

Visiting Thiruvannamalai Temple.

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Arulmigu Arunachaleswarar Tirukkoil, Thiruvannamalai.

GENERAL:

Tiruvannamalai is an ancient city named after the holy mountain “Thiru Annamalai”. Thiruvannamalai is a pilgrimage town in Thiruvannamalai district in Tamil Nadu, located 185 km south west of Chennai. The **Annamalaiyar Temple** and the **Annamalai hill** are situated here. The sanskrit name for Thiruvannaamalai is Arunachala; in sanskrit ‘Arunam’ stands for red-coloured fire and ‘asalam’ means “malai” or hill. This is one of the greatest Shiva Temples of India. The temple occupies an extent of about 25 acres of land. The height of the Arunachala hill is approximately **2669 feet** (800 m). The hill is approximately 16 Km. in diameter. This new district was carved out of the North Arcot District in Sept 1989.

Generally the stone-Idols are fixed to the base with what is called “Ashtabandana”, a combination of eight herbs (marundhu) and the first abishekam soon after is hence called Ashtabandana Kumbabishekam. But in Thiruvannamalai alone, it is “Swarnabandana” (Gold) which is of Special Importance.

LOCATION & ROUTE:

185 km from Chennai. Take direct buses from Chennai Koyambedu Bus Terminus; it takes 4 hours. There are no direct trains; we have to go to Katpadi Jn on Bangalore route and then take a Passenger train for 2-3 hours to reach Thiruvannamalai by train. Car route is by GST Highway via.Tambaram, Chenglepet, Maduranthakam, Melmaruvathur, Achiruppakkam and turn right 5 km before Tindivanam. Distance to this Junction is 125km and takes 2-2.5 hours; from here travel westward for 1-1.5 hours to cover 66km to reach Thiruvannamalai temple by NH66 via. Gengee and Keel Pennathur.

CAR TRAVEL:

Car parking fee is Rs.30 near the temple (Entry ticket Rs.20+Parking Rs.10) on the eastern side called Theradi Veedhi (or Car Street). Parking is difficult during festival seasons since it can hold only around 100 cars.

DEITIES:

Shiva or **Arunachaleswarar** or **Annamalayar**

Parvathi as Ambal Apitakujamabal or **Unnamalai** Amman

Sthala Vriskam: Vilvam

Theertham: Agni Theertham

Patikam: Thirugnana Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar.

One should enter the temple by the Main Gate in front of the Sanctum sanctorum. When we pass the Eastern Tower Gate we see the Gopura Ganapathi. This deity is held in high esteem by all devotees and they first worship Him. To the south there is the sacred tank called Sivaganga Theertham. It has stonesteps and Thirumalapathi Mantapam on all four sides. There are five inner Prakarams including what is called Madavilagam running just outside the temple walls and the four car streets and the path round the Giri the temple is said to have Seven Prakarams in all.

DAILY POOJAS:

Poojas are conducted six times a day. Moreover the special poojas to be carried out in Lord Siva’s Temple are also performed regularly.

TIMINGS POOJA DETAILS

5.30 a.m. Ukshakala Pooja

8.00 a.m. Kalai santhi Pooja

11.30 a.m. Uchikala Pooja

5.30 p.m. Sayaratchai Pooja

7.30 p.m. Irandam Kala Pooja

9.00 p.m. Arthajama Pooja

ANNADHANAM:

When we come out, many shop owners press us to provide anna dhanam to the beggars sitting in the front mandapam outside the temple; they give you packets containing 4 idlis and a little chutney for Rs.5 per packet; we bought 20 packets for Rs.100 and distributed to 20 people; they were not very keen to get these since that was the 6th idli packet for that day! Hence do not fall a prey; if you want to donate food, buy 20 packets of Rs.5 biscuits or fruit or laddu or savouries and distribute or just give

Rs.5 each.

FESTIVALS:

‘**Karthigai Deepam**’ festival is world famous; this festival takes place every Nov-Dec in Karthigai (Tamil month) and celebrated for 13 days. The first three days of procession are at the Durga Temple and the remaining 10 days in the Annamalai temple. On the last day, a huge lamp is lit in a cauldron with three to four tons of ghee at the top of the Annamalai hill which is visible all over the city.

On that day, the **Bharani Dheepam** is lighted in five agantams inside the temple Arunachaleswarar’s Sannithi at four am to symbolise the unification of five elements. In the evening, In the evening the **Pancha Murthis, Vinayagar, Murugar, Annamalayar, Unnamulayamman and Chandikeshwarar** are taken out from the temple and placed on the Katchi Mantapam. in front of the golden flag mast. At exactly 6 pm, the deity of Ardhanareeshawarar comes out dancing forcefully. Simultaneously, **Aganda Deepam** in front of flag mast and five torches are lighted. On the hill top there is a big copper turn, a cauldron with around 3 tonnes of ghee in it, in which large quantities of camphor and cloth wicks are added and kept ready. On seeing the torches lighted inside the temple, men at the peak of the mountain light the Maha Deepam. The moment Maha Deepam is lighted, people enigmatically chant ‘**Annamalayanukku Arogara**’ and all the lights are switched on. People rever the deepam on the hill, which would be visible around 30 km radius. While a few thousand privileged devotees witness the rituals inside the temple, lakhs of others perform the Girivalam.

On the same night the eleven storeyed Gopuram is also lit with ‘Ahals’ (earthen oil lamps) set in rows in all the storeys. Though this festival is special to Tiruvannamalai it is common throughout Tamil Nadu. Lighting festival is celebrated in all the temples of South India including Vishnu temples. All the houses will also be illuminated with number of lamps being arranged in rows to give a beautiful appearance on **Karthigai day**.

Ardent pilgrims to Tiruvannamalai for this Deepam festival should take one meal on the previous (Bharani) night, worship Bharani Deepam during the early hours (4 am) on the Karthigai Deepam day, go round the hill walking the entire distance of eight miles (Girivalam), see on the way Adi Annamalai temple and fast that day till they see the Maha deepam that evening. He should take food only after this Deepam.

There is ample literary evidence to prove that this lighting festival is one of the oldest in India. Nachinarkiniar, who wrote ‘*Tholkappiam*’ in about 1000 BC, one of the oldest works in Tamil literature, mentions “the light lit on the Karthigai day of the Karthigai month”. ‘*Jeevaka Chintamani*’, a Jain work and one of the five great Tamil epics written by Thirthakka Devar mentions “lighting a lamp on the hill on Karthigai day”. Saints Appar and Sambandar who lived in the 7th century A.D. make references too. This bears eloquent testimony to the antiquity of the lighting festival on the hill.

Ani: Dakshinaya Brahma Utsavam- 10 Days

Adi: AdiPuram – 10 Days ; Last day Fire Walking festival

Purattasi: Navarathri – 10 Days

Aipasi Kanntha Sashti – 6 Days

Karthigai: Brahma Utsavam; Deepam festival – 10 Days

Margazhi: Manikkavasagar Utsavam – 10 Days

Thai: Sankaranthi Utsavam – 10 Days

Panguni: Uthram Festival – 6 Days

GIRIVALAM:

For the last hundreds of years, the devotees of Shiva have been going around the hill on full moon nights. Now the crowd has increased to a few lakhs of pilgrims on full moon days and this is called the Girivalam or ‘circumambulating’ the ‘the mountain of fire’ barefoot. ‘*Giri*’ means mountain and ‘*Valam*’ means clockwise circumambulation in Tamil language. This covers a distance of about 14 km. On the **Chitra Pournami night** (full moon in Apr-May) and Maha Sivarathri night, the pilgrims come from across the world for the Girivalam. Many people from USA, UK, Asia and Africa also walk along with you!

The **Girivalam path** is well tarred and is well lit with sodium lights and hence the pilgrims can walk 24 hours of a day without any fear of security. It takes about 3-5 hours depending on your walking speed on bare foot. Start before dawn or after sunset. Day time may not be suitable because of hot sun and dry humid weather. Full day fasting is recommended, which also makes walking easier; if you have to eat, eat at least 3 hours before commencing the walk. Carry water bottles, first aid medicine, glucose, banana etc. To prevent low sugar problems. Many good samaritans serve free water, milk and juices throughout the girivalam path. Eat after completing the Girivalam. Chant your preferred sloga or mantra while walking. Keep 30-50 coins, one rupee and 50 paise coins, for those who need charity.

During the Girivalam, the pilgrims visit **eight shiva lingams**, Indra Lingam, Agni Lingam, Yama Lingam, Niruthi Lingam, Varuna Lingam, Vayu Lingam, Kubera Lingam and Esanya Lingam, one each in every direction. Besides these, there are Eight Nandis and more than 350 tanks and many mandapas around the hill.

The Eight Lingams are

1. Indira Lingum (direction:East) is the first lingam in the girivalam.

2. Agni Lingum (direction:South East) is the second lingam in the girivalam is in the chengem Road near tamary kulum.This is the Only Lingum situated in the righten side of the girivalam path,other lingams are in the Southern side.
3. Ema Lingum (direction:South) This is the third lingum in the girivalam path.It is 3 k.m. from Raja Gopuram.
4. Niruthi Lingum (directon:South West) This is the fourth lingum in the girivalam path. Sani thirthum is nearer to this lingum.
5. Varuna Lingum (direction:West) It is in the Western direction and 8 k.m. from the Raja Gopuram.Varuna thirthum is next to this.
6. Vaaiu Lingum (direction:North West) is the sixth in the Row.
7. Kubera Lingum(direction:North) is the important Lingum in the Girivalam. People throw coins on this lingum.
8. Esanya Lingum (direction:North East) is the Last lingum in the girivalam.

HOLY PLACE FOR GURUs:

Many yogis and siddhars (sages) had lived here and died here which include **Swami Arunagiri Nathar** who wrote the *Thiruppugazh* and *Kandaralankaram* in Tamil. This city is full of spiritual ashrams built by many holy men. Advaita Vedanta guru **Ramana Maharshi** lived in Thiruvannamalai for fifty three years until his death in 1950. His ashram, Ramanasramam, is located at the foot of the Arunachala hill, to the west of the town. **Sri Seshadri Swamigal** and **Yogi Ram Surat Kumar** from Uttar Pradesh are examples of other gurus who lived in this city in this century.

Sri Seshadri Swamigal Ashram: Mahan Sri Seshadri Swamigal lived in the late 20th Century. Sri Seshadri Swamigal Ashram is one of the holy places in this Town. People from all over the world visit his Ashram, which is situated near the Sri Ramana Ashram. The Garden in this Ashram attracts the people who visit here.

Sri Ramana Ashram:Mahan Sri Ramana maharishi lived in this tiruvannamalai town. Sri Ramana Ashram is one the holy places in this town. People from all over the world visit his Ashram. He attained mukthi in the year 1950.

Yogi Ram Surathkumar Ashram: Yogi Ram Surathkumar Ashram, also known as Visiri Samiyar Ashram, is one of the beautiful place in our Town. It is situated near the Ramana Ashram. Devotees from all over the world visit Yogi Ram Surathkumar Ashram. He attained mukthi in the year of 2000.

BAGAVAN SHRI RAMANA:

He was born on Dec 30, 1879 at Thiruchuzhi near Sivakasi, south of Madurai; he was fascinated by Arunachala from an young age; reached Thiruvannamalai temple on Sept 1, 1896 when he was 16; he realised that when one dies, only the body vanishes and not the spirit; he sat near one of the lingams (now called the **Paathala Lingam** situated near the huge Nandi in the temple) in bliss for three continuous years, prayed Shiva without food or water; ants and rodents bit his body all over, termites built a huge mount around him and finally he was recovered by Sri Seshadri Swamigal who put him up in Virupaksha caves on the eastern slope of the Arunachala hills; he gave mukthi to his mother Alagammal in 1922, buried her in the hills and built his Ramana Ashramam; he finally gave up his body on April 14, 1950 when he was 71 years. He has a big group of devotees including many foreigners who congregate in his Ramanashramam today.

Accommodation:

The temple has constructed Four cottages, two rest houses and seventeen rooms (6 double and single rooms) with modern facilities for the use of pilgrims. The twin cottage is situated in North Othavadai Street, just near Ammani Ammal Gopuram. The two rest houses are situated in the Northern side of the 5th Prakaram. The seventeen rooms Unnamalaiamman Lodge are located just by the side of Eastern Raja Gopuram.

The rent for the rest houses is Rs. 150-200 per day.

The rent for the rooms at Appar Illam is Rs. 100 per day.

The rent for rooms at Unnamulai Amman Rest House is Rs.100 (Double room) and Rs.50 (Single room) per day.

Sakthi vilasa Mandapam built by His Holiness Gnaniar swamy is located opposite to Brahma Theertham Tank. Religious functions are held here.

Nattukkottai Nagarathars have also built choultry for Pilgrims, Annachatram, Vedic school, Oya Madam etc. Besides these, in Thiruvannamalai there exist a lot of Madams (resting places) constructed by various sects of Hindus for the benefit of devotees who visit this place during ordinary and special occasions.

Apart from this, private accommodation is available in and around the temple; for hotels see <http://www.tiruvannamalai.net/hotels.html>

Public Utilities:

Police Station 04175-222302

Fire 04145-252101

Highway Patrol 94433-287717

NEARBY TOURIST LOCATION:

Saathanoor Dam constructed in 1958 across the Then Pennaiar River in the Chennakesava Hills, is a tourist place near Thiruvannamalai about an hour’s drive towards Chengam on the south west. It has a dam and gardens and was a very popular film shooting spot those days. It has beautiful parks and a mini zoo. The garden is dotted with colourful statues. There is a swimming pool and a crocodile farm.

VERY USEFUL SITES:

<http://www.tiruvannamalai.tn.nic.in/>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thiruvannaamalai>

<http://tiruvannamalai.co.in/>

<http://www.tiruvannamalaiguide.com/History-of-Tiruvannamalai.php>

<http://www.tiruvannamalai.net/hotels.html>

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Read the following only if you are interested in Temple History OR the Hindu Mythology:

CONSTRUCTION OF THIRUVANNAMALAI TEMPLE:

Constructed between 9th and 17th centuries. Hence it is over 1000 years old.

100 BC: Tiruvannamalai existed even during the Tamil Sangam age since the ancient tamil literature such as Periya puranam, Kandha puranam and Thiru vilaiyadal puranam talk about this temple and the Girivalam.

6th century to 8th century AD: Chozha and Pandiya Tamil literature works talk about this city and the temple. The oldest script was the 6th century tamil script written on Madurai Meenakshi Temple wall by Kulesekara Pandiyan II. He was the grandfather of ‘Maduraiyai Meetta’ Sundarapandiyan, who liberated Madurai from the Kaalee ruler. In the script, Tiruvannamalai and has been mentioned as ‘Thiruvanangum Malai’ as part of Madurai kingdom. Tiruvannamalai should have been under the sway

of the Pallava Kings who ruled from Kancheepuram.

850 AD: the present gopurams (stately towers) and mandapams could not have existed then. Saint Sambandar in his Thevaram relating to this place mentions a temple. Sekkizhar, the renowned author of Periapuranam mentions that both Saints Appar and Sambandar who belonged to the Seventh Century, worshipped Arunchaleswarar in the hill Temple.

850 A.D. to 1280 A.D: The Chola Kings ruled over the country for more than four Centuries. The Chola Kings were at the height of their [power](#) from the latter half of the 9th century till the beginning of the 13th century when they were overcome by the Pandya Kings. Under [Rajaraja Chola I](#) and his son [Rajendra Chola I](#), the dynasty became a military, economic and cultural power in [South Asia](#) and [South-east Asia](#). During the period 1010–1200, the Chola territories stretched from the islands of the [Maldives](#) in the south to as far north as the banks of the [Godavari River](#) in [Andhra Pradesh](#) besides [Sri Lanka](#) and Maldives. They were great temple builders and they started the major constructions in Thiruvannamalai temple. Some earlier Kings of Vijayalaya dynasty must have begun to construct the inner shrine (Garbagraha). The foundation of Arunachala temple has been laid by Chola king Vijalaya Chozan. Many additions were made by the Chola kings of the Tamil empire. The temple is famous for its massive gopurams [9]. There are nine gopurams, five in the East-West line and four in the North-South line. The four outer gopurams are the tallest; Eastern gopuram is the main entry point. The 11 tiered East Rajagopuram towers to a height of 217 feet, while the fortified walls pierced with 4 gopuram entrances offer a formidable look to this vast temple complex . The Pei Gopuram, Tirumanjana Gopuram and Ammaniammal gopuram are the other three.

14th Century AD: the Hoysala Kings had their capital at Tiruvannamalai. Later the Kings of Vijayanagar and Nayak Kings of Thanjavur ruled over this part of the Country. The 1000 pillared hall, Aayiramkaal Mandapam, and the temple tank were built by Krishna Deva Raya of Vijayanagar. Each of the prakarams has a huge Nandi and several towers such as the Vallala Maharaja Gopuram and Kili Gopuram.

16th Century AD: Ellappa Nayanar, Tamil scholar, recorded extensively about Tiruvannamalai town in his ‘Arunachala Puranam’ and has recorded the City architecture and the legendary stories about King Vallalan of the Hoysala empire. This work is based on the ‘Arunachala Mahatmyam’, written several centuries before in Sanskrit, but the chapter dealing with King Vallalan and his exploits in Tiruvannamalai are found only in the Tamil version. King Vallalan’s devotion and piety are described in the 7th chapter of the Arunachala Puranam. King Vallala is credited with spreading the benefit of Girivalam and Arunachaleswara temple.

The **Hoysala King Vallala** succeeded his father Narasimha; later, he expanded his territory up to Thiruvannamalai by taking over his uncle’s kingdom in 1292. King Vallala was ruling the entire South India with Dwarasamdura (now, **Halebid**) as capital. The richness of Hoysala architecture and its

unique style, distinguished by finer details and embellishments, can be seen in the remains of the city of Halebid even today. He was thirty years old when he was crowned as the King. Later he lost most of his ruling territory to **Delhi Sultan Ala-u-din Khilji**; he moved South and made Thiruvannamalai as his capital. Since then the Grace of Arunachala spread all over India and Tiruvannamalai become a vital spot for spiritual pilgrimage. **King Vallalan founded the present Thiruvannamalai Town.**

17th Century AD: it came under the sway of the Nawabs of Carnatic. There was confusion and chaos after A.D. 1753. Vijayanagar kings, Mughals, the French and the English besieged this place and had their successes and defeats. In A.D. 1790 it was captured by Tippu Sultan. During the first half of the nineteenth century it came under the British rule.

The Eastern Tower called the ***Rajagopuram*** is the Highest.

The Southern tower is called ***Thirumanjangopuram***,

The western tower is called ***Peigopuram***

The northern tower is called ***Ammaniamma Gopuram***.

The walls on the East and West measure 700 feet each.

The South wall is 1479 feet long and North wall is 1590 feet.

The Rajagopuram which adorns the East Gateway is 217 feet high with 11 storeys, its base measure 135 feet by 98 feet. This tower was built by King Krishna Devaraya of Vijayanagar and completed by Sevappa Nayaka of Thanjavur. Krishna Devaraya also constructed the Thousand Pillared Mantapam and dug the tank opposite to it . Ammani Ammal a Sanyasini built the North Gopuram which is called after her name.

TEMPLE MAINTENANCE:

The temple is managed by the Government of Tamil Nady by the HR&CE department. But the resources are not enough to maintain such a huge temple. There are innumerable Endowments and Kattalais in this Thirukoil instituted for purpose of daily pujas, pujas on special occasions, celebration of the periodical Uthsavams on a very grand scale, for singing '*Devaram*' in the mornings and evenings in the temple, for feeding the poor, for burning lamps, for supplying flower regularly and providing milk for abishekams and for various other purposes. These Kattalais, mainly instituted by the **Nattukkottai Nagarathar Chettiars**, are mainly responsible for carrying out the uninterrupted pujas. Many of them are there for centuries together. Even the names of the many of the Kattalais owe their existence to the Nattukottai Chettiar community who, being ardent Saivites, use the deities' names for their children viz. **Annamalai** and **Unnamalai**. Their Chathirams just outside the Eastern Gopurams are 150-200 years old and almost all the shops in the East Car Street are owned by these

Nattukkottai Chathirams.

The temple was in despair in the Nineteenth Century. Some seventy years back, the Nattukottai Nagarathars took up the renovation of the temple at a cost of Rs.35 lakhs of rupees. The mahakumbaphishekam was celebrated on 12-06-1903. Another ashtabandana Mahakumbapishekam was performed on 04-6-1944. The next Ashtabandana and Sornabandana mahakumbabishekam was performed on 04-04-1976 at a cost of Rs.40 Lakhs. The temple administration has given special praying rights and VIP locations during festivals to the Nattukottai Chettiars for their munificence and philonthropy.

HINDU MYTHOLOGY:

Thiruvannamalai is one of the ‘**Pancha Bootha**’ **Sthalangal** representing the **Fire** element; the other four are **Chidambaram** (sky), **Sri Kalahasti** (air), **Thiruvanaikoil** (water) and **Kanchipuram** (earth). Near Kaatchi Mandapam inside the temple, we can see shrines dedicated to Kalatheeswarar (of Sri Kalahsthi), Chidambraeswarar (of Chidambaram), Ekambareswarar (of Kancheepuram) and Jumbukeswarar (of Thiruvanaikkal). Thus we can see all the panchastala Shivas in the Arunachalam temple.

In Hindu mythology, the Creator **Lord Bramha** and Protector **Lord Thirumal** entered into a controversy among themselves so as to ascertain who was the greatest. Lord Shiva was asked to be the judge. Lord Siva told them that whoever was able to see his crown as well as his feet would be declared as the greatest. Then Lord Shiva transformed himself into a Jothi (a column of fire) touching the heaven and earth. Thirumal took the avatar of varaha (wild boar) and dug deep into the earth to find Siva’s feet but later accepted defeat. Bramha took the form of a swan and flew to see the crown of Siva. Unable to reach the crown, Bramha saw a **thazhambu** flower which had decked Shiva’s crown falling down. He asked the flower on its way down, as to the distance of Shiva’s crown whereby the flower replied that he had been falling for forty thousand years! Bramha, realizing that he would not be able to reach the crown, asked the flower to act as a false witness to help him. The thazhambu flower, acting as a false witness, declared to Lord Shiva that Brahma had really ‘seen’ Shiva’s crown. Shiva became angry at the deception and cursed that **Bramha should have no temple on earth** and that **the thazhambu flower should not be used while praying to Lord Shiva**. The place where Lord Siva stood as a column of fire to eliminate Brahma’s ego is Thiruvannamalai.

Lord Shiva’s wife Goddess Umadevi (Parvathy) once playfully closed His eyes which plunged the world into darkness. All living beings suffered in the darkness. To absolve of this sin, Mother Umadevi created a Sivalingam out of sand and worshipped at Kancheepuram. At that instance, Lord Shiva ordered her to proceed to Thiruvannamalai and do penance so that she could get half of His body. Likewise she did penance at Pavalakundru with the help of Saint Gowthama. A demon called Makidasuran disturbed the penance of Mother Parvathi. The **Mother took the form of goddess Durga Devi and destroyed him on the full moon day of the Tamil Month of Karthigai**

during the auspicious period of pradosham. Lord Shiva presented himself in the form of Fire atop the hill and merged Goddess Parvathi into the left half of his body to form **Arthanareeswara** (Sanskrit Ardha=half; nari=woman; easwara=Shiva). To commemorate this event, every year during the Tamil month of Karthigai in Kiruthigai Star, exactly at 6.00 p.m. Arthanareeswaramurthi presents himself as Jyothi Swaroopa to his devotees at the time of Karthigai Festival on the 10th day.

Appearance of Lord Muruga for Arunagirinathar:

Saint Arunagirinathar was an ardent devotee of Lord Muruga. Thirugnana Sambandam was a scholar in the king's court and had obtained many boons from goddess Kali. Afraid of Arunagirinathar's popularity, he proposed to the king a competition between him and Arunagirinathar, as to who could bring his chosen deity manifest in the form visible to everyone present. In the competition the devotion of Arunagirinathar brought the appearance of Lord Muruga through a stone pillar. Since then this has become one of the famous places of visit for the devotees of Lord Muruga. In his earlier years, Arunagirinathar climbed the Vallala Maharaja Gopuram and wanted to shuffle off his mortal body by falling from this tower. Lord Murugan appeared before him and saved his life. Since then Arunagirinathar became known as Gopurathilayanar.

Vallala Maharaja humbled by Lord Shiva:

After completing the construction of the Gopuram just west of the Raja Gopuram, now called the Vallala Maharaja Gopuram, King Ballala became too proud of his achievement. In order to teach him a lesson, Lord Arunachaleswara refused to leave the temple through this Vallala Gopuram during the first 9 days of the 10-day Festival. The King was distressed and prayed for forgiveness. Only then, Lord Arunachaleswarar consented to pass through this gopuram on the 10th day of the festival. This is a lesson taught by Lord Shiva about humility and greatness, not only to King Ballala but to everyone of us.

Lord Arunachaleswarar himself performing the funeral rites of King Vallala :

Arunachala Puranam describes King Vallala as an embodiment of all human virtues. He was praised for his uprightness, generosity and love for Lord Arunachaleswarar. The King had no issues. Lord Shiva tested him for his piety and became a child at the hands of King Vallala and his wife. King Vallala embraced the child in all his lovingness and later Lord Shiva disappeared. When the king prayed for a child, Lord Shiva assured him that he would perform all his funeral rites as he himself had become a child to the King. Even now in the month of Maasi (February) when the annual anniversary of King Vallala Deva's death occurred in those days, the Lord is taken in procession with great Ceremony to the nearby village of Pallikonda Pattu, where the funeral rites take place. This festival is known as 'Masi Maga Theerthavari' Urchavam.

Yanai Thirai Konda Vinayagar :

The Vijayanagar King Pravda Deva Maharaya, once lost his vision and was blind. Sambandar, a confidant to the king advised him to get the flower Parijatham to regain his sight and suggested that Arunagirinathar could do the job. The king was convinced and asked Arunagirinathar to bring Parijatha flower. As the Parijatha flower is in heaven, Arunagirinathar moved his life force into the body of parrot, after keeping his own body in the gopuram. Even before his return with Parijatha flower, his body was cremated. As he could not get his human form back, Arunagirinathar remained as parrot and composed great songs including Kandaranubuti.

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