value, supporting its recognition as a symbol of Kerala's living traditions.

The communities play a central role in planning safeguarding initiatives. The Paramakkavu and Thiruvambadi Devaswoms, and other representatives from the ten participating temples, coordinate festival planning through traditional assemblies and temple committees. These bodies collectively decide on ritual conduct, scheduling, and the engagement of percussion ensembles, artisans, and elephant processions. Community elders, hereditary practitioners, and temple priests provide guidance to ensure that safeguarding measures respect traditional norms while adapting to modern contexts. The local municipal body and district administration collaborate with these community representatives to address issues related to safety, environmental management, and public infrastructure during the event.

Implementation is primarily community-driven. Local percussionists' unions, artisans' guilds, and temple volunteers ensure the transmission of traditional skills and uphold standards of performance and craftsmanship. Community groups organize workshops, training camps, and awareness programs for youth to sustain interest in Pooram's traditional arts. Women's collectives participate in making decorative umbrellas and ornaments, supporting both cultural preservation and livelihood generation. Temple committees, along with local NGOs and animal welfare organizations, enforce measures for elephant health care and eco-friendly practices. The public's participation as devotees, sponsors, and cultural enthusiasts ensures that the festival remains a vibrant, living tradition rather than a staged performance.

4. Community participation in the nomination process and consent

For Criterion R.4, States shall demonstrate that ‘the element has been nominated following the widest possible participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned and with their free, prior and informed consent’.

1. Describe how the communities, groups or individuals concerned have actively participated in all stages of the preparation of the nomination.

Not to exceed 300 words

The communities, groups, and individuals concerned have actively participated in every stage of preparing the nomination of Thrissur Pooram, ensuring that it accurately represents the traditions and experiences of those who sustain it. The initiative for the nomination was taken by the Angadi Foundation, which recognized the need to document and preserve the festival as a living cultural heritage of Kerala.

To undertake this task, the Foundation formed a team of researchers and photographers led by Dr. Choodamani Nandagopal, noted art historian and cultural scholar, UNESCO Fellow. Dr Seethal C P, art historian and researcher in Kerala Heritage, with the team conducted extensive field visits to Thrissur, closely observing and recording the rituals, performances, and community participation associated with the festival. They participated in various stages of the Pooram; from the preparatory rituals and temple processions to percussion performances, fireworks, and ceremonial exchanges between the Paramekkavu Bhagavathy Temple, Thiruvambadi Sri Krishna Temple, and the all participating temples.

The research team engaged in direct dialogue with Devaswom representatives, temple priests, artisans, percussionists, and community elders, gathering oral testimonies and lived experiences. Through interviews and discussions, they ensured that the documentation reflected the voices and perspectives of those who bear and transmit this heritage.

All aspects of the festival were systematically documented through photographs, video recordings, and field notes, capturing the cultural, ritualistic, and artistic dimensions of Thrissur Pooram. Based on this, the team prepared a comprehensive film and a detailed dossier describing the historical background, ritual structure, and social significance of the event.

The communities provided full cooperation, guidance, and consent throughout the process, reviewing materials and contributing to their refinement. Thus, the nomination emerged as a collaborative effort between scholars and the participating communities. All collected materials; including the film, photographs, and dossier; are submitted along with the proposal to represent the collective cultural identity and living heritage of Thrissur Pooram.

Consent (written, audiovisual or any other way) to the nomination of the element from the communities, groups or individuals concerned is attached in support to the description above (referred to as ‘consent materials’)

2. Community organizations or representatives concerned

Contact person for the communities:

Title (Ms/Mr, etc.):

Family name:

Given name:

Institution/position:

Address:

Telephone number:

Email address:

Other relevant information:

Additional contact information for main community organizations or representatives, non-governmental organizations or other bodies concerned with the element are attached in a separate annex, and their details can be published on the website of the Convention as part of the nomination

5. Inventory

For Criterion R.5, States shall demonstrate that the element is identified and included in an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage present in the territory(ies) of the submitting State(s) Party(ies) in conformity with Articles 11 and 12 of the Convention.

1. Name of the inventory(ies) in which the element is included

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2. Name of the office(s), agency(ies), organization(s) or body(ies) responsible for maintaining and updating that (those) inventory(ies), both in the original language and in translation when the original language is not English or French

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3. Reference number(s) and name(s) of the element in the relevant inventory(ies)

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4. Date of the element's inclusion in the inventory(ies)

Is the information concerning the updating and periodicity of the inventory(ies), as well as the participation of communities, groups and NGOs concerned to the inventorying process, included in the periodic report on the implementation of the Convention? Yes, the information is included in the periodic report. Specify in the box below the year in which that report was submitted No, the information is not included in the periodic report. Provide information in the box below <i>Not to exceed 200 words</i>

An extract of inventory(ies) in English or in French and in the original language, if different, is submitted

6. Checklist for audiovisual materials

Confirm that the following audiovisual materials have been submitted:

10 recent photographs in high definition submitted

Form ICH-07-photo is attached to grant rights for the 10 photographs submitted

A video (from 5 to 10 minutes) is submitted

Form ICH-07-video is attached to grant rights for the video submitted

R.2 materials (written, audiovisual or any other way) submitted (*optional – with reference to section 2.3; audiovisual materials should last no more than ten minutes*)

Form ICH-07-video is attached to grant rights for the R.2 materials submitted (*only if the materials are audiovisual*)

Consent materials (written, audiovisual or any other way) submitted (*with reference to section 4.1; audiovisual materials should last no more than ten minutes*)

Form ICH-07-video is attached to grant rights for the consent materials submitted (*only if the materials are audiovisual*)

7. Correspondence and signature

1. Designated contact person

Provide the contact details of a single person responsible for all correspondence concerning the nomination. For multinational nominations, provide complete contact information for one person designated by the States Parties as the main contact person for all correspondence relating to the nomination.

Title (Ms/Mr, etc.): To be filled by Angadi Foundation

Family name:

Given name:

Institution/position:

Address:

Telephone number:

Email address:

Other relevant information:

2. *Other contact persons (for multinational nomination only)*

Provide below complete contact information for one person in each submitting State, other than the primary contact person identified above.

Title (Ms/Mr, etc.): Ms. Dr. Choodamani Nandagopal Art Historian UNESCO Fellow
Family name: Vydayagiri
Given name: Choodamani
Institution/position: **Director** Centre of Excellence in Art & Culture, Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath Bangalore
Address: Kumara Krupa Road Bangalore 560001
Telephone number: 98864 43018
Email address: choodamani.nandagopal@gmail.com
Other relevant information:

3. *Signature on behalf of the State Party or States Parties*

Name:
Title:
Date:
Signature:

1.

4. *Name(s), title(s) and signature(s) of other official(s) (for multinational nominations only).*

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