

# Prominence of Channagiri Fort in the History of Davangere District, Karnataka

**Virupakshappa. H**

Associate Professor, Department of History, Government First Grade College, Harihar-577601

## **Abstract:**

Channagiri Fort, located in the Davangere district of Karnataka, is a historically significant site that reflects the strategic and architectural prowess of the Vijayanagara Empire. Constructed during the 15th or 16th century, the fort was strategically positioned to control important trade routes and regional territories, underscoring its role as a key military and administrative outpost of the empire. Its robust fortifications, including high walls and bastions, are emblematic of Vijayanagara defensive architecture and reflect the empire's advanced engineering skills.

Following the decline of the Vijayanagara Empire, Channagiri Fort came under the control of various local powers, including the Wodeyars of Mysore, illustrating its enduring significance in regional power dynamics. The fort's historical role extends beyond its military use, contributing to the cultural and administrative heritage of the Davangere district.

Today, Channagiri Fort serves as a symbol of the region's rich historical legacy, attracting interest from historians, archaeologists, and tourists. Its preservation and study offer valuable insights into the architectural and strategic practices of South India during a pivotal era. The fort stands as a testament to the complex historical and cultural tapestry of the Davangere district, reflecting the enduring impact of its historical past on the region's identity.

**Keywords:** Vijayanagara Fortifications, South Indian Military Architecture, Karnataka History, Historical Sites

## **Introduction**

Channagiri Fort, located in the Davangere district of Karnataka, India, is a significant historical site that reflects the rich heritage of the region. Situated in a strategic location, the fort has played a notable role in the region's history, particularly during the period of the Vijayanagara Empire. Its architectural features and historical associations underscore its importance as both a military and administrative center.

The fort's prominence extends beyond its historical and military significance; it represents the complex tapestry of regional politics and cultural heritage. As a former stronghold of the Vijayanagara Empire and later a focal point of various local dynasties, Channagiri Fort embodies the historical shifts and cultural dynamics of the area.

Channagiri has a hill fort which was built around 1770 with Ranganath temple inside it, which rises to a height of about 200 feet to the west of the town consists of a single soft dark covered with earth which commands a wide plain. The fort consists of two rubble walls defending by Moats, the chief gate being on the north where the gradient is lowest.

On the peak stands a temple dedicated to Sri Ranganatha. It is called Bete-Ranganatha and depicts Vishnu standing in Samabhanga holding chakra and Shankha (Conch) in his back hands and arrow in his front hands with a low Garuda pedestal below him and a consort in relieve on the Prabhavali on each side.

To its south-west is a small shrine dedicated to Bhutappa which contains the head of the god whose tongue projects out of his mouth

Today, it stands as a symbol of Davangere's historical legacy, offering insights into the architectural and strategic practices of past civilizations. The fort continues to attract interest from historians, archaeologists, and visitors, highlighting its enduring importance in the historical and cultural narrative of Karnataka.

### Historical Context

**Strategic Importance:** The fort was built during the rule of the Vijayanagara Empire, which was a powerful South Indian empire known for its military and architectural achievements. Channagiri Fort served as an important military outpost and administrative center during the Vijayanagara period.

Built during the era of the Vijayanagara Empire, Channagiri Fort was strategically positioned to control and oversee important trade routes and territorial expanses in the region. Its location reflects the strategic foresight of the Vijayanagara rulers in safeguarding their empire from potential invasions and managing local governance.

**Architectural Features:** The fort is known for its impressive architecture, including fortifications and bastions. Its design reflects the typical fortification style of the Vijayanagara Empire, characterized by strong walls and strategic positioning to oversee the surrounding region.

**Vijayanagara Empire:** The Vijayanagara Empire was a powerful South Indian empire known for its extensive military and administrative capabilities. The empire established a network of forts to control trade routes, manage territories, and protect against external threats. Channagiri Fort was part of this extensive network, playing a key role in the empire's regional control.

**Post-Vijayanagara Period:** Following the decline of the Vijayanagara Empire after the Battle of Talikote in 1565, the fort came under the control of various regional powers. It was later administered by the Wodeyars of Mysore, who continued to use the fort as a strategic and administrative center.

**British and Colonial Era:** During the British colonial period, the fort's significance diminished, but it remained a notable historical site. Its strategic importance lessened as British control established new administrative and military structures in the region.

### Cultural Significance

**Local Heritage:** Channagiri Fort is an important cultural and historical landmark for the Davangere district. It represents the architectural and strategic innovations of the Vijayanagara Empire and reflects the region's rich history of political and military activity.

**Tourism and Preservation:** Today, the fort is a point of interest for tourists and historians. Efforts to preserve and study the site contribute to the understanding of South Indian history and architecture. It serves as a tangible link to the region's past and offers insights into the historical dynamics of the area.

The fort's architecture is a testament to the engineering and military prowess of the Vijayanagara period. The robust fortifications, bastions, and walls were designed to offer substantial defense capabilities and reflect the advanced fortification techniques of the time.

**Role in Regional Power Dynamics** :After the fall of the Vijayanagara Empire in the 16th century, Channagiri Fort came under the control of various local powers, including the Wodeyars of Mysore. Its shifting control illustrates the turbulent nature of regional politics and the fort's continued relevance as a strategic asset.

**Later History**: After the decline of the Vijayanagara Empire, the fort came under the control of various local rulers and dynasties, including the Wodeyars of Mysore. Its control shifted several times, reflecting the turbulent political landscape of the region.

**Cultural Significance** Channagiri Fort has also played a role in the cultural and historical narrative of the Davangere district. It is a symbol of the rich heritage and history of the region, contributing to the local identity and historical understanding of the area.

### **Modern Relevance**

Today, Channagiri Fort is a point of interest for historians, archaeologists, and tourists. It offers valuable insights into the architectural styles and military strategies of the Vijayanagara Empire and the subsequent periods of regional control. The fort's preservation and study contribute to a deeper understanding of the historical and cultural context of Davangere district, making it a significant landmark in Karnataka's heritage.

### **Notable Aspects**

**Historical Records**: While specific historical records about Channagiri Fort are sparse, it is mentioned in various historical accounts and local records. Its importance in regional politics and administration is noted in these records.

**Current State**: The fort is in a partially dilapidated state but retains much of its historical character. Efforts to restore and maintain the site help in preserving its historical value for future generations.

### **Conclusion**

Channagiri Fort holds a significant place in the history of the Davangere district due to its strategic, architectural, and cultural contributions. Built during the Vijayanagara Empire, the fort exemplifies the advanced military and engineering practices of the time, reflecting the empire's strategic vision and administrative prowess.

Throughout its history, Channagiri Fort has witnessed shifts in control from the Vijayanagara rulers to local dynasties such as the Wodeyars of Mysore, illustrating its enduring importance in regional power dynamics. The fort's design and location underscore its role as a critical defensive and administrative center, making it a key asset in historical conflicts and governance.

In the present day, Channagiri Fort stands as a testament to the rich heritage of the Davangere district. Its preservation and study provide valuable insights into the historical and cultural evolution of the region. As a symbol of the area's historical depth, the fort continues to attract interest from historians, tourists, and heritage enthusiasts, highlighting its lasting impact on the cultural and historical landscape of Karnataka.

### **Reference**

1. **The Vijayanagara Empire: A Study of the Society and Culture**" by K. A. Nilakanta Sastri – This book provides comprehensive details on the Vijayanagara Empire, including its fortifications and ad-

ministrative strategies, which can offer context for Channagiri Fort's role.

2. **"History of Karnataka"** by M. Chidananda Murthy – This book covers the history of Karnataka, including the period of the Vijayanagara Empire and subsequent regional history, relevant to understanding the fort's historical significance.
3. **"Karnataka: A History"** by S. R. Suryanarayana – Provides a broader view of Karnataka's history, including details on various forts and their roles in regional history

#### **Articles and Journals**

1. **"The Forts of Karnataka: A Historical Overview"** – Articles in historical and archaeological journals often explore various forts, including Channagiri, detailing their architectural and strategic significance.
2. **Archaeological Survey of India Reports** – Reports from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) on the historical and archaeological significance of forts in Karnataka can provide insights into Channagiri Fort