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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ARANI JAGIR PALACES AN ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS

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Abstract

This paper presents about the various features of Dhiwan Khana and Forest Palace of Arani Jagirs. Dhiwan Khana designed with Mughal style of architecture, corinthian columns, arched window and beautiful stucco works on pillars and ceiling. The Forest palace is European style heritage structure and has steel joists with parallel chords and triangular web system-the walls are polished and glow like glass so it is also called as glass castle.

Keywords: Arani Jagir, Architecture, Diwan Khana, French Castle, Monuments, Palace

Introduction

The Arni Jagir established in 1640 A.D at Arani in Tiruvannamalai District of Tamilnadu. Vedaji Bhaskar Pant was the first Jagir. The great Maratha General Shahaji Bhonsle gifted to him for his services during the conquest of Carnatic region. The Jagir was later ratified by Chhatrapati Shivaji who also invaded in South India. The spanned of the Jagir was 211 sq miles and consisted of 192 villages. In 1825 A.D they established a city near Arani called Sathya vijayanagaram and ruled till 1948. Ostentatious royal Palaces constructed by them and stand till today and proclaim the history. The Focus of this paper is reconstructing the history of Arani Jagir and their Palaces like Diwan khana, Forest Palace, Arani house and also it analyze about the glorious architectural Monuments.

Historical Background

The Arani Jagir dates back to 1640 when Vedaji Bhaskar Pant, a Maratha Madhwa Brahmin was gifted the Arni Jagir from the great Maratha leader Shahaji (father of Shivaji) for services in war rendered in his military campaign to the South of India (then known as the Carnatic). Shahaji had a pact with the Raja of Bijapur for division of Military gains on an expedition to the Carnatic. Shahjai was presented with extensive Jagirs belonging to the Bijapur sovereign and this included Arani. This was in the year 1638 when the tide of Maratha invaded the Carnatic. In 1640 Vedaji Bhaskar Pant was awarded the Jagir of Arani and he became the commander of Arani Fort, town and Jagir. Shahjee died in 1664. A permanent sunned (Official stamped Bequest) was given to Vedaji Bhaskar Pant for the long and faithful military service

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by the Rajah of Bijapur. Again in early 1677 Sivaji (the son of Shahaji) and his military forces moved towards Golconda. He, Kootab Shah and Bijapur drew up a pact for a division of his victories in the Carnatic. Shivaji embarked in March 1677 for his invasions. He conquered many properties that had belonged to his father. Vellore surrendered immediately and then the three other forts Vedaji Bhaskar Pant who was in charge of Arani since the time of Shahaji. Shivaji there by confirmed the award of the Jagir of Arani to him. ; then several skirmishes including small wars took place in the Carnatic involving the Anaverdy Khan, Chanda Saheb, Nawab of Arcot, Rajah of Tanjore, Mohamed Ali including a Brahmin rebellion with Nawab of Arcot and Disputes of who Arani belonged to. In 1781 Hyder Ali captured Arani and converted it into his chief depot in the Southern Provinces. It was in his possession till 1783 when it was restored to the Nawab of Arcot on the conclusion of a treaty between Tippu Sultan and the East India Company. The matter remained in dispute until 1789 when finally the Nawab was forced to abide by the Court ruling, declaring "that neither the Nawab nor the Rajah had a right to withhold the Jaghir of Arani from the descendants of Thirumal Rao and it should revert immediately to it by the stipulations of the Treaty of 1762." (Ref: Minutes by The President in Council of Fort St. George dated 24/11/1795 and also the Court Orders signed by "HOBART") The British through East India Company ruled Jagirs were hereditary and Arani Jagir continued to be enjoyed by the male heirs of Veda Bhaskar Pant. The common names of the Jagirdars were A.Thirumala Rao Sahib, A.Srinivasa Rao Sahib, A.Venkata Rao Sahib and A.Ramchandra Rao Sahib. The hereditary rights of the Jagirdars were fully recognized and guaranteed later by the stipulation of the Treaty 1762 and sunned issued by the British Government since 1789. A.Srinivasa Rao Sahib was the 12th and last Jagirdar. The Jagir of Arani was abolished under sections 41 (1) and 50 (7) of the Madras Estates (Abolition and Conversion into Ryotwari) Act, 1948 (as a result of the Zamindar Abolition Bill in 1948).

Diwan Khana palace

Jagir Venkatanatha Rao established a new capital in 1825 AD at Sathyavijayanagaram on the banks of the Kamandala Naga River 5 KM away from

Arani. It is spread over 35 acres and it was bustling royal courtyard and adobe of the Jagirs more than 100 years. He built two palace there name as Diwan Khana and Srivilas. Diwan Khana palace housed for women, children and guest. The palace had circular brick pillar, Indian motif, arches, gothic columns and madras terrace built by lime and mortal method. Peacock pattern glass, arched window, the lime polished wall, high columns, enormous corridors all stand testimony to the fine architecture. The style called Mughal architecture and columns are distinctly Corinthian. A fine door like concealed wall, complete with a pad lock, has been built on the first floor, to confuse the opponents. The hand polished lime mortal has such smoothness that it can only be felt by running our hands over it. The high columns have unusual semi-circular bricks and circular granite to ensure full support. The banisters are finely polished, and the pillar has beautiful stucco work with bricks over which lime mortal (Mixture of lime and sand) plastering was done. Polishing was done after plastering. Still we can see and feel smoothen of the wall in the un-pealed portion. Woods are used for support for the ceiling. The pillar is constructed with specially made semi circular bricks and round granite stones are used to increase strength to hold the load. The stucco work on the pillar, above doors ways, windows both inside and outside are excellent with figure like lion, human face etc., and painting are done on the ceiling and walls.

In Queen palace also known as Srivilas, entrance door glass has an etching of Jagirdars emblem (an image of a fort and a hand with sword). A Latin word "Per deum – et ferrum obtinui" is written and the meanings are "We got all these through GOD and our sword". The Jagirdars lived lavishly. They used to go to horse races conducted at Chennai, Ooty and Bangalore. They bought imported cars from various countries and had all brands of cars. They had 182 cars at one period and at least 8 to 10 cars might have parked in the palace.

The Forest Palace (French Castle)

Century old red bricks structure known as Forest Palace at Poosimalai Kuppam village in Tiruvannamalai District. The 10th Jagir Srinivasarao Sahib of Arani built the palace around 1850-1860

AD.Originally two storeyed building. British architecture William N.Pogson designed it. The Madras roofing is evident as we stand mesmerized on the verandah. The Madras roofs of this palace made of steel, bricks placed on 45 degrees from the wall, and lime mortar, gravel and sand connecting them. The graffiti on the wall of the abandoned are so horrifying, some literally, with all spooky movie names and dialogues written all over. The lower floor has few rooms, all equipped with a fire place. I wonder what a fire place must have been used for in the humid area.

The ornate ceiling has murals that have started peeling off. A bunch of “busy-bodies” slept on the floor, and we climbed the intricately polished steps to first floor. The same type of rooms with beautiful roofs and columns look inviting. No two corners of the same building are the same, each designed in a unique way. The sit-out on the northern side has cast iron pillar, which have the dual purpose of draining the rain water, and support . Interestingly, these pillar/pipes have the “Made in Glasgow” seal still intact, with the year 1860 imprinted. Here too, we find rounded ‘corner bricks’ in the palace. The Palace looks like 1800’s European palace. Top Tied slopping roof. Sit out on the north side was supported by cast iron pipes made like pillar and also serves as a rain water drain pipes from the top slopping roof. The top slopping roof has gutters to divert the water through these iron pipes. These rain water pipes are imported from UK and made at Glasgow during 1860 CE.

There is a separate kitchen outside the palace, a well, and a large pigeon tower. The pigeon tower has multiple crevices for the pigeon to nest. May be the inhabitants of the palace loved to rear pigeons. Now the pigeon tower has huge termite nests and we didn’t venture inside for fear of upsetting the army lurking underneath.

Arani House

The resident of Jagir located on Halls road at Egmore in Chennai.It appears to have been in the midst of extensive grounds. The building itself appears to have been rather curiously planned, the façade, topped by triangular pediment that seems to almost reach the ground at its two ends and there is a portico

behind it. The rear is what appear to be a multi-storeyed block, with the first floor having a broad verandah running all around and covered with reed mat blinds. That looks like a medieval castle. In all it looks as if Arni house had at least five levels. The architecture indicates that the house was probably designed at the 19th century.

Conclusion

Between1637-1640AD Bijapur sent out more expeditions to the Carnatic region under the command of Shahaji along with Vedaji Bhaskar pant. Shahaji captured Vellore and Arani region and he declared Vedaji Bhaskar pant as Jagir of Arani in 1640 AD. His clan ruled till 1948 AD, They constructed two more Palaces named Diwan Khana and Forest palace. Diwan Khana had unique Mugal style of architecture; Gothic columns, fish type door stoppers and lime tiled flooring and most parts of the palace were ruined by itself, if the government restore the palace it can be a heritage and tourist site. Forest palace was a guest house for the rulers; it is a two-storey structure and typically British style. Most of the structures now remain intact but need to conserve their heritage value.

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