

CULTURAL HERITAGE OF **JHANSI**



Archaeological Survey of India
Jhansi Circle

प्राचीन विद्यालय

Situated on the southwestern fringe of the state of Uttar Pradesh, the city of Jhansi is esteemed to be one of the greatest centres of freedom struggle in India. Every Indian is proud of the patriotism, chivalry and supreme sacrifice of Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi during the first war of Independence.

In ancient times, the region fell under 'Chedi desa' or 'Chedi rashtira', 'Jejak-bhukti' and Bundelkhand, respectively. The fort was built by Raja Bir Singh Deo in 1613 on the hill known as Bangara.

According to a legend, Raja Bir Singh Deo, sitting on the roof of his palace at Orchha with his friend, the Raja of Jaitpur asked the latter whether he could discern this new fort that he built on Bangara hill, he replied that he could see it 'Jhainsi' (meaning rather indistinct). This 'Jhainsi' in course of time became corrupted to Jhansi. It was one of the most strategically situated forts of central India being built on an elevated rock rising out of the plain and commanding the city and the surrounding country.

It is to mention that Bundela chief Bir Singh Judev was the friend of Mughal Emperor Jahangir. In 1731, it came in possession of Maratha rulers. Naru Shankar, a Maratha Chief, made alterations and additions to this fort which also came to be known as Shankargarh, largely owing to construction of a Siva temple here. He is also credited to have founded the city of Jhansi which extends to an area of 7.3 Km in circumference. The city wall and its main gate were added by Shiv Rao



Bhau during A.D. 1796-1814.

Marathas continued to rule Jhansi upto 1853 when Raja Gangadhar Rao expired. After his death, his adopted son Damodar Rao ascended to throne under the regentship of Rani Laxmi Bai. But the British did not recognize their claim to throne and declared the state as having lapsed to the British government. This illegal annexation of Jhansi created great discontent among the Maratha and Bundella chiefs of the region which was further aroused by the freedom struggle waged in 1857.

On Feb, 14, 1858, Rani issued a proclamation appealing to all Hindu Muslim brethren to join the fight against the British rule. She was assisted by Raja Mardan Singh of Banpur and Nana Saheb. Taty Tope joined her in March and the great struggle begun. Rani Laxmi Bai prepared her army and showing exemplary courage, valour and organizing capacity led her troops from the fort. The British troops fought in command of Hugh Rose for seventeen days. The besieging British battalions and cavalry kept on pounding the fort with their artillery but they failed to breach the walls which were very thick and of great strength. Rani put forward a resolute and spirited defence and returned the fire with equal vigour.

Rani herself took part in operations and encouraged her soldiers in person placing herself at the head of the Afghan battalions. She fought with a sword in each hand, holding her horse's reins in her mouth. Many deeds of heroism were performed. Men & women preferred to kill themselves rather than fall into hands of enemy and fought like tigers. Having suffered heavy casualties, British forces were finally able to capture the fort as well as the city. Rani let herself with Damoder Rao (her adopted son), down from a turret window on the night of April 4 and escaped on a horse.

After her escape from Jhansi, Rani rode on to Kalpi engaging in fierce fighting on the way. She further moved to Gwalior and captured the fort. Hugh Rose after losing many battles finally won the battle of Gwalior on June 18 and captured the fort the next day.

Rani, mortally wounded become a martyr. Her wish that it should not fall into British hand, was fulfilled. Rani Laxmi Bai has been given a place amongst the greatest women in the history of the world and is an illustrious figure in Indian history.



Decorated Wall of Rani Mahal

The British generals were aghast at her daring. Hugh Rose described her as 'the bravest and best military leader of rebels'.

JHANSI FORT:- The area occupied by the fortification is 49 acre in which the fort proper is in an area of 15 acres and measures 312m in length and 225m in width. Altogether, there are twenty-two bastions with a huge fortification wall protected by a moat on two sides. A bastion on the eastern side was destroyed, which was reconstructed by the British, who also added a floor to Panch Mahal.

The fort can be divided in three parts keeping in view the different stages of its constructions:- Baradari, Shankergarh and Panch Mahal. Besides, the fort contains many ancient structures of great importance. The old city wall had ten gates known as Khanderao, Datia, Unnao, Orchha, Baragaon, Lakshmi, Sagar, Sainyar, Bhandar and Jhirna. The first eight still have wooden doors and of the last two, the former is completely closed and the latter is open. A breach in the wall between Sainyar gate and Jhirna gate, which was made by Hugh Rose's batteries during the assault on the fort in 1858, is still in existence. There are also four khirkis (entrances) made in the walls-Ganpatgir-ki-Khirki, Alighol-ki-Khirki, Sujan khan-ki-Khirki and Sagar-Khirki.

KADAK BIJLI:- This canon is placed on the eastern side of the fort which can be seen by entering through the main gate. This lion-headed gun



KADAK BIJLI CANON

roared like a lion when fired, hence this name. Operated in the leadership of Gulam Gaus Khan, this canon used to frighten the enemies. It measures 5.50m x 1.80m with a diameter of 0.60m.



GANESH TEMPLE

GANESH MANDIR:- Located on the northern slope of the fort, it is built near the main entrance (City gate). Dedicated to Lord Ganesh, this temple is executed in traditional Maratha style. The temple was very popular until the fort was taken over by the British. Rani Laxmi Bai paid regular visits to this temple for worship. Entered through an arched entrance, it comprises a courtyard, mandapa and garbhagriha, ceiling of the latter being decorated with various geometrical and floral patterns.

BHAWANI SHANKER:- Believed to be blessed with the power of goddess Bhawani, this gun is popularly known as Bhawani Shanker. Placed in north-south orientation, the front portion of the gun has the form of crocodile, while it has elephant-like back. It measures



BHAWANI SHANKER

5.00x0.60m with a diameter of 0.52m. An inscription on the gun dated to AD 1781 mentions the gun as Bhawani Shanker and also names of Raja Udit Singh and guru Jairam.

BARADARI:- It is said that this baradari or pavilion was built by Raja Gangadhar Rao (A.D.1838-53) for his brother who had deep interest in drama, music, etc. The pavilion erected on a platform is square on plan



BARADARI

and has 3 arched openings on each side. It is beautifully decorated with stucco mouldings depicting various floral and geometrical patterns. To the west of the pavilion is a fountain built on Mughal pattern.

SHAHAR DARWAZA:- Located on northeastern side, it served as the main entrance to the fort. But, during the British occupation this door fell in disuse and the present entrance became functional.



GRAVE OF GULAM GAUS KHAN

GRAVE OF GULAM GAUS KHAN:- Gulam-Gaus Khan, Khuda Bakhsh and Motibai were three very faithful military officers of Rani Laxmi Bai's army. Gulam-Gaus Khan and Khuda Bakhsh were artillery experts and their graves are situated inside the fort near Panch Mahal.

PANCH MAHAL:- Constructed by Raja Bir Singh Deo, this palace was originally five-storeyed. Rani Laxmi Bai is said to have used its ground-



PANCH MAHAL

floor which served as her meeting-hall. Rani stayed in one of the apartments on the first floor. The top floor of the palace was added during the British rule. During archaeological excavations, the remains of the drainage pattern of the palace have come to light.

SHANKAR GARH:- Maratha Chief Naru Shankar extended the fort in northeastern direction in 1742 which came to be known as Shankargarh largely owing to construction of Siva temple in this part. The place was



EXECUTION TOWER

used for various functions and festival celebrations in which the Rani alongwith her friends used to participate.

EXECUTION TOWER:- Situated between Amod bagh and Shiv temple, this execution tower was erected during the regime of Raja Gangadhar Rao for the execution of the offenders.

SHIV TEMPLE:- Built by Maratha Chief Naru Shankar, this temple is the exquisite example of blending of Maratha & Bundella styles of



SHIV TEMPLE

architecture. Rani used to worship here regularly. The Siva-linga enshrined here is made of granite stone. Even today, this temple is very popular among devotees who throng the place in large numbers during Shivaratri festival.

KAL-KOTHARI:- Built by the Marathas, this cell was used to imprison the offenders. The British added one more floor to this structure and used it for same purpose.

JUMPING SPOT:- A square platform located in between two bastion on southeast, is regarded as a place from where the Rani let herself with Damodar Rao, her adopted son down on her horse on the night of April 4 and escaped from the fort during the freedom struggle.



RANI MAHAL

RANI MAHAL- Built by Raghunath-II of Nawalkar family (1769-96), this palace later formed one of the residences for Ram Laxmi Bal. Architecturally, it is a flat-roofed double-storeyed building having a quadrangular courtyard with a small wall and one fountain each on either side. The palace consists of a number of small rooms, six halls and parallel corridors with multi-foiled arches. The Darbar hall approached by a flight of steps is beautifully decorated with paintings in bright colours. The themes included floral and faunal designs. The arches are embellished with peacock and rosette design. The ground floor of the palace houses stone sculptures from Lalitpur, Madanpur, Barua Sagar, Dudhai and Chandpur dating from late Gupta to medieval period.



GANGADHAR RAO'S CHHATRI

GANGADHAR RAO'S CHHATRI:- Situated at a distance of 1.5Km from the fort, this 'chhatri' or 'samadhi' was built by Rani Laxmi Bai as a memorial to her husband who died in AD 1853. The brick-built 'chhatri' is located in the center of a courtyard. It is plastered in lime and decorated with various patterns in stucco. The complex has two gates-the main one being on the south. The main 'chhatari' stands on a square platform in form of a *baradari* consisting of three arched entrances on each side. The flat roof of baradari is supported by stone pillars. The panels on upper part are decorated with various figures; one on the east side showing perhaps Raja Gangadhar Rao himself.

MEMORIAL CEMETERY- Constructed in memory of one hundred sixty-six British soldiers/officers who died in the battle-field during the siege,



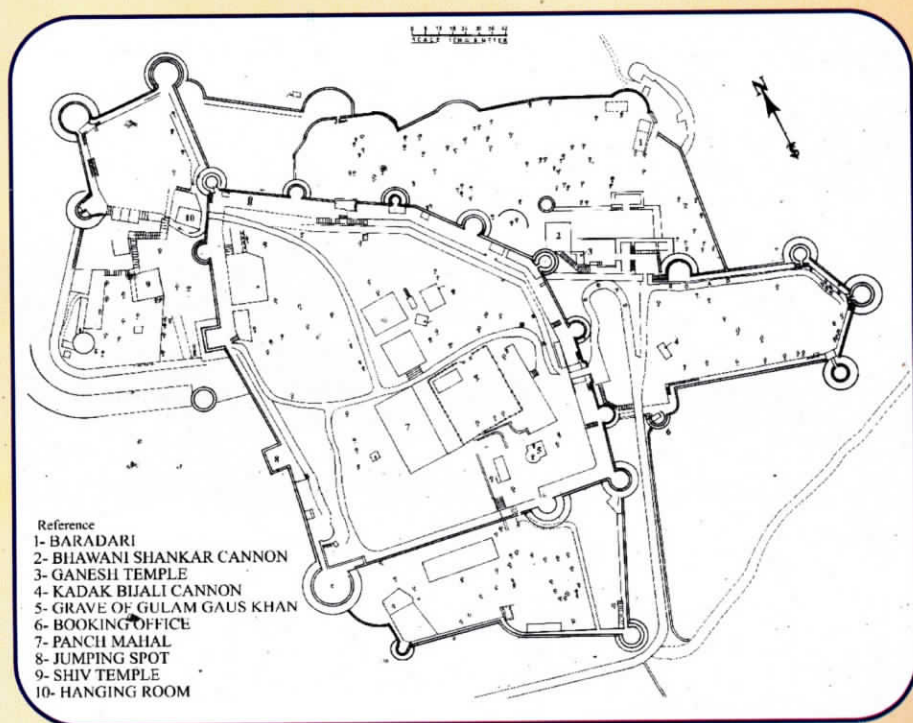
MEMORIAL CEMETRY

this octagonal structure has four entrances. It is placed on a square recessed platform capped by a dome, which is further topped by a Christian cross. In front of the main structure there is a stepped fountain.

Lucknow Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India endeavors to keep the originality of monuments of Jhansi. It is our prime responsibility and tribute to Rani Laxmibai to preserve and conserve the monuments of our Independence.



SITE PLAN OF JHANSI FORT



Reference

- 1- BARADARI
- 2- BIHAWANI SHANKAR CANNON
- 3- GANESHI TEMPLE
- 4- KADAK BIJALI CANNON
- 5- GRAVE OF GULAM GAUS KHAN
- 6- BOOKING OFFICE
- 7- PANCHI MAHAL
- 8- JUMPING SPOT
- 9- SHIV TEMPLE
- 10- HANGING ROOM

Our Duties Towards/Our Cultural Heritage

Dos

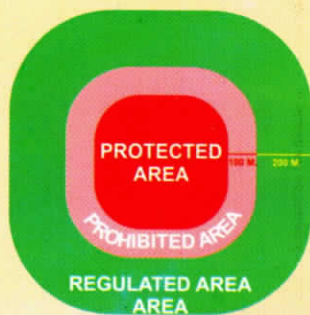
- Help in keeping the monuments clean.
- Help in maintaining the natural environment around the monuments.
- Help in preventing and avoiding any kind of destruction of a monument by any one. Report any such matter to the concerned staff.
- Keep distance while looking at any displayed or easily reachable antiquity and painting, etc.
- Help in protecting unprotected monuments, antiquities, etc.
- Help in creating cultural awareness among the masses.
- Help in maintaining the sanctity of the monuments.

Don'ts

- Don't litter or spoil any monument.
- Don't pluck flower, etc. from monument-garden.
- Don't paint, draw or whitewash any wall, etc. in and around the monuments.
- Don't touch any painting, etc. and neither throw nor divert any water, flash - lights and use ritual objects, etc. over them.
- Don't hamper or spoil the originality of any artefact/antiquity of an unprotected area/ monument.
- Don't underestimate the importance of any cultural heritage.

According to the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2010

PROTECTED AREA	Archaeological Site/monuments of National Importance.
PROHIBITED AREA	Construction activity not allowed
REGULATED AREA	Construction activity only after the permission of the National Monuments Authority (NMA)



प्रत्नकीर्तिमपावृणु

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