INTRODUCTION

Temple is of major importance to most of the Hindus, for they are not only centers of religious activity, but also serve as the focus for the cultural and social activities of the town which encompasses them and the village which surround them. From antiquity till the present day Indian culture and what is nowadays called the Hindu religion have been one and the same reality. Ways of living, beliefs and the practices connected with them are a tradition that still rules the daily routine of the Tamils.

Even before the dawn of Hinduism as we know Thiruvannamalai was, as it centuries to be, an important place of Pilgrimage. Eternal Holy Mountain which is the manifestation of Siva, Holy Sri Arunachala, Annamalai is Lord Siva Himself from beginning less bottom to endless top, the one limitless self, a sense of mass jnana.

Lord Arunachala – Siva ruler over there premises and grants his grace to all who honour him. That is why pilgrims from all over south India always come here, year after year, in hundreds of thousands. According to Hindu tradition Panchabhuta sthalas are Chidambaram for Akasa, Thiruvanikka for Water, Srikalakasti for Air, Thiruvarur and Kanchipuram for Earth, Thiruvannamalai for fire. Hence it is one of the important as well as significant temples in south India. The Tamil word Annamalai is a combination of two terms “Anna” and “Malai” means inaccessible and “Malai”
means hill\(^3\). Hence, Annamalai means the inaccessible hill. Lord Siva was described by Gnana sambandar as ‘Annal’\(^4\).

In Sanskrit the word Arunachala is the combination of two terms “Aruna” and “Achala”, which means “red” and “immovable mount”. So Arunachala means an immovable red mount\(^5\). In Sanskrit there is another meaning for the word Arunachala is “Arunadri” the embodiment of effulgence, this is in the form of Linga, in the form hill is said to have been worshipped by the Brahma\(^6\). Another means also there regarding about the term Arunachala which is a – ru – na – cha – la Panchamukham or the five faces of Arunachala. Which represent the five faces of Lord Siva\(^7\).

The Lingam Mountain of Lord Arunachaleswarar Siva is all – pervading, uncaused, timeless, supreme Deity, the divine is living precisely in this world of matter, but His Divine Arul (Grace) is beneficial to of salvation of souls. Lord Siva manifested Himself as the Theyes Jyothi Lingam at Lingasthana. This well – known highly sacred area in Thiruvannamalai, in southern India is the holy location when we can attain enlightenment through His loving grace\(^8\).

The Hill (Linga) removes the sin from all the worlds, and sins bondage (Runa) becomes non – existent when one sees, it is called Arunachala\(^9\). Effulgent Linga at their request become motionless Linga named Arunachala. As the mountain is red in colour and unreservedly gives salvation, so it goes by the name of Arunachala. Those who see, in any
one’s life, Arunagiri, which tastes sweet like the juice of the sugar cane in the heart of His lovers, will become sages in this earthly life.

The saivaite traditions believe that Thiruvannamalai is a centre for liberation on those who merely think of it. So Thiruvannamalai is also called Muktipuri, Gnananagaram and Sivalogam\textsuperscript{10}.

According to Hindu tradition Lord Siva is manifested himself in the form of Linga in order to remove the delusion of Brahma and Vishnu, who in their pride entered in to a fight to claim superiority over the others. Further on their request Siva, who was in the form of an effluence become the motionless Linga named Arunachala who removed the bondage of life.

Thiruvannamalai has been praised by samayacharyas namely Appar, Sambandar, sundarar and Manickavasagar\textsuperscript{11}. Thiruvannamalai is famous for so many factors such as it is the birth place of Arunagirinathar and the great saint Ramana Rishi settled there and established the great religious mission called Ramana Maharishi Asramam. People from all over India visited the Asramam. Not only that but foreigners who came from all over the world visited the spiritual place and get spiritual enlightenment.

1.1. Need for the Study

Man is a religious as well as a social being. Man without religion is unthinkable similarly without religion, temple is impossible to our religious faith, customs are streamlined only by the divine being. So that temples have been constructed and worshipped by the people. The present study on
“Arulmigu Arunachaleswarar temple at Thiruvannamalai – A study” exposes the entire realm of the temple

1.2. Objectives of the study

The present study is undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To describe the concept of God in the form of Sivalinga.
2. To bring out the history of the temple.
3. To describe the structure of the temple.
4. To illustrate the significances of the sculptures and Paintings.
5. To highlight the significances of Girivalam.
6. To bring out the significances of Pujas and festivals of the temple especially Karthigai deepam.

1.3. Aim of the thesis

Thiruvannamalai is the holy place which represents the faith, belief and culture of the people. Various studies have been made by various scholars about the temple but so far detailed study has not been given. But the present study is an attempt to bring out all the features of the temple.

1.4. Limitation of the study

The collected data from the primary and secondary sources and the sivacharyars are properly interpreted without any interruption and presented in proper manner.
1.5. Plan of the study

The first chapter gives introductory remarks of the thesis.

The second chapter is devoted to the detailed explanation of the origin and development of Sivalinga worship.

The third chapter describes the history of the temple.

The fourth chapter elucidates the structure of the temple.

The fifth chapter describes the sculptures and Paintings of the temple.

The sixth chapter narrates the importance and significances of Girivalam.

The seventh chapter narrates the pujas and festivals of the temple.

The eighth chapter is the conclusion which presents the findings of the study.

1.6. Delimination

This thesis “Arulmigu Arunachaleswarar Temple at Thiruvannamalai – a study” for the award of the Ph.D. Degree covers the entire informations about the temple.

1.7. Sources of the study

Generally sources are classified in to primary and secondary. Tevaram of Appar, Sambandar Sundarar and the work of Manickavasakar (Thiruvasagam, Thirukovaiyar) Sivapuranam, Vedas, Upanisads, Mahasivapuranam and Maikandasastram are the primary sources. All the available articles, books, journals are the secondary sources.
1.8. Review of literature

Regarding Thiruvannamalai temple, various books, dissertations, journals, articles have been published both in English and Tamil but no one presented the full details about the temple as for.

Arunachala puranam of Ellapa Navalar\textsuperscript{12} says that we can understand the natural condition of Thiruvannamalai Arthanarisvara concept of Siva and Parvathi here.

C.V.Narayana Iyer’s\textsuperscript{13} ‘Orgin and Early History of Saivism in South India’ illustrates the concept of Sivalinga. Iswari Kamalabaskaran\textsuperscript{14} in her ‘The Light of Arunachaleswarar’ described the various parts of temple, Sivalinga Mountain, festivals and the history of Thiruvannamalai temple. A.T.M Panneerselvam\textsuperscript{15} in his work Thiruvannamalai Deivika Natkurippu describes the festivals of Thiruvannamalai.

P.V.Jagadesa Aiyar\textsuperscript{16} south Indian festivities describe all the festivals of India especially karthigai festivals of Thiruvannamalai. V.Narayanaszamy\textsuperscript{17} in his work ‘Thiruvannamalai’ has briefly explained the history of this temple.

Balaji Sou.Senthilkumar’s\textsuperscript{18} ‘Thiruvannamalaiyum Girivalamum’ describes the Girivalam methods and significance of the mountain. A.Arivoli\textsuperscript{19} in his book ‘Panchabhuta Thalankal’ states Panchasabha, Panchabuhtas, Attaveerattam, Sabthasthana, Sabthavidanga sthalas.
Among them Thiruvannamalai is one among the Panchabhuta sthala, that represents the element of fire.

1.9. Methodology

This study is based on descriptive method to bring out all details pertaining to Thiruvannamalai temple. The method of field study is also undertaken to observe the pujas and festivals and the informations collected from the sivachariyars. Reflective method is also used to corporate the materials collected for this study and presented them in an appropriate manner.