



CHANDRAGIRI FORT IN CHITTOOR DISTRICT – AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

Chandragiri is a village in the Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh with quite a rich history. It is home to a small fort originally built in the year 1000 AD, by the Yadavaraya rulers who ruled these parts for about 3 centuries. In the 14th century, the fort became a part of the Vijayanagara Empire which had its capital in Hampi. In the 16th century, an alliance of Deccan Sultanates defeated the Vijayanagara army in the Battle of Talikota, and killed its ruler Aliya Rama Raya. They then proceeded to plunder and destroy Hampi to ruins. The slain king's brother survived the battle, and he moved to Penukonda in present day Andhra Pradesh. From there, he ruled the now weakened and diminished kingdom. The last Vijayanagara king made Chandragiri his capital, but the empire disintegrated after his death. Next, Chandragiri passed into the hands of the Golconda Sultanate and finally the Kingdom of Mysore. Now the fort – you enter it through two gateways, with carved pillars typical of Vijayanagara architecture. There are two parts in the innermost enclosure – a lower fort and an upper fort. The upper fort was closed to public when we went – I'm not sure if it's always like that. A granite hill forms the backdrop to the lower fort, which has two important buildings. The first is the King's Palace, a three storeyed palace with a durbar hall in the middle. Apparently, the greatest Vijayanagara ruler, Krishnadevaraya, lived here until he ascended the throne. If you've been to Hampi, you'll notice the resemblance this building has to the Lotus Palace there. The ASI runs a museum in the King's Palace now. The other building is the Queen's Palace, which is smaller, but similar in design. It is believed to date back to the reign of Krishnadevaraya's successor. This paper is focus on the overview of chandragiri fort in chittoor district.

Key Words: Chandragiri, Originally, Kingdom, Resemblance, Architecture Museum.

1. Introduction

Chandragiri fort was built in the 11th century by Immadi Narasimha Yadavaraya but was taken over and renovated by the Vijayanagara Kings in the 14th century. The Chandragiri Fort is located on the top of a hill about 183 meters high, with an enclosed wall and a ditch all around protecting it from any attack. The wall and the ditch had been built as a barrier against attackers. There are two mahals, Raja and Rani Mahals, located on the ground floor inside the Chandragiri Fort. You can find rich taste of Indian Art and Architecture, which are seen in the stone carvings found on the walls of the mahals and the fort.

Chandragiri is a suburb of Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh, India. It is also the southern entrance to the Temple city for vehicles going from Bangalore, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The greatest of Hindu Emperors, Krishnadeva Raya of Vijayanagara Empire was brought up at Chandragiri Fort, before his coronation at Penukonda in Anantapur District Chandragiri is famous for the historical fort, built in the 11th century, and the Raja Mahal within it. Chandragiri was under the rule of Yadava Naidus for about three centuries and came into control of Vijayanagar rulers in 1367. It came into prominence during Saluva Narasimha Rayalu, he got the title of Mahamandaleswara and his illustrious Prime minister Chitti Gangarayalu was known for his vision, wisdom and rectitude and was revered as a Bhisma Pitamaha in his times, he was the person who identified intellectualism of Timmarasu and taken him into the service of Chandragiri and later promoted to the Prime minister of Vijayanagar Empire. Gangaraya descendants served the Vijayanagara empire as trusted Generals for several generations, Chandragiri was the 4th capital of Vijayanagar Empire, Rayas shifted their capital to here when Golconda sultans attacked Penukonda. In 1646 the fort was annexed to the Golkonda and subsequently came under Mysore rule. It went into oblivion from 1792 onward. The fort encircles eight ruined temples of saivite and vaishnavite pantheons, Raja Mahal, Rani Mahal and other ruined structures.

Chandragiri is about 145km from Chennai, and 230km from Bangalore, but I really wouldn't recommend going all the way – for all its rich history, the fort itself is not too remarkable. But if you are in the vicinity, like in Tirupati, which is just 14km away, do check it out. A sound and light show happens at the fort every night, with narration by Amitabh Bachchan. I didn't watch it, but since the history of Chandragiri is rich, I'm guessing it must be good. Please note that the fort is closed on Fridays. And finally, another interesting bit of trivia about Chandragiri: in the 17th century, the British East India Company purchased from Chandragiri's king's general, the piece of land where they built Fort St. George. The regions around the fort grew into present day Chennai, known as Madras earlier. You might have heard of the Madras Day celebrations that now take place each year – they are held on the anniversary of that historic transaction.¹



2. Objective

This paper main objective of this paper history of Chandragiri fort in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh in India.

3. Methodology

This paper based on the secondary data from various websites, reports, and journals in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh.



4. Chandragiri Fort History

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Located in Chandragiri which was once upon a time the capital city of the Vijayanagara Empire and is linked with the Aravidu dynasty, Chandragiri Fort dates back to 1000 AD. Do not confuse it with with a similar named fort in Kerala, as this fort is on the Bangalore-Tirupati route, located about 20 kilometres before Tirupati. Divided into two buildings named Raj Mahal and Rani Mahal, the former has been converted into a museum which has a small collection of idols and literature, ancient artefacts, all related to periods ranging from Mysore Empire to the Golcondas. Pradesha, well known for its fort which goes by the same name as the village. This was once the capital of the Vijayanagar Empire and is located very near the temple town of Tirupathi. The great emperor, Sri Krishnadevaraya grew up in this fort. he Chandragiri Fort is easily accessible by air from Chennai, Bangalore (Bengaluru) and Hyderabad. The nearest railway station to Chandragiri is at Tirupathi.

The Chandragiri Fort was built in 1000 AD during the rule of the Yadavarayas and was under their control for over three centuries. The Yadavarayas built the place as ramparts and barricades. From 1367, it came under the control of the Vijayanagar Empire, and they later embellished the fort by adding majestic buildings and temples to it. Composition of beautiful kavyas (poems) also took place here during the rule of the Vijayanagar kings; yet, in 1792, the fort fell into obscurity. Before the Mysore rule in 1646, Chandragiri Fort was invaded by the Golcondas. Now very little is left of the majestic fort. The Aravidu dynasty ruled this place when the Vijayanagar Empire ended. The Raja Mahal of Chandragiri Fort is said to be the same venue where Sri Rangaraya granted the site of Fort St. George to the British in 1640.

The Chandragiri Fort has eight ruined temples of Shaivite and Vaishnavite pantheons, Raj Mahal, Rani Mahal and other ruined structures. The fort was protected by enclosed walls and a ditch which were used as a barrier for the attackers. From the top of the Chandragiri Fort, you can watch the entire layout of Chandragiri. The main building, the Raja Mahal is a huge



impressive structure which is now converted into a museum. It houses a small collection of ancient artifacts, idols and literature dating back from the Mysore empires to the Golcondas. The palace is a classical example of the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture of the Vijayanagar period. The central durbar occupies two stories that are crowned by Dravida vimanas. The roofs of Chandragiri Fort are supported by massive pillars having cross arches with strong square ceilings. The Chandragiri Fort is built of stone and brick using mortar, and is well plastered. The Rani Mahal is similar in style to the Raja Mahal but houses a stable in its ground quarters and the first floor houses quarters that are adorned with shikharas (towers). Even though it is assumed that it was a palace set apart exclusively for the queens, there are ample reasons to believe that it acted as quarters for commanders of the army. Chandragiri Fort is a place of historical interest and you can have a glimpse into the history of kingdoms that ruled Andhra Pradesh.²

It is a historical fact that the subcontinent of India was ruled by several rulers across the land. Several dynasties like the Cholas of Southern India ruled the land more than 1000 years ago and their primary defense against the invading army of the enemies was fortification around their place. As time went by, they had introduced innovative methods to build strong and impenetrable forts to beef-up their defense against sudden unprovoked attacks from their neighboring rulers. In India there is no dearth of such forts older than one thousand years. The historical Chandragiri fort, which is now not it was in the by-gone years, is a case in point. Though the structure is not in good shape, none can deny that once it was a major center of imperial power.

The historical Chandragiri fort, built on the 183 meter high hill, is one of the rare oldest forts in India. Chandragiri is a village in Chittoor district of the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. This 1000 year old fort was under the control Yadvarayas for three centuries and they built the place as barricades and ramparts to safeguard them against raids from other rulers. The fort was seized by the rulers of Vijayanagara in 1367 as it became a powerful kingdom in that region. Vijayanagara rulers were great builders and obviously they built impressive buildings and temples, consequently the area of the fort was also expanded. The Vijayanagara Dynasty made valuable contribution in literature and art and they encouraged scholars, poets and artists. Their kingdom saw expansion all around, particularly as far south as Thanjavur and Madurai in Tamil Nadu where their resident representatives were Nayaks. Vijayanagara gained popularity during the reign of Saluva Narasimha Rayalu. Chandragiri was the 4th capital of Vijayanagar Empire. Because of frequent threats from the Golconda Sultan, Rayas shifted their capital from Penukonda to this place here Chandragiri fort witnessed several seesaw battles among the local rulers to control over the area. In 1646, it became part of the Golconda territory under the Sultan. Later the ruler of Mysore took control till 1792. After that the fort was never occupied and there is a big hiatus. Nothing is left of this once famous fort where, it is believed, the most popular ruler Sri Krishnadeva Raya grew up

The fort has several parts, besides ruined Vishnu and Hindu temples. The building here is made of stones and bricks and lime mortar. Amazingly no timber is used. The two Mahals in the fort are in the lower and upper levels. There are separate quarters for the king and the queen. The king's palace is called Raj Mahal which is a three-storied structure built in Indo-Saracenic style during the Vijayanagara period. The crowning towers, typical of Hindu architecture, are made of bricks instead of stones to avoid additional over load. The queen's palace Rani Mahal is a big hall with flat roof. It has well designed private quarters.³

5. Explore Chandragiri Fort

Chandragiri fort, Tirupati is a perfect destination for a great time with your dear ones. Enjoy the attractions of this popular tourist spot. With so much to lure your senses and offer you recreation at its best, get drenched in the spirit of adventure that you get to explore at Chandragiri fort, Tirupati. Enjoy together all the points of popular interests and bring back several memorable moments. Chandragiri fort, Tirupati is not just the place for sightseeing, but it also enables you to steal a self-indulgent moment for yourself as well. So, check out the Chandragiri fort tourist spot for all the attractions that is on offer and visit this spot on weekends for a rejuvenating time. World standards, extraordinary architecture, innovative layouts, and well-thought execution make place a highly coveted point of tourist interest. Do not forget to carry your camera and capture special moments. Chandragiri fort, Tirupati is the sure way to refresh and relax after a busy weekday. Explore interesting themes, fabulous designs, colorful landscapes, amusing characters, ambient music, props and merchandise available in nearby stores- all at one place. Chandragiri fort, Tirupati is the best way to have a memorable time with kids and family.⁴

6. Sri Krishna Devaraya Promoted In Chandragiri Fort

Krishnadevaraya was a prominent ruler of the Vijayanagara Empire of South India. As the third ruler of the Tuluva Dynasty of the Vijayanagara Empire, he extended the empire to most of South India, which included present-day Karnataka, Northern Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, stretching upwards in the northeast to Cuttack. He ascended the throne during the most critical stage of the empire and went on to consolidate it as a flourishing empire. He played a major role in defeating the



Bahmani Sultans and Portuguese, forcing them to retreat their plans of expanding their empire beyond their boundaries. Along with his prime minister and mentor, Timmarusu, he defeated the Bahmani Sultans, thereby conquering their fortresses of Bidar, Gulbarga, Raichur, and Bijapur. He led a major campaign against the Gajapatis of Odisha, following which he seized and captured the fortresses of Udayagiri, Kondavalli and Kondavidu. He is often compared with the greatest emperors of Asia and Europe, due to his brilliant achievements and exceptional ability to maintain political stability in the Deccan. By ruling the three most powerful territories in the southern peninsula of India, he was known by different titles, earned as a mark of respect, such as 'Kannada Rajya Rama Ramana' (Lord of the Kannada empire) and 'Andhra Bhoja and 'Mooru Rayara Ganda' (King of three Kings).⁵

He was married to Tirumala Devi and Chinnama Devi. He married Prathapa Rudra's daughter, Princess Annapurna Devi, who became his third queen, as part of the peace treaty signed by the two rulers to establish peace and harmony on both sides of the Krishna River. Being highly religious and devout follower of Lord Tirumala of Tirupati, he donated numerous precious objects to the Venkateswara Temple, including a jewel-studded golden sword and diamond-encrusted crowns. In 1524, he pronounced his son, Tirumala Raya as the Yuvaraja but the crown prince didn't live long to continue his father's legacy and died, probably due to poisoning. With Timmarusu's son rumored to have poisoned his son, he got both Timmarusu and his son blinded. He declared his half-brother Achyuta Deva Raya, as his successor and died in 1529, after falling ill critically. His development in Chandragiri fort in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh in India.⁶

7. Conclusion

Chandragiri is now famous for the historical fort, built in the 11th century, and the Raja Mahal (Palace) within it. The fort encircles eight ruined temples of saivite and vaishnavite pantheons, Raja Mahal, Rani Mahal and other ruined structures. The Raja Mahal Palace is now an archaeological museum. The fort and palace are in the care of the Archaeological Survey of India. The palace is open to the public, but the fort is closed. The palace is an example of Indo-Saracen architecture of Vijayanagar period. The palace was constructed using stone, brick, lime mortar and devoid of timber.^[4] The crowning towers represent the Hindu architectural elements. Chandragiri was under the rule of Vijayanagar from 1367. It came into prominence during Saluva Narasimha Rayalu. Chandragiri was the 4th capital of Vijayanagar Empire. Rayas shifted their capital to here when Golconda sultans attacked Penukonda. In 1646, the fort was annexed to the Golkonda territory and subsequently came under Mysore rule. It went into oblivion from 1792 onward. So most important fort in Chittoor district of Chandragiri fort in Andhra Pradesh.

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