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VADODARA

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FORT PRATAPGAD A HISTORICAL TOURISM PLACE IN SATARA DISTRICT

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Abstract:

Satara is a historical district place in Maharashtra. The popular two hill stations of Maharashtra are in Satara district. Recently Satara is come to limelight due to Kas, a site recognized as a world heritage site. The paper has set the three objectives viz. To study the historical background of Pratapgad Fort. To study the tourism development of Pratapgad Fort. To study the tourist attraction of Pratapgad Fort. To review the development work done at these historical places of interest in Satara district and to create awareness among the people about these historical places.

Keywords: Tourism, Tourism development, Amenities, Satara

Introduction:

Pratapgad is one of the large forts located in Satara District of Maharashtra. The fort lies at an altitude of 1080 m and is built on a spur which overlooks the road between the Villages of Par and Kineshwar. Significant as the site of the Battle of Pratapgad, the fort is now popular for tourist destination. It is located 22 km from the Mahabaleshwar, a popular hill Station.

Objective of study:

Some specific objectives of the study are as follow

- i. To study the historical background of Pratapgad Fort
- ii. To study the tourism development of Pratapgad Fort
- iii. To study the tourist attraction of Pratapgad Fort

Research methodology:

The research work is based on the primary and secondary data. The primary data is collected from the various sources mainly satara municipality records, Gazetteer of Satara District, The secondary data is collected from the newspapers, Government Resolution (GR), and printed material etc.

Historical Background of Pratapgad fort:

Chh.Shivaji Maharaj had commissioned Moropant Pingle, his prime minister, to commence the construction of this fort for the purpose of defending Nira and the Koyna River banks, and also to guard the Par pass. The construction of the fortress was Completed in the year 1656.³ The fort stands as the witness of historic Battle of Pratapgarh between Shivaji and Afzal Khan, the commander of the Bijapur Sultanate, on 10th November 1659. In 1818, the Maratha forces had to surrender the Pratapgad Fort after losing the third Anglo-Maratha War.⁴ Out of the 360 forts that bear testimony to the glory of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's, the Pratapgad Fort holds the most significant place in Maratha rule because it is from here that the history of this legendary emperor took a decisive course after he scored a victory against the mighty Afzal Khan, commander of the Bijapur Adilshahi forces. Also, the fort commands a spectacular view of the surroundings.⁵ Located close to the hill station of Mahabaleshwar with an overview of the encirclement of mountain ranges and deep valleys, Pratapgad Fort made its way into history on November 10, 1659 with the meeting between Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's and Afzal Khan. When the two warriors met, the tall and imposing Afzal Khan embraced Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's as a customary sign of friendship and then drew a hidden dagger to stab Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's in the back.⁶ fortunately, the Maratha ruler was not harmed due to the iron armour that he had worn under his dress. In swift response, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's disemboweled Khan with a single stroke of his 'waghnakhi' (iron tiger claws) that he had worn on his hand and concealed with his finger rings.⁷ Afzal Khan was then beheaded by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's lieutenant, Sambhaji Kavji Kondhalkar. Afzal Khan entered Jawali with a Radtondi ghat.⁸ After his burial, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's ordered for a 'dargah' to be built at Pratapgad Fort, which came to be known as 'Afzal Buruj'. This tale of bravery apart, the fort in itself is interesting from an architectural point of view too.⁹

Described by locals as being 'a fort within a fort' since there are two parts to it, the lower fort,

which is around 320 meters long and 110 meters wide, has been built on the southern and the eastern terraces and defended by towers and bastions 10 to 12 meters high at corners on the projecting spurs. The roughly square upper fort, which is 180 meters long on each side, was built upon the crest of the hill where the main proceedings and meetings were held.¹⁰ the upper fort had several important buildings, including the famous temple of Mahadev located at the northwest of the fort. The royal 'darbar' used to be held right in front of this temple so that no one would tell a lie in this pious place.

¹¹In 1778 Sakharam Babu, a famous Poona minister, was confined by his rival Nana Fadnavis in Pratapgad and from here secretly removed from fort to fort until he perished miserably in Raigad.¹² In the Maratha war of 1818. Pratapgad surrendered by private negotiation, though it was an important stronghold, had a large garrison, and could much annoy the country round wai.¹³ PratapSingh Maharaja spent forty thousand rupees for the construction of Bhavani Mata on Pratapgad. Bhavani took an active part in the celebration and worship of Mother and made this celebration a big one.¹⁴

Tourism development in Pratapgad Fort:

Pratapgad fort does not come under the jurisdiction of the Central Archaeological Department and State Archaeological Department.¹⁵ Therefore, this fort is unprotected. No conservation work is being done on the fort by both division. The fort is privately owned and managed entirely by Chhatrapati Udayan Raje Bhosale, MP of Satara, and a direct descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. A large car park has been developed at the foot of the fort. The admission fee is charged by the Joint Forest Management Committee. The use of that charge includes notice boards, plastic removal, tree planting, fort beautification, solar lights, tree protection, gas distribution, roadside pimples, painting of trees, installation of cement benches for resting, provision of drinking water, Protection from drought, construction of dams, construction of star compounds etc. Used for various tasks. These works are under Government Resolution no. FDM 2011 / Q No.100 / F Tourism, Mantralaya, Mumbai, etc. As per 5th October 2011. The tombs of Afzal Khan and his colleague Syed Banda are near the vehicle stop under the Machi bastion of Pratapgad.¹⁶

The Nizam of Hyderabad built a Dargah here in 1895 for one lakh rupees. At present, the government is not allowed to visit the Dargah and the tomb.¹⁷ Apart from visiting a historical building, many tourists visit Pratapgad and feel the need to construct various buildings to show the other necessary facilities and information about the history of the Maratha period. Interestingly and to remind them of the features, importance and need to preserve Maratha period architecture. The building mainly houses a museum, library, photo exhibition, auditorium for various events, tourist accommodation, adequate toilets, tourist points at important places etc.

Conclusion:

Pratapgad is better than many other forts in the south and tourists get a unique pleasure when they visit this fort. Pratapgad cannot remain without the attraction of a tourist who comes in the cool air of Mahabaleshwar.

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