



## Rani Chennamma

**For Prelims:** Rani Chennamma, [British East India Company](#), Naanoo Rani Chennamma, [Doctrine of Lapse](#).

**For Mains:** Rani Chennamma, The Freedom Struggle- its various stages and important contributors/contributions from different parts of the country.

[Source: IE](#)

### Why in News?

Commemorating 200 years of Rani Chennamma's rebellion against the [British East India Company](#), several social groups across India have organised a national campaign, **Naanoo Rani Chennamma (I am Rani Chennamma too)** on 21st February.

- The Campaign is trying to invoke Chennamma's memory to show that women can be the vanguards of safeguarding dignity and justice. Rani Chennamma's bravery is an inspiration to the women of the country.
- Her stride and quick thinking to safeguard her homeland can be seen as a testament to her commitment and dedication to protecting her kingdom.



## Who was Rani Chennamma?

### ▪ About:

- Chennamma was born on 23rd October 1778, in Kagati, a small village in present-day Belagavi district in Karnataka.
- At the age of 15, she married Raja Mallasarja of Kittur, who ruled the province until 1816.
- After Mallasarja's death in 1816, his eldest son, Shivalingarudra Sarja, ascended the throne. But it wasn't long before Shivalingarudra's health started deteriorating.
- Kittur needed an **heir apparent to survive**. However, Shivalingarudra had no natural heir and Chennamma too had lost her son.
- Before his death in 1824, Shivalingarudra adopted a child, **Shivalingappa**, as the successor. However, the **British East India Company** refused to recognise Shivalingappa as the successor of the kingdom under the **'Doctrine of Lapse'**.
  - **Under the doctrine**, any princely state without a natural heir would collapse and would be annexed by the Company.
- **John Thackery, the British official** at Dharwad, launched an attack on **Kittur in October 1824**.

### ▪ Battle Against British:

- In 1824, a fleet of 20,000 British soldiers was positioned on the foothills of the Kittur fort as they attempted to invade the former princely state of Karnataka.
- But Rani Chennamma retaliated and killed a British official to protect and safeguard her homeland.
- Trained in martial arts and military tactics, she was a **formidable leader**.
- She led her army into battle, **employing guerrilla warfare tactics to surprise the British forces**.
  - The conflict lasted several days, but ultimately, the British prevailed due to their superior firepower.

### ▪ Legacy:

- Despite her capture and imprisonment in Bailhongal Fort (Belagavi, Karnataka), Rani Chennamma's spirit remained unbroken.
- Her rebellion inspired countless others to stand up against British rule. She became a symbol of courage and defiance.
- In 2007, the Indian government honoured her by **issuing a postage stamp in her name**.
- Several Kannada **lavanis or folk songs** are recited that fondly remember Rani Chennamma as a protector and guardian.
  - Lavani is a vibrant and expressive folk art form that has its roots in the cultural heritage of Maharashtra, but it has also found a place in certain parts of Karnataka. The word **"Lavani" is derived from the Marathi term "lavanya,"** which means beauty.
  - Lavani is a combination of traditional song and dance, performed to the rhythmic beats of the Dholki, a percussion instrument.

## What is the Doctrine of Lapse?

- It was an annexation **policy followed widely by Lord Dalhousie** when he was India's **Governor-General from 1848 to 1856**.
- According to this, any princely state that was under the direct or indirect control of the East India Company where the ruler did not have a legal male heir would be annexed by the company.
  - As per this, any adopted son of the Indian ruler could not be proclaimed as heir to the kingdom.
- By applying the doctrine of lapse, **Dalhousie annexed the States of:**
  - Satara (1848 A.D.), Jaitpur, and Sambalpur (1849 A.D.), Baghat (1850 A.D.), Udaipur (1852 A.D.), Jhansi (1853 A.D.), and Nagpur (1854 A.D.).

## Conclusion

- The Rebellion of Kittur Rani Chennamma remains a significant chapter in India's struggle for freedom. Her unwavering leadership and resilience serve as a reminder that even in the face of

daunting challenges, courage can prevail.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### Prelims

**Q. What was/were the object/objects of Queen Victoria's Proclamation (1858)? (2014)**

1. To disclaim any intention to annex Indian States
2. To place the Indian administration under the British Crown
3. To regulate East India Company's trade with India

**Select the correct answer using the code given below:**

**(a)** 1 and 2 only

**(b)** 2 only

**(c)** 1 and 3 only

**(d)** 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (a)**

- Owing to policies like the Doctrine of Lapse of British East India Company that were aimed to annex Princely States and the Revolt of 1857, many influential Princely States such as Awadh, Jhansi and Nagpur and influential landlords like Kunwar Singh, saw British policies as an intrusion into their independence. Thus, to allay the fears of Princely States and to break the support group (i.e., dissatisfied Princely Rulers) of rebel sepoys - 1858 proclamation clarified the British position in relation to the Princely States. The proclamation denied any intention to annex Indian States. **Hence, 1 is correct.**
- The proclamation of 1858 abolished the rule of the East India Company and placed the Indian administration under the British Crown. **Hence, 2 is correct.**

### Mains

**Q.** Defying the barriers of age, gender and religion, the Indian women became the torch bearer during the struggle for freedom in India. Discuss. **(2013)**