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Research Article

SRIRANGAPATNA-A HISTORICAL TOURIST CENTRE

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ABSTRACT

There is large number of historical sites in India and Srirangapatna is one of the prominent historical sites. It is an island town, situated on Bangalore-Mysore highway, encircled by the river Cauvery. The main historical tourist attractions of the city are Srirangapatna fort - a magnificent fort built in indo-Islamic style, Daria Daulat Bagh, the summer palace of Tipu Sultan, Tipu's place of death, and colonel Bailey's dungeon and Jamia Masjid etc. This paper presents the historical background of monuments and their significance and its contribution to tourism development.

Key Words:

Srirangapatna, Fort, Tippu
Sultan, Ranganatha temple, Cauvery,
Historical Place

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INTRODUCTION

Once the historic capital of Wodeyars, Haider Ali and Tippu Sultan, Srirangapatna today, is a definite hot spot for tourists while on an exploratory expedition to Mysore. Srirangapatna forwards tourists a plethora of attraction places. While the fort and the dungeon unfold the pages of history, the Ranganathaswamy temple is an religious place to be in unison with the Almighty. Apart from this, this small town also extends beautiful and mesmeric sites. Srirangapatna is an enchanting town cocooned in historic importance. The beautiful town is hemmed in by the river Kaveri. The town derives its name from the presiding deity of Ranganatha temple situated at the western end of the island in the Cauvery River. This island is about 3 Km. in length and one Km. in breadth. The town is famous for a very ancient temple dedicated to Sri Ranganathaswamy, a form of Lord Vishnu. Other attractions include the Jumma Masjid and the Daria Daulat Gardens. The famous Nimishambha temple is located in the nearby place of Ganjam. The summer palace of Tippu Sultan is also a very interesting place.¹

The original town of Srirangapatna appears to have been built by Udayaditya, brother of Hoysala king Vishnuvardhana in 1120 A.D. Vishnuvardhana conferred on Sri Ramanujacharya and his followers, the tract of the country on each side of the river Cauvery at Srirangapatna, known as Ashta Grama or eight

villages. In 1454, Thimmanna, a chief of Nagamangala, obtained permission by the Vijayanagar ruler to erect a fort at Srirangapatna. He enlarged the Ranganatha temple. As the place was considered important by a Vijayanagar Viceroy named Srirangaraya. In 1610, when Raja Wodeyar took possession of Srirangapatna, it was the capital of the Mysore Wodeyars and continued to be the seat of Government under Haider Ali and Tippu Sulthan until its seizure by the British in 1799.²

During the course of a very long history of Srirangapatna, different people and different religions have left a mark in the concrete forms. Srirangapatna was a flourishing place during Chikkadevara Wodeyar's period. An inscription dated 1685 A.D. contains a description of the place.³ The town, temples, mosque and other historical monuments are surrounded by a strong stone fort, known to have been renovated during the period of Haider and Tipu. The fort has four gates. There are remains of Tippu's palace known as Lal Mahal, a Water Gate, two Dugeons, one at the north-east corner of the fort, another to the east of Delhi gate. It is said that Tippu Sultan had kept Dhondji Wagh, a Maratha warrior in the former and some British Prisoners in the latter. There are more than 8 historical sites and places in the city under the ownership of State and Central Governments.

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The Fort is one of the principal elements to the character of Srirangapatna. The island of Srirangapatna is surrounded by a great stone fort wall that rises up sharply from the banks of the river Cauvery. The Srirangapatna Fort was constructed on the western end of the island in 1454 AD and is one of the most formidable forts in India. The fort was so formidable that a great military authority who visited it in 1880 A.D., pronounced it as the second strongest in India. Being a place of pilgrimage it has seen countless battles, some of which have shaken the foundation of its massive fort wall, that still stand as a testament to the greatness of Srirangapatna's glorious past. Distinguished ruling dynasties like The Gangas, Hoysalas, Vijayanagar Kings, The Wodeyars of Mysore and Hyder Ali & Tippu have left their indelible impression on the cultural legacy of this town. Innumerable monuments are a living testimony of this heritage and they are of national, state and local importance.⁴

Srirangapatna Fort-Built on the western end of the island, the triangular inn shape Srirangapatna fort was originally built by Thimmanna Hebbbar, the chieftain of Nagamangala. Later Kantivrava Narasaraja Wodeyar and the succeeding rulers strengthened the fort. The principal entrance to the fort is the Elephant gate on the south side. This gateway bears an inscription in Persian which mentions the year of foundation of the fort in 1219 of Tippu sultan's Mauludi era. The other important gates are water gate near the Gangadharshwara Temple, Krishna gate near the Krishna temple and the Bangalore gate in the eastern wall. It is one of the most formidable forts in India from where Tippu charged at the British soldiers with his legendry sword. On May 4. 1799 AD, East India Company troops under the command of Colonel Wellesley stormed into the town by breaching the fort. Srirangapatna Fort is one of its kind structures. Around 40 ft. high walls on three sides of the fort provide it a magnificent look. Four main entrances of the fort are named as Delhi, Bangalore, Mysore and Water and Elephant gates. Double wall defense system of the fort makes it impenetrable. Located on an island amidst the Cauvery river, the fort enjoys the company of beautiful surroundings. The architectural style of the fort and Persian inscription on the gateway are irresistible. All these announce its date of construction. The Gibi Gate -It is a small gate in the enclosure which leads from the temple area to the river in the east of Delhi gate. Outside the gate there is a small ruined shrine dedicated to Hanuman. The Elephant Gate- In south of Srirangapatna the elephant gate built by Tipu Sultan in 1791 AD to enter the city on the back of elephant. The Delhi Gate - The gate is protected by two round bastions on both sides of the gate. It was used to connect the bridge and fort area. Water Gate: small entrance/exit gate in the northern face of the fortress, facing the Cauvery River. Scene of heavy fighting on 4 May 1799 and in close proximity to the gate in the inner rampart where the body of Tippu was eventually discovered by Major Alexander Allan and other British officers, including Major-General David Baird and Colonel Arthur Wellesley. **Moat Around Fort** - Srirangapatna Fort has natural and artificial Moat. The Fort is surrounded by natural river water on one side and on the south and eastern side, an artificial Moat of 20-25 ft depth was erected with water filled in it. Two enclosed Moat may be seen at Srirangapatna. Flag staff Cavalier located at the highest spot in Srirangapatna.⁵

The Dariya Daulat Bagh (Tippu's Summer Palace and Museum) - The Dariya Daulat Bagh is situated outside the fort, on the island. Dariya-Daulat, "the wealth of the sea", referred to as the summer palace of Tipu Sultan, was built in the year 1784 AD is situated outside the fort, on the island. The palace is built in the Indo-Sarcenic style. Tipu Sultan laid out a garden here and constructed the Summer Palace in 1784 which was his favorite retreat. It is built in the Indo-Sarcenic style standing on a square platform. There are excellent mural paintings depicting the war scenes, the British and the French officers, the Sultan, the Kings and others. The palace has been converted into a museum in which are displayed war weapons, paintings and coins of Tippu's period. One of the main feature of this museum is the famous oil painting "Storming of Srirangapattana" by Sir Robert Ker Porter made in 1800. This historical painting depicts the final fall of Srirangapatana on 4th May 1799. On the top floor of the Daria Daulat Palace is the Tippu Sultan Museum. It has a collection of Tippu memorabilia, European paintings and Persian manuscripts. The museum has the famous painting "Storming of Srirangapattanam" an oil painting by Sir Robert Ker Porter made in 1800. This historical painting depicts the final fall of Srirangapatana on 4th May 1799. Tippu's men are seen giving stiff resistance to the British army and many British officers are clearly visible in the painting.⁶

The Museum exhibits confined to the ground floor of the palace and mostly pertaining to Tippu Sultan, consists of oil paintings, pencil sketches, aquatints and engravings, coins and medals, costumes, furniture, arms, etc. A portrait of Tippu Sultan depicts him wearing a turban, a striped shirt. A necklace, a girth belt and a stone-studded cross belt to which is attached a sword. The artist was G.F. Cherry who painted it in 1792. Another full portrait of Tippu Sultan as prince painted by John Zoffany in 1780is on display. Another historical painting by Robert Home, painted between 1792-95 depicts Tippu's sons Abdul Khaliq and Maizuddin, the hostage princes with Ghulam Ali Khan, the Vakil of Tippu who is shown seated in a carrying chair and in the background an Englishman, most probably, Captain Kennaway the personal secretary to Lord Cornwallis is shown as having a discussion with Ali Raza Khan another Vakil of Tippu holding a treaty document. There are eighteen pencil sketches on display and among them are those of the seven sons of Tipu Sultan Fateh Haider, Abdul Khaliq, Maizuddin, Mohiuddin, Yasin Sahib, Sultan Sahib and Shukrullah his Vakils ghulam Ali Khan and Ali Raza Khan – Commanders Ghulam Ali Khan, Badruz Zaman Khan, Sheikh Hussain, his companion and confidential servant Raja Khan and the senior door keeper Firuz Saut. Also on display are the sketches of Mir Alam, Minister of Nizam, his son Mir Dauran, Krishna Raja Wodeyar III and his maternal uncle, Nandi Raja. These portrait sketches were drawn by Thomas Hickey the English artist, between 1799-1801 in Srirangapatna and Vellore. Coins of various denominations on view include Double paisa, Paisa, Half paisa, Quarter paisa and One-eighth paisa issued by Tipu Sultan from different mints at Bangalore, Calicut, Chitaldurg, Dindigul, Gooty and Srirangapatna. Madals of different metals like silver, copper and bronze issued by the English, commemorating their victory over Tippu are also exhibited. Among the other exhibits mention may be made the costume of Tippu, a payjama, a silk coat and a straw hat, two silver bowels presented by him to the Ranganathaswami

Temple, a handmade paper manuscript in Persian dealing with the military code of regulations, furniture comprising of chairs, sofa with backrest, couch and a rosewood roundtable, a brass cannon, daggers, swords, pistols and muskets besides iron cannons.⁷

Gumbaz - Situated just outside the fort is the Gumbaz, the burial chamber of Tipu Sultan, his father Hyder Ali and mother Fatima Begum. It is built on a lifted platform and is circumvented by various other tombs of his relatives and nobles. Gumbaz is an imposing structure, which is situated right in the middle of the beautiful Lalbagh Garden on an open balcony with polished black basalt pillars on all sides. The doors of the tomb are beautifully carved and engraved with ivory works. The interior is painted in lacquer with the tiger stripe adopted by Tipu for military uniforms. There is also a mosque in the complex built in Moghal style. The Gumbaz is circled with a beautiful garden and this gives it a beautiful and cool sight. At the eastern end of the island towards the south is Gumbaz or Mausoleum. It was built by Tipu Sultan for his parents between 1782-84 A.D. Later Tipu was buried here on 5th May 1799 A.D. It is an impressive square tomb chamber surmounted by brick built dome. Open corridors run black stone pillars. The carved stone windows and doorways with ivory inlaid doors are fine workmanship. In the verandahs and on the platform are housed the Tombs of Haider's family members.⁸

Colonel Bailey's Dungeon - It is one of the most dreaded yet historically attractions of Srirangapatna. The place is so called because Colonel Bailey died in these dungeons in 1780 AD. It is a place where Tipu Sultan's prisoners of war were jailed. It is said that Captain Baird, Captain Rulay, Colonel Brithwite, Samson, Frazer and Lindsay were imprisoned here. The fortress is 30.5m x 12.2m in height built of brick and mortar. In the Northern rampart is a large oblong bastion in the fort wall on the top of which was formerly placed a heavy battery called Sultan Bateri. Irman's Dungeon - At North-East corner of the fort is another dungeon about 45' X 32' which is called as Irman's Dungeon who discovered this in 1895. In this dungeon, many Maratha and others were kept during Haider and Tipu's period as captives. The so called 'Malabar hut' dungeon in which many important British officers were kept is now no more.⁹

Obelisk monument - The Obelisk is a monument that is just meters away from the dungeon. The structure is one of polished stone and is in the form of a square-Planned pier surmounted by a tapering obelisk with the names of officers who died and the units which fought at the siege of Srirangapatna in 1799 inscribed on it on the top and around are cannon balls. There are Eight Gunpowder Stores, situated in different places of the Fort and enable easy supply of ammunition during War. Garrison Cemetery containing 310 tomb stones of the European Civil and Military Officers (dated 1800-1867 A.D.) are found in Srirangapatna town restored recently.¹⁰

The ruins of Tipu's Palace (Lal Mahal) - 150 meters away from Sri Ranganatha Swamy temple is a ruined structure identified as Tipu's Palace. It was called Lal Mahal. Once a very beautiful structure as described by many English historians, who visited it, was dismantled between 1807 and 1809 by the orders of Col. Wellesley.¹¹

Tipu's Death Place - A commemorative Obelisk, is located in a small envelopment into which one is not allowed to enter, marks the same spot where Tipu fell dead. His body lay there for two days before it was noticed by the locals. The stone tablet erected standing. "Tipu Sultan's body was found here". 50 meters to the east of Watergate, inside the second fort line, is said to have stood another gateway which led through the inner eastern wall, which was constructed by Tipu Sultan inside the second line. On the 4th of May 1799 A.D., pushed back by the storming troops Tipu moved along the second wall and descending from it near the Watergate tried to enter the town through the second gate. It is said that he found the gate closed. Meanwhile the British troops who crossed over to the third wall came along, descended into the town and entered the gate from inside. Then Tipu was stuck between the two advancing English forces. Fighting, he fell down wounded. The storming troops not knowing that Tipu was there entered the gate and rushed towards the palace. When the British officers tried to trace the body of Tipu, his dying private secretary pointed to place where his master lay under a heap of the dead. It is found that the inner fortification was razed to the ground by Col. Wellesley.¹² Now there is a Stone Tablet erected stating "THE BODY OF TIPPU SULTAN WAS FOUND HERE".

Tipu's Armory and Rocket plans - A military tactic developed by Tipu Sultan and his father, Hyder Ali, was the use of mass attacks with rocket artillery brigades on infantry formations. Tipu Sultan wrote a military manual called Fathul Mujahidin in which 200 rocket men were prescribed to each Mysorean rocket artillery brigade known as Cushoon. Mysore had 16 to 24 cushoons of infantry. The areas of town where rockets and fireworks were manufactured were known as Taramandal Pet. It is recorded that during the second and third Mysore wars; Tipu's rocket men or troops used a new type of missile, the rocket, to terrorize the British forces. These rockets comprised of an iron tube filled with combustible powder. The tube was in turn attached to a bamboo shaft. A large rocket carrying about one pound of combustible powder could travel a thousand yards. Congreve rocket. During the conclusive British attack on Srirangapatna on 2 May 1799, a British shot struck a magazine of rockets within the Tipu Sultan's fort causing it to explode and send a towering cloud of black smoke, with cascades of exploding white light, rising up from the battlements. On the afternoon of 4 May when the final attack on the fort was led by Baird, he was again met by "furious musket and rocket fire", but this did not help much; in about an hour's time the Fort was taken; perhaps in another hour Tipu had been shot and the war was effectively over. After the fall of Srirangapatna, 600 launchers, 700 serviceable rockets and 9,000 empty rockets were found. Some of the rockets had pierced cylinders, to allow them to act like incendiaries, while some had iron points or steel blades bound to the bamboo. By attaching these blades to rockets they became very unstable towards the end of their flight causing the blades to spin around like flying scythes, cutting down all in their path.¹³

A bulk of these tourists is domestic travelers though the number of international tourists visiting Srirangapatna too has gone up. As against about 4,900 foreign tourists in 2000-01, the town received 26,791 foreign tourists in 2010-11. The ASI collected Rs. 70.68 lakh from the sale of tickets. The proximity to Mysore, which is emerging as a major urban centre and

draws over three million tourists every year, and improved connectivity between Bangalore and Mysore had a spillover effect on Srirangapatna. According to the information available from the Archaeological Survey of India office at Dariya Daulat Bagh, 6.75 lakh domestic tourists and 23,500 international tourists visited the monument in 2007-08. The number of domestic tourists increased to 7.25 lakh in 2008-09, while 23,000 international tourists visited the monument during that year. Between 2009-10 and 2011-12, there has been a year-on-year growth with a continuous rise in the number of domestic visitors who fuel the local tourism industry in Srirangapatna as also Mysore. During 2009-10, Dariya Daulat Bagh attracted 7.91 lakh domestic tourists and 25,000 international tourists but this increased to 8.77 lakh domestic tourists and 26,500 international tourists in 2010-11. But it was in 2011-12 that the number of tourists visiting Srirangapatna-as evident by ticket sales-approached the one million mark for the first time. Officials in charge of the monument pointed out that 9.33 lakh domestic tourists and 27,000 international tourists visited Dariya Daulat Bagh in 2011-12 taking the number of tourists to nearly 9.6 lakh. But these figures do not include children aged less than five as they have free entry and if they too were to be accounted for, the number of visitors would easily cross the one million mark.¹⁴

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