HISTORY OF THE TEMPLE

Thiruvannamalai is one of the most venerated places in Tamil Nadu. In ancient times, the term "Annamalai" meant an inaccessible mountain. The word "Thiru" was prefixed to signify its greatness, and coupled with the two terms, it is called Thiruvannamalai.

The temple town of Thiruvannamalai is one of the most ancient heritage sites of India and is a centre of the Saiva religion. The Arunachala hill and its environs have been held in great regard by the Tamils for centuries. The temple is grand in conception and architecture and is rich in tradition, history and festivals. The main Deepam festival attracts devotees from far and wide throughout South India. It has historic places besides Thiruvannamalai, Arni, Vandavasi, Devigapuram connected to East India and French companies. In the late Chola period this district was ruled by the Chola of Sambuvarayar having Padavedu near Arni as headquarters. We can now find the history of Thiruvannamalai a Siva temple.

3.1. DISTRICT FORMATION

After independence Thiruvannamalai was under North Arcot District. The civil district of North Arcot was divided into Vellore district and Thiruvannamalai district in October 1989. Thiru. P.Kolappan IAS was the
first Collector of Thiruvannamalai District. On the whole Thiruvannamalai is traditionally rich in Historic and spiritual values but lacks in industrial growth.

3.2. THIRUVANNAMALAI

Thiruvannamalai is one of the 'Panchbhuta sthalas' dedicated to Lord Siva appeared as a 'Jothi' or Fire and is being worshipped as a Jothi lingam. The name Thiruvannamalai is taken from the hill near the temple and the deity is called 'Arunachaleswarar'.

3.3. LOCATION

The Thiruvannamalai town and the Annamalaiyar temple are situated in the present Thiruvannamalai district. Before 1989, it was in the North Arcot district. The Thiruvannamalai town is located close to 80° longitude and at 12° – 15° latitude. Thiruvannamalai itself is a taluk. There is a railway station on the Villupuram Katpadi route, 226 kms from Chennai. It is connected to all other important cities like Vellore, Bangalore, Salem, Trichi, Kumbakonam, Chidambaram, Cuddalore and Puducherry through bus routes. The town stands on an elevation of 79 – 80 kms above sea – level. Accommodation is available both in the guest-houses maintained by the temple authorities and in the lodges in the town.
3.4. THE TEMPLE

The temple occupies an area of about 25 acres with four large 'gopuram' on each side. The largest 'gopuram' is above the eastern entrance which is the main entrance. There are five major 'prakaram' or corridors around the central structure with a high wall running on all four sides at the edge of the outer 'prakaram'. There are numerous shrines for other deities in the temple complex and Goddess Parvathi has a separate shrine on the third 'prakaram'. She is named 'Unnamulai Ambal'.

Annamalai achieves its importance as a venerated and holy place as it is mentioned in Hindu mythology and legends and also by its association with saints, sages and religious men and women who have sung the praises of the deity in their devotional outpourings. The temple also has an important place as a repository of historical chronicles with its large amount of inscriptions on its walls and pillars. These are studied and researched by historians as an attempt to understand the life in the country centuries ago.

3.5. HISTORICAL GLIMPSES

Thiruvannamalai is an important Saivite centre of Tamilnadu, famous for its impressive and historic temple of Arunachaleswara. During the Karthigai festival the entire Annamalai hill will be lit up with thousands of lights. The hill is appropriately called in Sanskrit as Arunachala – or the Hill of Fire. The lord is worshipped here as the very incarnation of Fire, an
element of Nature. The vast temple complex at the foot of the hill is one of the largest of its kind in Tamilnadu and contains a number of inscriptions throwing valuable light on the history of the place⁴.

The temple has received the one mūlam of the Tevaram hymns and also saint Manickavasagar, the presiding deity is described as great effulgent fire, the dispeller of darkness and the symbol of purity. Later saints like Sekkilar and Arunagiri have also sung about the sacredness of the temple. The hill is called the very personification of the Almighty who is beyond human measurements (Annamalai)⁵.

3.5.1. UNDER CHOLAS

This temple with its halo of the Tevaram hymns grew in importance and dimensions in subsequent ages. The walls of the central shrine contain many early Chola records. Thus, there at inscriptions of Parakesari Aditya II one of which records the gift of gold by his Chera queen Kilandigal. There is also an inscription of Kannardeva (Krishna III), the Rashtrakuta king who invaded Tamil country and occupied its northern parts for a few years. But the presence of the inscriptions of Aditya II here and in the South Arcot region clearly shows that the Cholas had recovered the area from the Rashtrakutas.

In the first prakara wall, we see the records of Rajendra I, Virarajendra, Kulottunga IV, besides many Pandyan and Vijanagar
inscriptions. The inscription of Virarajendra records some repairs to the
tank. The inscriptions of Kulottunga III and his feudatories are found in a
many places in the basement of the Killigopura, which was constructed
during his period also the gilding of the vimana of the central shrine was
done by his Bana chief Rajarajan Ponparappinan alias Vanakovaraiyas of
Arkalur this Bana chief is described in several inscriptions as the hero of
many battles and builder of many temples. He is called 'Ponparappinan' as
he was responsible for gilding the vimana of the Thiruvannamalai temple.
The other chieftains and officers of Kullottunga III who gave endowments to
the temple were Adiyaman, the chieftain of Tagadur in Ganganadu, Karikala
Chola – Adiyurnadalvan, Rajagambhira Chedirayan, Cholendra – Simhan
Pridhvi Ganga – Vikramachola Sambuvaraya.

There are also a number of inscriptions of the last two of the imperial
Cholas viz., Rajaraja III and Rajendra III. They show that the feudatories
became more prominent at the cost of the central authority. Thus, a gift was
made to the temple for the merit of Vanakovaraiyan (Bana) (491); and also
by Telugu – Chola chief Tirukalattideva (495), Smabuvaraya chief Edilisola
(551). Gifts given by royal ladies are also recorded such as those by the
daughter of Yadavaraya chieftain and another by Imai Yadavaraya chieftain
and another by Umai Alvar, queen of Illakkumadeva.
3.5.2. KADAVARAYAS

The Kadavarayas became powerful chieftains during the 13th century with their capital as Sendamangalam in South Arcot District. They were feudatories of the Cholas in the beginning but later defined their authority and even imprisoned the Chola king Rajaraja II. Kadavan Kopperunjingan was a colorful personality who did daring exploits and became de facto ruler over many parts of Tondaimandalam. A Tamil verse found in the first prakara wall records the gift of several ornaments like necklace by him and the erection of many structures by his son. Another records the gift of ornaments, silver vessels and golden spoon and cup by his queen Sadum Perumal. Gift of ornaments by one Virasekhara Kadavaraya is also recorded. During this period Nagai – Alwar queen of the chieftain Nilagangaraiyan, set up an image and gifted a lamp.

3.5.3. UNDER THE PANDYAS AND HOYSALAS

When the Chola king Rajaraja III was imprisoned by his own chieftain Kopperunjinga, the Hoysalsa who were ruling over Dwarasamudra in Mysore intervened and re-established the emperorship for a brief period. They even assumed the little 'Cholasthapanscharya. From then on the Hoysala influence in the politics of Tamilnadu was growing. The Hoysala generals (Dandanayakas) became active here and enjoyed de facto sovereignty. Thus, during the reign of Rajendra III Hoysala general Mahapradhani Singana Dandanayaka exempted the lands of Thiruvannamalai temple from
taxes. One of the gopuras at Thiruvannamalai is called Vallala Gopura. That it is a Hoysala construction, being confirmed by a record starting that the tirumadil was erected by Singana- Dandanayaka Vallaka which had the Tamil form for Ballala. This Hoysala activity in the Tamil country was briefly cut short by the Pandyan expansion under Jaravarman Sundara who spread his authority right up to Kanchi and Vellore.

All the earth while Chola feudatories now acknowledged the pandyan over lordship that is how we find the inscriptions of the Pandyan kings like Maravarma Kulasekara in this temple. But soon, when the Pandyas became weak due to internal dissensions and the Muslim armies from the north penetrated the south (A.D 1310 - 1327), we see the Hoysalas becoming once again active in these parts Hoysala king Ballala III was already in the Pandyan borders to help Vira-Pandy against is brothers.

Meanwhile the Hoysala capital was attacked by the Muslim armies which forced the Hoysala king to shift his capital to Kannanur (near Tiruchi) and later on to Thiruvannamalai. From epigraphic evidence, we come to know this Ballala III was active in Thiruvannamalai region from A.D. 1318 to 1343. He attempted to capture Kannanur from Thiruvannamalai. In 1338, he assumed the title 'the emperor of the south'. His inscriptions found on first prakara wall named him Pratapa chakravartin – Vira Vallaladeva and are dated s. 1262- A.D 1340- 41. His presence with his general Dati Ballappa Dandanayaka at Thiruvannamalai early in 1341 is an evidence of important
military activity. But his attempts were frustrated by the subsequent Muslim invasions

3.5.4. UNDER THE VIJAYANAGAR

The Vijayangar kings who were great patrons of Hinduism lavished gifts on innumerable temples of our land. We get a number of inscriptions recording their various gifts to this temple. One of their earliest records belonging to Harihara and dated S. 1299 i.e., A.D., 1377 s found one the Vellala-Gopura wall. It records a gift of paddy and money for the employment of watchman at this gopura. Another record of his son Virupanna Udaiyan is dated S. 1310 (A.D. 1388). It makes provision for the recital of the Vedas by five persons for the merit of Kampana-Udaiyan made by his son Jamanna Udaiyar. Another record of Vira Vijayabhupatiraya, son of Vira Deva Raya dated S. 1335 (A.D. 1413) refers to the gift of cows made by Annadata Udaiyar, son of minister Savundappa Udaiyar, son of minister Savundappa Udaiyar. Saint Arunagirinathar, who has sung the Soul-stirring Tiruppugal songs and who was born here, has paid tributes to the ruling Vijayanagar king Prabhuda Deva Raya.

The celebrated Vijayanagar monarch Krishnadeva Raya who had built several gopurams in South India such as those at Hapi, Ekmpranathar temple of Kanchi and Chidambaram temple etc. He had also built the 100-pillared and 1000-pillared mandapas, the tank near it and also the eleven -
storeyed gopura. This is inscribed on the slab set up near the Thousand Pillared mandapa and dated S, 1438 (A.D. 1516) (574)\textsuperscript{11}.

3.5.5. UNDER THE NAYAKS

The other Vijayanagar kings whose records are found in this temple are Sadasiva, Tirumala and Sriranga; but they were only nominal over lords and the real de facto power had gone to Sevappa Nayak of Thanjavur mentioned in the inscriptions. This Nayak ruler was responsible for many benefactions to the temple. An inscription on the eastern gopura of the temple dated S. 1494 (A.D.1572) praises him for construction or rather completing the eleven strayed gopura. It is stated to have been done at the instance of the two tapasvins Sivanesa and Lokanatha. The inscription contains verses composed by Srinivasa Dikshitar, who was probably the court poet. He was much honored in the court of Thanjavur Nayak rulers, especially I that of Raghunatha from whom he is said to have received the surname of Ratnakhatadvari. There are also, in the same gopura, Sanskrit verses composed by Govinda Dikshitar and Tamil verses by Kalmadatu-mudaliar\textsuperscript{12}. Govinda Dikshitar became the minister of Senappa's successors Achyutappa and Raghunatha and earned a name for his administrative capacity and charitable disposition. Sevappa also assigned several villages to the temple and prouded tax-exemptions. Another inscription of probably the same period but without dated or king's name refers to the construction the mani-mandapa and a tank in the temple.
Thus, Thirivannamalai temple is rich in its historical association beginning from the days of Tevarams when it was probably a small shrine. But it gradually grew in size and popularity, thanks to the benefactions made by the kings and queens, chieftains and officers and the common folk, who had an abiding faith in the Lord of Arunachaleswara. It is a fined example of a vast south Indian temple reared and beautified in the course of several generations. Several Tamil and Sanskrit inscriptions that are found in the temple walls of the shrines and mandapas and the gopuras of this temple prove the continuity in the history of this great temple. We get a picture of the political, economic and social conditions of the people of the olden times. Apart from the rule of the major dynasties like the Cholas, we come to know how the place came under the hold of Rashtrakuta king Kannaradeva in the 10th century; the feudatories like the Kadavarayas and Sambuvarayas in the 12th-13th centuries; the Pandyas in the 13th and 14th centuries; and the Hoysalas who occupied the place their temporary headquarter during their stormy struggle for survival.

Another remarkable feature of this temple is that we see the architectural contribution of several dynasties well-preserved in one complex. Thus, we have the smaller shrines built by the Cholas; the vimana of the central shrine was gold-gilded by a Bana Chieftain in the 13th century; the Kadavarayas built many structures in the same country; the Hoyasalas built the Vallala-gopura and perhaps embellished some portions with paintings; the Vijayanagar kings built several mandapas including the 100
pillared mandapa, the tank and also one of the gopuras; of Nayak king Sevappa of Thanjavur who constructed the eastern gopura and also probably the mani-mandapa and a tank also. Thus, the Thiruvannamalai temple has grown with the ages and was held in high esteem by the devotees for whose continued devotion and patronage it was an eloquent symbol. The rich literature that has grown round the temple, the graphic inscriptions that are found inscribed on its walls, the beautiful architectural and ichnographic examples that abound the temple would ever remain as a source of education and inspirations for the devotee as well as his historian^{13}.

3.6. MODERN HISTORY

Mr. Dupleix succeeded Dumas as Governor of Pondicherry. Then, in 1748, British reinforcements, intended for the recovery of Madras, arrived with a new fleet under Boscawin. Pondicherry in its turn was besieged, but once more French enterprise was aided by British ineptitude in securing a French success. Due to the war between Dupleix and La Bourdannais in 1748, Madras was restored to the English and maintained the statuesque. But the restoration revealed a profound change in the politics of South India. Three taluks adjoining Pondicherry viz., Valudavur, Villianur and Bahur were handed over to Dupleix as reward for his kind assistance, during the Ambur battle in 1749^{14}.
Mr. Dupleix refused to admit defeat and with enormous resource continued the struggle. He even besieged Trichinopoly a second time in 1753. The triumph of Arcot was followed by more victories at Arni, Kaveripakkam and Valikandapuram over the forces of Chanda Sahib and the French. So the campaigns continued throughout the year 1753. But early in 1754, Dupleix was forced to open negotiations with the British. Meanwhile the French company had decided upon his recall. Due to the hostilities between the English and the French in 1756, neither Madras nor Pondy was properly garrisoned.

D’ Auteuil, one of the officers of Dupleix captured Elavanasur. The French then took Thiruvannamalai and other forts, threatened Thyaga Drug, and attacked Fort David, in spite of the fact that their fleet was defeated by the English fleet in an action off Nagapattinam. After Nayak rule, this region seems to have gradually passed into British hands except for a brief period of subordination to the Mysore Odeyars (AD 1816).

3.7. UPANISAD’S VIEWS ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE TEMPLE

Thiruvannamalai is one of the most sacred temples of Tamilnadu. It is considered superior to all the other eminent temples. While Tiru Arur confers salvation or mukti to one who is born there, Thiruvannamalai confers
salvation to one who merely thinks of it. No wonder this temple is the most important, as it points out the easiest way to salvation.

The tradition of Thiruvannamalai is that the Supreme Power appeared there is long time ago to remove the ignorance and ego of Brahma and Vishnu, the two great divine powers when they quarrelled among themselves as to who was superior. This story has its origin in the Kenoupanishad where we find it in another form.

Keno Upanisad is the second of the ten principal Upanisad commented upon by Sankara and now studies by all students of Indian philosophy. Its importance is such that sankara is said to have written two Bhashyas on it. It consists of four sections. The first two sections define the idea of Brahman as the one supreme Power and show its distinction from the created world. The third section deals with a story where Brahman appeared before the devas in the form of a blazing light to remove their ignorance and ego when they boasted that their victory over the Asuras was due to their own might.

The important legend of Thiruvannamalai has the same story. In Saiva religious lore, five ancient shrines are held to denote the live elements. Tiru Arur is the prithivi sthala, dedicated to earth air, and Chidambaram is the akasa sthala, subtle ether. There is a relevancy in calling Thiruvannamalai the Agni sthala. Siva enshrined here in the Jyothir linga. Annamalai is also known as Arunachala, the hill of fire (Aruna – red, achala hill). The Tamil name is also significant. Annamalai means the hill (the peak
of) which could not be reached. The consort of Siva here is known as Unnamulai Gnanasambandhar mentions, Her name in his Devaram song of this place. A remarkable legend, probably derived from the Kenoupanisad legend, will explain the name Arunachalam\textsuperscript{17}.

As ages gone by, Brahma the Creator and Vishnu the preserver disputed between themselves as to who was greater an who was Supreme. This dispute was a prolonged one and so Lord Siva decided to teach them the truth. He appeared before them in the form of a column of fire, an effulgent Light. When the two saw it, they referred their quarrel to Him. He told them that he who could discover the crown of the Light or its foot first might be considered as the superior.

Accordingly Brahma took the form of a swan and flew up in an attempt to find the crown of the Light. While Vishnu took the form of a boar (Varaha) and began to dig down to find the foot of the Light. Neither succeeded. Then light dawned upon them that the Light was superior to both of them. This is the significance of Aunachala. The karthigai festival is celebrated to bring out this great trough that the Supreme God is far beyond the ken of the Creator and the Preserver. Brahma and Vishnu there upon prayed to the column of Light. Siva to be ever present in the place in the form of a linga. Siva agreed. The hill of Thiruvannamalai is that linga, the sthavara linga.

Karthigai is the name of both a month and nakshatra in the Tamil calendar. The month corresponds to November-December and the
nakshatra is plaiding according to the legends have grown around this karthigai festival. The constellation karthigai appears as a group of six seats in the firmament, in the shape of a pendant from the ear. The stars are considered in Indian mythology as the six celestial nymphs who reared the six-faced Muruga in infancy in the Saravana tank. Muruha is consequently called Karthikeya, one brought up by the Kritika nymphs. Usually the annual karthigai festival is celebrated in Tamilnadu when the moon is in conjunction with the asterism Karthigai. This is especially important in Thiruvannamalai for various reasons.

In memory of this Light, the whole temple is illuminated with thousands of lamps, big and small, and every home is also illuminated in the evening with hundreds of lamps. It is indeed a grand sight to see the temple tower lights shedding their twinkling light throughout the darkness of the whole night. A special offering is made to Siva on this day, considering of tried or puffed rice mixed with treacle.

In the city of Thiruvannamalai, the same procedure is adopted for the festival even today. Hundreds of thousands of devotees and pilgrims gather in the outer courtyards for the temple from early afternoon waiting for the appropriate time in the evening when the symbolic fire will be lit. Sri Arunachaleswara is taken in a procession around the courtyard. At the appointed time (usually about 5 p.m) the fire on the hill in the back ground is lit. This fire is made of vast quantities of camphor supported by more than a hundred liters of ghee. The fire continues to burn for the whole of the night.
and is visible even at a distance of eight miles. It continues for several days and nights following the moment the fire is lit on the hill, a deepa – aradhana (waving of camphor lamp) is made to Sri Arunachaleswara. The assembled bhaktas have a simultaneous darsan of the Lord in the temple as also of the column of Light on the hill.

There is a great sore of devotional fervour when the sea of humanity sounds with one voice ‘Annamalaiku- arohara’ (hail, Hara, Lord of Annamalai ) and the sound lingers for a long time echoing from one wall to the other and back, and even going as far back as the hill and resounding. Caste, class, creed, age and sex are all forgotten and every one seems to have an intense feeling that he is enveloped in the grace of fasting and pilgrimage to the temple by several lakes of people has now reached its culmination and every one now departs to his home after receiving His prasadam in the form of sacred ash.

The same ritual is followed in every temple with devotional fervour. In the place of the huge light on the hill of Thiruvannamalai each temple erects a sokkappanai in front of the shrine, some distance away from it. This is mostly made of combustible materials such as palmarah leaves. Lighting of this sokkappanai and karpura aradhana to the deity in procession is done simultaneously and this symbolises the end of the karthigai festival.

The lighting of a large number of lamps, both in the temples and in the devotee’s homes on the karthigai day has been a very ancient observance. Saint Gnasambandhar refers to this on one of his songs. In the moving song
sung by him at Mylapore in order to bring back to life the young maid Pumpavai from her ashes, he addresses her and asks, “Will you go away from this world without witnessing this festival? The first verse refers to the general feeding of Sica – ganas as a festive ritual. The second rears a Unam festival in the month of Aipasi. The third verse speaks of the Karthigai festival. He asks, “Will thou go away, Pumpavai, without witnessing the festival of lamps lighted by young damsels on the ancient Karthigai day sacred to the Lord of Kapalisvara”.

The image of Lingotbhava, installed at the goshta (niche) just behind the Mulavar on the outer side of the garbhagraham in all Siva temples is symbolic of the manifestation of the Jothi in Thiruvannamalai.  

3.8. PURANIC HISTORY OF THE TEMPLE

3.8.1. THE LINGAM AS SIVA

The Siva Purana specifically states that there is no greater worship then that of the Sivalingam. The Sivalingam holds within it all the sacred principles that explain the functioning of the Creative in the universe. In order to bless the world, Siva decreed the greatness of His form as the Linga visible to everyone in the holy centres, as well as in other places. There is no limit to the number.

The entire earth, the entire universe is in the form of a Lingam, and that whatever is seen, described or remembered is Siva's form.
The Sivalingam is the cosmic unity of Divinity. The Lingam is Ruparupam revealing that Siva is the Form and Formlessness of the universe. The Lingam is visible or invisible, stationary or mobile. Many Sivalingam have a cylindrical stone that is rounded at the top resting on top of a large circular stone. The circular stone has a spout on the side that faces north. There are Lingams of different shapes as well as sizes. They are formed of earth, of rock, and even of metals-the entire universe of the seen and the unseen being a Lingam. Siva and Sakti.

Just as Lord Siva remains ever in close embrace of the Goddess Parvati, so also the emblem holds onto the pedestal, forever.20

The Sivalingam in Thiruvannamalai is one of the five Sthalams known as the "Pancha Bhuta Lingams" that stretch in their majestic Yantric Pattern, across the Indian Southern land and influence the soul of the holy Nation.

For the benefit of the world the Siva Lingam in Thiruvannamalai is the Self Manifested Holy Mountain, the reddish Aruna Mountain.

Inherent in Yantric design, is the geometrical spacing and its inner form. In other words, that which can be seen; its form, and the power and influence derived from it; It's Formlessness = Ruparupam.

The Prithvi - Sand (earth) Lingam in Kanchipuram, Ekaambareswarar.

The Appu - Water Lingam in Thiruvanaikkaval, Jambukeswarar.
The Theyu - Fire Lingam in Thiruvannamalai, Arunachaleswarar.
The Vayur - Air Lingam in Kalahasti, Kalatheeswarar.
The Aakasam - Ether Lingam in Chidambaram, Chidambaraeswarar,

These five elements; Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Ether are the Eternal elements of Siva within our earthly realm and make up the composition of our existence. These elements, so crucial to our life on this earth, should be seriously reflected upon, because they are our vital energies. Though sincere contemplation on the significance of these energies, one can Endeavour, through Yogic practice, to obtain mastery over those factors which hold us back from progress.

The temples of Tamil Nadu have seven areas. There are seven paths known as Prakarams. These Prakarams match the seven sites of our body, and these can also be compared to the seven stages of spiritual awakening, the removal of the seven veils of ignorance that cover our being.

Of the sacred traditions and rituals connected with the sacred Mountain in Thiruvannamalai, the legacy of the Theyu (Jyothir) Fire Linga is the profound enlightenment concerning the manifestation of Divine Siva as the sacred Mountain Linga that confers salvation.

Siva, for the sake of the vision and worship of the world, became diminutive in size resembling a mountain of fire. Famous as the reddish Aruna Mountain. The other wonderful account that concerns the greatness of the location is the profound legacy of Ardanarisvara. This heritage explains with utmost clarity, the wonderful penance of the Divine Mother and
the delight, when she attained Siva's left side: Oneness with Her Lord and Master. These important Divine living legacies are the Blessedness which have come directly from Siva Himself, and they are without doubt established the area of Thiruvannamalai as a gathering place for the worship of the Divine.

3.8.2. THE THEYU JYOTHIR LINGA

O all-pervading Lord I worship you,
If, as a fruit of that worship,
you grant me the privilege,
Of becoming a Brahma or a Vishnu,
I shall have to assume the form of a swan,
Or even a boar to see You again,
How can I bear the sorrow?
Therefore, grant me O Lord,
Without delay—eternal bliss.

Many years ago, before our forebears existed, during the first Kalpa of the world an egotistical argument arose between Brahma and Vishnu, as to establish the individual greatness.

The quarrel commenced when Brahma saw Vishnu reclining on His thousand headed serpent couch surrounded by His wonderful retinue of attendants. Seeing Vishnu resting in this manner, Brahma asked him who he was and why he did not get up from his couch and pay homage to him in the appropriate manner. On hearing Brahma’s words Vishnu became very annoyed, explaining in His thunderous voice that everyone in the universe,
including Brahma, sprung from the lotus blossom of his navel region. Thus the contest between Brahma and Vishnu began with both of them trying to ascertain their superiority over the other.

The two monarchs, with increasing agitation, and with dignified show of presence, mounted their respective Vahanas (vehicles), the mighty Swan and Garuda. Then the courageous pair in their attempt to show who was the most distinguished, commenced their fight, clashing in unrestrained combat in their battle for supremacy.

The sky erupted as they fought their missiles and weapons blazing and clashing in the skirmish. Brahma with His terrible pasupata weapon and Vishnu in his fury, discharging the Mahesvara weapon at Brahma. The earth and sky shook, clouds of smoke billowed everywhere as arrows and weapons of every description filled the air.

The Devas in their chariots looked on with dismay witnessing their monarch fighting this terrible battle over superiority. It seemed as if there was nothing that could stop them. Terrible to behold, their weapons blazing like a thousand suns, Brahma and Vishnu raged like a terrible storm in their attempt to show their supremacy. Their armour clashing and missiles flying through the air, a maelstrom of destruction was occurred.

The Devas, in their concern of being caught in the devastation emitting from the terrible wrath of their two monarchs decided that something had to be done to restore tranquility. With trepidation, they decided that they should appeal directly to Lord Siva Himself, to settle the dispute. Flying in
their chariots to Kailasa, the peaceful and spiritual abode of Lord Siva, the Devas saw the Supreme Lord of all together with Uma, his charming and Gleaming Consort, seated on an altar of fine gems. Shedding tears of joy at the awe-inspiring sight, the Devas fell to their knees at respectable distance, bowing in reverence to the astounding jewel-crested Divine\textsuperscript{24}.

\begin{quote}
O Infinitely Infinite Effulgence,
Obeisance to You
O lord adorned with snakes,
Obeisance to You Obeisance to You
O Ancient Cause,
Obeisance to You
O Effulgence O flame
O Lamp of encompassing light,
Obeisance to You
O half of Uma of curly tresses,
O transcendent One,
Obeisance to you
O Milk-white ask smeared One,
Obeisance to You
O the One whom Brahma of the lotus and Vishnu do not know,
Obeisance to You\textsuperscript{25}.
\end{quote}

On hearing their words of reverence to his wonderful jewel-crested form, Esvara consoled them thus:

\begin{quote}
Children mine, all flourish in their duties to Me
All is known to me.
Agitation is of no avail
Sweet as the honey is the way of the Lord All.
Hearken, how the flutes play their tune
\end{quote}
See how the Omkara Chariot flies with swiftness through the air
See how Ambika sits in beauty by my side knowing all that happens
the flags wave in the breeze
The Karthigai Flower descends scattering
Perfume fills the air.
I will settle on the battlefield like a blazing sun.
I am the Karthigai Flower
Falling from the head of Siva
It has taken me a very long time in my descent
You cannot see the top
On seeing me the Karthigai Flower
Say that you have seen the summit.
I will act as a witness for this event
Even falsehood is recommended in times of danger\textsuperscript{26}.

After the pleasant journey, the great Vishnu began to feel tired. His long journey into the earth, searching for the root of the flame had been arduous. Deciding to return whence He came, he joined Brahma. Together they stood in reverence, facing Siva in His wonderful visible flaming form. Vishnu, with hands clasped together in reverence adoring Siva, the Creator of All, explained that he was unable to find the root of the excellent awe-inspiring flame.

Seeking to delude, Brahma said, “In my flight upwards I found the top of the glorious flame and I have the Karthigai flower as a witness of this event”\textsuperscript{27}. When the Almighty Infinite One heard Brahma’s speech, He became rudely enraged and created the mighty Bhairava who, after
requesting reverently what is duties were, proceeded to seize the tuft of hair from Brahma's fifth head.

The gigantic Bhairava was an impressive and the most terrible sight to behold, standing astride with His chest puffed out and head thrown back. With the tuft of hair caught between the nails of his mighty figures, he prepared himself to detach the head of Brahma with a nick and one great twist of his gigantic wrist. Great shudders of fear filled the hearts of the spectators, when they saw what happened. Then falling down, supplicating themselves before the Blue Throated One, they pleaded for mercy. Seeing their wonderful entreaty, Siva demonstrated His great benevolence by sparing Brahma. Yet because the deed committed by Brahma deserved punishment, the Great One rebuked Him for trying to assume a false role in such a manner.

When Siva punished Brahma, the Great One decided that He could not leave the world without the help of the monarch. He thus proclaimed the punishment for the deed, Brahma would never be honored in this world by enshrining a temple in his name. Further Brahma was granted a special blessing from Siva that is difficult to achieve. From that auspicious time due to Siva's grace in remembrance of that event, Siva said:

Even though a sacrifice is complete with all the ancillary tires and offerings of gifts, it will be fruitless without you\textsuperscript{28}. 

\textsuperscript{28}
With hands pleaded together and with the utmost reverence the two great monarchs paid homage to Siva acknowledging His greatness and their allegiance to the Mighty One.

When the column of fire grew thicker in its wonders mighty Flaming Linga Form, the wonders force was shown to be Siva Himself-without beginning and without end. On seeing the truth of this amazing sight, Brahma and Vishnu, who were made humble, supplicated themselves before the Mighty one. Special articles were used to glorify Him, with lamps, sacrificial threads garlands, incense, camphor sandal-paste. Music was played; mantras were chanted together with many other items that constitute the excellent worship for the adoration of the Lord of All.

O Brahma and Vishnu, I am Brahman because of Brhatva (huge size) and Brmhanatva (causing to grow). O children, I am Atman due to Samatva (equality) and Vyapakatva (Pervasiveness). The Isatva in me is to be known as the embodied form and this symbolic column is indicative of my Brhamtiva. Since it has all the characteristic features of my emblem, it shall be my symbol. O sons, you shall worship it every day. The Lingam Symbol and the symbolised Siva are non-different. It brings devotees quite near to me, It is worthy of worship.

Forgive us out sport, for you are Lord of all,
Behold Esvara, who everyone is entitled to knowe.
Who is the Primordial Fire,
Who has no beginning,
Who has no end.
Who can be worshipped in His Linga state.
Who is that Mountain Arunadri Column.
Worship Him with due respect.
With all the mighty things as we do now.
Adore the Lord of all.
With due reverence,
Adore Him

Siva spoke, "Since I manifested in the form of a blazing Linga in the field of battle, this place will be known as Lingasthana. This column without root or top will henceforth be diminutive in size for the sake of the vision and the worship of the world. The Linga is the only means of worldly enjoyment and of salvation. Viewed, touched or meditated upon, it removes all future births of living beings. Since the Flaming Linga rose high, resembling a Mountain of fire, this shall be the famous reddish Aruna Mountain. Many holy centers will spring up there. A living or death in this holy place ensures salvation. The celebration of festivals, the congregation of devotees as well as sacrifices, gifts and offering of prayers in this place shall be million fold efficacious. Of all my sectors this sector shall be the greatest. A mere remembrance of me at this place shall accord salvation."

3.8.3. THE SIVA LINGA MOUNTAIN

At the time of the Arudra –Star at the auspicious time of Margashirsha, which falls in the earthly months of November or December, special worship is performed to the Jyothir – Mountain Linga, which is Siva’s embodied image.
The glorious adoration of Siva, which lasts for over ten days, is known as the Karthigai Deepam Festival. It is a spectacular festival of veneration and celebration as well as a very special time for remembering that it was here that Siva manifested instantaneously as a colossal Linga of fire that had no beginning and no end. This is the Jyothir Linga Mountain.

Out of His Divine Arul (Grace) renders salvation of the world, Lord Siva manifested as the Jyothir Linga at that place, known as Lingasthana. This place is known as Lingasthana, the only place for means of enjoyment and salvation in this earthly world. The Mountain Linga can be seen, touched, and meditated upon and is available to everyone.

Since Siva grew as enormous as the Column – of – Fire, and because. He is the Cause of the whole universe which was generated out of Himself, which has no beginning and the no end, it is our of His Divine-Love that the Mighty One reduced the vision of Himself in size, so that the we might take part in this miraculous sight.

Since the Aruna Mountain is embodied here on Earth for all mankind – it calls souls to it. The Jyothir Linga Mountain is the Living Siva and is the center of the pilgrimage of this world. The area of the Jyothir Linga is without doubt the most venerated. Spectacular spot on this earth. The mountain linga is the mighty Siva, the cause of the universe, lingasthana.

It was decreed that many holy centers will spring up here, and that a living or death in this place assures liberation. That the celebration of chariot festivals, the congregation of devotees, the presentation of ordinary as well
as sacrificial gifts and chanting of prayers at this place is manifold efficacious. When a devotee mere thinking of Arunachala Siva at this place accords salvation to all souls. For the means of salvation of souls, Aruna Mountain calls loudly to seekers of Truth. Unknowing, in what seems like unfathomable mystery, Siva’s Mighty- Call reaches out like a powerful magnet. Siva’s magnetic call reaches outwards, far and wide into the world of souls, living in far off places. Then, if they so desire, they can go see and witness for themselves the Mountain of Vision and be forever knowingly united with Him.

The Call of the Mighty Aruna Mountain is Siva’s call to everyone who has developed the ears of the soul, so that they might hear and partake of the Truth of the vision in this world of form.

3.8.4. THE PRAYER OF VISHNU AND BRAHMA

In the Arunachala Mahatmyam, Vishnu and Brahma, clearly define, in their prayer to Siva that of all Lingas that are on this world; are divinely but, here alone it is “Self Originating:” In order that the Devas, Danavas and Gandharvas who travel in mid-air, might not be impeded in their passage, we pray thee, to draw this bright pillar within and establish Thyself, in the form of a hill with the name of Sonachalam (Arunachala) and so bless Thy devotees. We pray to thee, also to take the form of a Linga on the East of the hill, so that we can worship Thee by pouring libations of water over It and by waving lights before It"31.
3.8.5. THE SIVA SAKTI UNION

The Lord of all creatures who is besmeared with ashes,
Who ha swallowed poison and has the quarters of the
World for His garments, who has matted hair and is,
Garlabbed with the king of the serpents, an who holds
A skull for a begging bowl in His hands, is called
Lord of the universe because of His marriage with Thee
O Mother Bhavani\textsuperscript{32}

The second magnificent tradition associated with Thiruvannamalai
explores with utmost depth the union of Siva with his sakti. This union
profoundly discloses the deep mystical foundation that maintains the
universe in perfect equilibrium. In order to explain the wonderful significance
of the second tradition to you, one must endeavor to explain the union of the
Intelligent Infinite One, the Creator of Everything, with His Sakti. This is not
only difficult, it is indeed impossible to explain in its entirety, with the fullness
of complete essential purity contained within it.

In Siva there exists an unlimited abyss of glory, and from the
profundity of glory emanating from the Great One, who is capable of
producing many an offspring, there goes forth but one spark which makes all
the glory of the sun, and of the moon, and of all the stars and planets, and of
all living beings. Thus Siva is both the Father and the Mother The producer
of all. Of everything that can be seen by us and of that which we cannot
see. He is the Maker of everything; The Creator of the Universe. Siva’s
Sakti is eternally conjoined with Him for the maintenance of universal order. As the Mother, she is the most evident form we can know in this world of form. Through her, all can be understood.

The Mother’s names are many, and beautiful are her wondrous forms. She is the mysterious Eldest One, the Great Tripurasundari, who dwells in the kadamba Forest, shining brighter than thousand suns. She is the Great Lalitha of a thousand names. She is the Divine Mother, who holds the thread upon, which the universe is held together. She is the Bride, the wife of Siva, called Bhuvaneswari, who is the Mother of the Universe, Ruler of the Devas, who has an access of mercy and love out of Her truly beautiful nature. She is the Beautiful path of wisdom, and knowledge.

None is equal to Her, and She is always with Him. Through Her grace, the father can be found. The mother manifests in all states. She wears the garland around Her graceful neck and hidden in Her are the roots of all letters, all numbers, and all knowledge. The Mother is wisdom combined with understanding and love, where one can lay at rest, sweetened by the perfume of Her presence. She is the Wife of the Ruler of Matter. The five senses, which are open by Her grace lead to salvation. The potentiality of the whole object world exists as the Sakti of Siva.

Supreme as He is, Siva is symble of Pure Consciousness. Matter is Maya, which is unconsciousness arising from the phenomenal world of the senses. The link between the two, Pure-Consciousness and matter, is Mother Sakti, who is full of infinity of aspects, the chief of which are:
It is Mother who mediates between Pure-Consciousness and Matter and thereby is the Nature of Consciousness forever engaged in the rescue of souls from him Fetters of Matter (Maya). To know Her is to know all.

3.8.6. ARDHANARISVARA AT ARUNACHALA

The following legend and religious evidences explain the reason Ardhanarisvara is worshipped so prominently during Deepam at Arunachala. A Murti symbolising the union of Siva-Parvati is displayed inside the compound of Arunachaleswarar Temple immediately after the fire is lit on top of the Hill.

The Goddess once playfully closed the eyes of her beloved thereby plunging the world into darkness and causing suffering to all living beings. The Universal mother comprehending her folly started worshipping Lord Siva in the form of a Lingam to absolve herself of the sin and reunite with him. After visiting Kanchipuram first, Parvati proceeded to Thiruvannamalai to do her penance. While performing penance at Pavalakundru (with the help of Sage Gautama), the demon Mahishasura came and disturbed Parvati’s tapas. The Mother then took the form of Durga Devi and destroyed the demon on Full Moon Day of the Tamil Month of Karthigai during the auspicious hours of Pradosham. Satisfied with his Goddess, Lord Siva
presented himself in the form of Fire atop the hill and merged with Parvati - thus was created the half-man, half-woman aspect of the Lord, symbolising the oneness of all beings. To commemorate this event, every year during the festival of Annamalai Deepam, Lord Ardhanarisvara presents himself as Jyoti Svarupa to his devotees.

This fusion of Siva and Sakti representing the male and female halves transcends the distinction and limitation of male and female and takes the Lord to a level beyond gender-manifest Brahman, realization of which means liberation. Siva is snow-white while Sakti is golden. He is substance while She is substrate. Siva is static; Sakti is dynamic and creative. Siva is being and Sakti is becoming. He is one; She is many; He is Infinite and She renders the Infinite into finite; He is formless and She renders the Formless into myriad forms; But both are one. Siva and Sakti exist in Nirmala Turiya state (Stainless Purity)\textsuperscript{34}.

When it comes to worship of Ardhanarisvara, some worship the Siva aspect and some worship the Sakti aspect. Siva is viewed as the Holder of Power, though he is inert. Siva is Sava (dead body) without Sakti. All the power in creation, maintenance, and dissolution rests with Sakti. But the Great Mother does not exist without Siva. When they become one Ardhanarisvara becomes a being of enervative and constructive force.

Philosophically, this form portrays the boundless Grace of God. The formless God is called Parasiva. On Its own free-will for the benefit of pasu (soul), which are drowned in pasa (bondage), it thinks to create the worlds.
Its dynamism of creation thus springs out of it, which is called Sakti. Now Siva and Its power Sakti create everything. This is the form of their togetherness that makes every existence active. Siva and Sakti is one and the same Supreme. They are associated like the person and the action of the person. They are one and the same like ice and the water - one becomes the other. Siva and Sakti are compared to gold and gold ornaments; they are the same; Siva is hypostasis and when this force fuses with Sakti, it results in a multitude of manifestations.

It was the Divine Mother of all, who saw Siva’s wonderful form after doing great penance on the Hill. At His request, she did pradakshina around him the Blazing Mountain Linga. After she had passed around the North West side it was she that took Her rightful place in Her Lord’s left side.

How magnificent is the Motherhood of God,
Who manifests herself nurturing within Mankind
How magnificent is the expansion of Her sport,
As She pierces mountains, flashes lighting,
Wielding nature in myriads of ways,
Creatures appear and disappears
Thy fire burns,
The earth evolves,
The seasons change
This is the functions of Her dynamic ways.

The bride of Siva obtained union with Siva after great penance. They became bound together in the Mystical marriage as the One – Luminous – Supreme – Wisdom. This Wisdom is the force inherent in existence. It is this
force that is Ardhanarisvara who spreads the Siva-Sakti union into the world of matter. The Bride stands next to her groom. The Siva-Sakti union is shining on many paths, expanding the truth of union into our world. What this means, on one side there is the material universe with different names and forms, and on the other the supreme out of which the material universe emanates. This is the marriage of the supreme Siva with His sakti, the ever united couple whose marriage is belong celebrated every second. This is the harmonious linking together of the divine and the natural world, as is also the ideal in all ancient beliefs. Be they Chaldean, Egyptian, Chinese, Everything is the divine.

The very ground of the earth itself, including trees, plants, minerals and every living breathing entity because we are all part of this earth and heaven. Call it what you will Light, Life, Love, Father, Holy Sprit, Mother, Son Take them all as being the very nature of that one Element Divinity. For the Creator created all as part of Himself. Some call this knowledge, “Concealed Mystery” because it is difficult to understand this balance out of which all is produced\textsuperscript{36}. It is open to all who have love for the Divine and the heart to listen. Since the Creator is the Head in all that is supreme, He alone is without body for the purpose of establishing things.

The supreme goes forth from the concealed as that revealed White Brilliance of glorious influence expanding into the many paths in this world of form. Forever joined as divine light with that world him that ancient one, who is the grace of graces, is manifested. All things are light. Mother
understands. The divine couple is associated together. They generate and expand in truth. And since Mother Sakti is crowned with the crown of the bride by the groom, His grace is forever in Her, whereby all things may be purified through Her.

All things are thus. If it seems that the father is more concealed of the two, this is because, she, the Bride of Siva is His ornament of ornaments. His way of placing Himself in this world. It is between the two, where the Divine couples stand and bless the world that the lives of saints and devotees oscillate; serving Divinity with longing in the germs of their ecstasy—

the true mystery is discovering that there is no division. The Divine couples are one. If one fixed Siva who is the golden light reflected in nature in one’s thoughts, and praised Him as the Lord of All things, and with love sought His grace, then Siva will bestow final bliss

So long as one element of the being, one movement of the thought is still subjected to outside influence not solely under Thine, it cannot be said that the true union is realised.