



### **JHANSI LAKSHMIBAI**

If we have to name one freedom fighter who was an epitome of courage and bravery then it must be Rani Lakshmi Bai. She was a leading warrior who left an indelible mark on the history of Indian freedom movement. Rani Lakshmi Bai was an inspiration for following women freedom fighters. She successfully redefined the role of women in Indian society. A symbol of generosity, patriotism, resistance, perseverance and self-respect, Rani Lakshmi Bai sacrificed her life on the altar of Indian freedom struggle. British rulers feared her and Indians revered her valour. She was also known as 'Rani Lakshmi Bai or Rani of Jhansi'.

Rani Lakshmi Bai was born on November 19, 1828 in a high class Brahmin family. Her initial name was Manikarnika or Manu as her family members affectionately used to call her. Along with her formal education, she also took training in adventurous skills like horse riding, fencing and shooting. At the age of 16, she got married to the Maharaja of Jhansi, Raja Gangadhar Rao. Rani Lakshmi Bai gave birth to a child who unfortunately did not survive for long. Soon, Raja Gangadhar Rao fell sick and they decided to adopt Damodar Rao as their son. But the king did not survive for long and died on November 21, 1853. It shows the courage of Rani that she survived so many deaths at such a young age. Yet, she kept going and gradually took over all the responsibilities.

As soon as the Raja Gangadhar Rao died, the British Governor General Lord Dalhousie planned to take over Jhansi on the pretext that it did not have any legal heir. Damodar Rao, the adopted son was not considered as the legal heir of Jhansi and that set the ball rolling. Rani was asked to leave the fort and settle somewhere else. Rani Lakshmi Bai refused to surrender to British and called for an armed forces battle. She formed an army that had men warrior as well as women who were provided military training. During the battle in March 1858, she fought bravely for the Jhansi but finally British prevailed. She moved to Gwalior and Kalpi where she met Tantya Tope. But her battle did not last long and she lost her life in the battle of Gwalior. She breathed her last on June 18, 1858. The story of Rani Lakshmi Bai inspired generations of freedom fighters.

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