

# Historical Background in Thiruvannamalai District

**A.Ashok Kumar., M.A.,M.Phil.,M.Ed.,Ph.D.,**

*Assistant Professor in Humanities, Sathya College of Arts and Science  
Kilvisharam, Melvisharam Post, Walaja Taluk, Vellore District, Tamil Nadu, India*

## OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 6

Issue: 3

Month: Januray

Year: 2019

ISSN: 2321-788X

Received: 06.01.2019

Accepted: 07.01.2019

Published: 30.01.2019

Citation:

Ashok Kumar, A. "Historical Background in Thiruvannamalai District." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2019, pp. 66–68.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2550023>

## Abstract

*Thiruvannamalai is one of the most venerated places in Tamil Nadu. It is a temple town and a major pilgrimage center in the State. The Annamalaiyar Temple is the most prominent landmark of Thiruvannamalai. 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, is called Thiruvannamalai.*

## Historical Background

Thiruvannamalai is an ancient Town of historical importance. It is a sacred center for the Hindus. It is one of the twenty two famous sacred Shaiva centers. It was an independent town of Anna-Nadu located on the north bank of river Pennar in Chengunrakottam of Jayangonda Cholapuram. Further, it is considered as one of the five sacred shrines connected with five elements known as Pancha Boothas. In ancient period, Thiruvannamalai region was under the sway of the Pallava kings who ruled from Kanchipuram in between Sixth and Ninth Century A.D. After the Pallava rule, Thiruvannamalai was brought under the control of the Chola Kings. During the 13th and 14th Centuries the Sambuvarayars ruled the Thiruvannamalai region. Then it was under the rule of the Hoysalas. Later it was ruled by the Kings of Vijayanagar and the Nayaks of Tanjore. During the last phase of the Seventeenth Century, Thiruvannamalai came under the control of the Nawabs of Carnatic. A number of battles took place between the British and Haidar in the Thiruvannamalai region. In 1790 Tipu Sultan attacked the Thiruvannamalai Town and captured it. In the beginning of the Nineteenth Century the Madras Presidency was formed and Thiruvannamalai region was included in the North Arcot District. North Arcot District, which was bifurcated into the North Arcot Ambedkar District and Thiruvannamalai Sambuvarayar District on 27th September 1989 has now been changed into Thiruvannamalai District, as the North Arcot Ambedkar District has been changed as the Vellore District.

## Topography

Thiruvannamalai is one of the northern districts of Tamil Nadu with Vellore, part of Chengalpattu and South Arcot districts as northern, southern and western boundaries. It is the administrative headquarters of Thiruvannamalai District. This district comprises of Thiruvannamalai, Chengam, Polur, Arni, Cheyyar and Vandavasi Taluk. It came into existence on 30th September 1989 after the bifurcation of the North Arcot district.

The district lies between 11.550 and 13.150 North latitude and 78.200 to 79.500 East longitude. The topography of Thiruvannamalai is almost plain sloping from west to east. Thiruvannamalai experiences hot and dry weather throughout the year. The temperature ranges from a maximum of 40 °C (104 °F) to a minimum of 20 °C (68 °F). It is mostly comprised of the plain lands except for the Eastern Ghats in the north western part of the district and small hills in Polur and Chengam Taluk. Palar, Cheyyar and Pennaiyar are the rivers running through this district. They are seasonal in nature and there is no perennial river in the district. This chapter presents an overview of historical, physical and economic facets of the district and places it in an appropriate context in relation to human development. It would help in better understanding of various issues taken up in the following chapters.

The 'Status of the People' constitutes the Second Chapter. In his Chapter an attempt is made to highlight the socioeconomic condition of the people of Thiruvannamalai District. Thiruvannamalai is not as progressive as any other town of its size. The predominant population comprises the Hindus belonging to several caste groups. The Christians and Muslims are living in less number. A very small percentage of the population practices Jainism. As Thiruvannamalai is a well-known pilgrimage center, many people belonging to higher castes came over to this town and settled. The lower castes still continue to work as farm land laborers. The customs and habits of the people living in town and villages have differences. The life of the people moves at a leisurely pace and people are mostly self-satisfied, self-sustaining and self-contained. Thiruvannamalai including its suburbs is not an industrial area. The State Government has extended much financial help to establish small scale industries. Women self help groups have spread almost all localities of Thiruvannamalai District. The rich people have cultivable land and many houses or shops rented out to others. The middle class people are either professionals or merchants with average turnover. Most of the lower class people living in poor condition. All kinds of business are at the zenith during festival season or during Deepam days. On other days the economic activities were not up to the mark.

## Religious Importance

The name 'Thiruvannamalai' instantaneously brings to mind the picture of Karthigai Deepam too many as this festival is well known throughout Southern India. Every year lakhs of devotees visit this district during the festival. Among the five 'Panchalinga Sivasthalams', 'Agnilingam' is the famous places in Thiruvannamalai. According to the religious story Lord Siva took the form of 'Jyothi' (light) here to solve the dispute between Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu. It is one of the sthalams (holy place) quoted in various Puranas. Girivalam, meaning going around the Annamalai Hill once in every month during Pournami (full moon day) is very famous in this district. Due to the religious importance of the Annamalai temple in Thiruvannamalai, religious tourism has been one of the major income sources for the district.

## Annamalai Temple History

The temple is of major importance to most of the Hindus, for they are not only center 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 Janna. Lord Arunachala - Siva ruler over their premises and grants his grace to all who honor 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, Thiruvannamalai for Water, Srikalakasti for Air, Thiruvannamalai 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. Hence, Annamalai means the inaccessible hill. Lord Siva was described by Gnana sambandar as ‘Annal’.

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. In Sanskrit there is another meaning for the word Arunachala is “Arunadri” the embodiment of effulgence, this is in the form of a Linga, in the form hill is said to have been worshipped by the Brahma. 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. 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 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. The Hill (Linga) removes the sin from all the worlds, and sin’s bondage (Runa) becomes non - existent when one sees, it is called Arunachala. 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 center of liberation of those who merely think of it. So Thiruvannamalai is also called Muktipuri, Gnananagaram and Sivalogam. According to Hindu tradition Lord Siva has manifested himself in the form of Linga in order to remove the delusion of Brahma and Vishnu, who in their pride entered into 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. 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.

## References

- Adam, William Reports on the State of Education in Bengal, (1835-38), University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1941.
- Aggarwal, J.C., Landmarks in the History of Modern Indian Education,
- Aggarwal, J.C., Teacher and Education in a Developing Society, New Delhi, 1995.
- Aggarwal, J.C., Theory and Principles of Education, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1992.
- Aiyangar, Krishnaswami, S., South India and Her Muhammadan Invaders, S.Chand & Co (Pvt) Ltd, New 1921.
- Board of Revenue Consultations, Vol. 918, 8 July 1882.
- Bora Dutta, History of Education in India, New Delhi, 1997.
- Despatch from the Court of Directors to the Governor General of India in Council, no date.
- Extract from Letter, 26 January, 1855 from Government of India to Government of Madras.
- Extract from Lord William Bentick’s Resolution, 7 March, 1835.
- G.O. No.620, Education Department, 4 October 1884.
- G.O. No. 76, Revenue Department, 16 January 1860.
- G.O. No.776, Education Department, 1 December 189.
- Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1984.