



FORT OF GANDIKOTA

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Abstract

India is famous for palaces, Monuments and Forts. Even today they are most fascinating to the visitor. The reigning Monarchs and Princes have constructed forts as a defense mechanism to keep the enemy away. India is credited with famous forts such as Amber, Chittorgarh, Jaisalmer, Lohagarh, Bikaner, Jaigarh, read fort, Purana Quila, Tuglaqabad, Gwalior, Agra, Junagarh, Vellore, Jinjee etc.

In this article an attempt is made to study about the fort of Gandikota, which is situated in Kadapa District.

Origins of Forts in India

Generally, the Forts provide security to the inhabitants and serve as stronghold to resist the enemy. In ancient times, the forts as known as Durga, mean inaccessible. Then it is called as Pura, means a fortified city and fort.

The concept of Fort in the past was aimed to protect from the hazards of nature, and attacks from outside. The “Forts are built in times of peace designed to protect political, industrial, transportation and Communication centres”.¹ It means, the forts are erected to strengthen a place and for strategic importance. According to G.T Date, “In times of yore, the fortress was a capital means of defence”.² On the importance of forts as fortification and artillery it is said thus! “Forts are equally useful in offensive as defensive warfare and they will not arrest an army, they are excellent means of retarding embarrassing and annoying a victorious army”.³ According to Straith there is need of an exterior line of forts to provide security to the fort and serve as a measure of resistance from the besieger. The main purpose of the fort is defence.

Evolution of Forts in India

The evaluation of Forts in India, “Grew as a corollary to the existing trends of warfare which is one of the oldest aspects of human existence. According to B.P. Sinha “The art of warfare, evolved from the earliest times, with attention paid to both offensive and defensive weapons”.⁴ Thus, fort was the dominant features of Indian History. The rulers practiced the art of war for self-preservation and self-expansion. Self-expansion led to the system of defense in the form of forts. Then wars were fought to expand the territory, occupy the strategic areas or suppress rebellion.

The concept of kingship grew out of warfare. It in term, led to the birth of the system of defence in the form of forts. During the Neolithic, Chalcolithic period, followed the pristine type of fortification in the form of thorn hedges, Mud walls etc. It was followed by the fortification system at Kohtras Buti, Kotdigi, and Mazene Danb in Sindh slightly before the development of Harappa culture. At Kalibangan During the pre- Harappan and Harappan times. Two phases of fortification took places. During the Vedic period, there were references like Pura, Durga, Vapra, Dehi means a rampart made of earth or dikes. There are references in Rigveda and Atharvana Vedas about forts. The literary reference, corroborate with archaeological excavations at Koushambi, Ujjain and Rajagriha the about the existence of forts.



There are reference to the forts in Ramayana and Mahabharatha. The Aranyakaparva of Mahabharata contains an interesting account of defence against siege. The Buddhist literature also refers to the existence of forts.

During the Mouryan times, in order to protect them from the invasions of Greeks, Bactrians, Scythians and the Pahlavas, the art of fortification were practiced on a large scale.

Kautilya in his Arthasastra in his Saptanga theory of Kingship gave fourth place to durga(fort) after the king, Ministers and the Country.⁵

Classification of Forts

The forts are classified based on their location, plan and the material used for construction. On the basis of location, the forts are classified by Kautilya into four namely, Audaka, Parvatha, Dhanvana and Vana.⁶ Kautilya felt that of these water and Mountainous fortifications are well suited to protect the centres with more population.⁷

The shape of the forts are circular, square, rectangular or semi – circular. The material used for the construction of the forts is brick, clay or mud.

Gandikota Fort

Gandikota is a small village situated on the right bank of the river Pennar in Kadapa District. Here lies the famous fort of Gandikota.⁸ It acquired the name due to the gorge, formed between the Yerramalai range of Hills, also known as Gandikota Hills and the Pennar river that flows as its foot. It is located amidst beautiful landscape and wild forests. It is surrounded by a deep valley and impossible hills. With massive boulders of red granite and the river Pennar that flows about 300 ft. Below on the west and northern sides. Thus, it provided a strong natural defence to the occupant of the fort.

The Gandikota fort is located on river Pennar at strategic point where the river narrowed down to 230 ft from 1400 ft and pass through the gorge. It forms the link for a chain of forts in the neighboring districts like Gooty and Penukonda in Anantapur district and Adhoni in Kurnool district. The fort was constructed on a circular plan and the circumstances of the fort are 5 miles.

Political History

According to Kaifiyath of Gandikota, the fort was founded by Kakaraja, a subordinate of Ahavamalla Someswara I, the western Chalukyan king of Kalyana on 9th January 1123.⁹ Kakaraja on his way the Mulkinadu via Bellary and Gooty, he was impressed by the natural facilities like mountain, wild bushes and several water springs. The divine vision of Vishnu strengthened his belief about the natural strength of the site. Thus, he ordered for construction of the fort.

But the fact is that the political history of Gandikota began in the last decade 13th century AD. When kayastha Ambadeva was exercising his authority over the region, as a feudatory of the Kakatiyas of Warangl. The Attirala inscription dated AD1279, states that Gandapendera Mahamandaleswara Ambadeva was ruling over Gandikota, Mulkinadu, Renadu, Sakali, Pottapinadu etc from his capital Valluru Pattana.¹⁰



Later, Gandikota was ruled by Tripurari II, son of Ambadeva for a very short period.¹¹ Prathapa Rudra appointed Somaya lenka as Governor of Gandikota and ruled from 1308 to 1314.¹² He was succeeded by Juttayalenka Gonkareddi from 1314 to 1319. Nothing is known after the decline of Kakatiyas till the rise of Vijayanagara in AD 1336. Gandikota was liberated by Somadeva Raja of Kampili from the Muslim yoke.¹³ After the establishment of the Vijayanagara Empire, Gandikota became part of the Vijayanagara Empire. Bukka I of Vijayanagara ruled over Gandikota.

From Devaraya II, Gandikota is associated with Pemmasani family of Gandikota. Pemmasani Timma ruled the fort area and his son succeeded him. During Mallikarjuna time, the fort was ruled over by Polepalli Bukka Raju.¹⁴ during Sri Krishna Devaraya's time it was ruled by Timmarusayya.

In the ensuing power struggle after the death of Achuta, Gandikota played a prominent role. During this period, Pemmasani Erra Timmanayudu, brother of Ramalinga naidu was the acting commander of Gandikota. He stood beside Ramaraya against Salakaraju from Gandikota. It angered Salakaraju. In the ensuing battle Salakaraju was defeated at Komali.¹⁵

From the reign of Sadasiva brought about a new chapter in the history of Gandikota this was ruled by two families. They were the Nandyala Chiefs and the Pemmasani family.

The battle of Raksasi Tangadi in AD 1565 brought about, a new phase in the history Gandikota. It resulted in the change of capital to Penukonda. After this, Gandikota became the target of attack.

During the reign of Venkata- II, Nandyala Narasimha raju was ruling over Gandikota and was attacked by Golkonda general Aminul-Mulk. The Sultan Quli Qutub Shahi appointed Sanjar Khan to defend the fort and Murtuja Khan was appointed as the Governor of the newly conquered territories.¹⁶ Thus, Muslim rule began in and around Gandikota. But the fort was regained and ruled by Nandyala Krishnamaraju. In 1597-98, he declared independence and refused to pay tribute to Venkata II.¹⁷ Venkata II defeated Krishnamaraju and Pemmasani timma was appointed as chief of Gandikota. Then Mir Jumla, the general of Abdula Qutubsha occupied it in 1649-1650.¹⁸ Jille Fakir Khan was appointed as ruler of Gandikota by Mir Jumla. Jille Fakir Khan was succeeded by Nek Nam Khan and Dawood Khan. Then it passed into the hands of Mayana chiefs of Kadapa and into the hands of Hyder Ali in AD 1777.¹⁹ the control of Tippu ended in AD 1790. Then it passed into the hands of Nizam of Hyderabad. Finally it was taken over by the East India Company in AD 1799.

Fort

The fort of Gandikota consists of three fortification walls, a moat two gateways one is in the east and west, and a number of bastions one each in the east and west and a number of bastions, spaced of regular intervals of distance among the main fort wall. There are several structures belongs to Vijayanagara and Kutub Shahis. The religious structures include the Jama Masjid, the Madhavaraya temple, the Ranganayaka temple and Rangunatha temple. The secular structures include in Jail, Granary, Ranga Mahal and Mini Charminar.²⁰ There are several water reservoirs. There are Rajula cheruvu, Katthula Koneru and several wells. An important feature is the underground channel system mint for the flow of water by means of conduit pipes of clay and connected to different structures like the Rangamahal. Apart from the above there are a number of watch towers at several vantage points in the fort area.



In conclusion, the fort of Gandikota which came into existence in the last quarter of the 13th Century till its merger into the British East India Company in 1799, played a very important role in the defences of several ruling dynasties of the region. It served the medieval system of defences. Finally with the advent of the modern warfare like guns, Cannons, slowly the conventional forts lost importance and became the centres of the cultural Heritage of the past.

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