



ISSN: 2249-894X
 IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631 (UIF)
 UGC APPROVED JOURNAL NO. 48514
 VOLUME - 8 | ISSUE - 8 | MAY - 2019



FORTIFICATION AND ARCHITECTURE OF MEDIEVAL KHIMLASA FORT

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ABSTRACT:

Khimlasa fort is situated at the Khimlasa village, 20 Km away from Khurai railway station in Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh. It is a medium size village of Sagar district. The Mahal of Khimlasa with 11,720 bighas paid 6,45,665 dams and its contribution to the imperial army was 40 horsemen and 100 infantry.⁹³

The details of the fortification of Khimlasa fort is as below :-

KEYWORDS: Khimlasa Fort, Gond Rulers, Gond Architecture.

CITY WALL :-

The exact nature of the walls of a medieval Gond town of city would depend on the resources available for building them, the nature of the terrain and the perceived threat. Khimlasa was a business centre during the Gonds of 14th century. Huge taxes were collected from the citizens and the people of this Garh (equal to a Riyasat) Khimlasa was among the richest Garh (fort) of the Medieval Gonds.⁹⁴

Thus the brilliant Gond rulers of Garh-Mandla had built the city compound wall around the Khimlasa city. This type of compound walls are around the Chanda (Chandrapur) city of Maharashtra.

The thickness of this city wall (Photo-28) around Khimlasa is 11 feet. There were total 4 gates and

one window built at the city walls. These 4 gates were -

- (1) Tal Darwaja situated on the south,
- (2) Dudhai Darwaja , on the North,
- (3) Dhamoni Darwaja on the East, and
- (4) Basahari Darwaja on the West.

Tal Darwaja was built to communicate the *talab* (tank) whereas the Dudhai and Dhamoni were two strong Garh (Fortress) of the Gonds at that time.

Basahari gate was toward Garhi Bina (fortress of Bina).

The name of the small gate (Window) is called *Chor Darwaja* (secret gate). This gate was used when the attackers closed all the 4 gates, the inmates went outside through this secret gate- '*Chor Darwaja*'. The height of the gate was 28

feet that time. The entrance size at the 4 gates were 11' (Wide) X 12' (Height). The window entrance is measured as 5' (height) X 4' (Width).

Curtain walls and 2nd gate were built next to the main 4 gates of the city wall.

The city of Khimlasa and Khimlasa fort was situated inside this city wall.

Towers :-

Towers were built on each corner of the fort. 14 towers were there. At present 12 are seen good and ruins of 2 are seen. These circular towers were of 14' diameter. Above the drum dome was built.

Gates :-

There was 1 main Gate following 2 other gates at the front of the fort. The first main gate is east-faced and the width of the entrance at this gate is 13'.



The second main gate following the first main gate is north-faced. Old wooden doors supported with iron plates and studs from the back side. There were two security cells at this gate only. The third main gate being followed by second main gate is east-faced and it is the final one to enter in to the main residential and activities centre of the castle. The entrance at this third gate is 15'(height) x 11'(width). One small inscription in Bramhi (?) is engraved on the left outside doorjamb of the third main gate.

Security Cells :-

2 security cells on either side, just next to the door frame of the second main gate, were built. The size of the cells is 8' (W) x 10'.3" (L) x 16' (H).

Killing Fields :-

As the city walls and the four gates of the city walls were followed by the next curtain walls and gates, they created killing field in between the outer city wall and the curtain walls.

The other killing fields were in between the first main gate and second main gate, and in between second main gate and the third main gate.

The defenders or the garrison defended the attackers at these killing fields. It was very strongly secured fort of the Gonds of central India.

Bailey :-

The outer walls of the fort (Photo-29) is made of red sand stones and still stand since 10th century A.D. Parapet and towers were built on the top of the outer walls.

The west side Bailey of the fort was rebuilt or renovated by the Mughal rulers during the 17th century A.D., as one inscription on the west wall is seen in Parsi (?) implies.

The height of the outer wall is measured 24' and the thickness of the wall is 8'.10".

Walls :-

The walls of the royal palace situated on the north side of the fort are 4'.2" thick and supported with pillars and pilasters. This Royal palace is a triple storeyed building, thus the height of each floor or the walls are very low.

Roof :-

Except the new buildings (Panchpir and the Nagina Mahal on the southern side of the castle) all the buildings are belongs to the architects patronised by the Gond kings. The ground floor roof are flat and the first & above floor roof is vaulted.

Pillars & Pilasters :-

The pillars and the pilasters on the royal palace and other residential building inside the castle is rectangular. But there are rounded pillars seen on the Verandah and the open space (portico). The rectangular pillars inside the walls are measured 4'.2"x3".

Religions Places :-

The Mughal period Panchpirs' (5 pirs) temple is situated at the southern side of the castle near the central Baodi. Before Mughals it seems to be a Surya temple or Vishnu temple. Because the broken idols of Lord Surya (sun) and Lord Vishnu is seen behind the Panch Pira building. Mughals were the later conqueror of the fort before Marathas, the original builder of the castle and the religious places were only the Gonds. Gonds had not built any piras, Durgah or Mosque at all. There might be a Surya or Vishnu Temple at that place originally. The Mughal invaders in the original temple might have been displaced and new Piras installed there after the Mughal invasion to this fort of Khimlasa. As the

historian of this area Mr. Ramkrishna Soni says the renowned Panch pira building was built within one night. That means the local people might have protest against the destruction of the original Gond temple, and the Mughal commandant due to the protest of the local citizen might have renovated the walling only, with ready made meshed-stone at the old Gond temple and had installed the 5 Piras in this structure.

The another temples of Lord Shiva & Goddess Durga were built at the north-west corner of the castle near the another *Baodi*. The ideology behind the religious places built near *baodis* was that the inmates, the Soldiers after took bath would worship the God & Goddess in the near by temple.

Water Reservoirs :-

There are two big baodies (Step-wells) in side the castle. One is at the North-west corner of the castle and the second one is behind the 'Panch Pira Structure'. These two *baodies* could fulfill the yearly water requirement to the castle.

Stairs :-

The Stairs in palace and the Garrison camp are very short i.e. 18" wide and 8" depth. The steps are of 10" height. The stairs at the *Baodi* No.1 (Situated at the North-west corner) is 6' feet wide. But the stairs at *Baodi* No.2 (Situated behind Panch Pira) are of 17" wide. All the stairs to the top of the gate and in baodis are built left-hand-helix.

Horse stable:-

The building situated at the right side of the path just after the third gate was originally a horse stable. During the British rule over the fort, they modified the structure of horse stable in to the police station. The elephant Stable was out side the fort but within the city wall of Khimlasa.

Moats:-

Artificial water trench was built around the castle except the east side. The wide of the trench is 12' only. One assailant could jump such low length, we can say. But the trench was touching the outer wall of the fort one assailant could not jump the length and climb the smooth wall of 24' height.

Historians who have specialisation in fortification architecture say there is no necessity of a trench or Moat when the fort or castle is situated in side a strong city wall. But Gond rulers had given very much attention towards the security of their palace and forts.

Materials used :-

Red sand stones, which were locally available, marvel, wood, iron were used in the construction of this castle. But bricks were used in the later age. The paste of lime & Soil was in using for jointing the stones with each other.

CONCLUSION :-

As it is a Gond Fort the gates and doors are arched at the top hence become strong and durable than other flat-top gates and doors.

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