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FORTS OF INDIA

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Role of Forts in Indian History

A 'fort' typically refers to a robust protective structure, often surrounded by walls, wooden palisades, or fences, and further secured by moats, deep ditches, or additional fortified walls, guarded by warriors. These forts enhance the defensive capabilities of a town, city, or kingdom capital, leveraging the terrain to bolster security within the cultural and military landscape.

Role of Forts in Indian History

- Forts were central to the defense strategies of ancient towns, cities, and kingdom capitals.
- They served as military strongholds and safe havens during conflicts.
- Forts often housed garrisons and stored supplies essential for withstanding sieges.
- The strategic location of forts often provided natural advantages, such as elevated positions and difficult terrain.
- Over time, forts became symbols of power and authority for ruling dynasties.

Harappan Culture and Early Urban Fortifications



- Harappan cities like Mohenjodaro and Dholavira featured advanced urban planning and defensive structures.
- The use of baked and unbaked bricks in construction indicates a high level of technological development.
- Citadel areas within Harappan cities served as administrative and defensive centers.
- The extensive use of fortifications suggests a well-organized approach to community protection.
- The remains of walls and gates provide insights into the social and political organization of Harappan society.

Fortified Cities of Ancient India

- **Magadha's Ancient Capital:**
 - **Rajgriha:** Hill-protected, predating Pataliputra.
 - **Kausambhi:** Burnt brick walls.
 - **Chandraketugarh:** Notable fort remains.
- **Pataliputra (c. 321 BCE):**
 - Described by Megasthenes: Ditch with wooden walls.
 - Citadel: 570 towers, 54 gates with colonnaded halls.
- **Other Early Forts:**
 - Tanot (Rajasthan), Punjab Salt Ranges.
 - Indian Desert: Defense chain against Central Asian attacks, dating from around 600 CE.
- **Pre-7th Century CE:**
 - Fortified citadels, cities, garrison encampments.
 - Cultural landscapes of Mauryan, Gupta, Pratihara, Vakataka, Cholas, and Pandya dynasties featured urban fortifications.
- **Post-8th Century CE:**
 - Massive defensive forts in Punjab, Sindh, Rajasthan.

- New forms from the 10th to 17th centuries.

Modern Recognition of Forts

- **Large, Recognizable Forts:**

- Examples: Chittorgarh, Ranthambore, Kumbhalgarh, Amber, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Gwalior, Agra, Delhi, Golconda, Bijapur, Raigad.
- Many are UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
- Often located on hilltops.

- **Continuity of Fortified Settlements:**

- Fortified settlements and cities have existed since ancient times..

Evolution of Forts

- The design and construction of forts evolved to meet changing military technologies and tactics.
- From the 8th century onwards, the scale and complexity of forts increased significantly.
- Hilltop forts offered natural defensive advantages and became prominent in regions like Rajasthan.
- Forts like Golconda and Bijapur showcased intricate architectural styles and advanced defensive features.
- The construction of forts often involved significant engineering and logistical efforts, reflecting the resources and capabilities of the ruling dynasties.

Geographic Influence on Fort Placement

- Geographic features such as rivers, mountains, and deserts influenced the strategic placement of forts.
- Forts in different regions were adapted to local climatic and environmental conditions.
- Coastal forts provided protection against naval threats and facilitated control over maritime activities.
- Hill forts utilized the natural elevation for enhanced defense and surveillance.
- The placement of forts often considered access to essential resources like water and food supplies.

Literary and Historical References

- Ancient texts and treatises on architecture provided guidelines for fort construction and maintenance. Texts (or Shilpa-shastras) on architecture like the Mansar, Maymtam, Shilpa-Ratna, Samarangana Sutradhara, etc., composed in different time periods and in different geographical regions,
- Literary works often celebrated the grandeur and significance of forts in historical narratives.
- Historical records and inscriptions offer valuable information about the construction, use, and significance of forts.
- Archaeological excavations and studies have provided insights into the materials, techniques, and designs used in fort construction.
- Artistic depictions in sculptures and paintings illustrate the importance of forts in ancient Indian society and culture.

Kautilya's Fort Classification in 'Arthashastra' (3rd Century BCE)

Kautilya's text 'Arthashastra' identifies six major types of forts, categorized by their primary defense mechanisms:

1. **Jal-Durga (Water Fort):**

- **Antardvipa-Durga (Island Fortress):** Surrounded by natural water bodies like the sea or river (e.g., Murud-Janjira).
- **Sthala-Durga (Plain Fortress):** Encircled by artificial moats or irrigated by a river (e.g., Gagron, Deeg, Lohagarh, and Shergarh in Rajasthan).

2. **Dhanvana or Maru-Durga (Desert Fort):**

- Located in arid regions with at least 5 yojanas (73 km) of desert surrounding them (e.g., Jaisalmer, Lodrava, and Bhatner in Hanumangarh).

3. **Giri-Durga (Hill Fort):**

- **Prantara-Durga:** Situated on a flat hill summit (e.g., Chittorgarh, Gwalior).
- **Giri-parshva-Durga:** Extends down the hill slope with fortifications and civilian structures (e.g., Taragarh forts in Bundi and Ajmer).
- **Guha-Durga:** Located in a valley surrounded by hills, with outposts and signal towers.

4. **Vana-Durga (Forest Fort):**

- **Khanjana-Durga:** Built on a marsh, surrounded by thorny forests.
- **Sthambha-Durga:** Constructed in dense forests among tall trees, often lacking sufficient water sources (e.g., Ranthambore).

5. **Mahi-Durga (Earthen Fort):**

- **Mrid-Durga:** Enclosed by earthen walls.
- **Parigha-Durga:** Encircled by earthen walls in addition to stone or brick walls, with walls at least 5.4 meters high and widths half their height, minimum 2.7 meters wide.
- **Panka-Durga:** Surrounded by marshy land or quicksand.

6. **Nri-Durga (Human Fort):**

- Defended by experienced warriors and often part of a city fortress with a large permanent garrison (e.g., Nagaur).

Specific Political Conditions and Defensive Architectural Structures

Defensive Structures on Hills and Peaks

- Built to guard passes, river routes, ford crossings, and more.
- Smaller forts served as watchtowers.
- Subsidiary forts strategically placed to guard routes to capitals, major urban centers, and trade and travel routes.

Impact of Cannons on Fort Design

- Introduction of cannons influenced the architectural design of forts.
- From the 10th-11th centuries, capitals began to resemble defensive forts rather than fortified cities.
- Fortified citadels developed around which cities and towns grew (e.g., Delhi, Agra, Lahore, Orchha, Pune).

Historical Forts

- One of the oldest surviving forts: Qila Mubarak part of Bhatinda fort (dating back to c. 100 CE).
- The fort at Kangra has a long history with various overlays and layers.

Typical Rajput and Jat Forts



- Examples include Chittorgarh, Kumbhalgarh, Ranthambore, Gagron, Jaisalmer, Amber, Jodhpur Mehrangarh, Bikaner Junagarh, Bundi Taragarh, Ajmer Taragarh, and Gwalior.

Sultanate Forts in the Deccan Region

- Significant examples include Daulatabad in Ahmadnagar, Gulbarga (14th century), Bidar and Bijapur (15th century), and Golconda (16th century).

Changes Due to Artillery (16th Century)

- Thicker walls and further out bastions, inspired by European forts.
- Forts like Golconda and Berar featured a central citadel and more area between the citadel and outer walls.
- High and wide gates for elephants with rows of iron spikes to prevent attacks.
- Fort walls often used natural rock formations to provide defense against battering rams and war elephants.

Noteworthy Mughal Forts

- **Agra Fort:** Red sandstone walls (2.5 km long) protect the imperial city.
 - Includes Jahangir Palace, Khas Mahal, Diwan-i-Khas, and two mosques.
- **Delhi Red Fort:** Innovative planning and architectural style influenced later buildings and gardens.

Maratha Military Land and Sea Forts

- Rich heritage of forts with significant historical importance.

Sikh History Forts

- **Qila Mubarak Patiala:** A fort with bastions, palaces, and a fortification wall.

Eastern India and Telangana/Andhra Pradesh Forts

- Ahom (Eastern) Hill Forts and coastal/land forts have their own stylistic importance.

European and Colonial Forts

- Examples include forts at Diu, Surat, Daman, Bassein, Bombay, Goa, Hughli, Chinsura, Fort William, Chandranagar, Serampore, Visakhapatnam, and Masulipatam.
- Impact of contact with Portuguese, British East India Company, French, Dutch, and Danish.

Fort Parapets and Merlon Types

- Range of merlon types and firing loopholes.
- Semicircular and pointed merlons, sometimes solid with relief on the outside (e.g., Chittorgarh).
- Loopholes in merlons and under crenels for forward or downward command.
- Some merlons pierced with multiple loopholes.

British Trading Posts and Forts

- Established along the coast with protective forts (e.g., Fort at Mumbai, Kolkata's Fort William, Chennai's Fort St George).



- Vulnerability of earlier forts and hostilities with the French led to stronger designs.
- Influence of French engineer Vauban seen in Fort St George.
- Fewer Indian forts erected in northern India during this period.

All in all, India has a rich and variegated history when it comes to its forts and fortified heritage, of which we are justly proud.

Defence Architecture of Forts of Andhra Pradesh & Telangana

The term 'fort' generally denotes a stronghold providing protection and security to its inhabitants. In Sanskrit, a fort is called 'Durga,' meaning hard to approach or inaccessible. In Telugu, it is 'Kota,' in Kannada 'Kote,' and in Tamil 'Kottai.' Fortifications in India date back to the Indus Valley Civilization, where excavations revealed massive defensive ramparts around citadels.

Archaeological remains suggest about 160 forts or fortified villages and towns in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Coastal Andhra has 73 forts, Rayalaseema 50, and Telangana 37. Around 50 forts are significant due to their preservation. These forts are traditionally classified as Sthala, Giri, Jala, and Vana Durgas.

Key Forts in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

1. Kondapalli Fort

- **Location:** NTR district, Andhra Pradesh
- **Features:** Hills of Eastern Ghats, entry gates (Durga Darwaza, Golconda Darwaza), Indo-Saracenic palace complex
- **History:** Western Chalukyan territories (12th century), Reddy-Velama rulers, Gajapati, Vijayanagara kingdoms, Qutb Shahi rulers (1530s)

2. Kondaveedu and Addanki Forts

- **Location:** Bapatla and Palnadu districts, Andhra Pradesh
- **Features:** Double-layered defense fortification, stone defense ramparts, high security towers
- **History:** Reddy kingdom headquarters (early 15th century), Kakatiyas of Warangal, Gajapatis, Vijayanagara, Bahamani powers, Qutb Shahi, Mughals, French, Nizams, British

3. Udayagiri Fort

- **Location:** PSR Nellore district, Andhra Pradesh
- **Features:** 13 fortresses, bastions, gateways, water reservoirs, granaries, watch towers
- **History:** Vijayanagara rule, Gajapatis, Krishnadeva Raya, Qutb Shahi, East India Company (1839)

4. Gooty Fort

- **Location:** Anantapuramu district, Andhra Pradesh
- **Features:** Largest fortification (11 km circumference), 14 gateways, granary, powder magazine, store rooms
- **History:** Kalyana Chalukyans, Chola attack repelled, Vijayanagara, Adil Shahis of Bijapur, Qutb Shahis of Golconda, Maratha chief Morari Rao, Haider Ali, East India Company (1799)

5. Penugonda Fort

- **Location:** Satya Sai district, Andhra Pradesh
- **Features:** Seven massive fortifications, moat, four gateways, temples, wells, watch towers, granary
- **History:** 14th century, capital of IV dynasty of Vijayanagara kings, Adil Shahi and Qutb Shahi attacks, Bijapur, Morari Rao, Haider Ali, East India Company (1799)

6. Chandragiri Fort

- **Location:** Tirupati district, Andhra Pradesh
- **Features:** Lower fort, upper fort, strong stone ramparts, Vishnu temple, Krishna temple, Rani Mahal, Raja Mahal
- **History:** Capital of Vijayanagara shifted from Penukonda to Chandragiri (late 16th century)

7. Gandikota Fort

- **Location:** YSR Kadapa district, Andhra Pradesh

- **Features:** Deep gorge, massive stone fortifications, series of bastions, moat, two gateways, magazine, jail, granary, temples, wells, water reservoirs
- **History:** Late 13th century, Vijayanagara, Qutb Shahi, Nizam ceded to East India Company (1800)

8. Warangal Fort



- **Location:** Warangal district, Telangana
- **Features:** Two concentric circular defense fortifications, moats, stone fortification, security tower, temples, secular structures, Swayambhu temple complex, four toranas
- **History:** Kakatiya kingdom (Ganapatideva Maharaja, Rudrama Devi), governors, local chieftains, Bahamanis, Qutb Shahis, Nizams

9. Bhongir Fort

- **Location:** Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, Telangana
- **Features:** Steep hill, lower and upper forts, baradari, stucco decorative elements
- **History:** Kakatiyas, Velama kings, Ahmed Shah Bahamani, Qutb Shahis, Nizams

10. Koilkonda Fort

- **Location:** Mahbubnagar district, Telangana
- **Features:** Hill with ravines, defense wall, arched gateways, commander's house, apartments, magazines, granary, Idgah
- **History:** Vijayanagara, Qutb Shahi, Bijapur forces, Abdulla Qutb Shah

11. Elgandal Fort

- **Location:** Karimnagar district, Telangana
- **Features:** Fort gates and bastions with Qutb Shahi influence, temple, Darga
- **History:** Kakatiyas, Musunuri Nayakas, Qutb Shahis, Mughals, Nizams

These forts demonstrate the rich historical legacy and diverse architectural styles influenced by various ruling dynasties in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. All these forts, once centers of power, polity, and might, are engulfed in the annals of time, yet they remain a source of information about those ancient societies.

Golconda Fort: The Impenetrable Fortress

Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah not only pioneered Deccani literature but also became a significant patron of Telugu literature. He founded Hyderabad and oversaw the construction of the iconic Charminar. The last Sultan, Abul Hasan Tana Shah, supported a unique dance-drama form that later became famous as Kuchipudi. In 1687, Aurangzeb annexed the kingdom, leading to its incorporation into the Mughal Empire. Subsequently, Asif Jah declared independence in 1713 and was bestowed the title Nizam-ul-Mulk by Aurangzeb. The Nizams, who succeeded him, governed Hyderabad until September 17, 1948.

Etymology and Early History:

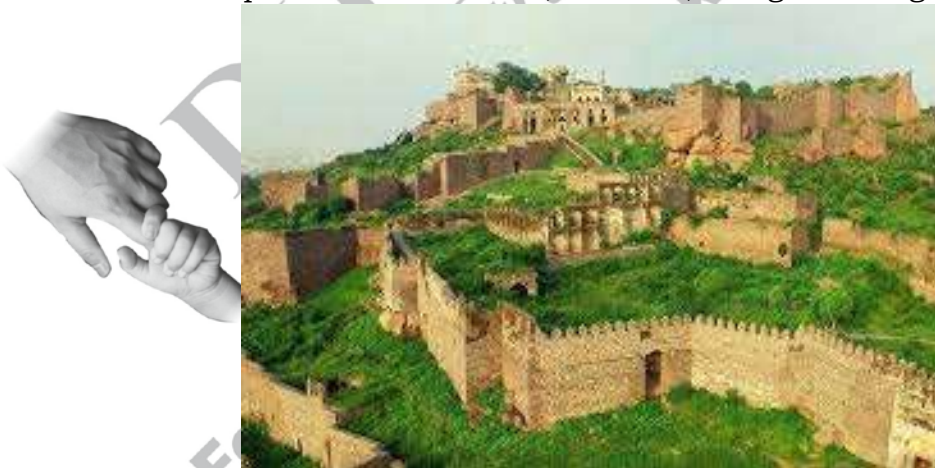
- Golconda Fort, strategically located in the Deccan region, played a pivotal role during medieval times as a formidable defensive structure.
- The name "Golconda" originates from the Telugu words "Golla Konda," meaning shepherd's hill, reflecting its initial use and geographic prominence.
- Initially established by the Kakatiya dynasty, Golconda became a significant stronghold under the Bahmani Sultanate after its capture in 1363 AD.
- Sultan Quli Qutb Shah I's establishment of Golconda as the capital in 1518 AD marked a period of cultural and economic prosperity under the Qutb Shahi rule.

Koh-e-Noor Diamond and Diamond Market:

- The discovery of the Koh-e-Noor diamond near Golconda during Sultan Abdullah Qutb Shah's reign enhanced the fort's reputation as a center for precious gems and trading.
- Golconda's diamond market flourished, attracting merchants and traders from around the world and contributing to its economic significance during the medieval period.

Fort Layout and Architecture:

- Golconda Fort's layout spans approximately five miles, encircling a vast area with a complex network of walls, bastions, and gates designed for defense.



- It features a series of intricate tunnels, windows, and doors strategically placed for surveillance and military operations, showcasing advanced fortification techniques.
- The fort's numerous turrets and pails, equipped with cannons, highlight its defensive capabilities and strategic importance in regional conflicts.

Gates of Golconda Fort:

- Nine gates or doorways provide access to Golconda Fort, each with specific names and historical significance tied to their construction and strategic positioning.
- Fateh Darwaza, Moti Darwaza, and Jamali Darwaza are notable examples, known for their architectural grandeur and defensive features, including bastions and watchtowers.

Structures within the Fort:

- Bala Hisar, situated atop the hills within Golconda Fort, housed the Qutb Shahi palaces, administrative buildings like Durbar-e-Aam (General Assembly), and special audience halls like Diwan-e-Khas.



Image: Bala Hisar

- The fort also contains unique structures such as the Curtain Wall, Mortuary Bath, Nagina Bagh (pleasure garden), and Baradari (Darbar Hall), showcasing a blend of military, administrative, and recreational architecture.
- These structures served multifaceted roles, from defense and governance to cultural patronage and religious observance under successive rulers.

Cultural and Architectural Highlights:

- Jama-e-Masjid, Masjid-e-Mulla Khiali, and Taramati Mosque exemplify the rich architectural heritage of Golconda Fort, featuring intricate designs, domes, and minarets that reflect Islamic artistry and craftsmanship.
- Royal Palaces (Zanana), Armoury (Aslah Khana), and Baradari (Darbar Hall) showcase distinctive features such as stucco decorations, marble inlays, and ornate ceilings, reflecting the opulence and cultural patronage of the Qutb Shahi dynasty.

Water Management and Infrastructure:

- Golconda Fort's advanced water management system included cisterns, wells, and canals designed to collect and distribute water throughout the complex for drinking, irrigation, and defensive purposes.
- The fort's engineering prowess is evident in structures like the Katora House (cistern), which stored rainwater, and the canal system that supplied water from sources like Durg Tank (Durgam Cheruvu) to various gardens and reservoirs within the fort.

Cultural and Religious Significance:

- Ramdas Prison, where the revered poet-saint Ramdas was imprisoned, and Jagadamba Mahakali Temple, dedicated to the goddess Durga, highlight Golconda Fort's cultural diversity and religious tolerance.
- These sites served as centers of spiritual and cultural activities, attracting pilgrims, poets, and scholars from different religious and cultural backgrounds throughout history.

Golconda Fort stands as a testament to the rich heritage of medieval Deccan, blending military prowess with architectural splendor. Its strategic significance, cultural patronage, and enduring legacy make it a cherished UNESCO World Heritage site and a symbol of India's historical resilience.

Forts of Gujarat: Guardians of Legacy and Lore

Gujarat, steeped in a tapestry of history and culture, boasts magnificent forts that serve as enduring testaments to the region's rich heritage. From the rugged hills of Junagadh to the serene shores of Diu, each fortress tells tales of valor, conquest, resilience, and architectural magnificence. Join us as we delve into the secrets of Gujarat's prominent forts, exploring their historical significance, cultural importance, architectural brilliance, and ongoing efforts in preservation.

Uparkot Fort, Junagadh:

- **Historical Significance:** Believed to be founded in 319 BC by Chandragupta Maurya, Uparkot Fort has withstood 16 sieges and served as a stronghold for various dynasties including the Mauryas, Guptas, and Chudasamas.
- **Architectural Gems:** Houses ancient Buddhist caves, a former mosque, and two millennia-old step-wells carved from solid rock, showcasing engineering brilliance and sustainable water management practices.
- **Military Might:** Nilam and Mani cannons, monumental artillery pieces named after precious gems, defended the fort, with Nilam cannon brought from Diu after the siege of 1538.
- **Preservation Efforts:** Restored multiple times, most recently by the Government of Gujarat in 2020, focusing on step-wells, gateways, and fortifications, with community engagement for ongoing maintenance.

Pavagadh Champaner Fort:

- **Historical Significance:** Originating from the 8th century, it served as a strategic stronghold for Chavda, Solanki, and Sultanate dynasties, reaching its zenith under Sultan Mahmud Begada.
- **Cultural Blend:** Reflects Hindu, Jain, and Islamic influences with temples, mosques, and tombs coexisting harmoniously within its walls.
- **Architectural Marvel:** Positioned strategically atop a volcanic hill, showcasing Rajput, Islamic, and Mughal architectural styles, designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004.

Diu Fort:

- **Historical Significance:** Built in 1535 by the Portuguese, it served as a strategic outpost and later transitioned into a national monument post-independence.
- **Cultural Fusion:** Reflects Portuguese influence with Renaissance military architecture, now coexisting with local mosques and a museum highlighting local history.

- **Architectural Splendor:** Crafted from red sandstone, featuring intricate carvings, three churches, and a lighthouse, symbolizing centuries of maritime heritage and colonial history.

Bhujia Fort:

- **Historical Significance:** Constructed in 1715 by Rao Godji I of Kutch, strategically located atop Bhujia Hill to defend against invasions from Sindh and Gujarat.
- **Architectural Brilliance:** Built from red sandstone, featuring seven ornate gateways and extensive defensive walls covering 6.5 square kilometers, with a network of courtyards and barracks inside.
- **Military Legacy:** Withstood numerous battles between 1700 and 1800 AD, symbolizing Kutchi identity and preserving local folklore, rituals, and traditions.

Bhadra Fort

- **Historical Background:** Built in 1411 by Ahmad Shah I, Bhadra Fort was originally named after the temple of Bhadra Kali and later became synonymous with the rise of the Gujarat Sultanate. It served as a pivotal fortress in Ahmedabad's history.
- **British Era:** Captured by the British in 1817, the fort was used as a prison until India gained independence. It underwent a significant renovation in 2014 by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation and the Archaeological Survey of India.
- **Cultural Heritage:** Reflects a blend of diverse architectural styles and cultural influences, housing cultural treasures such as the Bhadra Kali Temple and the historic Jama Masjid within its precincts.
- **Architectural Marvel:** Exemplifies Indo-Islamic architecture with its fortified city walls, 14 towers, eight gates, and notable structures like the Teen Darwaza, a triple gateway leading to the royal square Maidan-Shah.
- **Clock Tower:** Features a prominent tower clock installed in 1878, originally brought from London in 1849. It was an early symbol of modernity with its electrification in 1915, marking Ahmedabad's first electrical connection.

Gujarat's forts are living testaments to its rich heritage, blending Hindu, Islamic, and European influences. Beyond military roles, they were hubs of political, economic, and cultural exchange, shaping the region's history and identity. They symbolize Gujarat's resilience and diverse cultural landscape over centuries.

Forts in Delhi

Delhi's history spans from ancient legends to tangible archaeological evidence. According to accounts, the Pandavas established Indraprastha near the Yamuna River, possibly at the site of Purana Qila. The city's fortification began in the 11th century with Anangpal's Lal Kot, expanded later by Prithviraj Chauhan into Qila Rai Pithora, the first of Delhi's famed Seven Cities. The iconic Red Fort, a blend of Mughal, Persian, Timurid, and Hindu architectural styles, serves as a symbol of India's sovereignty, where the Prime Minister annually raises the national flag on Independence Day.

Qutub Minar and Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque:

Initially developed by Aibek, commander of Muhammad of Ghor, after their conquest in 1192 CE, this fortification evolved into what is now known as the Qutub Minar complex. Surviving elements include stone ramparts, remnants of a moat in some areas, and semi-circular bastions, visible in present-day locations like Saket, Mehrauli, Kishangarh, and Vasant Kunj.

Tughlaqabad Fort:

Constructed in the 14th century by Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq, this fort was part of a new city built to resist Mongol invasions and serve as the Tughlaq dynasty's capital. The fortifications stretch over 6.5 km and include massive stone walls with battlemented parapets and circular bastions.

- **Legends and Myths:** Tughlaqabad Fort is steeped in folklore, including a supposed curse by Sufi Saint Nizamuddin Auliya. According to legend, the saint cursed the city after a dispute with Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq, predicting its abandonment or occupation by herdsmen. Another tale recounts the tragic death of Ghiyas-ud-din and his son due to an incident following a campaign in Bengal, marked by the collapse of a pavilion erected in the ruler's honor.

Adilabad Fort:

Built soon after the death of Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq in 1327–28 AD by his son Muhammad bin Tughlaq, Adilabad Fort stands as a symbol of imperial might. Located on a hillock, it mirrors the architectural style and materials used in its contemporary, Tughlaqabad Fort, serving as an extension of its defensive network and administrative center.

The Mughals were next to follow, and two forts in particular continued to charm.

Purana Qila (Old Fort):

1. Historical Significance:

- Built in the 1530s, Purana Qila stands on the reputed site of ancient Indraprastha, mentioned in the Mahabharata.
- Excavations have revealed settlements dating back to the 4th-3rd centuries BC, with pottery fragments possibly as old as 1000 BC.
- Originally intended as Dinpanah by Humayun, it was completed by him after Sher Shah Suri's interruption.

2. Architectural Features:

- The fort is irregular in shape with bastions at corners and three gates: Bada Darwaza (main entrance), Talaaqi Darwaza (forbidden gate), and Humayun Darwaza (south gate).

- Notable structures include Qal'a-i-Kuhna Masjid, a mosque built by Sher Shah Suri in 1541 AD, showcasing early Mughal architecture with Hindu motifs.
- Sher Mandal, a double-storey octagonal tower possibly used by Humayun as a library, is another prominent feature.

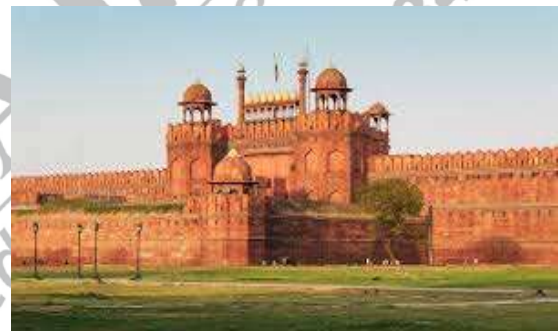
3. Cultural Significance:

- Qal'a-i-Kuhna Masjid is adorned with intricate calligraphy from the Quran and blends Islamic and Hindu architectural elements, symbolizing syncretism.
- The fort's legend includes the story of Talaqqi Darwaza, believed to have remained closed since a queen's vow after her husband's death.

Red Fort:

1. Construction and Purpose:

- Commissioned by Emperor Shah Jahan in 1638 as the palace fort of Shahjahanabad, the new capital city.
- Designed by Ustad Ahmad Lahauri, the fort took nine years to build (1639-1648) using red sandstone.



2. Architectural Marvels:

- Features intricate carvings, elegant domes, and sprawling gardens, exemplifying a fusion of Mughal, Persian, Timurid, and Hindu architectural styles.
- Notable structures within the fort include Diwan-i-Aam (Hall of Public Audience), Diwani-Khas (Hall of Private Audience), Rang Mahal (Palace of Colors), and the Moti Masjid (Pearl Mosque).

3. Layout and Defenses:

- The fort's rampart walls, covering 2.41 km, rise up to 33.5 m on the town side and 18 m along the river, originally bordered by a moat connected to the Yamuna River.
- Lahori Gate serves as the main entrance, leading through Chhatta Chowk, an arcaded bazaar originally used for shops.

These forts not only represent the pinnacle of Mughal architectural grandeur but also serve as cultural touchstones in Delhi's history, attracting visitors from around the world. The monument was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2007 because of its outstanding universal value as per the guidelines of UNESCO.

Bekal: A Fusion of Culture and History Echoing Through Time

In the northernmost reaches of Kerala, where the Arabian Sea whispers to the shore, lies Kasaragod a district brimming with cultural and linguistic diversity. Known as the 'Land of Seven Languages,' Kasaragod boasts a rich heritage reflected in its use of over ten languages, including Malayalam, Tulu, Kannada, Konkani, and Urdu. Dominating this dynamic landscape is Bekal Fort, a majestic structure steeped in history and overlooking the Arabian Sea

- **Historical Roots:** Bekal Fort traces its origins to the powerful Mahodayapuram kingdom, evolving into a vital port town under Kolathunadu's rule in the 12th century. It gained strategic importance when the Keladi Nayakas took over in the 16th century, initiating the construction of the fort.
- **Nayak Dynasty:** Constructed by Hiriya Venkatappa and completed during Sivappa Nayak's rule, Bekal Fort was crucial for defense and military campaigns in Malabar. Chandragiri Fort nearby stands as another testament to Nayak dominance.
- **Mysore Sultanate Era:** The fort later came under Haider Ali's Mysore Sultanate, serving as a key military outpost during Tipu Sultan's Malabar campaign. Archaeological finds attest to the Sultanate's influence.
- **British Rule:** After Tipu Sultan's defeat in 1799, Bekal Fort passed to the British East India Company, becoming headquarters of Bekal Taluk. Its political and economic importance declined over time.
- **Post-Independence:** Following India's independence, Bekal became part of Kerala in 1956, while the northern Kasaragod region retains the name Tulunadu.
- **Present Day:** Managed by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Bekal Fort's weathered laterite stone walls and strategic architecture offer panoramic views and insights into military advancements.

Beyond its historical value, Bekal Fort features the Mukhyaprana Temple and an ancient mosque, showcasing religious harmony and coexistence. Kasaragod's cuisine reflects influences from South Karnataka, distinct from Kerala's culinary traditions.

Vellore Fort: The Great Garrison of South India

The Vellore Fort, 'the iron throne of South India', was considered the golden seat of the Pallavas, Cholas, Marathas, Bijapur Sultans, and Arcot Nawab dynasties. The fort city of Vellore is an archaic district with a rich historical past showcased in every aspect and is one of the most prominent tourist destinations in southern India.

- **Historical Origins:**
 - Constructed in 1556 AD by Chinna Bommi Nayak and Timma Nayak under Emperor Sadasiva Raya of the Vijayanagar Empire.
 - Initially built as a strategic outpost and later expanded into a full-fledged fortress.
- **Under Vijayanagar Rule:**
 - Served as a major administrative and military center for the Vijayanagar Empire.
 - Witnessed significant architectural developments under subsequent rulers, showcasing Vijayanagar style and craftsmanship.
- **Conflicts and Transitions:**
 - Played a crucial role in battles between local Nayaks and the Bijapur Sultanate in the 17th century.

- Captured by the Marathas in 1678 AD after a prolonged siege, marking a shift in regional power dynamics.
- **Under Mughal and British Rule:**
 - Fell to the Mughal Empire in 1707 AD during the period of Aurangzeb's Deccan campaigns.
 - Occupied by the British East India Company in 1760 AD, becoming a pivotal garrison and administrative center.
- **Vellore Mutiny (1806 AD):**
 - Site of the first large-scale mutiny against the British by Indian soldiers, protesting against new regulations and uniforms.
 - The mutiny was a significant event preceding the wider Indian Rebellion of 1857.
- **Architectural Splendor:**
 - Constructed predominantly from granite stones sourced from Arcot and Chittoor, showcasing sturdy medieval architecture.
 - Houses notable structures like the Jalakanteswara Temple, Tipu Mahal, Begam Mahal, and St. John's Church, each reflecting distinct historical and cultural influences.
- **Tourist Attractions:**
 - Archaeological Museum of India within the fort complex exhibiting artifacts spanning ancient to modern times.
 - Bronze sculptures, inscriptions, and historical relics add to the cultural significance of the site.
 - Nearby attractions include Sripuram Golden Temple, Muthu Mandapam, Amirithi Zoological Park, and Armamalai Cave Paintings.
- **Location and Accessibility:**
 - Centrally located in Vellore City, easily accessible via road and rail networks.
 - Close proximity to Vellore-Katpadi Junction railway station and several airports including Chennai and Bengaluru.
 - Managed and preserved by the Archaeological Survey of India, ensuring its historical integrity and accessibility for tourists.

This comprehensive overview highlights Vellore Fort's historical significance, architectural heritage, and its role in shaping regional history from medieval times to modern-day tourism.

Medieval Ports and Forts

In Maharashtra, numerous coastal forts are strategically positioned on headlands or capes where rivers from the Sahyadri mountains flow into the Arabian Sea, forming creeks. These forts, such as Revdanda and Korlai forts on Kundalika Creek, serve both defensive and strategic purposes. The fortified island of Janjira, situated at the entrance of Danda Rajapuri creek, exemplifies the region's fortified heritage. Beyond these coastal defenses, inland forts situated further inland are crucial for trade, reflecting the hinterland's role in supporting maritime activities. Combining traditional survey methods with modern tools like geophysical surveys enhances our understanding and preservation efforts of these historical sites.

Ancient Ports on the North Konkan Coast

- **Sopara:** Known for its ancient port and trade links dating back to early historic times. Sopara was significant due to its strategic location for maritime trade with the west.
- **Sanjan:** A coastal town noted for its trade with Persian Gulf countries and possibly the landing place of Parsi immigrants in India.

- **Chaul:** Also known as Chemula in ancient times, Chaul was a bustling port mentioned in inscriptions and visited by Arab travelers. It flourished as a center for trade in spices, textiles, and other commodities.
- **Thana:** An ancient port with historical significance, mentioned in various inscriptions and documents for its trade connections with other parts of India and beyond.
- **Kalyan:** Another important port is known for its role in maritime trade during ancient and medieval times, contributing to the economic activities of the region.

Historical References and Trade Centers

- **References in Inscriptions:** The Kanheri inscriptions from the 5th century mention the involvement of merchants from Chaul in funding activities, indicating its prosperity and influence.
- **Arab and European Travelers:** Arab travelers like Masudi, Muhalhil, and European explorers like Nikitin and Marco Polo visited ports like Chaul, documenting its role as a vibrant trading hub connecting India with the Middle East and Europe.
- **Trade Commodities:** Ports like Chaul and Dabhol were known for exporting muslin, silk, spices, and copper, while importing goods like cotton, rice, wheat, and millet. The trade flourished during specific seasons, benefiting from favorable monsoon winds and sea routes.

Portuguese Influence and Maritime Dominance

- **Challenge to Arab Traders:** In the 15th century, Portuguese maritime strength challenged the dominance of Arab traders due to superior naval technology and strategic forts along the coast.
- **Establishment of Forts:** The Portuguese built forts like Korlai and Revdanda to protect their trade interests and maintain control over key ports, thereby disrupting traditional Arab trade routes.
- **Impact on Local Economies:** Portuguese dominance altered trade dynamics, leading to the decline of older ports like Chaul and Dabhol, which lost their prominence in international trade.

Ports and Forts in Raigad District

- **Strategic Locations:** Forts like Chaul, Revdanda, Korlai, and Janjira were strategically located along Kundalika and Mandad creeks to control maritime trade routes and defend against rival powers.
- **Role in Maritime Defense:** These forts played crucial roles in defending against maritime invasions and securing trade shipments, influencing the geopolitics of the region.
- **Architectural Significance:** Forts such as Revdanda and Korlai reflect Portuguese architectural styles adapted to local conditions, showcasing a blend of European and indigenous fortification techniques.

Decline and Shifts in Trade Dynamics

- **Siltation and River Courses:** The decline of ports like Chaul and Dabhol was accelerated by siltation of rivers, changing course patterns, and shifts in maritime trade routes favoring emerging ports like Mumbai.
- **Economic Shifts:** With the rise of Mumbai as a major port, smaller ports like Chaul and Dabhol gradually lost their importance in international trade, impacting local economies and trade networks.
- **Legacy of Forts:** Despite their decline, forts in Raigad district continue to stand as historical landmarks, attracting tourists and researchers interested in understanding their role in shaping regional history.

Specific Forts and Their Significance (after Portuguese Arrival)

- **Revdanda Fort:** Surrounded by seawater on three sides, Revdanda Fort served as a Portuguese outpost guarding the Kundalika River, reflecting the strategic importance of coastal defenses.

- **Korlai Fort:** Built by the Portuguese on a hill overlooking the sea, Korlai Fort defended the entrance to Kundalika Creek, showcasing Portuguese military engineering and fortification techniques.
- **Janjira Fort:** Located on an island near Danda Rajpuri, Janjira Fort remained unconquered by various dynasties, including the Marathas, due to its strategic location and strong fortifications.

Modern Changes:

Urbanization and road construction have rendered old creek routes obsolete. Forts that once protected these routes have diminished in significance, replaced by modern checkpoints and coast guard stations along highways.

This overview highlights the evolution of fortification strategies along Maharashtra's coast, reflecting shifts in maritime trade dynamics and geopolitical control from medieval times to the present day.

India on the UNESCO World Heritage List

UNESCO protects outstanding cultural and natural sites around the world. There are over 750 on the World Heritage List, including 42 from India. These sites are considered to be irreplaceable treasures for humanity.



Agra Fort:

- Built in the 16th century, it's a Mughal fortress of red sandstone.
- Includes palaces like Jahangir Palace and Khas Mahal, and important halls like Diwan-i-Khas.

Ajanta Caves:

- Buddhist cave monuments dating back to the 2nd century BCE.
- Richly decorated during the Gupta period, known for its influential paintings and sculptures.

Nalanda Mahavihara:

- Archaeological site in Bihar, dating from 3rd century BCE to 13th century CE.
- Ancient Buddhist university known for its monastic and educational buildings.

Sanchi:

- Oldest Buddhist sanctuary in India, dating to the 2nd century BCE.
- Contains monolithic pillars, temples, and monasteries.

Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park:

- Includes forts, palaces, and religious buildings from 8th to 14th centuries.

- Notable for its blend of Hindu and Islamic architectural styles.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus:

- Victorian Gothic Revival architecture in Mumbai, symbolizing the city's mercantile past.
- Built in the late 19th century, showcasing a blend of British and Indian architectural styles.

Churches and Convents of Goa:

- Illustrate the spread of European artistic styles in Asia during Portuguese rule.
- Notable for Manueline, Mannerist, and Baroque art.

Dholavira

- Ancient urban settlement in Gujarat from 3000-1500 BCE.
- Known for its advanced water management and artifacts indicating extensive trade.

Elephanta Caves:

- Collection of rock art dedicated to Lord Shiva on an island near Mumbai.
- Features impressive high reliefs and sculptures.

Ellora Caves:

- Monasteries and temples carved into a basalt cliff from AD 600 to 1000.
- Represents Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain religious art.

Ramappa Temple, Telangana

- Located in Palampet village, Telangana, built during the Kakatiyan period (1123–1323 CE).
- Main Shiva temple with a distinctive Vimana (tower).
- Constructed using lightweight porous bricks, known as 'floating bricks', reducing roof weight.

Khajuraho Group of Monuments

- Built during the Chandella dynasty's peak (950–1050 CE).
- Includes Hindu and Jain temples renowned for balanced architecture and sculpture.
- The Kandariya Temple is notable for its profusion of sculptures.

Mahabodhi Temple Complex, Bodh Gaya

- One of the four holy sites related to Buddha's life and enlightenment.
- Initial temple by Emperor Asoka in the 3rd century BCE, present structure from 5th or 6th century CE.

Mountain Railways of India

- Includes Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (1881), Nilgiri Mountain Railway (1908), and Kalka-Shimla Railway (mid-19th century).

Qutub Minar and its Monuments, Delhi

- Built early 13th century near Delhi, featuring a 72.5 m tall red sandstone tower.
- Surrounding area includes Alai-Darwaza Gate and Quwwatu'l-Islam Mosque.

Rani-ki-Vav (Queen's Stepwell), Patan, Gujarat

- Built in 11th century AD as a memorial.
- Represents Maru-Gurjara architectural style, known for intricate stepwell construction.

Red Fort Complex, Delhi

- Built as the palace fort of Shahjahanabad, capital of Shah Jahan's Mughal Empire.
- Features the Stream of Paradise connecting pavilions, reflecting Mughal architectural fusion.

Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka

- Located in the Vindhyan Mountains, central India.
- Contains rock shelters with paintings dating from the Mesolithic to historical periods.

Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas

- Three notable Hoysala-style temple complexes in southern India (12th–13th centuries).
- Known for hyper-real sculptures covering architectural surfaces.

Santiniketan

- Founded by Rabindranath Tagore in 1901 in rural West Bengal.
- Initially a residential school and later a 'World University' known as Visva Bharati.

These sites represent the rich cultural and architectural heritage of India, spanning centuries and showcasing diverse artistic traditions.



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