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Gingee Fort: A Unesco World Heritage Site

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Abstract

Gingee fort has been glorified as 'troy of India' for its impregnable nature and architectural endeavor. Gingee fort acted as the capital of this region for both South Arcot and North District. Gingee fort erected on the period of Anada Kon dynasty from thirteenth century, which gradually fortified by the following Kings and Kingdoms. Though, the major and minor Kingdoms, and feudatories ruled the Gingee fort, controlled the region up to Bay of Bengal. Archaeological survey of India listed the heritage monument more than thirty-two sites as heritage monument sites, including Gingee fort. In 2024 C.E., the team of members from UNESCO has visited the Gingee fort, including around 12 sites in India for nomination of the world heritage site in a Maratha architectural marvel. From North to South Indian Kings eager to clinch the Gingee fort on their period, however some were captured and ruled for some years, even Mughals, British and French. This article deals with the significance of Gingee Fort and its potential of UNESCO heritage site.

Keywords: Gingee Fort, UNESCO World heritage site, troy of India, Architectural endeavor, Fort and Fortification.

Introduction

Gingee fort has been glorified as 'troy of India'¹ for its impregnable nature and architectural endeavor. Gingee fort acted as the capital of this region for both South Arcot and North District. Gingee fort erected on the period of Anada Kon dynasty from thirteenth century, which gradually fortified by the following Kings and Kingdoms. Though, the major and minor Kingdoms, and feudatories ruled the Gingee fort, controlled the region up to Bay of Bengal. Archaeological survey of India listed the heritage monument more than thirty-two sites as heritage monument sites, including Gingee fort. In 2024 C.E., the team of members from UNESCO has visited the Gingee fort, including around 12 sites in India for nomination of the world heritage site in a Maratha architectural marvel. From North to South Indian Kings eager to clinch the Gingee fort on their period, however some were captured and

ruled for some years, even Mughals, British and French. This article deals with the significance of Gingee Fort and its potential of UNESCO heritage site.

Physiographic setting

Gingee fort is located thirty kilometers from Villupuram, an important town in the Villupuram district on the premises of National Highway of sixty-six, with the coordinates 12° 15' N and 79° 25' 12' E, geo 12.25,79.42,² During Kingship, the majority of the Kings erected their capital on the hilly regions with strategic advancement, indeed Gingee had the quality in the region. Moreover, the transportation was evolved to transport the goods and army for safeguarding from the enemies. From 12th century onwards, Gingee fort become the important place and might be the key of the (Sengol) any King or Kingdom. Gingee fort bounded on the southern side with Appampudur village, Singavaram on the Southern side, Nellakvalai on the Northern side, Sankarabarani river on the eastern side. Though, Gingee was called multiple toponyms namely like Gingee, Gingi, Gingy, Jinji, Chingu, Chinch, Chunjee and Chengy.³

Erection of the Fort

Gingee fort construction was in a hypothetical question, however, the reliable sources revealed the reality of the same. The sixteenth century sources written about the twelfth century, written by Narayana pillai namely Karanataka Rajukkal Charaithiram, and this testimony authenticated about the erection of the fort by Kon Dynasty.⁴ Tamil literary sources namely Muvarula written by Ottakuthar belongs to twelfth century, mentioned about the Gingee fort as Chenjiyar Kon Kadava, might be erected by Pallava rulers.³ The trio of hilly forts of Gingee namely Krishangiri, Rajagiri, Chandrayan drug was erected over the years. The fortification process was enlarged by the following Kingships, most of the stone blocks were depicted the fort region like Polygonal, rectangular and trapezoidal. The construction method was followed by dry masonry, later the modern techniques were followed like using mortar for the construction, with bricks.

Historical significance

Gingee has the history from prehistoric period, particularly Neolithic period which was the rudimentary line. From ancient period to Nayak period, the Gingee was glorified by the Kings and Kingdoms, also noticed with the other Kings wants to capture the same. Jain monument existed in the Gingee fort revealed that this was attributed the Jain people from second century A.D.,⁵ This pattern of reminiscences was existed in and around the village attributed the Jainism. Pallavas were ruled the Gingee region which depicted the inscriptions, mentioned the notion Satrumalla and Narendira from seventh century A.D.,⁶ This was under listed one among the heritage monuments in Gingee region, come under Gingee circle out of thirty-two from Archaeological Survey of India.⁷ Then this region was ruled by the Chola Kingdom from the King Aditya I to King Rajaraja III exhibited by epigraphical sources, period covered 1014 A.D., to 1190 A.D.,⁸

The real history of the Gingee fort was begun from Ananada Kon rule, whom was the founder of the Kon dynasty.⁹ Gingee fort named as Anandagiri while the erection of the fort, because of the rule of Anandakon.¹⁰ After the Kon dynasty, the Kurumbas¹¹ were ruled in this region. Hoysalas were ruled after the Kurumbas, followed by Vijayanagar Empire,¹² and their governors called Nayaks. Bijapur Sultans captured the Gingee fort after the Nayak rule,¹³ while the General Mustafa khan. After that, the Marathas were made expedition to South India, and they are reached Gingee fort and captured the fort. By following, Mughals were reached South India for eradicating the Marathas rule in Gingee, and captured the fort by Zulfiqar khan as Kiladar.¹⁴ The war of succession broke out in Hyderabad Nizam crown, when Nasir Jung and Muzaffar Jung fought between themselves, finally French become the prominent power and capture the Gingee fort. After that the British hold the fort themselves, even they tried to demolish the fort. In a meantime, the Tipu sultan trying to capture the Gingee fort however it was failed. Finally, the Gingee fort come under the possession of Archaeological Survey of India in 1921.

Potential of Gingee Fort

The potential of Gingee fort was high esteem, because the strategic position of the Fort and its landscape was more prominent. The three peaks possessed the fort and fortification which strategically stretched by the Kings and Kingdoms of this region. First up all the rock formation was more advantage to erect the fort in this region. There are three forts namely Rajagiri, Krishnagiri and Chandragiri. There are lot of strategical advantages to defend the forces for long years, perhaps, Gingee fort was siege more than one year during Mughal expedition.¹⁵ Also, it has the separate moat facility on those days, which acted impregnable nature. From ancient to modern period, it witnessed all the historic sequences and acted as the prominent place in this region. Moreover, still there are lot of buildings and structured existed means to reveals the greatness.

Nomination process

The visit of the crew members from UNESCO was highly confidential, however the details were published after the selection in the website. It was categorized under Maratha Military Landscape of India, where Gingeer fort was one among twelve forts from all over India. It includes the fort of Salher Fort, Shivneri Fort, Lohagad Fort, Khanderi fort, Raigad fort, Pratapgad fort, Suvarnadurg fort, Panhala fort, Vijaydurg, Sindurdurg and Gingee fort. The inspection was delved for the visiting of UNESCO team on 28th September 2024, whom inspected between 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. The inspection team members met the collector of Villupuram district, Superintendent of Police S.P. Deepak Sivach, District Forest Officer Suresh Soman, with consulting about the protection, disaster management in the Gingee fort whether the foreign tourist visits in this place.¹⁶ A visited team visited on the Gingee fort on 22 September, while the cleanness drive hold by the Government, awareness marathon, brough the school children for the event to know about the history. The preparation process of the UNESCO team visit started from 22 September, a mass cleanliness programme initiated which includes marathon run, awareness activities, indeed the school children participated in this event.

Tourism Development

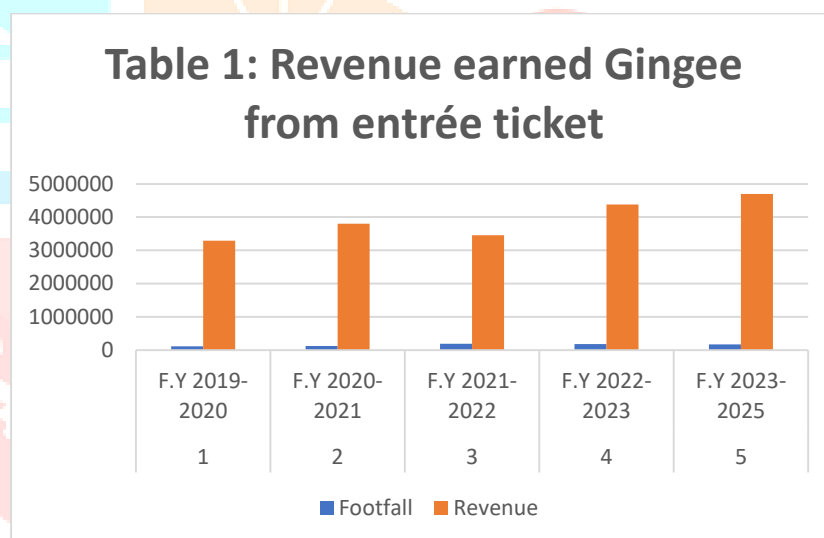
The development Gingee fort through the modernised approaches of tourism issues which lead economical gain.¹⁷ Gingee fort is the one among the ticketed monument in Tamil Nadu. Gingee fort is a primary list to the tourists, because the huge heritage monument attracted all kind of people, including the Scholl and college students.

Table No.1: Revenue earned Gingee from entrée ticket

S. No	Year	Footfall	Revenue
1	F.Y 2019-2020	108809	3290855
2	F.Y 2020-2021	127381	3798590
3	F.Y 2021-2022	189051	3459945
4	F.Y 2022-2023	181185	4382395
5	F.Y 2023-2025	171463	4698487

Source¹⁸

The Gingee fort has been opened from 9.00 a.m to 4.30 a.m, the entry fees fixed Rs.20 for Indian visitors, Rs.250 for foreigner visitors, Rs.20 for SAARC country visitor, Rs.20 for BIMSTEC visitors in the Gingee fort by ASI.



The footfall of the visitors is increased and the income was generated which gradually increased through the years. Last five years the visitors level was increased around 6.35 percentage which authenticated improvement of the tourism in Gingee fort.

Heritage and cultural value

Gingee fort has the Heritage and cultural value, because it has the several heritage monuments inside the fort, temples, mosques, and the dwellings of the Kings and royals, queens, soldier's residence, lake, spring water (sunai), and the granary tells the heritage and culture of the inhabitants on those days. Perhaps, the existence of architectural endeavours depicted the cultural attributes of the people like Hinduism, Jainism and Islam. Also, the Jesuit missionaries Nicolos Pimenta, Father Antaode Proenza visited the Gingee fort ¹⁹ The reminisces of Sati system prevailed in the Gingee fort, where wife of Raja Tsing attributed the sati after the death of his husband in the battlefield. ²⁰ Moreover, the Kamalakanniyamman temple has the religious attributes of buffalo sacrifice in the hilly region of

Gingee.²¹ The cultural attributes still prevailed from the people of Marathas, Mughals, Bijapur sultans, Jains in Gingee fort.

UNESCO heritage site

The UNESCO has selected the sites as World Heritage site which having more heritage and cultural value. Gingee fort received World Heritage tag under Maratha Military Landscape of India, one among the country forty-four heritage site. The heritage committee included twenty-one members from the different states, convention of General assembly elected the Gingee fort as World Heritage Site in 2024 C.E., Because the King Shijvaji, founder of the Maratha dynasty whome made expeditions of the South India due to claiming the right of his father from brother Sambaji, and the generating amount through the expeditions. After that Gingee fort captured and enhanced the fortified places from erection of Moat, bastions, rampart and other fortification structures.

Issues and Challenges

After getting the Heritage tag, the huge amount of people should visit to explore the twelve-fort including the Gingee Fort. However, the transport facility from the capital of Chennai, and the capital of the district not good enough for the global visitors. The toilet facility was nor far enough and the drinking water facility war not fare, however the shops were available near the Gingee fort. Both central and State Government of India should involved to established the facility of Accommodation, transportation, and the hospitality services, including the awareness to the people, and the advertisement regarding the Gingee fort in the print media and social media may brought the tourist in this region over the years.

Conclusion

Gingee a fortified place witnessing the history of this region, and the Kings and Kingdoms ancient to medieval period, and even the colonial impact, even the post-Independence rule. The Maratha King Shivaji and the Mughal prince Kambaksh, son of Aurangzeb made footfall in the fort exhibited the importance of the Fort on those days. All the Kings might concentrate to protect the Kingdom and their people from enemies, while the forts were the tool for completing the task. Those who have the Gingee fort in their control, the entire region up to the sea coast in the east, and maritime trade, and the supremacy over the region on those days. Whether control or loss depends the holding Gingee Fort on those days. Marathas made tremendous work to made fortification into high esteem, which nominated the Maratha landscape, however, there are lot of Kings and Kinship existed before them. Also, the erection of the fort was not by the Marathas instead Anadakon, a shepherd dynasty in twelfth century. At last, the Gingee fort was selected as the World Heritage monuments brought the tourist visitors as soundly. This exposure should use by the central and State Government and the Archaeological Survey of India to exhibit the heritage and culture to the internal visitors and Global visitors further.

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