

Twitter Thread by Vibhu Vashisth



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Rani Chennamma of Kittur was one of the first women rulers of India who fought against the might of the British Empire in 1824. Rani Chennamma was born in 1778 in a small village of Kakati in Belgaon distt of the State of Karnataka.



Chennamma in as an youth

She was born into the Lingayat Community to a man named Dhulappa Desai. From a very young age she was trained in horse riding, sword fighting, archery and diplomacy. At a very young age of 15 yrs, she was married to the King of Kittur and

became the Queen of Kittur.



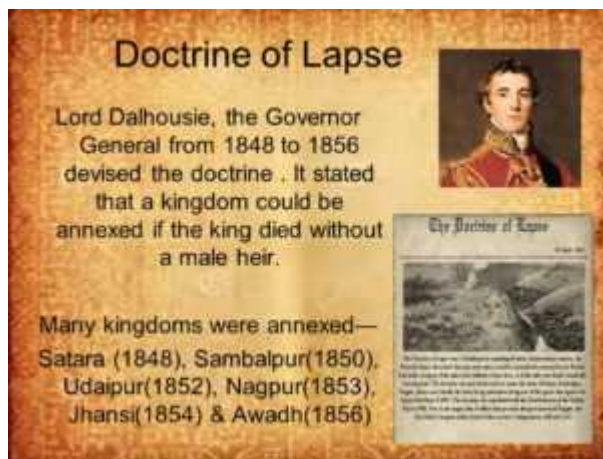
Chennamma as an infant. Born on October 23, 1778 at **Kakati**.

It is said that King of Kittur Mallasarja was once moving around in the neighbouring kingdoms to find support to fight Tipu Sultan. It is then, when he came across Chennamma and he immediately got attracted to her sheer confidence and bravery.

Rani Chennamma and King Mallasarja had a son together who died very soon after the death of King Mallasarja in 1816. As the Queen of Kittur, Rani Chennamma immediately adopted Shivalingappa as her son and declared him the heir to the throne of Kittur.

This did not go well with the British East India Company who was enforcing the Doctrine of Lapse those days, according to which the adopted children of the Indian rulers were not allowed to become their heirs and if the native rulers did not have children of their own, their...

...Kingdom would become a territory of the British Empire. The Doctrine of Lapse came into force between 1848-1856. It was the brainchild of Lord Dalhousie. British East India Company therefore ordered the exile of Shivalingappa from the Kingdom of Kittur.



The Company refused to recognize Shivalingappa as a legal heir to the throne of Kittur. Rani Chennamma however, defied the British order and stood by her decision regarding Shivalingappa. Lord Elphinstone was the Governor of Bombay those days.

Chennamma sent a letter to Elphinstone to plead the cause of Kittur but her request was turned down. Meanwhile, the East India Company's Collector and political agent Thackeray wished to capture Kittur to expand the British Empire. He did not recognise Chennamma as Regent.

Chennamma was then asked to surrender her Kingdom but she defied British order one more time. The war just begun. Britishers tried to weaken her position by plundering her treasury which valued around 15 lac rupees but were unsuccessful in doing so due to her pre-anticipated action.



Chennamma with her bodyguards, preparing for a battle.

First Battle between the Britishers & the Kingdom of Kittur happened in Oct 1824 to the very disappointment of Britishers who suffered very heavy losses. British collector & political agent Mr. John Thackeray was killed. It was Rani Chennamma's ferocious and fierce lieutenant...



Chennamma leading her army into the battle-field.

...Amatur Ballappa who was responsible for Thackeray's death and the losses suffered by the British. Rani Chennamma took hostages, the two very prominent British Officers named Sir Wallace Elliot and Mr. Stevenson. It was a very humiliating defeat for the Britishers.



Chennamma charges on as Amatur Balappa slays [John Thackeray](#), the British Collector.

Britishers never expected such a strong defensive from a lady ruler and her army. Consequently, they offered negotiation to which Rani agreed. As a result of this negotiation, Rani released the two hostages after the Britishers promised that the war won't be continued any longer.

But due to their inherent quality of treachery and deception the Britishers deceived Rani Chennamma. Britishers very soon under the leadership of Mr. Chaplin attacked Kittur once again. Only this time they returned with large forces gathered from Mysore and Sholapur.

Rani had also tried to strengthen her forces in anticipation and requested the neighbouring kingdoms to support. But most of the kingdoms fell prey to the Divide and Rule policy of Britishers and Rani's efforts were in vain.

However, unflinched by the non-supportive nature of neighbouring kingdoms Rani Chennamma gathered her forces and fought the second battle even more fiercely than the first one. Under the able leadership of Rani & strategic guidance of her lieutenants Sangoli Rayanna & Gurusiddappa...



Chennamma engaged in a fight against British forces.

...the Britishers again suffered losses and Collector of Sholapur Mr. Munroe was also killed. The battle continued for 12 relentless days and then Rani faced another betrayal, this time from her own people. Two of her soldiers Vankata Rao and Mallappa betrayed Chennamma .



These both traitors mixed mud and cowdung to the Gunpowder used for Canons on the orders of British as a result of which Rani Chennamma and her forces were defeated and Rani captured by the British. She was sentenced for life at the Bailhongal Fort.

Even after Rani's Capture Sangoli Rayanna , who was her loyal lieutenant continued to fight Britishers using Guerrilla warfare tactics until 1829 when he was captured and hanged by the British. Later Shivalingappa was also captured.



Sangoli Rayanna disguised as an ascetic meets Chennamma at Bailhongal jail. Rayanna assures Chennamma that he is continuing the struggle against the British.