

Importance of fort, special reference to Potagada in Ganjam district

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ABSTRACT

Forts are significant monuments of every country, State or kingdom which stand as the witness of important events of that particular location. These forts were built by various rulers or chieftains for administrative requirements and also for military safety from foreign invasion. Many ancient texts like the Vedas, Epics, Puranas, Arthashastra, Nitisastra etc. Provides information regarding fort building activity, different kinds of forts and also its essence for a king and his kingdom. The present paper is on the Potagada fort of Ganjam district. Several parts of this fort have been demolished over time but leave behind some relics. Archaeological survey of India has carried out extensive research on this fort in order to reveal various hidden and significant facts associated with it.

Keywords - Fort & Fortification, ASI, Fighting

I. INTRODUCTION

On earth, human beings are special social creatures that are different from other creatures for his creative genius. His basic needs were fulfilled by nature and from very early times he had to fight against it for his basic needs. But later he made efforts to secure his other amenities. For which fighting became a crucial part of his life. This activity gave a path to build a secure place for himself and also for his treasury.

Basically from prehistoric time, he had started to construct a safety shelter for himself which is found in the form of cave shelter. Later in the Neolithic period, he started to build a structural house. Then in the chalcolithic period, he led a settled life and then he also lived in a community. Later on all these developed into the concept of "state" or "kingdom". For a state or kingdom, fighting is very much essential to get safe from external enemies or influences. For which a secure and safe place was necessitated. Later this was turned into the concept of building fort.

The importance of forts and fortification realized by the rulers for their own facilities. So they built up various forts in different places. The forts often include Palaces or residential quarters of the royal family and the nobility. It act as military stations or residential centers and also as the center for commercial activities. The vedic literature may be regarded as the earliest literary records with focus on the construction of stone and iron forts. In this text the word "purandar" is also mentioned. The terms "pura" and "durga" denote the fortified city or town. Kautilya's Arthashastra, the treatises on political, administrative and military strategy, describes different kinds of forts according to their physical appearance. Kautilya mentions different kinds of forts like Water fort / Jala durga, Desert fort / Maru durga, Hill fort / Giri durga, Forest fort / Vana durga, Mud fort / Mahi durga, Nara durga / Fort protected by soldiers. The Manusmriti considers the Hill fort to be the best defensive structure while the Mahabharat describes the Nara fort as the most effective one. Besides these, the accounts of Hiuen tsang and Muslim chronicles also shows many walled towns like Delhi, Ajmer, Kanauj, Jalor, Meerut, Multan were enclosed by brick built wide walls and gates for protection. It is believed that the fort building activity in Odisha was started during the time period of Mahameghavahan kharavela after the discovery of Sisupalgarh in 1948-49 by B. B Lal. Forts in Odisha are so significant that they stand as the witness of important events of Indian History. A number of forts of Odisha like Barabati fort, Chudanga gada, Potagada, Raibania fort, Jaugada, Sisupalgarh etc. are discovered by archeologists. Among these forts, Potagada fort is the most important one.

Potagada fort

The Potagada fort, an archaeological wonder which translates in odia as a buried fort, is situated on the bank of river Rushikulya in Ganjam district. The fort is partly sunk and not easily

visible from a distance. It is not a single fort rather than a cluster of forts which throws on the light of the history of Muslim & French rulers and their administrative procedures. According to historians, the fort was constructed in 1768 under the supervision of Edward Costaford, the British resident officer of Ganjam. In 1753, Monsieur De Bussy took control over Ganjam and functioned from Potagada. In 1765, the French rule ended and the fort came under the British. It is in pentagonal star shape. Its main gate facing the river is in ruins. The gate on the opposite side is still intact. It is surrounded by a wide & deep moat. It has two designed doors-one is on the front side and the other is on the back side. Within the fort there are office buildings, artillery, armory, store and custom houses etc. Inside the compound wall, there are residential buildings of three different architectural designs of the rulers. The first one probably of Mohammedan or Kutab Shahi origin has been almost ruined. It is described by the celebrated historian W. W Hunter as having towers in the star angles except in the east front where there is a large gateway. The fort has five bastions facing the land with two half bastions on the river side.

The maritime history of Odisha reveals that the Danes and Portuguese had control over the port for some time before it was taken over by the French in 1757A.D. The French ships docked quite often at the port and there was a thriving French settlement in the fort. During the French occupation, only Christian were allowed inside the fort and the natives resided outside in the nearby villages. It is assumed that the French might have subjugated the areas near the fort and collected tributes from them. In 1765, the Northern Circars were granted to the English by an imperial farman. For which French domination came to an end and Edward Costford was appointed. He constructed some more buildings inside the fort. Realizing its potential and strategic location, the East India Company established a commercial center for its own profit. The cemeteries which have been found near the fort need immediate conservation as these antiquities give various details about this fort. The Odisha State Archaeology Department had already taken some conservation activity. Still it is in a dilapidated situation. So some other measures should be taken for its renovation by the government.

II. CONCLUSION

Lastly in the conclusion it is found that although the fort is in a ruined state, it gives a clear idea about the cultural, political, and traditional essence

of that particular period when the fort was in use by different rulers.

Figures



Fig 1 : Potagada fort (Showing cluster of forts rather than a single one)



Fig 2 : Entrance gate of the fort



Fig 3 : Dilapidated portion of the fort

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