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## Abhishek Sharma Gaur

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# Top 10 Queens in Indian history and thier stories



Abhishek Sharma Gaur May 19, 2019 · 13 min read

— — By ASG, Abhishek Sharma Gaur

The status of women in ancient India was low despite the fact that they were considered “goddess” and “Shakti (power)”. Most of the times she had to give up her individuality and she was offered minimum roles in the society. She was protected by her father in her youth, by her husband after her marriage and then by her son in her old age. Several centuries ago, the ruling dynasties mostly favored males as successors to the throne and women were consigned to the backstage work. However, there were some daring aberrant queens who became rulers and succeeded equally as their male counterparts. Here are the top ten queens from India who didn’t submit in the face of extreme challenges.

10:- Meera Bai (1498 CE — 1546CE)

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Meera Bai

Meera Bai was a great follower of Lord Krishna. Despite facing criticism and aversion from her own family, she lived an ideal saintly life and composed many devotional bhajans (devotional songs). Because of that Mira's father married her to Prince Bhoj Raj (eldest son of Rana Sanga of Chittor), at an early age. Meera unwillingly married Bhoj Raj, in 1516. And even after her marriage, Meera continued her worship for Lord Krishna. However, Bhoj Raj died after some time in 1516. And Meera's father in law, Rana Sanga, saw her husband's death as a way to get rid of her. He commanded her to commit Sati (a custom where a widow immolated herself on her husband's pyre). However she, with the

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her. They restricted her movements and tried to make her life as difficult as possible. Yet in the face of all these trials and tribulation, she remained disengaged from her physical suffering. There was nothing that could bother her inner connection to Lord Krishna. It is said that twice her family tried to kill her, once through a venomous snake and once through a poisonous drink. On both instants, it is said that Mirabai got protected by the Grace of Sri Krishna, came to no ill harm. Lastly, she escaped to the holy city of Brindaban where she was free to worship Krishna to her heart's content.

9 :- Samyukta( around 1150's — 1192)



Samyukta

Samyukta was the daughter of Raja Jaichand, the King of Kannauj. She became the wife of Prithviraj Chauhan, the Rajput King of the Chauhan clan, who ruled his twin capitals of Delhi and Ajmer. Various folklore concerning Prithviraj and Samyukta are still popular in India.

One such story is about her Swayamvara (a Hindu ceremony where a bride selects a groom from a number of suitors who assemble at the invitation of her guardian). Somehow her father got wind of their affair and resolved to have her safely wed at an early date. He arranged a Swayamvara and invited many princes of high rank and heritage, but purposely not invited Prithviraj. To add an insult to injury, Jaichand had a statue of Prithviraj made and placed at the entrance of the venue, thus mimicking Prithviraj as a doorman. Prithviraj came to hear of this. He made his plans and revealed them to his beloved, Samyukta. On the day of the ritual, Samyukta emerged from an inner chamber, entered the venue of the Swayamvara, and walked straight down the hall past the assembled

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behind the statue in the form of a doorman, emerged; put Sanyogita upon his horse and the two fled.

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### 8:- Rani Durgavati of Gondwana(1524–1564)

Rani Durgavati Maravi was born in the family of Rajput Emperor Keerat Rai. In 1542, she was wedded to Dalpat Shah, the eldest son of Sangram Shah, king of Gond Dynasty. After the death of her husband in 1550, she became the emperor of Gond's regime. With the guidance of some chief officers, she ran the dynasty successfully. But the prosperity of Rani Durgavati's state attracted Mughal General, Khwaja Abdul Majid Asaf Khan and he wanted to invade Rani's state. When Rani heard about this she decided to protect her kingdom with all her might. Although her Diwan Beohar Adhar Simha pointed out the power of Mughal forces. Still, Rani affirmed that it was better to die respectfully than to live a life disgracefully. Using her wits to fight a defensive battle, she went to Narrai — situated between a hilly range on one side and two rivers, river Gaur and river Narmada on the other side. It was an uneven battle with trained soldiers and modern weapons in abundance on one side and a few untrained soldiers with old weapons on the other side. Adding to the misery, her Faujdar (Army head) Arjun Das was killed during the battle; at this moment, Rani decided to lead the defense herself. And as the enemy entered the valley, soldiers of Rani attacked them from both sides. She lost some men but Rani won that battle ultimately.

### 7:- Rani Padmini(-1303)



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Rani Padmini

Rani Padmini was the queen of Rawal Ratan Singh, King of Chittor. The tale of Rani Padmini of Chittor is a legendary tale of courage, sacrifice, tragedy, and deceit. How on the verge of dishonor she preferred death over disrespect.

Her extraordinary beauty was legendary and articulated of in kingdoms and courts across the whole country. Raghav Chetan was a musician who was frequent to the court. He got enchanted by the beauty of Rani Padmini. When the king learned of this, he expelled Raghav Chetan from his kingdom but before doing so, he humiliated him by blackening his face and making him ride a donkey. Raghav Chetan could not digest this insult and swore vengeance. On his way to Delhi, Raghav made his way to a forest which Khilji(emperor of Delhi Sultanate) used to come frequently for hunting. Raghav then told the Khilji about Rani Padmini and Khilji was convinced that the queen deserved to be in his harem. When Khilji reached Chittor, he was shocked to see the fort was massively guarded. But as he was desperate to have a glimpse of the queen and he requested the king to allow him a glimpse of the queen who he considered his sister. The king allowed Khilji to see the reflection of Padmini in the mirror through this was held a disgraceful tradition as women were to be veiled at all times. When Khilji moved his way to the palace to see Rani Padmini, he made a mark of the fort's defenses. After seeing Padmini, as Khilji being escorted out by the king, he grabbed his chance and had the king arrested; and asked for Padmini in exchange for the king. The king's generals and Rani made a wise move and decided to play along. They sent word that Rani Padmini would be handed over in the morning. In the morning, 150 palanquins descended upon Khillji's camp but out-jumped not the queen or her maids but soldiers who freed the king and headed back towards the

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Rajput kingdoms of India, when facing defeat at the hands of an enemy) so that she won't lose her pride in enemy's hand.

## 6:- Kitturu Rani Chennamma

Rani Chennamma was the first woman to fight for independence with the British for India. Chennamma stood all alone with a vigorous blazing eye against the British Empire. Rani Chennamma did not succeed in knocking them away, but she did inspire many women to rise against the British rule.

After her son died in 1824, she adopted Shivalingappa and made him successor to the throne. But the British government imposed the Doctrine of Lapse policy on her states. According to which native rulers were not allowed to adopt a child if they had no children of their own. Their territory set as part of the British Empire automatically. Thus, by the law, the state of Kittur came under the administration of British India. Rani Chennamma sent a letter to Mountstuart Elphinstone, Lieutenant-Governor of the Bombay Presidency appealing the circumstances of Kittur, but her request was turned down, and war broke out. Rani Chennamma and the local people strongly resisted British high-handedness. In 1824 the first battle that occurred, hundreds of British soldiers were killed along with their collector Thackeray. The embarrassment of loss at the hands of a small ruler was too much for the British to swallow. Thus, they brought in bigger armies from Mysore and Sholapur and surrounded Kittur. For 12 days, the magnificent Queen and her soldiers protected their fort, but as is the common trait, traitors lurked in and mixed mud and dung in the gunpowder in the canons. Henceforth, the Rani got defeated and imprisoned in Bailhongal Fort, where she died on 21 February 1829.

## 5: — Maharani Tarabai (1675–1761)

As the eminent historian Jadunath Sarkar has noted about her, 'In that awful crisis her character and strength saved the nation'. Even the Mughal historian Khafi Khan has appreciated her. According to him, 'She was the only lady capable of taking over six provinces of the Mughal Empire, a great feat indeed!'

Rani Tarabai was the wife of the Rajaram, son of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. After the death of her husband, Raja Ram Maharaj in 1700; Tara Bai became the default head of government. She crowned her son Shivaji II and became his regent. Rani Tarabai is

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vivacious lady who did not waste time or tears on the collapse of the new Maratha capital Satara within a month of her husband's death. In contrast, she infused vigor in her people and organized a tough opposition to Aurangzeb (most powerful king of India at that time). Tarabai showed wonderful powers of organization and motivated the Marathas with a sense of commitment to their national cause. Aurangzeb, therefore, commanded his forces for the conquest of Panhala and Vishalgarh, the two strong citadels which became the seats of the Maratha court. The Marathas constantly wavered around the emperor's camp and carried away all that they could. The emperor seized several Maratha forts but lost them one by one. The victory of Maratha war of independence was in no small measure due to the indomitable personality of the Maratha Queen. Under the administration of Rani Tarabai, the Maratha power grew stronger and stronger with the result that Aurangzeb was forced to go back by 1705.

#### 4:- Rani Rudramma Devi(1259–1289 A.D.)

Rani Rudrama Devi the daughter of Ganapathideva, King Kakatiya dynasty in the Deccan Plateau. She succeeded her father when she was barely 14 years old. Born as Rudramba (Rudra-Amba) to King Ganapathideva, who ruled at Orugallu, her father formally designated her as a son through the ancient "Putrika Ceremony and gave her the male name of Rudradeva. She was brought up as a male child and she learned all the martial arts and traits of administration of the kingdom.

She succeeded her father after his death in 1262, wore male attire and sat on the throne; and with an iron-hand ruled the kingdom keeping the enemies at a distance. Her rulership was resented by some nobles, also, Veera Bhadra (her husband) was jealous of Rudrama Devi ruling the land. She also defeated Hariharadeva, her cousin brother and valiantly proved that she was the true successor to her father's throne to carry on the legacy of the Kakatiya dynasty. Pandyas from the south Indian peninsula were also a great threat but she kept them at bay with great vigor. Not only that she crossed the Godavari chasing the Yadav ruler right into his territories and forced him to make peace. The King had to pay a great amount of ransom to make peace with the queen. Literally, she was Lord Shiva — the cosmic dancer and also God of the battleship in woman form (hence the name Rudra Devi). Rani Rudramma Devi became such a brave, fierce warrior in a male-ruled world, the very mention of her name would make her adversaries shiver.

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### 3:- Akka devi

The warrior queen who defeated the Portuguese. The Chowtas followed a matrilineal system by which Tirumala Raya, Abbakka's uncle, crowned her the queen of Ullal. The Portuguese made several attempts to capture Ullal as it was strategically placed. The first attack by the Portuguese in South Kanara coast was in 1525 when they demolished the Mangalore port. Rani Abbakka was alerted by the event and started equipping herself to protect her kingdom. The Portuguese, clearly agitated by Abbakka's tactics, demanded that she pay them tribute however Abbakka refused to yield. In 1555, the Portuguese sent Admiral Dom Álvaro da Silveira to confront her after she denied to pay them tribute. In the battle that followed, Rani Abbakka succeeded to hold her own and repelled the attack successfully. In 1568, João Peixoto, a Portuguese general and a fleet of soldiers were sent by the Portuguese Viceroy António Noronha to attack Ullal. They succeeded in seizing the city of Ullal and also entered the royal court. Abbakka Rani, however, escaped and took shelter in a mosque. The very night, she gathered around 200 of her soldiers and ascended an attack on the Portuguese. In the battle that happened, General Peixoto was killed, seventy Portuguese veterans were taken prisoners and many of the Portuguese ran away. In further attacks, Abbakka Rani and her helpers killed Admiral Mascarenhas and the Portuguese were also compelled to vacate the Mangalore fort.

### 2:- Devi Ahilya (1725–1795)

Ahilyabai Holkar is fondly remembered as a remarkable, saintly and brave woman. She ruled the kingdom of Indore (which was then part of the extended Maratha Empire) for several decades. Her rule is recognized as a golden age in Indore's history.

Maharani Ahilya Bai Holkar was the wife of Khanderao Holkar. In 1754, Ahilya Bai's husband died during the battle of kumbher and twelve years after that in 1766, her father-in-law Maharaja Malha-rao-holkar died in Alampur. Hence, Ahilyabai resumed control of the kingdom's affairs by 1767. Due to her effective management and administration soon

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Empire, Peshwa Raghoba, was urged by one of Ahilyabai's own ministers to seize the excess wealth of Indore. Ahilyabai showed him that under the agreements that allowed the wealth of the treasury was supposed to be for the well-being of her citizens or for charitable purposes.

The Peshwa was angered that she defied him, and frightened her into the military action. She, in turn, summoned him to come and meet her on the battlefield. She assembled a small force, which included many women, and set out to fight. A note was sent to the Peshwa which conveyed the following message: "Now I will show you how weak I am. If I lose fighting against men I will have lost nothing. But if you lose against women then you will be in the soup! And remember, that is exactly what will happen." The Peshwa had a conversion of heart. He said, "You have misunderstood. I do not come to fight, but to mourn your son's death." He ended up staying as Ahilyabai's visitor for a month and was thoroughly dazzled at the skill with which she ruled.

### 1: — Rani Lakshmi Bai



Rani Lakshmi Bai

Rani Lakshmi Bai was one of the front figures of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and she became a symbol of resistance to the British Raj. She motivated many generations of

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encouraging. She amazed the British by showing remarkable fighting spirit and valor in battles fought at Jhansi, then Kalpi and lastly at Gwalior. Such an extraordinary lady, who tied her son on her back while fighting the battle, will not be found in the history of the world.

One of the many stories of her bravery is her fight with Sir Hugh Rose.

Sir Hugh Rose was selected by the British to capture Rani Lakshmibai, alive. On 20th March 1858, Sir Huges camped with his army 3 miles away from Jhansi and conveyed a message to her that she should surrender; but rather than surrendering, she stood on the wall of her fort forcing her army to fight the British. Even after 3 days of continuous firing, the fort of Jhansi could not be attacked. But eventually, on 3rd April, the army of Sir Hugh Rose entered Jhansi.

At that point, Rani Lakshmibai decided to join Peshawar by breaking the block of the enemy. In the night, with her troupe of trusted 200 cavalries, she tied her 12-year-old son Damodar to her back and raising the slogan of 'Jai Shankar' left her fort. She jumped on her horse Badal from the fort and escaped in the night with her son, surrounded by guards.

*Honourable Mentions :*

1. *RAZIA SULTAN*, the first female Muslim ruler of the subcontinent.

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