GANDIKOTA

General information

Gandikota is a small village (Lat. 14° 47' N and Long 78° 16' S) on the right bank of the river Pennar, in Jammalamadugu taluk of Cuddapah district, Andhra Pradesh. Here lies the famous fort of Gandikota, which acquired its name obviously due to the gorge formed between the Erramalai range of hills, also known as Gandikota hills and the river Pennar that flows at its foot, reducing its width to a mere 300 ft. Situated amidst beautiful landscape and wild forests, it is endowed with great potentialities of natural strength. Surrounded by a deep valley and impassable hills, with massive boulders of red granite, and the river Pennar that flows about 300 ft. below on the west and northern sides, it affords strong natural defence to the occupants of the Fort.

The river Pennar enters the district of Cuddapah almost a mile and half south west of Koduru, in Jammalamadugu taluk of Cuddapah district, and runs in a further easterly direction, and approaches Gandikota about 4 miles away and takes a south east course, for 5 miles, where it meets at Neknampet, its first big tributary, in the district, by name Chitravati on its right flank. Just below this confluence, it curves towards north, and strikes right in to the hills, where its width is reduced to a mere 500 from 1400 ft. and after 4 miles further down to 230 ft. where it passes through the gorge. It is here in this gorge on the rock above, is perched the fort.
Strategically, it forms the link for a chain of forts in the neighbouring districts like Gutti and Penugonda in Anantapur district and Adoni in Kurnool district.

Roughly it occupies an area of about 5 miles in circumference and is circular on plan.

It can be reached by bus upto Jammalamadugu and from there by foot which is within 15 Kms. distance, as there is no regular bus conveyance to the place.

Political history:

The early history of Gandikota, according to a legend contained in the Kaifiyat of Gandikota, begins in 12th C. A.D. when a certain chief Kakaraja, a subordinate of Jhavamalla Someswara I, the western Chalukyan king of Kalyana, founded it in S.1044, Sobaakrit, Magha su.10, i.e. A.D.1123, January,9.

He, according to the same record, while on his way to Mulkinadu via Bellary and Gutti, was impressed with the natural facilities like high cliffs and wild bushes and several water springs. Further, the sight of a hare chasing the hound; and the divine vision of Vishnu, strengthened his belief about the natural strength of the site. Accordingly he laid the foundation of the fort, in the south, by ordering the Gurikandlu and Ayakandlu that accompanied him to build the fort, and arranged inams for them. He is also said to have built several bastions which went by the names of Ramabamamu, Virabhadra Banamu and Madhava.
chakram, and several temples inside it.

The account of Gandikota kaifiyat ascribing its beginnings to 12th C. A.D. i.e. to the Western Chalukyan period of Kalyana, is untenable, as firstly it does not draw support from contemporary epigraphs. Secondly, the Western Chalukyan ruler of Kalyana in 1123 A.D. was Tribhuvanamalla Vikramaditya VI and not Trailokyamalla Somesvara I. Thirdly, Gandikota does not find mention in any of the Western Chalukyan records. Lastly, the historicity of Kaka is doubtful as he is nowhere mentioned either in the Western Chalukyan records, nor his own are available.

On the other hand the known political history of Gandikota, begins a century later, i.e. in the last decade of 13th C. A.D. when Kayastha Ambadeva was exercising his authority over the region, as a feudatory of the Kakatiyas of Warangal. An inscription at Attirala dated 1201 A.D. 1279, states that Gandapendara Mahamandalesvara Ambadeva was ruling over Khandikota, Mulkinado, Renadu, Sakali, Pottapinadu etc., from his capital Valluru patana. Another record of the same ruler from Tripurantakam dated 1212 A.D. 1290 calls him as the Lord of Khandikota manorathapuram, and ascribes the titles Giridurga malla, Vanadurga davana, jalaadurga baabadajvalana, and sthaladurga sandhurnana. From the above records, it becomes clear that Gandikota was in existence, since at least the Kakatiya period i.e. last quarter of 13th C. forming part of Kayastha territories and enjoyed the status of a secondary or
subsidiary capital to which Ambadēva later repaired after being dispossessed of his ancestral capital Vallūru, by Kākatīya Pratāparudra.

After this, Gaṇḍikōṭa was ruled by Tripurārī II son of Ambadēva, only for a short period, when he was slain by the forces of Pratāparudra. An inscription cited by the Kaifiyat, dated 6.1230 A.D.1308, states that a certain officer of Pratāparudra, name not given was ruling from Gaṇḍikōṭa. Another record from Devagudi dated 6.1238 A.D.1316 mentions a certain Sōmaya Leṅka as Lord of Gaṇḍikōṭa. Yet another inscription of the Kaifiyat, dated 6.1236 A.D.1314 informs, of another general of Prataparudra, who held the title Brahmārākshasa and Gaṇḍikōṭa Durgāvibhāla. The Upparapalle record of the same chief dated 6.1241 A.D.1319, calls him as the son of Pratāparudra and ruling over Mulkinādu, and Gaṇḍikōṭa. A study of the above inscriptions reveals that Pratāparudra first appointed Sōmaya Leṅka, as governor of Gaṇḍikōṭa, who ruled from 6.1230 to 6.1236 i.e. A.D.1308 to 1314. He was followed by Juttaya Leṅka Goṅkā Reddi, from 6.1236 to 6.1241 i.e. A.D.1314 to 1319.

After this the history of Gaṇḍikōṭa falls into oblivion, owing to the fall of Kākatīyas of Warangal, and the consequent Muslim occupation of the land. What happened to it, during this period of anarchy is a matter of conjuncture, as we do not have any information. We do not hear of any successors of Juttayaleṅka,
also. It is only after the establishment of the Vijayanagar empire by Harihara I and Bukka I in 1336 A.D., does Gandikota, find its rise again. This region, appears to have been liberated by Araviti Somadevaraja of Chalukyan lineage who ruled from Kaṃpili, from Muslim yoke during the course of liberation movement that pervaded the Telugu country.11 Ever since the establishment of the kingdom of Vijayanagar, Gandikota formed part of it, almost throughout. During this period it comprised the regions of Mulkinādu and Rēnādu, and was the headquarters of a Sima, in Udayagirirājya.12 The first Vijayanagar monarch, that we hear of over Gandikota was Bukka I. During his reign, according to an inscription cited by the Kaifiyat at east Rajucheruvu, south of Gandikota, dated 5.1297 A.D.1375, Rākshasa, a certain Ellamarasa renovated the temple of Narasimha, at the behest of a priest by name Koppadau Dēvāji and styled himself as the builder of Gandikota.13 About this time, Bukka is also said to have done repairs to Gandikota Fort.14 The Tadiparthi Kaifiyat informs us that during the reign of Bukka I, a certain Jillella Chalapati rāju, was appointed to rule over the region of Mulkinādu. This chief, impressed with the site, claims to have built the fort.15 Harihara II the successor of Bukka I according to the same record, transferred the Jillella chief, to Penugonda and appointed, a Nandyāla chief by name Vīra Rāghava Rāja to rule over both Gutti and Gandikota.16 Who ruled during the reign of Devaraya I we do not know. A certain Mallayadōva is said to be ruling over
Guttirajya which also included Gandikota, during the time of Bukka II or Vijaya Bukka.

It is from the time of Devaraya II that we find the association of the Pemmasani family with Gandikota. According to the Kaifiyat, a certain Pemmasani Timma was exercising authority over Guttii and Gandikota. He was followed by his son Timma, who obtained the governorship of Gandikota, and made several repairs to the fort, by strengthening the existing fortifications and adding new ones. According to Velugotivaramavali, a certain Polepalli Bukka Raja held the fort of Gandikota during the time of Mallikarjuna. The names of the chiefs or commanders of Gandikota are not known, in the succeeding years of the First Dynasty.

An inscription falling in the reign of Saluva Narasimha of the IIInd Dynasty dated 1485 A.D. mentions a certain Bukkayadeva maharaja, son of Tatapinnama and grand son of Kraviti Bukka, who suppressed a rebellion of the Gandikota chiefs. But details about the rebels are not furnished, and it is not known who held Gandikota about this time. We do not hear of any chief of Gandikota in the following years, until we come to the period of Krishnadavaraya.

During the reign of Krishnadavaraya, it was held by a certain Timmarusayya as amaram, and a certain Annaji was acting as regent or Karyakarta. In 5.1448, A.D.1526, we find 3 people ruling over Gandikota (viz.) Demarusayya, Timmarusayya and
and Rayasam Ayyaparasa. In 1452 A.D.1529, Siddhavatam Ellaramasa, was acting as the Kāryakarta of Rayasam Ayyaparasa the nāyaṁkara holder. This Ayyaparasa continued to rule over Gandikōta even during the reign of Achyuta also. During this period an inscription at Chinna Dasaripalle, dated 1455 A.D.1532, refers to a certain Kāryakarta by name Bācharasa, who granted remission of taxes due under Durga-dannāya nivartanam. His successor was Nandyāla Aubhala-rāja in A.D.1535.

The death of Achyuta resulted in a war of succession between his brother-in-law Salakaraju Chinna Tirumala of Adoni, who took control of the kingdom by acting as regent to the infant son of Achyuta, Venkata I and Aliya Rāmarāja, who supported the cause of Sadāśiva. This struggle for succession resulted in a series of sanguine battles, between the two factions, in which Gandikōta played a prominent role. During this period Pennamasānī Erra Timmā Nāyyudu, brother of Rāmalingānyaṇu, was acting as the commander of Gandikōta, on behalf of the Nandyāla chiefs, who held it as amaram. He stood firmly by the side of Rāmarāya, and in fact was responsible for the rise of Rāmarāya by assisting him in winning the battles, in the early years against Salakaraju Chinna Tirumala. Ramaraya began his offensive against Salakaraju, from Gandikōta itself, which formed the base of his operations, with the active assistance of Erra Timma. This act of Erra Timma, provoked the anger of Salakaraju, who proceeded against Gandikōta and demanded the surrender of Rāmarāya. Erra Timma stoutly refused this, and a battle ensued at Komali, which
resulted in the defeat of Salakarāju. 24

The reign of Sadāśiva brought about a new chapter in the history of Gandikōṭa. From this period onwards it is closely associated with two families, that ruled over it. They were the Nandyāla chiefs who held it as amaram, and the Pennamessāni family, who acted as Kāryakartas. It was this later family that actually stayed at Gandikōṭa, and exercised authority on behalf of their masters i.e. the Nandyāla chiefs. Several records of the Nandyāla chiefs, attest evidence to it, found in and around Cuddapah district. But it is a difficult exercise to frame a correct genealogical and chronological account of the family, owing to the fact, that they contain identical names of several chiefs, with conflicting dates, issued some times during the same year. Hence it is difficult to know who succeeded whom. However a brief but conjuctural account can be framed with the help of inscriptions and the information furnished by the Kaifiyat.

In Ś.1446 A.D., a certain Nandyāla Timmaḥadeva mahārāja held Gandikōṭa as amaram and granted remission of taxes under Durga damāya nivārtanam. 25 In Ś.1463 A.D., 1546 he was followed by Nandyāla Timmayadeva Nāraparāju. 26 In Ś.1470 A.D., 1548, it was a mahāmandalēśvara China Timmayadeva mahārāju 27 followed by Nāraparāju in Ś.1471 A.D., 1549. 28 In Ś.1473 A.D., 1551, we find Pina Aubhalamahārāju and Nārapadēva son of Narasimhagarāju. 29 In Ś.1475 A.D., 1552, it was Timmayadeva 30 and in Ś.1479 A.D., 1557, 31 Pina Timmayadeva and Pina Aubhala mahārāju, and lastly in Ś.1496 A.D., 1574 a certain Narasimharaju held it. 32
The above account shows that they succeeded each other quickly without enjoying their amaram at least for a considerable period.

The next family is of the Penmasani's, who, like the Matli chiefs of Sidhout, were warlike people and distinguished themselves in several battles. The Kaifiyats of Tadiparthi and Gandikōta furnish interesting accounts of the family. We come across, two early members of the family, namely Timma and his son China Timma, who governed Gandikōta, in the reign of Hari Hara II. Later it was during the period of Krishnadēvarāya, that they came into prominence, when flourished Rāmalingā Nayudu,ERR Timma, and China Timma.

The battle of Rakkasi-Tangadi in 1565 A.D. brought about, a new phase in the history of Gandikōta. It resulted in the change of capital to Penugonda, and thence forward came a new dynasty called Sṛavīdu, under Tirumala, the younger brother of Ramaraju. Since then, Gandikōta, which enjoyed almost absolute peace through out uninterrupted, became the target of attack, by its Muslim neighbours chief of them being the Qutb Shāhis of Gōlconda.

During the reign of Veṅkaṭa II a certain Nandyāla Naraśimharāju, was ruling over Gandikōta and was attacked and laid siege to, by the Golconda general Amīrul-Mulk, of the Sultan, Quli Qutb Shahi. He came to it after ravaging the entire country surrounding it. During this period a China
Timmanayudu was the Kāryakarta at Gandikōta fort. Though Naraparāju offered stiff resistance, in the beginning, he had to offer submission at last. The Sultan, who accompanied his general in this campaign appointed Sanjar Khān to defend the fort, and Murtuza Khan, as the governor of the entire country newly conquered. This marks the beginning of the Muslim occupation of the fort. The date of the campaign or details about its capture are however not known. But this was only short lived, as Venkata II rallied forces and succeeded in winning it back into his hands, after a series of struggles with the Muslim forces. He first captured Gutti and then interrupted reinforcements coming to the aid of Gandikōta garrison, under the command of Rustum Khān, who ensued a battle on the banks of river Pennar, in which the Muhammadan forces were routed completely and made to flee. In this Velugōti Chennappa distinguished himself, accompanied by Yaeha, who marched to Gandikōta and captured it. After this Gandikōta came to be ruled by Nandylā Krishnamarāju, son of Narasimha. In 1597-98, he declared independence and refused to pay tribute to Venkata II. In this he was joined by Kondraju Tirupatiraju chief of Pottapi, and Sidhout, and Kandanavōlu Gōpālarāju. Venkata II, assisted by Matli Yellamara- rasa, Hande-Dēvappanāyaka, and Pennasāni Timma, marched, at the head of a large army, against the rebels, and a battle was fought, near Jammalamadugu. Krishnamarāju took to flight, and sought refuge in Nandyala and the confederacy broken. Venkata II apportioned the territories between Hande Dēvappa and Pennasāni
Timma making him the chief of Gandikota. This marks a yet another landmark in the history of Gandikota for thence forward, Gandikota ceased to be the patrimony of the Nandyala chieftains, and became a possession of the Pemmasanis.

During the reign of Sri Ranga III (1642-64) took place the attack against Gandikota by Mir Jumla in 1649-50 A.D. This Mir Jumla, the general of Abdullah Qutb Shah, probably in secret connivance with the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, laid waste the whole of Rayalasima capturing a number of forts in the region including Gutti. He then proceeded against Gandikota, pitched his camp outside the fort walls, and besieged it for 6 months. Pennamasani Timma the commander of the Fort, stood firm and would not yield. Finding it difficult to win by strength of arms, Mir Jumla took recourse to a clever strategy, and offered Timma the fort of Gutti in lieu of Gandikota. Timma, realising the situation and the difficulties involved in defending the fort for long against the superior strength of the Muslim forces, accepted the offer, and came out of the fort. Immediately, Mirjumla occupied the fort, and established his control over it. He broke his promise by offering Timma the fort of Hanuman Gutti instead of Gutti. Thus came the Muslim occupation of the fort of Gandikota, which became a permanent feature hence forward.

During this period of Mirjumla's attack against Gandikota, visited the French Traveller, Jean Baptiste Tavernier who stayed there for 15 days from 1st Sep. 1651 to 15th Sep. 1651 and left an account of the Fort. He calls it as "Gandikot" and according
to him it was only 3 days since the Nawab had taken it, after a
3 months siege, and he would not have taken it but for the aid of
some French men who had quitted the service of Dutch . .
He also had as Gunners, many English and Dutch, with Italians,
who gave him great aid, in the capture of the place”. Describing
the Fort, he says “it is built on the summit of a high mountain
and the sole means of access to it is by a very difficult road,
which is only 25 or 20 ft. wide, and in certain points only
7 to 8 ft. At the level of the plain to the south, where the
town is built on a point, the limits are formed by precipices,
with two rivers which bound the point at the base, so that in
order to enter the town, there is but one gate on the plain side,
and it is fortified in this direction with 3 walls of cut stone,
with the ditches at their bases faced with the same stone.
Consequently during the siege, the inhabitants had only to guard,
a space of 400 or 500 paces wide. They had only 2 iron guns, one
being a 12 pounder, and the other 7 or 8. The first was placed
on the gate and the other on a kind of bastion. Until the Nawab
found a means to mount guns above, he lost several men from the
frequent sorties made by the besieged. The Rāja who was in the
town was considered to be one of the best and honest commanders
among the idolaters, and the Nawab seeing at length, that the
place could not be taken unless guns were carried up to the heights,
ordered all the Franks to come to him as gunners, and promised
each, 4 months wages more than their ordinary pay if they could
find some means of conveying guns to the heights. In this they
were successful. They placed 4 guns with which they bombarded
the place, and they were so fortunate to direct them against the Gun which was on the gate, which they rendered useless. When they had battered half the gate of the town, the besieged capitulated, they evacuated the place under honourable conditions.43

Mir Jumla, immediately after his occupation, appointed a general Jille Fakir Khan, as Khilfedar of the Fort.44 He also undertook to strengthen it by adding a new rampart wall inside the fort, and employed, according to the Kaifiyat 1200 men for strengthening the cist wall and in the North, a bastion was raised after the name of Jille Fakir Khan. On the south a new gate way Fateh Darwaja was built and on the west a bastion known as Alamgir buruzu was built and added new bastions to the wall. He also built two palaces to the west of Rayalacheruvu, and it took 5 years for all those measures to be completed. After this, when he was recalled by the Sultan he handed over the country conquered, to his cousin Nek Namkhan, with a force of 4000 soldiers and 34 generals.45

This Nek Nam Khan, completed the mosque left unfinished by Mirjumla, and also built a new town named after himself as Nekhamabad.46 He defended the fort firmly, and did not surrender when demanded by the Sultan of Golconda. He was succeeded by Dawood Khan as Subedar and Md. Nabi Khan was the Khilfedar.47 About this time, Abdullah Nabi Khan the Mayana chief of Ciddapah came with a large force of 4000 army and 4000 cavalry and laid siege to it.48 At this Mohd. Nabi Khan, offered to cede the fort, provided Abdullah, agreed to pay the arrears of 4 months
salaries which fell due to the garrison. The later agreed and paid a sum of Rs. 2,50,000 and occupied the fort. This marks another important event, for Gandikota was governed by the Mayana chiefs of Cuddapah, until its occupation by Hyder Ali in 1777 A.D. The Khilledar under Hyder Ali, was Mir Jumaluddin, who kept a garrison of 4000 in the fort and 2 cannons brought from Banaganapalle and Rudravaram. He also built two bastions outside the fort. In 1798, Tippu Sultan took control of it and maintained a force of 4000 in it. He also repaired the north wall and replastered it. From the Kaifiyat we learn that there were 3 Khilledars during the time of Tippu. They were Mir Jamaluddin Mir Ali Raja, and Syed Murtuzā. The control of Tippu over Gandikota ended in A.D. 1790.

After this it passed into the hands of Nizam of Hyderabad when Afīz a general, took it. During this period of Nizam's occupation which continued for 10 years, i.e. up to 1792 i.e. A.D. 1800 there were 4 khilledārs and 4000 garrison. At last in A.D. 1799, it was taken by East India Company who maintained a garrison of 2000 soldiers, before it finally passed into the hands of English under capt Little.
The Fort of Gandikota comprised 3 fortification walls, a moat, 2 gateways one each in the east and west, and a number of bastions spaced at regular intervals of distance along the main Fort wall. Inside, are a number of structures, both secular and religious, assignable to Vijayanagar and Qutb Shahi periods. Among the religious structures include the Juma Masjid, the Madhavaraya temple, the Ranganayaka temple and the temple of Raghunatha, where as the secular ones are the Magazine, Jail, Granary, Rang Mahal, and the mini charminar. There are also a number of water reservoirs, in the form of tanks like the Rajula cheruvu, the Kattula koneru, etc., and a number of wells. An important feature is the under ground channel system meant for the flow of water by means of conduit pipes of clay, characteristic of the Qutb Shahi period and connected to the different structures like the Rang Mahal. Further there are a number of watch towers, circular in shape, at several vantage points, in the fort area.

The fort roughly occupies an area of about 5 miles in circumference, and is circular in plan.

With this general sketch, we shall now proceed to study the fort in detail.

The fort is approached on the east, through a rough and uneven cart track. It is surrounded by a moat on the south, and the river Pennar on the west, North and north-east.
Stray remains of fortification walls are seen about a mile away on the east, which are in ruinous condition. In front of the Fort proper, a few yards away, is another line of wall, built of dressed blocks of red granite with a curved entrance on the right, protected by two watch towers on either side. Above them is a parapet wall, built of brick and lime coating, with a downward slope on the front, and openings in between. This outermost wall and gate way appear to be of Vijayanagar period, as seen from the resemblance of the gate way to the entrance of Vijayanagar gopura and the use of Hindu pillars.

Passing through this gateway, and after walking for a few yards further, is noticed a retaining wall, of lesser height running parallelly to the main one, in North-south directions, on either side of the main gateway. There is a wide gap of open space in between the two, which measures about 17 mts. wide.

After this, comes the Main Gateway, known locally as Gaveni dwaramu, with a slightly curved path way to the right. This gateway consists of 3 entrances 1. outer and 2. inner 3. court yards and one barbican, in a curved manner, at right angles. In front of the outer most entrance which faces south, are two plain monolith pillars with a cusped dome above. On the right is a high watch tower flanking it. Then comes the outer courtyard, which is rectangular in plan measuring about 19 x 10 mts. On the right is seen the rampart of the wall, climbed up by means of a flight of steps, leading to the battlement. In the northern corner, above it is a turret or room, with a flight of steps. Below it, at the foot of the wall, is a postern.
or side entrance. The right wall, is partly ruined, showing traces of original construction, done through the filling up of core with earth and stone facing on the inside. On the left i.e. facing east, stands the high and imposing Main entrance, typically Muslim in design and style. It has two vaulted arched niches in the wall on either side of the entrance. Above it is a scroll design, with the central dome having projecting recesses. Above the door jamb is the parapet wall divided into 3 panels. In the central one, is the vaulted arched niche with 4 loop holes in the center, half closed. Similar loop holes are there in the 2 plain panels on either side with 3" in each. The top section of the parapet facade, is decorated by several arches in a horizontal row. Above it is a row of arched merlons perforated with loop holes, and interspersed by 4 finial headed domes. The ceiling of the door jamb is supported by 7 decorated corbels, which protrude forward. The exterior of this main entrance bears fine lime polish in white, characteristic of the Qutub Shahi structures. On the right of the entrance is a small postern gate, leading to the interior, about 30 cm. wide and 0.75 cm. high; with a wooden cross beam to obstruct easy passage.

The entrance of this gate way is 3.20 mts. wide with heavy door frames made of wood, and coated with iron, on either side. The door frame is divided into 3 compartments, and fitted with sharp and heavy iron spikes. It is about 2' thick. Each compartment is provided with 5 large spikes in a row and 30 small and medium ones in the inner space. Across the entrance
is a heavy wooden beam, and on the inside in the walls is an arrangement of stone slots for fixing it up. At the outer and inner edges the ceiling consists of a number recessed and foliated arches symmetrically arranged, with the central part being plain and flat. In between are several foliated arches, bridging the space between the two arches. This decorated ceiling recalls the Lotus Mahal at Hampi, having close resemblance, to it in its lotus petal treatment. On either side are two platforms, serving probably, as guard rooms, for the sentries. Proceeding further inside, is reached 2nd the courtyard, and facing the main entrance is a wall. On the right is a barbican running in west-east direction, and a parallel wall on the left facing it. This front wall is built of crude undressed blocks of stone, with continuous parapets above having a slopy surface on the top.

From here one has to take right ward turn towards North and pass through the narrow entrance and reach the inner most courtyard, slightly larger than the previous one. Again one has to turn towards left i.e. west, where stands the 3rd entrance, almost similar to the main one but suffered destruction largely. After passing through this comes the fort area proper. Similarly there is another gate way in the west cattle Petla darwaja, measuring 2.20 mt. wide and 4.50 mts. high, which has several inner entrances ascended by means of a flight of steps with turns towards left and right. The outer most entrance is flanked by the hill on either side. The inner most entrance, has a width of 6.20 mt. with guard rooms for the soldiers.
Now to go back to the description of the Fort, we find that the main fortification wall runs along the entire fort on all the directions, rising on bare rock surface without any foundation below. Built of neatly dressed blocks of red granite, it rises upto a height of about 10 to 13 mts. with 16 to 18 courses, each measuring about 2ft. thick, and presents an imposing and formidable appearance even from a long distance. Originally, built of cyclopaean masonry, it shows subsequent traces of retouching with lime pointing, noticed at several places in the crevices between the joints. The wall on the exterior has several crenellations, loop holes in the top and middle sections. Its height varies at several places, depending upon the nature and contours of the ground. It is high on the south and east, whereas on the west and north its height is less, as it stands on high rock surface. Above the wall, on the front face, is a long embattled parapet, consisting of several merlons or arched hood stones, pierced with loop holes, measuring about 4' high and 2' wide. The loop holes are arranged in 2 horizontal rows, with 3 in each and another one in the top in the middle, thus making a total of 7 loop holes and a vertical row in the centre.

There are also several bastions, projecting forward from the main wall, at regular intervals of distance along the entire length of the wall, on all the directions, which number about 40 in all. These bastions are rectangular in shape at the bottom tapering towards square at the top, having wide box-like openings at the corners, and on the front face, in the middle probably meant
for hurling weapons and discharge of fire from a wide range.
Above them is a parapet, of arches pierced with 3 large loop holes in the bottom and 3 in the top and another one in the middle on the top. The distance between each bastion varies between 25 to 50 mts.

Now to proceed along the fort on the exterior towards south from the Main gateway i.e. right wards, is noticed a slight inward projection in the wall, where is noticed the 1st bastion, having a basal width of 12 mts. at the bottom and a frontal projection of 9.30 mts. on either side. With in 25.50 mts. distance comes the 2nd bastion, measuring 10.80 mts. wide at the bottom and 6.60 mts. frontal projection on the right side, and 7.35 mts. on the left side. Here the height of the wall ranges between 25 to 30 ft. The third bastion is noticed after 42.80 mts. distance, with 11.80 mt. width at the base and a frontal projection of 10.85 and 7.80 mts. on the right and left respectively. Immediately after this comes the postern or sally port about 2.40 mts. high and 1.35 mts. wide with a covered roof above. Thus there are 9 bastions in this section of the wall. After the VIth begins the moat, about 5.20 mt. deep and 14 mts. wide. Near the VIIth bastion, is seen the spring Nagajhari which supplies water to the fort inside through a stone cistern. After the VIIIth Bastion, is a low supporting wall, with a narrow wall walk, emerging from the main one. On its front face, is a row of 40 arched hood stones, pierced with loop holes. Then comes the IXth bastion, at the south-eastern corner, which differs in
shape from the others, it being semi-circular. On the top are 5
base like openings. There are 3 corbels protruding forward, to
support, the arches in the middle section above.

From here, the wall takes a turn towards west, running in
east-west directions. On this side, i.e. southern side, is also
seen the low retaining wall, about 5 ft. high with an open space
of about 30 mt. wide. The wall on this side also bears several
crenellations and loop holes. Immediately after the 1st bastion
comes a sally port at the foot of the wall. Within a distance of
68 mts. comes the 2nd bastion, measuring 11 mts. wide at the
base and 7 mts. forward projection, on the right and 7.30 mt. on
the left. The 3rd bastion circular in shape, measures about 20 mts.
in circumference. After the 4th which is also circular, the
wall recedes inward, making a projection. Within this is a sally
port, about 2.30 mts. high and 10.70 mts. long with a covered
roof above. In the south western corner is seen the moat connected
to the river outside. There is also a cistern with 2 partitions
in it. From here one has to proceed along the wall from inside
which begins near Rajulacheruvu. The rampart or battlement is
climbed by means of a flight of steps. With in the parapet of the
battlement on the south, is a secret passage provided with stone
doors, about 4' high and entrance gap of 1'6". The bastions on
the inside are square on plan. There are altogether 4 square
bastions up to the south western corner. The 5th bastion is
smaller than the rest. From the 6th bastion, which is semi-circular
in shape, the wall turns towards North, i.e. west wall running in
south-north direction. Near this is a circular watch tower, about 100 mts. in circumference and provided with steps for ascent up, on either side.

On the west, the fort is protected by the river Pennar which serves the purpose of a moat. On this side the continuity of the wall is often interrupted by the natural rock which serves the purpose of the wall. Wherever necessary, the wall is continued again. The height of the wall decreases as it proceeds forward towards north, being situated on an elevated spur. Bastions are seen in this wall which are ruined largely. After a distance of about 1 mile, the wall turns towards east, making it the northern wall. There are two lines of walls on this side one outer and the other inner. The outer wall is very much ruined, which appears to be Islamic in construction, whereas the inner, which is humble in proportion and smaller in size appears to be Hindu in construction. There are about 10 bastions along this inner wall, having a long gap between each. The wall proceeds along the uneven spurs of the rock, compelling one to rise up and down, with several projections, leaving little scope for bastions to be erected. Thus there are nearly 7 such projections before the 2nd bastion is reached, measuring a distance of about 118 mts. long. After the 6th bastion, is seen a gateway or portion of entrance providing passage to the outside. After this there are 4 more bastions, before the corner circular bastion is reached. This wall finally merges into the east one. Its
continuity is again seen in the southern section behind the main wall on the east, running in parallel alignment. There are altogether about 5 bastions in this wall, which are smaller in size and proportions than those in the main one. Above the wall is a continuous parapet. Of them only the 5th bastion is larger than the remaining ones. The wall finally merges into the southern one.

The main wall is provided with a wide battlement or wall-walk, about 20' wide. At the outer edge is the parapet of merlons, rising on a platform with a width of 4 ft. The 1st bastion in this wall measures 8 mt. wide at the base and 5 mt. frontal projection. The 2nd has a basal width of 6 mt. and 7 mt. projection. After this the wall proceeds for considerable distance, about 134' long and ruined in the middle. Again the wall continues further, and the 3rd measures 7 mt. wide and 6 mt. projection. After a distance of 129 ft. long, the 4th is 5 mt. wide at the base and 7 mt. projection. Then 5th is reached after a gap of 125' measuring 55 ft. 18 mt. wide and 8 mt. projection. There are 23 courses in all in this wall, built of crude blocks of stone of irregular size. It has an entrance on the south near Rajulacheruvu. The south and western walls are very much damaged. Originally built of mud it shows stone veneering on the outer face.

**Structures:**

Immediately after entering the interior of the fort through the main Gate on the east is noticed the Mini Charminar
which draws our attention, bearing close similarity to the famous Char Minar in Hyderabad. A roughly square structure it rises on 4 slender pillars in the 4 cardinal directions with a vaulted opening on 4 sides, one in each. Above the vaulted arch, is a scroll design as in the Main entrance. Above it are 2 decorated corbels supporting the structure above under a protruding corbel. There are two storeys above, with a perforated screen wall on either side and a vaulted arch in the centre. Above the 2nd storey are 4 corner turrets circular in design connected by means of some arched openings below. Above it is a small arcade with mini domes in a row. From the corner turrets rise the minarets, with a circular dome pointed on the top. The height of the entire structure is about 60 ft. and 10 ft. square. Although it bears close resemblance to the Charminar at Hyderabad, it differs from it in many respects. Firstly the corner pillars at Gandikota are square where as those at Hyderabad are circular. There are no screen walls and closed rooms in it as at Gandikota. The common points of similarity are its square outline and the minarets with domes. While the Hyderabad one is of larger dimensions, the later is a poor imitation, and humble in proportions. By its side is the Jail entered through side entrances on the South and North. Inside is a central hall, on a low ground, with cells on either side. Below it is a stair case of steps leading to the bottom of the cells, on either side about 50 ft. deep. The ceiling has a flat circular space with a single aperture meant for ventilation.
After a few yards walk on the south is the Mādhavarāya swāmy temple with a gōpura entrance in front. In the interior the pillars bear several carvings, and the portrait sculpture of a king in folded hands. It consists of a garbha griha āntarāla and arthamandapa supported by 6 pillars 3 in each row. The carvings depict several scenes and musicians playing instruments etc. On the prakāra is a line drawing of Mahishamardani.

Proceeding further towards west, along the main road, by the side of char minar, is reached the Kattulakoneru. To its west is the famous Juma Masjid. It has several moulded bays on the outside. It is entered through a gate in the east, and there is a water pond. Built in typical Deccani style, with a domed roof in the centre it has two minars at the corners surmounted by circular domes.

Adjacent to it in the north is a granary known as Bungalow, a huge hall, ascended by a flight of steps. Inside is a big hall supported by 12 pillars, 6 in each row, each measuring about 18 mts. high. The hall itself measures 37 mts. long and 13.50 mts. wide. The ceiling consists of vaulted arches in the middle, with small openings in the top section of the wall, and a number of windows.

On its right stands the Ranganayaka temple, built on high adhistana facing east. In the courtyard is the Nātya or Rangamantapa in the south-west corner.
The temple has a garbhā griha, antarala and a pillared mukhamandapa. The pillars are profusely carved depicting scenes from Ramayana, Mahābhārata and Bhagavata. There are 4 rows of pillars with 5 in each row. On the exterior of the Garbhagriha, are several line drawings, like Rāma, Sītā, Lakshmana and Hanumān, Mahishamardani and scenes of Dāsāvatāras. There are also erotic figures in the adhistāna part.

There is a magazine godown, near the western wall, and ruined traces of a palace called Rang Mahal. Within this are noticed several porcelain sherds typical of the Qutb Shahi period.

Water Resources:

The main water resources for the fort, are Rājulachchruvu, situated on the southern side, behind Mādhavarāya temple. It is a big reservoir, with a wall on the east, thus preventing its downward flow. There is another tank called Kattula Kōnēru, on the north, in front of the Masjid. Besides there are two springs out side the fort called Nagajhuri and Ervacheruvu. A magnificent feature is the existence of under ground cisterns, by means of pipes made of earth like the conduct pipes of the Qutb Shahi period, noticed at Golconda.
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