

CORPORATE OFFICE

Delhi Office

706 Ground Floor Dr. Mukherjee
Nagar Near Batra Cinema Delhi -
110009

Noida Office

Basement C-32 Noida Sector-2
Uttar Pradesh 201301



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RANI CHENNAMMA

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "RANI CHENNAMMA". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "HISTORY & CULTURE" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Several social groups across the country recently organised a countrywide campaign called Naano Rani Chennamma (I am Rani Chennamma, too) to remember Rani Chennamma's 200-year resistance against the British East India Company.

The Campaign hopes to honour Chennamma's memory by demonstrating that women can be trailblazers in the fight for dignity and justice.

ABOUT RANI CHENNAMMA

- Queen Chennamma, born on October 23rd, 1778, in the village of **Kagati (present-day Karnataka)**, emerged from a quiet hamlet to become a pivotal figure in Indian history. **Married at a young age to Raja Mallasarja**, the ruler of Kittur, she ascended to the position of queen consort upon his demise in 1816. However, the spectre of misfortune loomed large as their son and heir, Shivalingarudra Sarja, ascended the throne only to be overcome by illness shortly thereafter.
- Unwilling to witness the demise of her kingdom without a legitimate successor, **Shivalingarudra adopted a young boy named Shivalingappa, ensuring the continuation of the Kittur lineage**. This act, however, ignited a conflict with the British East India Company. The Company, driven by the exploitative "**Doctrine of Lapse**," refused to recognize the adoption as a valid claim to the throne. This doctrine, a cornerstone of their expansionist agenda, asserted the right to annex any princely state lacking a natural heir, effectively extinguishing their independence and erasing their legacies.
- Undeterred by the Company's machinations and determined to protect her adopted son and her kingdom's sovereignty, Queen Chennamma found herself facing a formidable adversary. In October 1824, the **British official John Thackeray launched an attack on Kittur**, marking the beginning of a significant struggle against colonial overreach. Queen Chennamma, resolute in her defiance, would go on to lead a valiant resistance against the British, etching her name in the annals of Indian history as a symbol of courage and resistance.

RANI CHENNAMMA: A LEGACY OF RESISTANCE

- In **1824**, the tranquillity of the erstwhile princely state of Kittur in Karnataka was shattered by the arrival of a formidable force – a **British army of 20,000 soldiers**. This incursion sparked a defiant response from Rani Chennamma, a woman of unwavering courage and strategic brilliance.
- Rani Chennamma, a skilled leader adept in martial arts and military tactics, refused to surrender her homeland. She bravely confronted the British, even taking decisive action to defend her kingdom. Though the exact details of her actions are subject to ongoing historical research, her spirit of resistance is undeniable.
- The ensuing conflict, though short-lived due to the British's superior firepower, **showcased Rani Chennamma's remarkable leadership and the resilience of the Kittur people**. They employed **guerrilla warfare tactics**, demonstrating their unwavering determination in the face of overwhelming odds.
- Rani Chennamma's capture and imprisonment did not extinguish the flame of resistance she had ignited. Her courage and defiance inspired countless others to challenge British rule, making her a potent symbol of anti-colonial struggle.

A LEGACY ENDURING IN SONG AND MEMORY:

- In recognition of her unwavering spirit, the Indian government rightfully honoured Rani Chennamma by issuing a **commemorative postage stamp in 2007**. Her legacy continues to resonate deeply within the hearts and minds of the people, particularly through the vibrant folk art form of Lavani.
- While originating in Maharashtra, **Lavani has found a prominent place in certain parts of Karnataka**. These song-and-dance performances, often accompanied by the rhythmic beats of the dholki, **narrate the story of Rani Chennamma**, keeping her memory alive for generations to come. Through these renditions, she is celebrated not just as a ruler but as a protector and guardian of her people.
- Rani Chennamma's story serves as a powerful testament to the human spirit's ability to resist oppression and fight for freedom. Her legacy continues to inspire generations to stand up for their rights and fight for a just and equitable world.

ABOUT DOCTRINE OF LAPSE

- In the 19th century, the British East India Company implemented the contentious Doctrine of Lapse. Introduced by **Lord Dalhousie**, the doctrine dictated that if a ruler of a princely state died without a natural heir, the territory would be annexed by the Company.
- This policy **aimed to increase British control by exploiting the absence of a direct successor**. It faced criticism for its disregard of local traditions and customs, leading to tensions

and conflicts with affected states. The Doctrine of Lapse played a significant role in shaping the dynamics of British rule in India during that period.

PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q1. With reference to the Doctrine of Lapse, consider the following statements:

1. It was a policy for annexing princely states without a natural heir.
2. Lord Cornwallis introduced the Doctrine of Lapse.
3. John Thackeray was associated with the implementation of the Doctrine of Lapse in Kittur.

How many of the statements above are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

ANSWER: B

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q1. Explain the Doctrine of Lapse and its implications on the Indian princely states during the independence movement.



Himanshu Mishra