CONCLUSION

Temples in proper form have come into existence in India only long after the Vedic period. They were constructed strictly in accordance with Agamas and Silpasastras. They were intended to represent the body of human being in which the soul resides in the same way as they represent in a far wider context, nature in which God resides. According to great sages like Tirumular, our body is the temple par excellence. It is temple in motion. Tirumular states as follows:

“Ullam perum koil unudambu alayam
Vallar piranakku vai gopura vasal
Thella therintharkku seevan sivalingam
Kallappulan ainthum kalamani vilakkey”

Pati, pasu and pasam are the three realities accepted by saivism. Among them god is conceived in three forms namely rupam, arupam and ruparupam. Sivalinga represents the transcendental aspect of Lord Siva. Various views are there about Sivalinga but alternatively it represents the formless aspects of Lord Siva.

As it is explained in the second chapter, the concept of God is seen in the form of Sivalinga. Thiruvannamalai the home of Annamalaiyar or Arunachaleswarar (Siva worshipped as a Siva Lingam) and Unnamulaiyal (Apitakuchalambal - Parvati), is one of the largest temples in India. It occupies a special place in the Saivite realm and is regarded as one of the
Pancha Bhuta Stalams (one of the five grand temples associated with the five basic elements.

Five ancient temples in South India enshrine Siva as the manifestation of the five basic elements of wind, water, fire, earth and space respectively. All of these five temples are widely visiting centers of worship and are repositories of ancient worship traditions.

Kanchipuram near Chennai in Tamilnadu the is home to the Ekamreswarar temple enshrining Siva as a Prithvilingam symbolising the element earth.

Sree Kalahasti in Andhra Pradesh is where the manifestation of Siva in the form of the element air – Vayulingam.

Chidambaram in Tamilnadu enshrines Siva in the form of Nataraja and in the form of the formless element space – Akasha lingam.

Tiruvanaikkaval or Jambukeswaram near Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu is the ancient temple holding Siva in reverence as a personification of the element water – Jala lingam.

Thiruvannamalai in Tamilnadu is an ancient center for Siva worship. The Annamalai hill is symbolically regarded as a tall column of fire or the Tejolingam.

In majority of the Saivite shrines Sivlinga is enshrined in the temple. But in Thiruvannamalai the Aruna hill is primarily considered as the Linga. Lord Siva appeared in the form of effulgent light before Lord Vishnu and Brahma to remove their ignorance in the claim of superiority of one over the
other. This flame on the request of the Lords cooled and settled as Aruna hill. This is the origin of the Aruna hill. Then the lords requested Siva to appear as a small Linga in order to offer ablutions, and Siva did so. This is the Suyambu linga (self originated) enshrined in the Annamalaiyar temple.

The Thiruvannamalai temple is located at the foot of a hill, over 2668 feet in height. This hill itself is considered by geologists to be of igneous rock which means that it is related to fire; probably the rock was more lustrous in the very remote past and hence the appropriateness of the Jyothir linga concept to this place. The temple is a very large one, occupying an area of twenty-five acres. It has tall towers on all the four outer walls but the one over the main eastern gateway is the tallest, reaching a height of 217 feet in eleven tiers.

The Thiruvannamalai temple is situated in Thiruvannamalai district. In Saiva religious lore this temple or sthala denotes of Agni sthala as the Lord Siva is enshrined as the Jyothir linga. The Lingodbhavar installed at his niche just behind the Mula linga in all in Siva temples is the symbolic representation of the manifestation of the Jyoti in Thiruvnnamalai.

The temple town of Thiruvannamalai is one of the most ancient heritage sites of India. In most of the holy places the Deity is found atop the hill. But here the Holy hill itself is the Deity (Lord Annamalaiyar) and is worshipped. "Arunam" means sun and denotes the red colour of fire. "Achalam" means "Giri" or "malai" (mountain). Thus "Arunachalam" means the Holy hill which is red in colour. The Holy hill is 2668 ft. high.
The Annamalai Hill was Agni (fire) during Kirthayugam, was Manikkam (Emerald) during Threthayugam, and was Pon (Gold) during Dwaparayugam and rock during Kaliyugam.

The temples originate for the purpose of enshrining an idol, the all pervading God in a concrete form. The temples also derive their names from the deities enshrined in them. The Thiruvannamalai temple is the best example as Linga with the name Annamalaiyar. The temple is the representation of the sacred centre of a human being.

The third chapter discusses the history of the temple. Thiruvannamalai temple was constructed by various dynasties in various periods. As far as available sources, this temple was constructed by the Cholas, the Pandyas, the Hoysalas, the Vijayanagaras and Nayakas, but in latter days various parts of the temple was renovated by the Government and private endowment boards. But this is one among the Pancha bhuta linga shetram – Jyothir Lingam. Puranic history says that the egoism of Lord Brahma and Vishnu and also the significance of Karthigai Deepam.

The fourth chapter explained the structure of the temple. The innermost prakara is a close court with two openings, east and north there mukhamandapa, mahamandapas and ardhamandapa. Finally the garbhagraha enshrines the Suyambu Annamalaiyar.

Actually the Thiruvannamalai temple is consisting of seven prakaram. The outer most prakaram is known as Girivalam path. The sixth prakaram is called car street. This path is used only at the temple of festivals. Remaining
five prakaras are within the car street or otherwise the five prakaram within the enclosed big wall. This temple was constructed by various dynasties in various periods but basically this temple was constructed only on Dravidian style. But maintenance and renovation were carried out by the Government and by various endowments. There is an air of deep mysticism around the temple, the hill and its environs and the town itself has been known for its long association with Yogis, Siddhas, the well known spiritual savant Ramana Maharishi and several others. The origin of this temple dates way back in time, although much of the temple structure as seen today, is a result of building architecture over the last one thousand years.

The fifth chapter explained the grandeur of sculpture and paintings of the temple. Indian sculptures and paintings are closely related to religion and philosophy. Not only had that it also represented the spirituality. In Thiruvannamalai we can find stone as well as bronze sculptures. The Rajagopuram, Kambathu Elayanar koil, Kalyanasundareswarar temple and other important places consisting of stone sculptures. Ganapathi, subramaniyar, Ardhanarisvarar, Somaskandar and some other important Bronze sculptures represents religion and spiritual significances.

The sixth chapter elaborately explained the Girivalam. Girivalam (also called Giri - Valam) spiritual festival observed on every full moon day at Thiruvannamalai for sacred Mountain Annamalai. In Tamil language, "Giri" means mountain and "Valam" means circumambulation. People who are
seeking spiritual aspiration choose to walk around the mountain and worship Aruanachala temple of Thiruvannamalai on pournami day called Girivalam.

During the Girivalam (Giri valam) circling, people visit eight Siva lingams located around the Arunachala Mountain. Each Lingam represents one direction, if one watches closely Thiruvannamalai town itself is structured around this lingams in octagonal dimension. Each lingam has its own name Indra Lingam, Agni Lingam, Yama Lingam, Niruthi Lingam, Varuna Lingam, Vayu Lingam, Kubera Lingam and Isanya Lingam.

Indian spiritual history says that even today number of siddhars are living on the hill. During the fullmoon Maha Girivalam (Giri Valam) or Deepam festival day of Karthigai month It siddhars movement would be there and the whole atmosphere would be filled with perfumes of herbal plants. This will provide peace of mind and good health. It is a proven fact that Thiruvannamalai Girivalam pulls 100,000 of devotees to circumambulate the Arunachala Mountain and obtain blessings by praying to Siva Annamalai.

The Girivalam of the Arunachala hill reveals various features. The Arunachala hill is considered as the representation of the rupa-arupa (form and formless) aspect of Lord Siva. The hill existed from the beginning of the Yugas in various forms. Arunachala is treated as the face with Lord Siva and His eyes where as all other sthalas constitute the body.

Pradakshina means going round the shrines within the temple in the courts and Giripradakshina is going round the hill to attain the grace of the
Lord. The foremost one who went round the Lord and Goddess is Ganesa. In fact, he had started the pradakshina.

The devotees who undertake the Giripradakshina used to look at the Arunachala hill from different angles. This great hill when looked at from eastern side resembles a single hill. This sight denotes the concept of single Linga. When going around the hill path it appears like twin hills. Which indicates the philosophy of Ardhanarisvara. When seen from west, it appears like Tri hills. This sight denotes the concept of Trimurti. When viewed from north, it looks like five faced hill. All this scenery denotes Siva’s Panchamuga Philosophy.

Walking around the hill is a kind of walking meditation where we are supposed to concentrate our steps and chanting our preferred mantra. We hear many different slogans and chanting like Arunachala Arunachala, Annamalaikku arohara, Siva Siva, Muruga Muruga etc.

Innumerable are the benefits of circumambulating the Annamalai Hill. As per the words of Sage Gautama to Parvati regarding the greatness of the Hill, one gets all his sins expiated at every step he puts forward with the intention of circumambulating it. One acquires the merit of performing thousands of Ashvamedha Yagna and innumerable Vajapeyas, bathing in all the thirthas and studying all the scriptures. One would acquire all virtues by just going around the Hill.

Circumambulation of Annamalai would mean attaining worldly success in the first step, the middle world in the second step and the world of Devas
in the third step. The very first step tramples on the sins committed mentally, the second the sins committed by speech and the third, the sins by the body.

All days are suitable for performing Girivalam. Pournami or the full moon day is considered auspicious to do the Pradakshina. Nevertheless circumambulation is done on all days of the week receiving the Lord's blessings abundantly.

Sunday : Penetration into the region of the sun and attains liberation and the world of Siva.
Monday : Freedom from the afflictions of old age and death
Tuesday : Freedom from debts and the attainment of the state of an Emperor
Wednesday: Attainment of wisdom and omniscience

Thursday : Attainment of the state of a Guru and being worshipped by the celestial beings
Friday : Prosperity and reaching the abode of Vishnu
Saturday : Worldly success and the aversion of ill effects of the planets in the horoscope.

One is to take a bath before doing the Pradakshina or Girivalam, wear clean clothes and wear the Rudraksha. The Pradakshina is supposed to be done with a meditative mood slowly with heart filled with devotion and love for the Lord in order to imbibe the silence and the stillness of Arunachala in one's being. It is auspicious to do Giripradakshina on the day of the commencement of the Uttarayana season which is the Makara Sankaranti to attain one's goal in life.
The benefits of the Pradakshina are reaped if one could do it on foot. It is not recommended to circumambulate in any mode of conveyance. Thousands of invisible Siddhapurushas, Devatas and Manus are believed to accompany a devotee who circumambulates the Hill with reverence and on meditating on Siva. The palms are to be joined prayerfully at every specific direction. It is also good to do the circumambulation chanting the Lord's name, singing or dancing His praise. It is better to offer alms to the needy while doing the Pradakshina with utmost humility and love. The Lord is said to as under the cord of the birth and death cycle bestowing His own state to a devotee who does the Girivalam accordingly. Let’s thus circumambulate Annamalai Hill in reverence to attain the Lord's grace to have our thoughts transfixed to the Hill, to be motionless within in order to realise the silence of Arunachala in one’s being.

The seventh chapter clearly explained pujas and festivals. Usually the nitya or daily pujas are conducted six times a day. In Thiruvannamalai Annamalaiyar temple these worships go by the name Usatkala, Kalasandi, Ucchikkala, Sayaratcha, Erandamkalam and ardhajamam. The puja Kriyas are performed on the basis of Kamikagama like in most of the Siva temples. Prior to the Usatkala puja, Go-puja, are palliarai elucchi are conducted early in the morning. During that time the Lord Siva who is in the form of mount Meru is taken from the bedchamber to the principal shrine. Similarly the Goddess Unnamalai Amman is taken to the Garbhagraha of the Amman
Festivals are fountains of joy for all. The Lord comes to the door steps of everybody when one is unable to go to the temple to offer worship or not. Festivals are congregational worship. The Thiruvannamalai temple festivals have their special characteristics. Almost all kinds of festivals ranging from one day to eighteen days take place in this temple. The common festival of this temple is the pancha parva vizha celebrated in the respective mandapas like the first day of every month of the masappirappu mandapa. The Karthigai festival is celebrated as one of he most important one all over Tamil Nadu but Thiruvannamalai takes the prime place in this case. It is on this day that the huge beacon is lit on the holy hill Arunachala. The other four days festivals are floating festival of various utsavamurtis. One more special feature of this festival is the planting of Muhurakkal nine days earlier before the commencement of the festival.

When the light on the top of the Thiruvannamalai Hill is unveiled on the Karthigai Deepam day, people look at the big light and worship it. They recite again and again in a loud voice "Harohara". Harohara combined form of Haran and Ari is Ardhanarisvara. In Annamalai, it is the Ardhanarisvara who reigns supreme. Hara – Hara has become ‘Arohara’. It is for this reason that the holy chant ‘Annamalaiyarukku Arokara’ has become the symbol for Annamalai. The esoteric meaning is that he who sees the light of lights that is burning eternally in the chambers of his heart through constant meditation.
attains immortality. The light on the Arunachala brings the message to all that the Self or Lord Siva is self-effulgent; He is the light of lights.

On the Karthigai Deepam day in South India, people make bonfires in front of temples in the evening. It is said that Lord Siva burnt the chariots of several demons who tortured sages and celestials. This bonfire symbolises this legend. People place rows of earthen lamps in front of their houses on the evening of Karthigai Deepam and worship the Lord. They also light a variety of fireworks.

Finally those who worshipped Lord Arunachala intuitively. Arunachala annihilates the three impurities, namely, egoism, selfish action and delusion. Burn the mind, senses and the desires in the fire of knowledge of the Self or Siva-Jnanam. Attain full illumination and behold the light of lights, which illumines the mind, intellect, sun, moon, stars, lightning and the fire. This is real Karthigai Deepam.

The temple will be famous in some places. The Deity will be famous in some temple. The tank or tirtha is famous for some temple but in Thiruvannamalai these three are famous as far as a Hindu tradition is concerned.