



On the eastern promontory is the famous Swami rock on which stands the celebrated Koneswaram temple. Swami Rock, historically referred to as *Kona-ma-malai*, a cliff on the peninsula that drops 40m directly into the sea. There are many references in ancient times that date back to 5th Century BC. It is usually referred to as Flagstaff Point by naval sources

It is documented that a Portuguese named Constantine de Sa demolished the glorious Koneswaram temple, a Great Pagoda or the temple of 1,000 pillars in 1624. De Queyroz, the Portuguese historian not only describes the exact location of the temple but goes further by describing it as the "Rome of the Orient more frequented by pilgrims than Rameshwaram or Jeganath in Orissa". An ancient phallus retrieved by Mike Wilson, an under water explorer is believed to have belonged to that ancient shrine. The Pallavas, the Pandyan and Cholas were closely associated with the building, repairs, extensions and endowments to the Koneswaram temple.

The first stupa built on the Gokarangiri rock which has been identified as the present Fort Fredrick or Swami rock was named as Gokaranna Vihara. And a village nearby was called Gokannagama.

An interesting legend regarding this area celebrates King Ravana who, when his mother was ailing, wanted to remove the temple of Koneswaram. As he was heaving the rock, God Siva made him drop his sword. As a result of this a cleft was created on the rock, which is today called Ravana Vettu, meaning Ravana's Cleft. It is also known as Lover's Leap by another legend of a daughter of a Dutch official – Fracina Van Rhede – who apparently flung herself into the sea from this escarpment, in despair, while watching her lover sail away. A pillar is found erected where it is thought to be a memorial.