

Ginjee Fort – A Tourism Icon of Villupuram District in Tamilnadu – A Case Study



Tourism

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Introduction

Ginjee Fort or Senji Fort (also known as Chenji, Jinji or Senchi) in Tamil Nadu, India is one of the surviving forts in Tamil Nadu, India. It lies in Villupuram District, 160 kilometres (99 mi) from the state capital, Chennai, and is close to the Union Territory of Puducherry. The fort is so fortified, that Shivaji, the Maratha king, ranked it as the "most impregnable fortress in India" and it was called the "Troy of the East" by the British. The nearest town with a railway station is Tindivanam and the nearest airport is Chennai (Madras), located 150 kilometres (93 mi) away.

Originally the site of a small fort built by the Chola dynasty during the 9th century AD, Ginjee Fort was modified by Kurumbar during the 13th century. As per one account, the fort was built during the 15–16th century by the Nayaks, the lieutenants of the Vijayanagara Empire and who later became independent kings. The fort passed to the Marathas under the leadership of Shivaji in 1677 AD, Bijapur sultans, the Moghuls, Carnatic Nawabs, French and the British in 1761. The fort is closely associated with Raja Tej Singh, who unsuccessfully revolted against the Nawab of Arcot and eventually lost his life in a battle.

The Ginjee Fort complex is on three hillocks:

Krishnagiri to the north, Rajagiri to the west and Chandrayandurg to the southeast. The three hills together constitute a fort complex, each having a separate and self-contained citadel. The fort walls are 13 km (8.1 mi) and the three hills are connected by walls enclosing an area of 11 square kilometres (4.2 sq mi). [1] It was built at a height of 800 feet (240 m) and protected by a 80 feet (24 m) wide moat. The complex has a seven-storeyed Kalyana Mahal (marriage hall), granaries, prison cells, and a temple dedicated to its presiding Hindu goddess called Chenjamman. The fortifications contain a sacred pond known as Aanaikulam. On the top of the hillock, there are minor fortifications.^[1] The fort, in modern times, is maintained and administered by the Archaeological Survey of India. The fort is one of the prominent tourist destinations in Villupuram district.

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The Bijapur Nawabs who held the fort from about 1660 to 1677 AD called it Badshabad, while the Marathas who succeeded them called it Chandry or Chindy. The Moghals, on their capture of the fort in 1698 A.D., named it Nusratgadh in honour of Nawab Zulfiqar Khan Nusrat-Jang, the commander-in-chief of the besieging army. Later, the English and the French called it Ginjee or Jinji. The early Madras records of the English give the spelling Chingee or Chengey.^{[2] [3]}

As per Tamil legend, the tragic tale of Raja Tej Singh, popularly known in Tamil as Thesingu Raasan, is associated with the fort. The true life story of Tej Singh and his general, Mehboob Khan (aka Maavuthukaran), who were friends, has inspired many poems, street plays, and countless other stories. He was the son of Swarup Singh and revolted against the Nawab of Arcot, and was defeated and killed in the war that followed. Though Ginjee became a part of the Nawab's territory in 1714, the young and courageous Tej Singh became a legend and his life, love and brave but tragic end were eulogised in various ballads.

The main source for the first two hundred years of the history of the place is the "Complete History of the Carnatic Kings" among the Mackenzie manuscripts. According to historian Narayan, a small village called Melacerri, located 3 mi (4.8 km) away from Ginjee is called "Old Ginjee" has traces of fortifications from about 1200 AD.^[4] Ananda Kon of the shepherd community (Konar), accidentally found a treasure in one of the cavities of the Western hill while grazing his sheep. Making himself the head of a small band of warriors, he defeated the petty rulers of the neighbouring villages and built a small fortress on Kamalagiri, which he renamed Anandagiri after himself. The Konar dynasty ruled Ginjee from 1190 to 1330 AD, and was succeeded by the chief of a neighbouring place called Kobilingan, who belonged to the Kurumba caste and ascended the throne of Ginjee. He was a feudatory of the powerful Cholas. Ginjee came into the hands of various ruling dynasties of South India, starting from the Cholas.

Tourism in a broader sense has existed for a long time in the Himalayas:

in the form of pilgrimage to Hindu sanctuaries that are located high up in the mountains. With the arrival of the British in the 19th century, summer resorts, the so-called Hill Stations, were established. Examples for these foundations are Darjeeling, Nainital, Mussoorie or Shimla. Nowadays, these Hill Stations are most frequented by members of the Indian and Pakistani middle-class. "Modern" n region - activities such as trekking,