Udayagiri is a small village, and the headquarters of a taluk named after it in Nellore district, Andhra Pradesh. Topographically it lies between Lat. $14^\circ 53'$ $N$ and Long. $79^\circ 18'$ $E$. It is situated within a distance of 52 miles from Nellore and can be reached by bus only. It is famous for the great hill fort, perched on the hills of Kondayapalem situated nearby. It's strategical importance lies in the fact that it controlled the eastern frontier of the mighty Vijayanagar empire, and proved to be a bone of contention among the three super powers viz. the Rayas of Vijayanagar, the Bahamanis of Gulbarga and the Gajapatis of Orissa. According to Robert Sewell "Udayagiri must be considered as one of the most important military centres on the east coast". It is a great place of much strategic importance and served as the military base of the Rayas for their expansionist activities in farther coast land.

Political history:

According to tradition the fort of Udayagiri was built by a certain Langulya Gajapati; whose historicity is however uncertain. On the other hand, the region of Udayagiri appears to have formed part of the 14 Sīmas of the kingdom of Kondayiṣu, mentioned by the Dandakavile. But the known political history of Udayagiri begins only with the Vijayanagar kingdom. While it is not known when exactly Udayagiri fell under Vijayanagar control, it is certain that it formed part
of their territories right from the beginning; for, we find a
certain Kampa I, brother of Hari Hara I held the province of
Udayagiri. This is supported by the evidence available from
the inscription at Kodavalur dated 6.1268 A.D. 1346 and the
Kapalur grant of Hari Hara I dated A.D. 1336 which mentions
"that he was the master of the whole of Svarnamukhi valley from
the sea coast to Chandragiri. From the Alankara Sudhanâdi
of Sayana, we learn that Bukka I with the help of Madhava elder
brother of Sayana, effected its conquest in A.D. 1336. Later
it was entrusted to Kampa I whose earliest record is dated
A.D. 1343 in the district which registers a gift to the temple of
Durga at Udayagiri. Another record of the same chief comes from
Kodavalur, dated 6.1268 A.D. 1346, which refers to him as
Kampana Odya, the lord of the eastern and western seas, and his
mahâpradhâna Sayana Odya. Kampana I died in or about A.D. 1355,
and was succeeded by his two sons, Vira Savanna and Sangama II,
to the province of Udayagiri. There are three inscriptions at
Mopuru in Cuddapah district dated 8.1273 A.D. 1351, 6.1275 A.D.
1356 and 6.1283 A.D. 1364 issued by Vira Savanna, son of
Kampana I in which he claims to be the lord of the eastern ocean
with his capital at Udayagiripattana. To the same period belong
the illustrious Vedic scholars Madhavâchârya and his brothers
Sayana and Bhoganatha. While the former, i.e. Madhava, appeared
to have been an adviser to Bukka I, the later two, actually stayed
at Udayagiri and held positions of power and authority. Sayana
was a mahâpradhâni.
Vira Savanna, seems to have continued to rule over Udayagiri even during the initial years of Bukka I as his inscriptions continued to appear till S.1284 i.e. A.D.1362. Afterwards, Bukka I appointed his son Virupama, famous as Udayagiri Virupanna as the governor of the fort and the provinces, and entrusted the protection of the prince and fort to Anantarasa Chikkavodaya. This Virupama continued to rule over Udayagiri upto S.1291, i.e. 1369 when Bhaskara Bhavadura, another son of Bukka I was appointed as Governor of Udayagiri under the care of Anantarassachikka Vodaya. During the reign of Hari Hara II, we find his son Devaraya I, styled as Viradevaraya, holding the governorship of Udayagiri rajya. There are three inscriptions of this Devaraya I, dated S.1304 A.D.1382 at Chilamakuru in Cuddapah district, Narsireddipalli in the Giddalur taluk of Prakasam district dated S.1314 A.D.1392, Palugurallapalli in the Badvel taluk of Cuddapah district dated S.1318 A.D.1396. He seems to have continued in that capacity till S.1322 A.D.1400, as seen from another inscription at Chilamkuru. This appointment of Devaraya I as governor of Udayagiri was of far reaching consequences, as he thought in terms of expanding the boundaries of his kingdom upto the river Krishna, in the North east. Hence he engaged himself in a ceaseless fight with the Reddis of Xondavidu, who proved to be a powerful menace to his designs. At last he succeeded in dispossessing the Reddis of their territories in Kurnool and Nellore district and made Krishna the Northern frontier of the kingdom.
When Devaraya I succeeded his father Hari Hara II to the imperial throne, he appointed his son Ramachandra as governor at Udayagiri. During this period the Reddis of Kondavidu made inroads into Udayagiri territory but Devaraya however got them back in A.D. 1413 after a short interval of 7 years. This Ramachandra continued to hold the administration of Udayagiri from A.D. 1406 the date of his Donakonda epigraph to A.D. 1417 the date of Dadireddipalli record. He was succeeded by his son Parvataraya from 1417 to 1435 and grand son Devaraya Odaja from 1435 to 1446.

After this, Udayagiri saw the rise of a family of feudatory chieftains. The earliest member of this family was Kantamaraju Vallabha. His son was Tammaraya or Tammanayimgeru who built two temples at Udayagiri in 1461 and 1462 A.D. respectively. He was followed by his son Basavaraja who ruled over Udayagiri for nearly half a century. It was during this period of Basavaraja that Udayagiri attracted the attention of the Gajapatis under Kapilesvara. It was originally conquered by Kumara Hamwira in his southern expedition in 1454 A.D. and since then it continued to be under them till A.D. 1471 when Saluva Narasimha re captured it, as according to Saluvabhyudayam, it is mentioned to be in his possession at the time of his coronation. This recapture of Udayagiri by Saluva Narasimha led to the conquest of Telugu country in the north.
Udayagiri fell to the Gajapatis for a second time when Purushottama, elder son of Kapilesvara attacked it. Sarasvativilasamu describes in detail the course of this attack. According to it, Purushottama captured the fort and took Saluva Narasimha as prisoner and set him at liberty as he begged for his life. The Anantavaram grant dated A.D.1500 also confirms the above facts, and states that Saluva Narasimha purchased piece by surrendering the fort of Udayagiri with its dependent territory. From this period, Udayagiri continued to be under the control of the Gajapatis till A.D.1513-14, when it was finally captured by Krishnadevaraya. This is also supported by the statement of Nuniz, who includes it among the three forts viz. Rachol (Raichuru) Odegary (Udayagiri) and Condolgi (Kondavidu) against which Krishnadevaraya was determined to proceed; immediately after his accession.

Krishnadevaraya, began his siege of Udayagiri about the beginning of A.D.1513. According to Nuniz "he captured the fort after a year and a half". After its capture he paid a visit to Tirumalai hill on 6th July A.D.1514. This siege of Udayagiri by Krishnadevaraya was protracted and long drawn out one. It was due to the natural strength of the fort which was encompassed by hills and rocks and the inaccessibility of its walls. The place, at this time, according to Nuniz "was so strong that they could not approach it except by one way which was so narrow that men could only pass along it one at a time". He also states that Krishnadevaraya "collected large army of
34000 foot and 800 elephants and arrived at the city? The fort of (Digary) Udayagiri at this time had 10,000 foot soldiers and 400 horses, for the fortress had no necessity for more by reason of its great strenth, because it could not be taken except by being starved out". The siege continued for a year and a half, in which time "Krishnaraya, had many paths across rocky hills, breaking up many great boulders" in order to make a road for his soldiers to approach the towers of the fortress. At last, he took it by force of arms, and captured an aunt (uncle) of the king of Oriya who was taken captive along with himself.

This attack of Udayagiri was attempted to be opposed by Prataparudra Gajepati who came with a large force, but was obstructed and pursued as far as Kondavidu by Krishnadevaraya, who thence returned to Udayagiri and recommended siege operations. He constructed a menata (a wall of circumvallation) around the fort with the object of starving the garrison. Tirumala Rahuttaraya, the governor of Udayagiri at this time offered stubborn resistance. At last Krishnadevaraya captured the fort, and set his foot on the ushnisa (Crown) of Rahuttaraya, took him prisoner and appointed Rayasam Kondamarusayya as governor. This Kondamarusa continued to rule over Udayagiri upto A.D.1526 and he was followed by Rayasam Ayyaparasa. He continued upto 1535 A.D. i.e. in the reign of Achyuta, when he was followed by Ramabhatla Bhunatha.
During this period, a certain Venkatadri was acting as the Kāryakarta or deputy.

In A.D. 1542 when Sadasiva was installed on the throne of Vijayanagar, Udayagiri was under the joint command of Aliya Ramaraya and his brother Timmayadeva. This Tirumala was governor of Udayagiri from A.D. 1543 to A.D. 1553.

After the battle of Rakkasa-Tangadi in 1565 A.D. Udayagiri appears to have lost its prominence. However, it served as temporary capital to the IVth dynasty i.e. Aravidus, before the transfer of their capital from Penukonda to Chandragiri. When Tirumala the founder member of the IVth dynasty was ruling at Penukonda, his elder son Śrī Rānga I was acting as Viceroy at Udayagiri.

In the secondhalf of 16th C. Udayagiri was under the control of the Koneti family who held high positions in Udayagiri rajya. About 1576 it was under the rule of Tirumala I. According to the Kondavidu inscription it was captured from Venkataraju by a general of Ibrahim Qutub Shah. It continued to be under the IVth dynasty till A.D. 1643 when according to an inscription at Udayagiri, Ghazi Ali, an officer of the Qutub Shah captured it. There is a Persian record at Udayagiri dated A.D. 1662 which mentions Abdullah Qutub Shah. During this period a certain Jupalle Venkatadri was acting as the Palegar of Udayagiri. Subsequently the Nawab of Arcot appointed Mustafa Ali Khan as Jagirdar of Udayagiri. After this, it passed under the control of the East India company.
"The hills of Udayagiri on which lies the fort rise to a height of 3079 ft. above the sea level." Its geological formation is gneiss, with an upper deposit of quartzose. The fortifications are in a fair state and the ascent is about 5 miles. It consists of 11 fortresses, 8 on the hill and 3 below. There were 11 bastions, 12 guns, 23 gates, 11 reservoirs, 12 granaries, and 3 pagodas.\(^3\) It covers an area of about 7 miles in circumference, covering 10,644.79 acres in extent. Most of the hills are under thick forest system, grouped as Reserve Forest and hence inaccessible. The fort is not visible from outside and appears to be both a vana and giridurga. The existing fortifications reveal only Islamic features. It is quite difficult to make a complete field study of the fort as most areas are inaccessible due to the thickly grown wild bushes and forest system, thus making it impossible to know the actual number of rampart walls, bastions and gateways. However an attempt is made to study the fort to the extent possible and tried to obtain an outline picture of the fort.

The fort as such is climbed up on the north and east from the village. After proceeding towards west for about half a mile begin the remains of the fort at the foot of the hill. Here the path takes a turn towards south, where a narrow entrance is seen built of curde and irregular boulders. The pathway through bushes leads up to the hill with turns towards left and right. Along side is seen a long water cistern, built of paved stones on either side, about 6" wide which runs
for about 3 miles long carrying water to the village even to this day. On the way is seen a small spring called Hanumanthuni Vanka or Vagu with a carved figure of Hanuman on a boulder nearby. From here begins the ascent up the hill by means of paved stones towards west. This ramped path way measures a width of 5.60 mts. After some distance comes a stone platform called "Dora Kattinchina Arugu" built by an European. From this point can be seen the high watch tower on the hill called Chintamala buruzu. Proceeding further after some distance comes the 'kona totti' a big water trough which supplies water to the long water channel mentioned already. After some distance is noticed the carved image of Ganesa. From there begin the outer fortifications of Udayagiri built of irregular blocks of white and red granite, in cyclopaean order. It has 10 courses with pieces of pebble stones serving as core in between. The wall rises to a height of about 3.70 mts. and runs to a length of about 9.20 mts. Beyond it comes the outer entrance of a gateway called "Bājakala Darwaja" facing north. It is reached by a flight of steps. There is a rampart of fortification wall on either side of the pathway i.e. east and west. This gateway has no parapet above, but 4 protruding corbels. It rises to a height of 4 mts. while the length of the passage is 8.30 mts. The battlement of the side walls measures 4.35 mts. wide. Unlike the gateways in other forts, the gateways in Udayagiri are direct and provide straight entry inside, instead of right angled turns. It is flanked by two square watch towers on either side. The width
of the entrance passage is 2.20 mts. Passing through this, we find that the wall continues further on either side and becomes narrow as we go further. On the way is noticed a water cleft called Sampangichelama. Beyond it is dharaakāda Chelama. Then comes the IIInd gateway called Alli Darwaja flanked by semi-circular bastions of 'u' shape. Here the wall is about 8 mts. high with about 20 courses. The wall bears complete lime plaster. The flanking watch towers have parapets at the outer edges by means of arched hood stones arranged in a semi-circular row with 3 loopholes in each. The entrance width of this passage is 3.90 mts. with a covered ceiling above. The ceiling has 4 protruding corbels on which stand an arched hood parapet with 4 loop holes in the centre. In the interior are 2 platforms on either side to serve as guard rooms. Along the inner edge of the ceiling is a high parapet wall with intermediary hood stones leaving a wide gap in between with 4 loop holes in each. On the left i.e. east is a prakara or rampart with bastions and arched hood parapets. These hood stones rise to a height of about 1.50 mts. The loop holes are slanting or sloppy, measuring 75 cm. long 15 cm. wide and 20 cm. high. There are also arched hood stones of huge size, measuring 2.45 mts. high, and 1.30 mts. width built of brick and lime. Inside are two platforms, about 8.90 mts. long and 3.60 mts. wide. On the top of the watch towers are box like machiculations as at Gandikota built in to the parapet wall. They measure 2.25 mts. long and 90 cms. high. Here the rampart rises to a height of 7.70 mts. with a
continuous line of arched parapets but ruined at several places. Here also is seen an underground cistern.

Passing through this IIInd gate, after some distance, begin another flight of steps, with a wall on the right built of crude and irregular stones, leading to another gateway called Eguva diddi. This gateway also is similar in plan like the 1st two, with a covered ceiling above decorated by minarets and 30 arched parapets.

After this comes the IVth gate called Mupparayani diddi, with a flight of 27 broad steps on the front to climb up. Here on the east are seen 4 lines of walls. It is flanked on the right by a semi-circular bastion called Mupparayani buruju, with 3 box-like machicolations, on the west and 20 arched parapets with a loop hole in each.

Proceeding further through this comes the Vth gateway with a platform on either side in the interior and devoid of ceiling above. There is a huge court yard inside. From here it can be seen that the fort is well protected on 3 sides i.e. east, west and north. Proceeding towards left i.e. east, is seen the Chinnamasjid, a rectangular structure with a mihrab in the centre and 2 arched pillars in the front. Above it is a line of arcade with 9 arches in a row. Above the arcade are 4 minarets at regular intervals of distance. On the front side are 5 protruding corbels. Proceeding towards south are seen two posterns providing outlet to the outside of the fort, which are known as Eguva diddi and Diguva diddi. They lead to
the Karim bavi outside. On the way is seen a boulder with engraved characters in Telugu of 17th or 19th C. recording a fight by the garrison of the fort, on Pushya Su.3, Monday, Vikari. On the west is another postern, called Dongala diddi. On the south is the Hazara chidi or 1000 steps which run for about a mile up. After climbing up the steps comes the open level ground. In it is a big rectangular hall called granary with an entrance on the north. There are 18 pillars in two rows of 9 in each. It measures a length of 24.20 mts. and a width of 7.40 mts. The ceiling is covered by horizontal beams above. With in the same area is another granary called oil granary or "nu.me garisa" with paved stones on the floor as well as sides. It measures about 3.50 mts. deep. Nearby is a tank called Savalaksha garisa.

On the eastern hillock is a big mosque called Pedda Masjid. There are a flight of steps to reach it. It is a huge rectangular structure with semi-circular arches on either side. On the way is another water tank called Emugula kunta. Proceeding towards west from the Pedda masjid are 3 gates or entrances. They are Duddigari darwaja, with 3 lines of walls. Beyond it is the Madarsidi which is slightly carved. After this is the Dyyyla-diddi with in which is a granary of paddy called Dhanyam garisa.
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