



## BRAHMOTSAVAMS AT SEVENHILLS SACRED COMPLEX-TIRUMALA-INDIA

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### KEYWORDS :

#### Introduction

Lord Venkateswara is known as Kaleyuga dyvam and Tirumala is known as Kaleyuga Vyakuntam. Venkata + Eswara together known as Venkateswara. The procession are mainly at Tirumala but Brahmotsavam is special.

Sri Venkateswara Swami vari Brahmotsavam or Srivari Brahmotsavam is the most important annual festivals celebrated at Sri Venkateswara Temple in Tirumala-Tirupati of Chittoor District in Andhra Pradesh, India. The event is conducted for nine days during Hindu Calendar month of Āśvina which falls in between the English months September and October. The paper focus its attention on Tirumala Brahmotsavams based on secondary data.

During the festival, the Utsava-murti (processional deity) of the presiding deity Lord Venkateswara, along with his consorts Sridevi and Bhudevi, will be taken on a procession on different Vahanams on the streets (Madaveedula) surrounding the temple. The celebration attracts pilgrims and tourists from all parts of India and across the world. A Brahmotsavam is a holy cleansing ceremony in honor of Lord Brahma, and the one at Tirumala is by far the largest.

The Hill here slopes from 3200 ft. to 2000 ft. The most noteworthy ones are Tumburu Kona, Akasa Ganga and Papavinasam.

**Topography:-** Whether the pilgrim ascends on foot by the old pathway or travel by the new motor road he will arrive at the top of the hill at about the same spot near to the temple. He will there find the Enquiry office of the Devasthanam and the Devasthanam Dispensary facing him.

#### Celebration

The Brahmotsava is performed over a nine-day period in the beginning of Āśvina Masa as per the Hindu Lunar Calendar (in parallel with Navarathri/Dasara festival). On the evening before the start of the first day, the rite of "Ankurarpana" (sowing of the seeds to signify fertility, prosperity and abundance) is performed along with a festival for Vishvakshena (the leader of Narayana's retinue who removes obstacles and protects worship). On the first day, the main activity is the "Dwajarahana," the hoisting of the Garuda flag at the Dhvajastambham. This signifies the commencement of the Brahmotsava. 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 of utsava-murti on different Vahanams on mada streets (roads surrounding the Temple). Every evening, the utsava-murtis are decorated with different alankarams. The concluding day is the Janma Nakshatra (birth star) of Sri Venkateswara, which is celebrated in a grand way with Avabhrittha Utsava (special abhishekams for the utsava murti). In Tirupati, the Sudarshana Chakra is bathed in the Swami Pushkarini and all the devotees bathe along with the Chakra. In Aurora, a priest takes the Sudarshana Chakra on his head and takes a holy bath in Swami Pushkarini. 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 Sudarshana. The celebration officially concludes with "Dhvajarahanam," 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.

#### Dwajarahanam

Dwajarahanam is a flag-hoisting festival that is held on the first day by hoisting a flag (dhvajapatam) with a picture of Garuda (Mount of Vishnu) on the top of the Dhvajastambham of the Temple. The flag will be hoisted amid Vedic chanting. It is believed to be a symbolic significance of formal invitation to all the deities to attend the Brahmotsavam festival. Before flag-hoisting the processional deities of the Temple, Malayappa by his consorts Sridevi, Bhudevi, will be taken in a procession along with Dhvajapatam and Parivara devathas such as Anantha, Chakra, Garuda and Vishvakshena. After Dwajarahanam, The Chief Minister of Government of Andhra Pradesh symbolically offers new silk clothes to the Lord as a custom.

#### Pedda Sesha Vahanam

After the Dwajarahanam the Lord is taken out in a procession in the evening on Aadi Sesha the thousand headed Chief Serpent God as his vehicle. Aadisesha is the seat on which Lord Sri Man Narayana rests in his abode Sri Vaikunta. Tirumala hills the abode of Lord Venkateswara is said to be the manifestation of Lord Aadisesha. Pedda Aadisesha vahanam will be seven headed.



#### Chinna Sesha Vahanam

On the second day morning the Lord is taken out in a procession on Vaasuki (Serpent God) as his vehicle. In Bhagavath Geetha Lord Sri Krishna says He is Vaasuki among the serpents. Chinna Sesha Vahanam will be five headed.



#### Hamsa Vahanam

On the second day evening the Lord is again taken out in a procession on Hamsa (Swan) as his vehicle. Hamsa or swan means 'pure'. Hamsa is believed to have a high intellectual capability and can distinguish good from bad. He is decorated as Saraswati goddess of knowledge.



#### Simha Vahanam

On the third day morning the Lord is taken out in a procession on Lion symbol as his vehicle. Lion is a symbol of royalty and power. Lord assumed the form of half man and half lion in his Narasimha Avathara. Lord Sri Krishna says in Bhagavath Geetha that he is the Lion among the animals.



#### Muthyala Pallaki Vahanam

On the evening of the third day, the Lord is again taken out in

procession along with his consorts Sri Devi and Bhoo Devi in a palanquin decorated with a canopy of pearls. Pearl is said to be a symbol of purity and royalty.



#### Kalpa Vruksha Vahanam

On the fourth day of the festival the Lord is taken out in procession in the morning on Kalpa Vruksha as his vehicle signifying that he is the giver of boons to his devotees and fulfills their wishes.



#### Sarva Bhoopala Vahanam

On the fourth day evening the Lord is again taken out in procession on a vehicle called as Sarva Bhoopala Vahanam signifying that He is the Lord of Lords.

#### Mohini Avatharam

On the fifth day morning the Lord is taken out in procession decorated in the attire of Mohini Avatharam (Ksheera Sagara Madhanam) the one who has distributed the Divine Nectar. All Vahanas will start from vahana mandapa which is outside the main temple, but Mohini avatharam starts directly from the temple in dantha pallaki (palanquin) along with lord krishna idol in another palanquin.

#### Garuda Vahanam

On the fifth day evening the Lord Sri Venkateswara is taken out in procession specially decorated, with his main devotee and chief vehicle Garuda (Garukmantha) the king of birds as his vehicle. It is a unique occasion when thousands gather together and would like to witness the procession. It is believed and said that it is highly meritorious and mukthi pradham to have darshan of the Lord seated on Garuda, the vahana of lord vishnu. During Garuda vahanam, Venkateswara will be decorated by garlands sent from Srivilliputhur Andal temple. These garlands were adorned to Andal before sending it to Tirupati. These traditional garlands are made of tulsi, sevanti and sampangi flowers. Every year Tirupati Venkateswara's garland is sent to Srivilliputtur Andal Temple for marriage festival of Andal.



#### Hanumantha Vahanam

On the sixth day morning the Lord is taken out in procession with Lord Hanuman as his vehicle. Hanuman was the personification of the most trusted and selfless service to the Lord in his avathara as Sri Rama in Treta Yuga. Undoubtedly Lord Hanuman was the greatest devotee of Lord Sri Rama.

#### Swarna Rathotsavam / Gaja Vahanam

On the sixth day evening the Lord is taken out first for Swarnarathotsavam and then in procession on Elephant (Gaja) or Airavatham as his vehicle. We find in Sri Madbhagavatham (Gajendra Moksham) Lord instantly coming to the rescue of Gajendra and get him relieved from the clutches of the Crocodile.



#### Surya Prabha Vahanam

On the seventh day morning the Lord Venkateswara is taken out in procession with Sun God driving the Chariot. Purusha Sooktha describes Sun as born from the eyes of Lord Sriramanarayana (Chaksho! Suryo Ajayathah!). Sun is said to be an incarnation of Lord Maha Vishnu (Surya Narayana).

#### Chandra Prabha Vahanam

On the seventh day evening the Lord is again taken out in procession with Moon as symbol of his vehicle. Purusha Sooktha describes Moon as "Chandrama Manaso Jaathaha" (Moon is born from the mind Lord Maha Vishnu). Moon is the commander of mind and is a symbol of cool and pleasantness. Both these rituals are symbolic significance that He is the cause for day and night.

#### Rathostavam

On the penultimate day (eighth day) morning the Lord Venkateswara is taken out in procession along with his consorts seated on a fully decorated Chariot pulled by the devotees with the chanting of Govinda Nama Smarana. Tirumala will be flooded with devotees to witness this occasion. It is believed and said that those who witness the Lord seated on the Chariot during Rathostavam will not be reborn. Idols of Daruka the charioteer of Lord Sri Krishna and four horses are placed before the Lord on the chariot. one should be blessed to witness this at Tirumala. NAMO NARAYANAYA

#### Ashwa Vahanam

On the eighth day evening the Lord is again taken out in procession with Aswa (Horse) as his vehicle symbolizing the forthcoming Kalki Avathara. Lord Venkateswara used to ride on a horse during hunting of wild animals. Lord assumed the form of Horse head during his avathara as Hayagreeva.

#### Chakra Snanam

On the ninth day morning, last day of the Brahmotsavams, special abhishekam known as Avabhrutha Snanam is held for processional deity Malayappa and his consorts Sridevi and Bhudevi along with Sudarshana Chakra (Disc weapon of Vishnu) at Varaha Swamy temple on the banks of Swamy Pushkarini. Later, the Sudarshana Chakra is immersed in the waters of Swamy Pushkarini. Large number of devotees will take a dip in the water of Pushkarini simultaneously. It is believed that one will get absolved from sins by taking a dip in Swamy Pushkarini simultaneously along with the Sudarshana Chakra on this day.

#### Dwajaavarohanam

On the ninth day evening the Garuda flag will be lowered as a mark of completion of the Brahmotsavam. The jeeyangas will be there along with priests. They will chant various mantras. It is performed in the dwajastamba mandapa. The priests will then lower the Garuda dwaja and the festival will soon be completed.

Some of the views of the nature of the Lord Venkateswara's image have been indicated above. Devotees who flock to Lord Venkateswara at Tirumalai worship him in various forms as their "Ishta Daivam" as Lord Vishnu, Skandha or Subrahmanya, Siva, Sakthi, a combination of the Trimurthis Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, or as Venkateswara, a combination of Hari and Hara. There can be no finality in the arguments of any of these devotees nor is it desirable to pursue such arguments of conflict and impertinence when the Lord is One and Only One.

From the Hindu point of view, the Lord is ONE and answers devotees by whatever name the Lord's *Chaitanyam* or Active Principle is invoked. Lord Venkateswara is this Absolute One.

Lord Venkateswara thus is the Lord of Lords, the One and only God. And as the One, He answers those who turn to him and pray to him. He is our father in Heaven of the Christian faith, the Allah of the Islamic faith, and the One that goes by various names in the Hindu pantheon and the numberless other paths in the Universe that lead to Him. He is the Narayana, the Universe that lead to Him. He is the Narayana, the All-pervading One, a Katyavalambita Murthi, who protects and releases all from bondage. *Sarva Dharman Parityajya Mamekam Saranam Vraja* is the message of this Absolute One, who says, 'Seek Me the One for thy protection and I shall deliver thee from sin and bondage'. May this Lord bless us all; *Sarvey Jana Sukhino Bhavanthu*.

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