

# ANOMALY IN 'MUHURTA TIME' OF TIRUMALA VENKATESWARA SWĀMIVĀRI BRAHMOTSAVAM



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## ABSTRACT

The starting time or commencement of Srivāri Brahmotsavam, an annual festival, at the Lord Venkateswara Temple at Tirumala, celebrated by Tirumala – Tirupati Devasthānams (TTD) is a total deviation from Vaikhānsa Āgama Sāstra injunction whereas an additional Brahmotsavam festival celebrated in an adhika māsam once in three years comes unaware in total conformity with Āgama prescription of the 'muhurtha time' for the commencement of this most sacred and important temple ritual. The rectification of the deviation occurring due to the erroneous astronomical positions of planets, the Sun and the Moon, in the Luni-Solar Indian almanac (TTD Panchānga) is discussed here with a suggestion of rectification of anomaly in the "Muhurtha Time" for the wellbeing of the Planet and all life living on it.

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**Keywords:** Brahmotsavam, Āgama Sāstra, Muhurtha, Indian Almanac (Panchanga)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Srivāri annual Brahmotsavam is invariably celebrated during a period near the end of September or in early October when astronomically the Sun is in debilitation in Libra (Thula) sign of the Zodiac based on Luni-Solar calendar. All Indian Panchāngas are astronomically far from actual as all of them are Luni-Solar calendars wherein the Sun and the Moon are based on their Nirāyana (Sidreal Zodiac) positions. Today's world order is an eloquent testimony of erroneous Panchānga muhurta timings of temple and domestic rituals. It is high time, a Panchānga based on the Sāyana (Tropical Zodiac) ordained by Varāhamihira (520 A.D), an Indian Astronomer and Astrologer par excellence, is the need of the hour, which is a panacea for all the evils of the world, confusions and controversies. When the "Muhurta Time" goes astray, the world order goes astray and when the world order goes astray, it is catastrophe.

सोमसूर्यस्तृचरितं विद्वान वेदविदश्रुते।  
सोमसूर्यस्तृचरितं लोकं लोके च सन्ततिम ॥४३॥



—R-VJ 30; Y-VJ 43

**Translation:** One learned in the Vedas who has also learnt this lore of the movement of the Moon, the Sun and the Stars will enjoy, after death, sojourn in the world wherein the Moon, the Sun and the stars have their being, besides having, in this world, an unending line progeny.

स्फुटगणितविदिह लब्धा धर्माऽर्थयशांसि दिनकरादीनाम ।

कुकरणकारस्सत्यं सहते नरके कृताऽऽवासाः ॥३७॥

—Varahamihira's Panchasiddhantika. 36

**Translation:** The purport of this is that the person having correct knowledge of the Sun, Moon, etc., gets Dharma which will take care of his future world, Artha which will ensure his prosperity in this world and fame which will perpetuate his memoir. But the bad astronomer who misleads people by his writings will certainly have to go to hell and dwell there.

अन्यक्षेत्रे कृतं पापं पुण्यक्षेत्रे विनश्यति | पुण्यक्षेत्रे कृतं पापं वज्रलेपो भविष्यति || -संस्कृत सुभाषितानि

Anyakshetre krutam paapam punyakshetre vinashyati. Punyakshetre krutam paapam vajralepo bhavishyati.

— Sanskrit Subhashitas

**Meaning:** One can get himself absolved from sins committed by him at other places by doing the pilgrimage of holy places. But if he commits sins at a holy places its ill -effect is permanent like the hardened cement (and such sins can never be absolved).

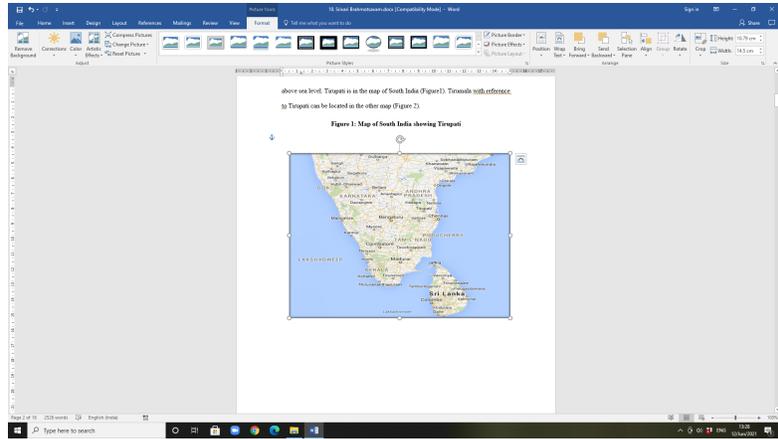
## 2. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF TIRUMALA AND TIRUPATI

Tirupati is a major pilgrimage and cultural city in the Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. It is located at the foothills of the Eastern Ghats, at 349kilometresTirumala - Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh State of South India, is near Geographic Coordinates:Latitude: 13°38' N Longitude: 79°25' E and Tirupati Geographic Coordinates: 13°38' N Longitude: 79°42' E at an elevation above sea level: 156 mft) while the "Garbhagudi" (Sanctum-Sanctorum) is situated as in the map of South India (Figure 1 )

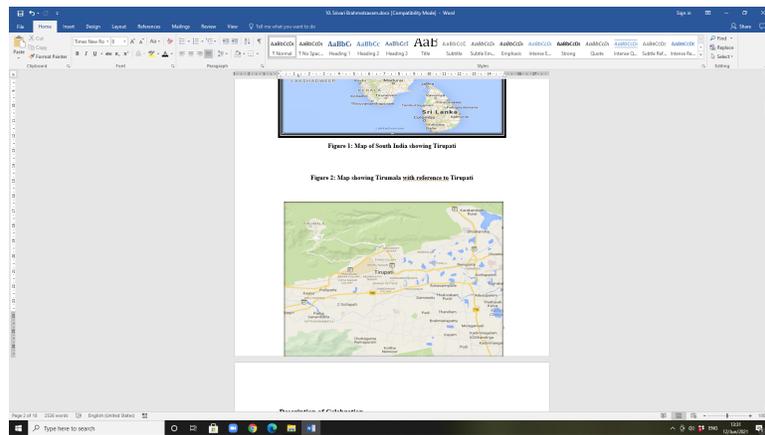
The pilgrim centre Tirumala with reference to Tirupati can be located in the other map (Figure 2 ).

## 3. VAISHNAVA ĀGAMAS

All the temples of the Vaishnava tradition are governed by two distinct schools. Those governed by 'Panchartra Āgamas' and the others governed by Vaikhānasa Āgamas where the hereditary system is in vogue. In the 'Pancharātra' tradition one should learn the important Agamas and attain 'diksha'. Only then are they qualified to func-



**Figure 1** Map of South India showing Tirupati



**Figure 2** Map showing Tirumala with reference to Tirupati

tion as temple priests. For example, the temple in Tirumala follow the Vaikhānasa Āgamas while those in Srirangam follow 'Pancharātra Āgamas'.

The Āgamas are texts derived from various concepts in the Vedas dealing with worship. The Āgamas describe in detail the various forms of God, the methods of temple worship, home worship, fire sacrifices offerings and other related ideas. The Sri Vaishnava Sāmpradāya accepts two Āgamas only as authoritative and non-conflicting with Vedas. They are Pancharātra Āgama and Vaikhānasa Āgama. Of the two, Pancharātra is the pradhāna or main source of authority for the Sri Vaishnavas. Vaikhānasa Āgama is highly utilized for temple worship only and is restricted to a certain group of Vedic priests. Vishnu is the Supreme Lord in the Āgamas.

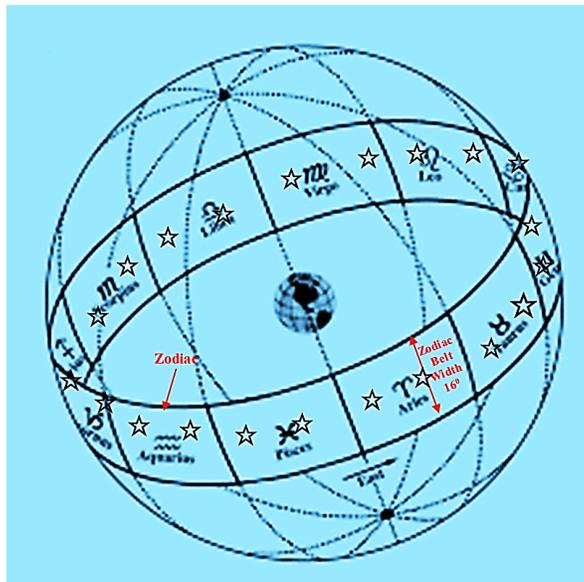
Lord Vishnu divided Himself into two, one as Guru or teacher and the other as Sishya or disciple. The guru taught the disciple for five nights the methods of worshipping God. Hence the teaching was called Pancharātra or work of the five nights. They are all about the methods of worship. Like the Pancharāthra Samhitas, there

is another kind of Samhitas called the Vaikhānasa Samhithas, prescribing the methods of worship in temples. They were taught to Sage Vikasana by Mahā Vishnu and through him to the Sage's descendants. There is not much of a difference between the two, except chanting of some different manthras during the worship.

A preliminary idea about the names of the 12 signs of the zodiac, the Sun's entry into each Zodiacal Sign every month and the transit of Moon in each one of the 27 star constellations (nakshatra of the day) over a period of about one lunar month of 29.5 days and the names of the relevant lunar constellations of the duration of Brahmotavam is a prerequisite to understand the deviation in the present "Muhurta Time" adopted from the actual "Āgama prescribed Muhurtham Time".

#### 4. ZODIAC

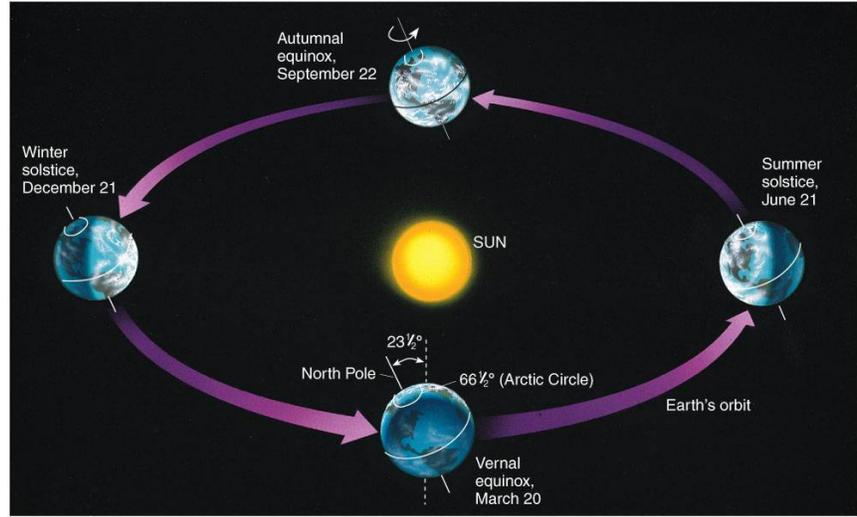
The planets move round the Sun in a circular belt of space in the heavens, about 16 degrees in breadth with 8 degrees on either side of the ecliptic. The ecliptic is the elliptical path among the fixed stars in which the Earth revolves round the Sun as its centre. It can be seen that this is the apparent path of the Sun viewed from the center of the Earth. A series of constellations lie along this belt. This belt is comprehensive enough to accommodate the movements of all the planets. This Milky Way is called the Zodiac. It is along this path that we must locate the positions of the Sun and the Moon (Figure 3).



**Figure 3** The 12 Signs of the Zodiac with the 27 Lunar Constellations

## 5. SUN'S TRANSIT IN THE ZODIAC EACH YEAR

The four-cardinal points of an Astronomical Year are Vernal Equinox and the Autumnal Equinox (equal days and nights throughout the world), the Winter Solstice and the Summer Solstice. The sun in his transit once in a year arrives precisely on the same dates year after year, that is the Sun is at Vernal Equinox on March 20, at Summer Solstice on June 21, at Autumnal Equinox on Sept 22 and at Winter Solstice on December 21 year after year (Figure 4).

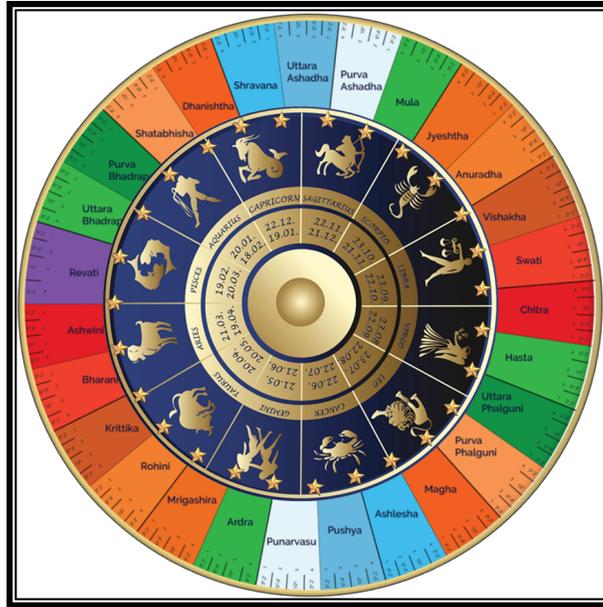


**Figure 4** Sun's Transit in the Zodiac Precisely on the Same Dates Every Year

Accordingly, the following table shows the duration of transit of the Sun in each one of the 12 signs of the zodiac at the rate of about 30 or 31 days in each sign (Table 1).

**Table 1** Sun's Transit in the Zodiacal Signs Precisely on the Same Dates Each Year

Name of the Zodiacal Sign	Astronomical Symbol of the Sign	Transit of the Sun in the Zodiacal Sign
Aries	♈	March 21 – April 20
Taurus	♉	April 21 – May 21
Gemini	♊	May 22 – June 21
Cancer	♋	June 22 – July 22
Leo	♌	July 23 – August 22
Virgo	♍	August 23 – September 23
Libra	♎	September 24 – October 23
Scorpio	♏	October 24 – November 22
Sagittarius	♐	November 23 – December 21
Capricornus	♑	December 22 – January 20
Aquarius	♒	January 21 – February 19
Pisces	♓	February 20 – March 20



**Figure 5** Sun's Transit in the Zodiacal Signs Precisely on the Same Dates Each Year

Vaikhānasa Āgama Sāstra particularly indicates that the annual Brahmotsavam celebrations of Sri Venkateswara Swāmivāru be conducted at Tirumala during the Kanya Māsam (Virgo Month) and in Chitra Nakshatra (Spica Constellation) during the period August 23 – September 23 when the Sun is in Virgo Sign and the Moon in Chitra Star Constellation. At present these celebrations are held annually according to Sidereal Zodiac thus, causing the vexatious problem of cumulative problem of 'Ayanāmsa' outside the said dates in total contradiction of Āgama Injunctions and lack sanctity of Āgamas (Table 2 ).

**Table 2** Names of the 'Stars' of the Nine days of Srivāri Brahmotsavam Celebrations with their Astronomical Catalogue Names

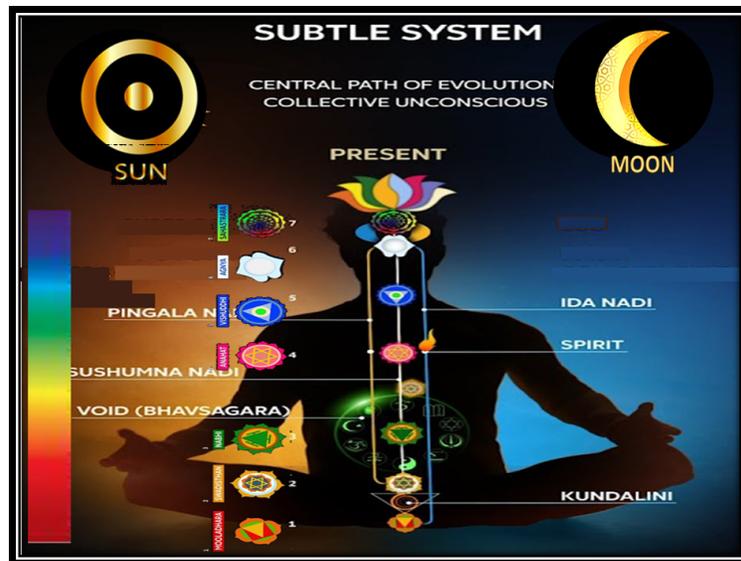
Sl.No.	Nakshatra Name	Astronomical Name
1	Chitra	Spica Virginis
2	Swāti	Arcturus
3	Visākha	Alpha Libro
4	Anurādha	Delta Scorpio
5	Jyeshtha	Antares
6	Mūla	Lambda Scorpio
7	Purvāshādha	Delta Sagittari
8	Uttarāshādha	Sigma Sagittari
9	Sravana	Alpha Aquila

## 6. NAMES OF THE STARS OF THE NINE DAYS OF SRIVĀRI BRAHMOTSAVAM CELEBRATIONS

Vikhānasa Āgama Sāstra dictates that the annual Brahmotsavam celebrations of Sri Venkateswara Swāmivāru be conducted at Tirumala when the Sun is in Kanya Rāsi (Virgo Sign) and the Moon in Chitra Nakshatra (Spica Constellation). The names of the 'Stars' of the 9 days of Srivāri Brahmotsavam Celebrations with their astronomical catalogue names are given herein for easy understanding (Table 2).

## 7. IMPORTANCE OF POSITIONS OF THE LUNAR CONSTELLATIONS, THE SUN AND THE MOON IN TEMPLE RITUALS

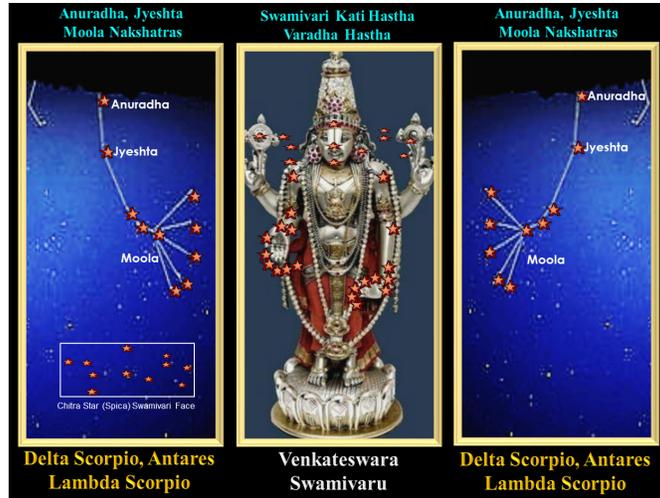
Āgama muhurtas for temple rituals are mainly based on the Sun's position and that of the Moon while the Rāsi (Sign) is defined by the Sun, the nakshatra (Lunar Constellation) is defined by the Moon. These are called Sun-Moon centres or energy centres in Pathanjali yoga sāstra also (Figure 6).



**Figure 6** Sun-Moon Centres (Energy Centres) in Temple Rituals

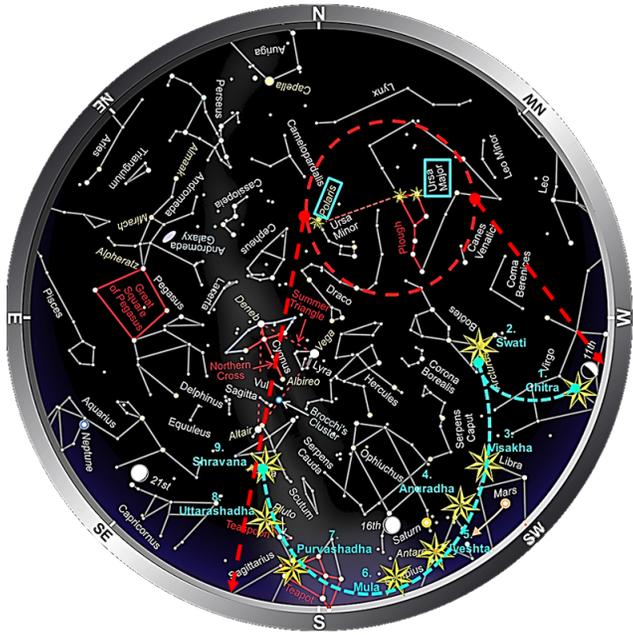
The significance of astronomy in Brahmotsavam is in multitude of ways. During nine-day period of Brahmotsavam, the path of the nine stars is directly under the umbrella of Saptarishi Mandalam rather under the supervision of Saptarishis who worship Swāmivāru daily in early hours of morning as first visitors. The shapes of these nine stars depict the picture of Swamivaru can be seen (Figure 7).

In the diagram of Northern Hemisphere is shown the nakshatra constellations. On the top of the diagram the Saptarishi Mandalam (Ursa Major) is marked in a red dotted circle on the top (Figure 6). From the right-hand side middle to the bottom of

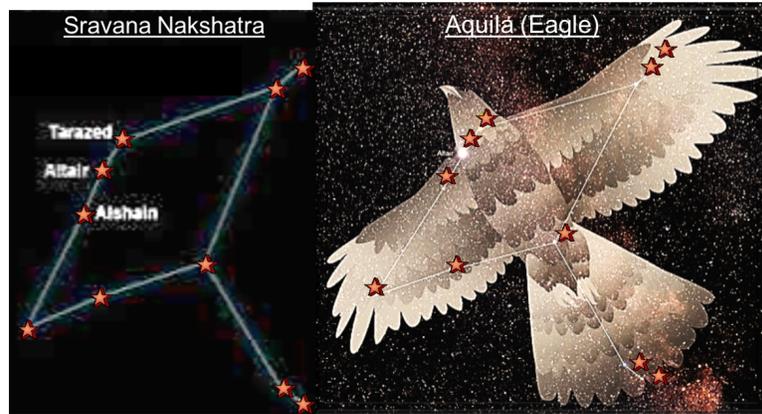


**Figure 7** The Shapes of the Nine Stars Depict the Picture of Swāmivāru

the diagram is marked the nine stars during which period Swāmivari Brahmotsavam is celebrated and finally concluded on the 9<sup>th</sup> day when the constellation Sravana (Aquila), the birth star of Venkateswara Swāmivāru, is ruling. The shape of Sravana (Aquila) means Eagle which is ‘Garuda’, Lord’s ‘āhanam’ (conveyance) (Figure 8).



**Figure 8** Transit of Moon in the Nine Lunar Constellations of duration of Brahmotsavam under the Direct Observation of Saptarishis



**Figure 9** Sravana Nakshatra (Aquila or Eagle or 'Garuda' MahavishnuVāhanam)

## 8. DESCRIPTION OF SRIVĀRI BRAHMOTSAVAM CELEBRATIONS

The annual Brahmotsavam festival is the most important and auspicious function in Tirumala. On the first day, the main activity is the “Dhvajārohana”, the hoisting of the Garuda flag at the Dhvajastambham. This signifies the commencement of the Brahmotsavam. It is believed that Garuda goes to Devalokam and invites the Devas to attend the function. During the days of the festival, the religious activities include daily homas and processions for the utsava murti on different vāhanas (chariots) that can be seen in the temple. Every evening, the utsava vigrahas are decorated with different alankārams. The concluding day falls on Sravana, the birth star or the Janma Nakshatra (birth star) of Sri Balaji, the deity, which is celebrated in a grand way with Avabhrita Utsava (special abhishekams for the utsava murti). In Tirupati, the Sudarsana Chakra is bathed in the Pushkarini and all the devotees bathe afterwards. In Aurora, a priest takes the Sudarsana Chakra on his head and takes a holy bath near the Dhvajastambham. Afterwards, the Chakra is placed on a high platform, so the devotees can walk under it and be blessed with the water dripping down from the Sudarsana chakra. The celebration officially concludes with “Dhvaja avarohanam”, the lowering of the Garuda flag. The priests pay respects to Gods and Sages with the chanting of Vedic mantras and see them off on their return to the Devaloka.

Generally, annual Brahmotsavam is being conducted at Tirumala when the Sun is in Kanya Rasi (Virgo Sign) and the Moon in Chitra Nakshatra (Spica Constellation), as prescribed by Vikhānsa Āgama Sāstra following the Indian Almanac which is erroneous regarding the position of the Sun. Brahmotsavam is celebrated based on the Hindu luni-solar calendar beginning near the end of September or in early October and an additional festival once in three years is celebrated when there is an adhika māsa (extra lunar month) or intercalary month in the year as per lunar calendar. The additional Brahmotsavam at Tirumala which coincides with sarannavarātri (Dasāra) festival days are known as Navarātri Brahmotsavam. In this festival, there is

no Dhvaja-rārohanam ceremony on the first day and Dhvaja-avarohanam on the last day to the satisfaction to those who observe the Saura-chandra māna Panchāngam (Luni-Solar Almanac). Thus, the Brahmotsavam celebrations of each year is a complete deviation from the prescribed “Muhurta Time of Vaikhanasa Āgama Srāstra.”

## 9. MYSTERY OF THE PROBLEM OF DEVIATION OF MUHURTA TIME OF BRAHMOTSAVAM FROM THE PRESCRIBED VAIKHĀNASA ĀGAMA SĀ STRA

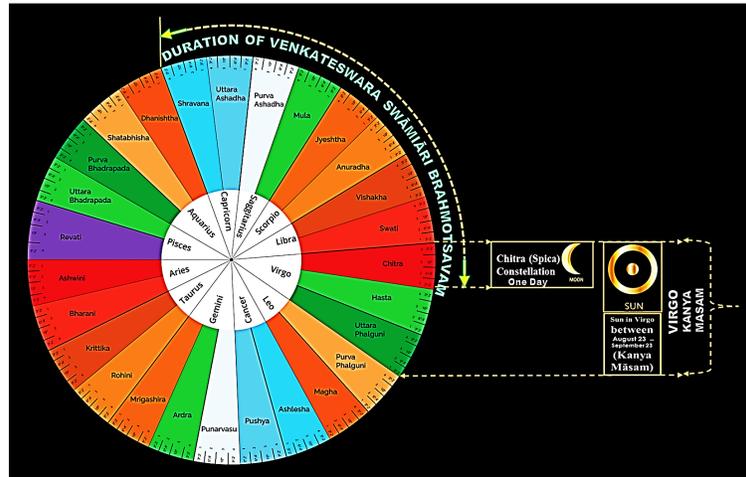
The Moon passes from full moon to full moon or from new moon to new moon in about 29.53 days. This period of 29.53 days of the Moon is called the synodic period or a Lunar month. The difference between the time taken by the Moon to revolve round the Earth and Full moon to Full Moon or New Moon to New Moon is simply explained by the time occupied to overtake the Sun just as the minute-hand in a clock, though it takes one hour to describe one revolution, takes as a matter of fact, one hour and five minutes to overtake the hour hand.

Sun completes one revolution in 1 Year (365.25 days). For one revolution, Moon takes 29.53 days. (It takes 29.53 days to go from one full moon to the other. This is because the Earth is moving around the Sun, so the Moon must rotate a little bit more to get back in the same position).

- Moon makes 12 revolutions in one year in  $12 \times 29.53 \text{ days} = 354.36 \text{ days}$ .
- Difference in time between the Revolution Time of the Sun and Moon's Revolutions time in 1 year =  $365.25 \text{ days} - 354.36 \text{ days} = 10.89 \text{ days}$  i.e.,  $\approx 11 \text{ days/year}$
- In the 1<sup>st</sup> year of Brahmotsavam time there is an inherent error of 11 days.
- In the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Brahmotsavam time there is a cumulative error of 22 days.
- In the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Brahmotsavam, there is a cumulative error of 33 days by August for 8 months.

Admittedly, an anomaly exists in the celebrations of Brahmotsavams between the one practiced in Tirumala and the prescribed “Vaikhānasa Āgama Sāstra Muhurtam” during the Brahmotsavams, one in each year. Of the two Brahmotsavams in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, the error in the 1<sup>st</sup> is absolved by the introduction of “Adhikamāsam” and bring the Sun and Moon in line with the prescribed Vaikhānasa Āgama Sāstra Muhurtam.

Thus, a total of 30 days' error has accumulated in about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years' time and the error is compensated by the introduction of “Adhikamāsam” in August (Intercalary Month) in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year when the additional Brahmotsavam is in tune with the prescribed “Vaikhānasa Āgama Sāstra Muhurtam.” It is clear from the following figure that the Kanya Masam is of 30 days' duration, Chitra Constellation is about 1 day only in Kanya Māsam.



**Figure 10** Positions of Sun and Moon in Kanya Māsam and Chitra Constellation

## 10. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTED RECTIFICATION

Vedic Astrology zodiac is therefore 'Tropical' and not 'Sidereal'. For astronomical or astrological purposes, either in the East or in the West, the 'Moving Zodiac' (Tropical Zodiac) Mesha '0' degrees starting from the Vernal Equinoctial Point and the division of it into twelve signs from the same point is indisputable. The astronomical observations confirm the various dates arrived at by the Sanskritists, historians, etc., regarding the composition of different works as well as the different strata in the layers of Indian civilization and culture. Thus, the Rig Veda was composed during 3000 – 4000 B.C., The Mahābhārath war took place in 2559 B.C., the Vedānga Jyotisha was composed in 1550 B.C., Buddha lived in 520 B.C. and Varāhamihira lived in 520 A.D.

For astronomical or astrological purposes, either in the East or in the West, either for domestic rituals or temple rituals, the moving Zodiac Mesha '0' degrees starting from the Vernal Equinoctial Point which is indisputable. and not from Asvini and the division of the Zodiac into twelve signs from the Vernal Equinoctial point is to be considered for determining the longitudes of planets as well as the Sun including for purposes of making an almanac. In spite of this, Indian Pundits stuck to Asvini as the starting point for determining the longitudes of planets as well as the Sun for purposes of making an almanac and has given rise to a 'Sidereal Zodiac' (Nṛāyana Zodiac) and brought into it cumulative error of about 24 degrees as on date known as 'Ayanāmsa' (Precession of Equinoxes) as on date in their calculation in determining the position of the planets including the Sun.

A word about Indian Almanacs needs a mention here. All Indian almanacs are mainly classified into two categories, namely, Siddhānta Panchānga and Drigganita Panchānga. Both varieties are primarily based on Nirāyana (Fixed Zodiac) System in spite of the ordainments of Varāha Mihira, the father of Indian Astronomy and Astrology. Even sage Satyāchārya and Bhattopala advocated the same. The advice went

into deafening years of Indian pundits who stuck on to fixed zodiac system for over 1500 years since the time of Varāha Mihira and based their calculations accumulated with an unpardonable error.

All rituals, temple or domestic, are based on astronomically accurate positions of planets, lunations, and Nakshatras for obtaining the earthly and celestial benefits in this life and beyond. With astronomically inaccurate positions of planets, lunations, and nakshatras, rituals go astray. When rituals go astray, the world order is seriously jeopardized. In fact, the present world order is an eloquent testimony to the foregoing remarks witnessing danger to Dharma, peace, nonviolence resulting in increased threat to orderliness in society and the very existence of the world we live in. It is not high time at least to wake up to set right the performance of rituals, correct in terms of time and methodology, for the benefit of posterity. It is therefore suggested that the present system of celebrating Srivāri Brahmotsavam be continued without seriously affecting the age-old belief and in addition, every year for the first two years also an additional Sriivari Brahmotsavam celebration be carried out during the period between August 23 – September 23 in tune with the Vaikhānasa Āgama Sāstra injunction. Thus, there will be two Brahmotsavam celebrations every year, one in tune with the Āgama Injunction and the other Navarāthri Brahmotsavam, as there is no restriction in worshiping the Lord any number of times for the good of the country and good of all life living on the Earth. It must be remembered that while the Sun transits Virgo Sign for one month, the Moon transits for one day only in the Chitra Constellation and any delay in the conduct of the Brahmotsavam renders the positions of Sun in Libra and Moon in Scorpio. Libra for the Sun and Scorpio for the Moon are the debilitation signs and renders these two planets highly weak bereft of any energy and no longer can be considered energy centres to bestow beneficial results for the planet and all life living on it. It is not advisable to commit a sin with wrong calculations in a sacred place like Tirumala as is evident from the following shloka.

अन्यक्षेत्रे कृतं पापं पुण्यक्षेत्रे विनश्यति |पुण्यक्षेत्रे कृतं पापं वज्रलेपो भविष्यति || -संस्कृत सुभाषितानि

Anyakshetre krutam paapam punyakshetre vinashyati.Punyakshetre krutam paapam vajralepo bhavishyati.

— Sanskrit Subhashitas

**Meaning:** One can get himself absolved from sins committed by him at other places by doing the pilgrimage of holy places. But if he commits sins at a holy places its ill -effect is permanent like the hardened cement (and such sins can never be absolved).

Yajurveda Vedānga Jyotisha states that one who knows the lore of the movements of the Sun, Moon, etc., will have good progeny, wisdom, peace prosperity and good health in this life and enjoyment of higher lokas and ultimately very soon attain moksha thereafter.

## 11. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors do report no conflicts of interest. The authors alone are responsible for the content and writing of the paper.

## 12. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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