



# VALIANT INDIAN WARRIORS

Philosophies, Approaches  
And Victories

*Edited by*  
Prof. (Dr.) C. B. Bhange  
Devidas Vijay Bhosale

 Bharti

# **Valiant Indian Warriors**

*Philosophies, Approaches, and Victories*

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## Maharani Lakshmi Bai: A Warrior Queen of India

Kausar Ansari<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

India is a great country where many great men were born but women here are no less than men. While on one hand, the brave sons of Mother India sacrificed for the independence of India, on the other hand, her daughters were also not left behind. They were courageous and mighty as well, but not abala (weak). Indian women made great sacrifices to free the nation from the clutches of the British rule and establish native rule. Among such women, Maharani Lakshmi Bai, the Queen of Jhansi, occupies a prominent place in the history of Indian freedom struggle. Maharani Lakshmi Bai was one such heroine who sacrificed her life while fighting in the battle field. She was one of the leading warriors of the freedom struggle of 1857 A. D.

Maharani Lakshmi Bai, who was a symbol of inspiration and honor for all citizens of India, was born on 19<sup>th</sup> November, 1828 A. D. in a Maratha Brahmin family in Kashi of Banaras (Now Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh) (David, 2003). Her childhood name was 'Manikarnika' which means "The Mistress of Jewels" but everyone used to call her affectionately as 'Manu'. Moropant Tambe and Bhagirathi Sapre (Tambe) were her parents who belonged to Maharashtra. Her father was a Maratha who worked as a consultant in the court of Peshwa Bajirao II of Bithur district. Her mother, Bhagirathi Bai was of a cultured, intelligent and devout nature. But unfortunately, her mother died when Manu was just four years old. After the death of her mother, there was none to take care of Manu, so father took her with him to the court of Peshwa Bajirao II. The Peshwa used

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to call her 'Chhabili' which means 'fickle' (Nirupama, 2012). Since childhood, Manu didn't play with dolls and played with sword and arrow. She was also very fond of horse riding. Along with the teaching of scriptures (Shastra), she was also taught about weapons (Astra-Shastra). Manu grew up playing with Nana Saheb and Tatyasaheb Tope. She was quite a courageous, fearless and brave woman. Since childhood, Rani Lakshmi Bai was quite proficient in horse riding, shooting, fencing, archery and self-defense.

At the age of fourteen, Manu was married to Gangadhar Rao, the King of Jhansi, in May, 1842 A. D. (Singh, 2014) Thus, she became the queen of Jhansi. After marriage, she was called 'Lakshmi Bai' in honor of Lakshmi, who was the Hindu Goddess of wealth and fortune. In September 1851 A. D. after nine years of marriage, Rani Lakshmi Bai gave birth to a son named Damodar Rao (Jhansi, 2004). But unfortunately, her son died only after four months of birth. After his son's death, Maharaja Gangadhar Rao's health was deteriorating. When his health deteriorated too much, he was advised to get an adopted son, so that he can be made the heir to the throne. Because his wife, Rani Lakshmi Bai as a woman, was not entitled to that right. Till that time, the princely state of Jhansi was independent of British India. As a result, a child was adopted, the son of Maharaja Gangadhar Rao's cousin, named Anand Rao on November, 1853 A. D. (Rana, 2004). Anand Rao was renamed as Damodar Rao. Maharaja Gangadhar Rao died on 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1853 A. D. the day after his adoption (Rana, 2004). Rani Lakshmi Bai became a widow after eleven years of marriage. After the death of Maharaja Gangadhar Rao, Rani Lakshmi Bai took the reins of governance in her hands. She took the responsibility for the entire kingdom and ran it efficiently. But very soon Rani Lakshmi Bai's struggle with the British started. Because the British wanted to annex Jhansi into the British Empire through the policy of 'Doctrine of Lapse'.

### **Struggle with the British and Participation in the Revolution of 1857**

After the death of Maharaja Gangadhar Rao, Lord Dalhousie, the Governor-General of the British East India Company, refused to accept his adopted son, Damodar Rao, as the successor of Jhansi under the policy of 'Doctrine of Lapse'. Lord Dalhousie wanted to make Jhansi a part of British Empire. Rani Lakshmi Bai strongly opposed this and gave a clear warning to the British Empire that "*Main Apni Jhansi Nahi Dungi (I will not give up my Jhansi)*" (David, 2003). However, she took the advice of British lawyer, John Lang



and filed a case in London court. But no decision could be taken against the British Empire, so it was rejected after much debate. Rani Lakshmi bai was offered 60000 as compensation for going from her region and was asked to leave the fort. After which she went to Rani Mahal. On 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1854 the British Government captured Jhansi. But Rani Lakshmi Bai did not lose courage and in every case decided to protect Jhansi from the British Government.

Rani Lakshmi bai began to strengthen the security of Jhansi and formed a volunteer army. Women were also recruited in this army and were given combat training. Jhalkar Bai, who looks like Rani Lakshmi Bai, gave her a prominent position in the army. The common people of Jhansi also supported Rani Lakshmi Bai in this struggle against the British Empire. In the struggle of Rani Lakshmi Bai against the British Empire, the Nawabs and the Kings such as Begum Hazrat Mahal, Begum Zeenat Mahal, Nana Saheb, Tantya Tope, who were victims of the 'Doctrine of Lapse', tried to co-operate in this work of the Queen. On the other hand, Rani Lakshmi Bai strengthened Jhansi with the help of other freedom fighters like Gulam Gaus Khan, Dost Khan, Khuda Bakhsh, Moti Bai, Lala Bhau Bhakshi and Sunder- Mundar. Subsequently, in the month of September and October of 1857 A. D., the kings of neighbouring kingdoms of Orchha and Datia, attacked Jhansi but Rani Lakshmi Bai showed her bravery and won (Wikipedia, 2020).

Jhansi became a major center of the revolt of 1857 A. D. and the wave of the revolution was spreading all over the country. In the month of January, 1858 A. D., the British army under the command of Sir Hugh Rose, started marching to Jhansi and in March besieged the city. On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1858 A. D., General Hugh Rose demanded Rani Lakshmi Bai to surrender the city and warned that if she refused, the city would be destroyed. The Queen of Jhansi refused and declared that "We fight for freedom. In the words of Lord Krishna, if we are victorious, then we will enjoy the fruits of victory, if defeated and killed in the battle field, we will surely be held by eternal glory and salvation". On 24<sup>th</sup> March, 1858 A. D., the British army bombarded Jhansi (Wikipedia, n. d. ). Rani Lakshmi Bai had a historic war with the British. She did not lose courage in front of the huge British army. The Queen tied her son firmly behind her back and came forward to counter the enemies. She took the reins of the horse in the mouth and attacked the enemy army with the sword with both hands. She cut the teeth of the English army. The struggle continued for about two weeks. The British army captured the city after two weeks of struggle. At last, Rani Lakshmi Bai with her adopted son, Damodar



Rao, succeed to escape from the fort on her horse, named Badal, from the British army. But her horse died. She escaped from Jhansi and reached Kalpi where she met Tantya Tope.

Rani Lakshmi Bai formed a joint army with the help of Tantya Tope. These combined forces captured the fort of Gwalior with the help of rebel soldiers of Gwalior (Singh, 2014). On 16<sup>th</sup> June, 1858 A. D., the British army also attacked there. Rani Lakshmi Bai fought bravely with the British army. A fierce battle ensued but eventually the Jhansi army was defeated. The Queen's horse ran to take them to a safe place, but due to coming in front of a rainy stream, the Queen had to stay. Her horse was killed. The Queen was shot in the ribs. In this battle, she also felt that this was the last battle of her life. She understood the situation and continued to fight with valor. But the Queen of Jhansi was badly injured and she fell from the horse. She was wearing a man's dress so the English could not recognize him and left the queen in the battlefield. Lastly, Rani Lakshmi Bai ordered her sepoy that after her death, her dead body should also not be touched by the English. Her body started to sag. The Queen breathed her last after drinking Ganga water at the hands of Baba Ganga Das. At the same time, placing her dead body on the pyre of grass, the Queen was cremated by Ganga Das and other Saints. In this way, at the age twenty-nine, the great and brave warrior queen of Jhansi was martyred while fighting with the British army on 18<sup>th</sup> June, 1858 A. D. at Kotah-ki- Serai near Gwalior (Britannica, 2020).

At the same time, Maharani Lakshmi bai had neither a large army nor a very large kingdom to fight with the English, but the courage that Rani Lakshmi Bai showed in this freedom struggle is truly praiseworthy. Her bravery has also been praised by her enemies. India's head will always be elevated with pride due to such adventures. She is a symbol of bravery, patriotism and respect. Along with this, Maharani Lakshmi bai is an inspiration not only for the women of India but also for the women of the world. The Poetess Subhadra Kumari Chauhan described the heroic stories of the Queen of Jhansi in this way:

*"Dur Firangi Ko Karne Ki, Sabne Man Me Thani Thi  
Chamak Uthi San Santawan Me, Wo Talwar Purani Thi  
Bundele Harbolo Ke Muh, Humne Suni Kahani Thi  
Khub Ladi Mardani Woh To, Jhansi Wali Rani Thi"*



## Conclusion

We can say that Maharani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi is a shining example of patriotism and national pride. The name of Rani Lakshmi Bai is considered to be paramount among the warriors who sacrificed their lives in the battle field against the English. She was a heroine in the First Independence struggle of 1857 to raise voice against the British rule and got martyred in the battlefield while fighting with the British army. But while surviving, she did not let the English to occupy their kingdom, Jhansi. General Hugh Rose has rightly said that "Rani Lakshmi Bai was remarkable for her beauty, ingenuity and tenacity and was also the most dangerous of the rebel leaders". The Queen of Jhansi proved that women of India are second to none to protect their rights and freedom of the country. Her courage and valor fueled a renewed vigor in her army. She bravely responded to the British attack and received the gallantry while fighting.

Rani Lakshmi Bai was the ideal heroine in real sense. She not only honored the women of India but also the world and became immortal in history. Her life is a unique saga of sacrifice, immortal patriotism and full of heroic qualities in itself. She is a symbol of bravery, patriotism and respect. Her name and life are written in golden letters in the history of India. Her sacrifice for the independence of the country will always be immortal in Indian history. Rani Lakshmi Bai's tomb is situated in Phool Bagh near Gwalior. This tomb, situated in Phool Bagh, reminds us of the heroic saga of this great woman warrior of India. We should all be proud of the valor, bravery and sacrifice of Maharani Lakshmi Bai.

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