

MUKHWINDER KAUR<sup>1</sup>**Mother of Nations and Kali's Daughters: An Empirical Study on Amazon Dahomey Warriors and Indian Queen Warriors****Nemzetek anyja és Kali lányai: empirikus tanulmány a dahomey-i amazon harcosokról és az indiai királynői harcosokról****Abstract**

*English Women has have played a pivotal role during freedom struggle in every nation. Somewhere In India they were named as Kali's Daughters and on the side of the world they were strongly addressed as Mother of Nations. Be it west or east women has their equally important role to play. This paper deals with the participation of women as documented in history, and the women forces which were active during the freedom struggle in India and Africa. How their kingdoms were annexed and how they never gave up but sacrificed their lives for their nation. The paper also answers the modern day's dilemma in defense forces, if the women-female soldiers are fit enough to actively participate in combat positions? The historical perspective serves this answer.*

*Keywords: India, Africa, Women, Warriors*

**Absztrakt**

*A nők minden nemzet függetlenségi háborúi során központi szerepet játszottak. Indiában Kali Lányainak hívták őket és a Nemzet Anyjaiként tekintettek rájuk. A tanulmány a nők történelemben feljegyzett szerepével foglalkozik és azokat a női katonákat mutatja be, akik India és Afrika szabadságharcaiban aktív szerepet játszottak. A tanulmány azt a kérdést is megválaszolja, hogy a női katonák felkészültek-e harcoló beosztásokban való szolgálatra. A történelmi kitétkintés megadja erre a kérdésre a választ.*

*Kulcsszavak: India, Afrika, nők, harcosok*

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The western colonisation has empowered the women of the East to stand for what is right. It's not that Westerners stood for women, but the passion of freedom has empowered women in the 18<sup>th</sup> century while Western nations were discovering the east. When the French figured that the British East India Company would not let them flourish in India they moved to South African nations and tried the same ideology of the British East India Company in Africa.



*Picture 1.: In the picture the Dahomey warriors are gathered in the town. This was the postage stamp of France*

While in India the East India Company denied recognition to the queen Rani Laxmi Bai as her regent and annexed the kingdom. Undeterred Rani Laxmi Bai took the reins of government, recognised her forces and fought the colonialists. The queen lost her family, her kingdom and died in battle, but she also became a legendary figure in Indian History.<sup>1</sup> Khoob Ladi Mardani wo to Jhansi wali rani thi (She fought till her last breath and she was the queen of Jhansi).

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*Picture 2.: The picture of Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi*

The motto has been used by various leaders during their nations freedom movements. For instance "Do or Die" by Subhash Chandra Bose during India's freedom movement became famous, too. But Conquer or Die contains an intense motivation amongst the warriors in 18th century living for one dream that is to serve their king with complete dedication and fearlessness. The Kingdom of Dahomey had a force comprising of 4000 audacious women warriors and has defeated the French military many times in 18<sup>th</sup> century. "Women warriors", why the term need to be defined in this way? In fact Warrior is a gender-neutral and the human being imbibe those qualities of warrior earns it.

For the better part of 200 years, thousands of female soldiers fought and died to expand the borders of their West African kingdom. Even their conquerors, the French, acknowledged their "prodigious bravery."<sup>2</sup> another term to revise upon why the soldiers are defined as women soldiers whereas there is no such term called male soldiers as the society in 18<sup>th</sup> century was more open to accept warrior as gender free and use to honour every warrior regardless if male or female. In this paper the author will discuss female warriors who served their nation in 18<sup>th</sup> century. The analyses of African and Asian warriors will be portrayed in this paper. The Dahomey warriors and India's Queen of Jhansi's Laxmi Bai has already casted a dye which proves that women as soldiers are stable for the combat roles. This is the sixty four thousand dollars question according to the modern military leaders if women could fit in the combat positions. The history holds various answers and the modern technology have made it easier to perform together in the area of command and action.

## THE MOTHERS OF AFRICA

Greek Myths informed the ancients that long before raiding from their fortresses in the Caucasus Mountains, Amazons were centred in Africa. They were depicted as clad in red leather Armor with snakeskin boots and shields. The most ancient contracts mention that the Amazons practices animal husbandry, but not horticulture. Herodotus observed the remnants of a culture of women warriors in the sixth century B.C. when he travelled along the coast of North Africa. The following account from his journal, through clearly recorded through the eyes of a Greek, is noteworthy: *Next to the Machlyans, there are the Ausans, who share the lake with them. Every year they celebrate a festival in honour of Athena, the virginal goddess. The girls are divided in two groups and fight with one another, proving as they say, which ones were born of their nation. The maidens who die of their wounds are considered impure. Before ending the fight, they observe the following custom. The girls who conducted themselves with the greatest bravery and decorated with a Corinthian helmet, put on a chariot, and led all the way around the lake. The women's clothes and their shields with the image of Athena were copied by the Greeks from the Libyans through the Libyan images were clothes of leather. All the other things are the same.*<sup>3</sup>

Herodotus added that the women were wearing red leather armor. Morocco, Libya, Algeria and Tunisia are still known for red leather products. When the Greeks chronicler Strabo travelled into Libya about six hundred years after Herodotus, He found that *"there have been several generations of belligerent women in Libya."* He saw no women warriors, but he did note that women ruled the country from the urban areas along the coast. In the interiors, and particularly into the Atlas Mountains regions, the nomadic tribes were controlled by women who boasted a tradition of female warriors and armies.<sup>4</sup> French archaeologist Henri Loth, working in the early 1930s and again in the 1950s at Sefar in western Libya, discovered the "Fresco of the Twelve Steps". In addition to images of elephants, giraffes, and other animals, the ancient drawing portrayed a battle scene, which featured bow-carrying women thus adding some confirmation to the observations of Herodotus and Strabo.<sup>5</sup>

A classic account of Amazons is found in Homer's *"Iliad"*, his stirring epic of the Trojan wars, where he mentions them several times, but does not describe their arrival at Troy. Less well-known, a more complete account of Trojan Wars, Arctinus of Miletus's epic *"Aethiopsis"*, existed before the *"Iliad"*. Whereas Homer ended his tale with the death of Hector, Arctinus tells of the arrival of the Amazons at Troy led by their queen Penthesilea and accompanied by King Memnon and his armies from Ethiopia. The connection of Africa and women warriors in Arctinus fits with the reports of the ancient travellers.<sup>6</sup> An impressive series of Ethiopian warrior queens, queen regents and queen mothers, known as *kentaktes* (Greek: Candace), are only now appearing to the light of history through the on-going deciphering of the Merotic script. They controlled what is now Ethiopia, Sudan and parts of Egypt. One of the earliest references to the *kentaktes* comes from 322 B.C when Alexander the Great set his sight on the rich kingdom of Ethiopia. The presiding *kentaktes*, known in

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history as “Black Queen Candace of Ethiopia,” designed a battle plan to count Alexander’s advance. She placed her armies and waited on a war elephant for the Macedonian conqueror to appear for battle. Alexander approached the field from a low ridge, but when he saw the Black Queen’s army displayed in a brilliant military formation before him, he stopped. After studying the array of warriors waiting with such deadly precision and realizing that to challenge the *kentakes* could quite possibly be fatal, he turned his armies away from Ethiopia towards a successful campaign in Egypt.<sup>7</sup>

Much of the commentary on women in the military up to the present time and most particularly in relation to their ability to adapt and perform combat roles has been strongly influenced by socio-cultured perspectives flowing from an exclusively male oriented warrior framework or at least the assumptions underlying it. Moreover, until recently, much of the social and behavioral science-based evidence has been downplayed or ignored in favour of anecdotal evidence, personal opinion and/or uninformed conjecture. However, fundamental questions have been raised regarding expansion of women’s roles, which call for responses based on the evidence available today. Stated quite succinctly in a United States Heritage Foundation article, below are five such questions that permit the author to address issues revolving around the physical and mental suitability of women for combat operational roles, the impact of women on group cohesion and effectiveness, and public and personal attitudes toward women in combat.<sup>8</sup> These are:

1. Are women suited to the rigors of ground combat?
2. What are the potential consequences of women and men operating in intimate proximity away from home for extended periods of time?
3. What has been the experience of nations that have men and women in mixed combat units?
4. How do women serving in the Armed Forces feel about being assigned to combat units?
5. How will bearing and raising children affect a women’s readiness to deploy on short notice, as its frequently required of military units?<sup>9</sup>

Bras reliefs dated to about 170 B.C reveal *kentakes* Shenakdahkete dressed in armour and wielding a spear in battle. She did not rule as queen regent or queen mother, but as a fully independent ruler. Her husband was her consort. In bas-reliefs found in the ruins of building projects she commissioned, Shenakdahkete is portrayed alone as well as with her husband and son, who would inherit the throne by her passing. The following African queens were known to the Greco Roman world as the “Candaces”: Amanirenas, Amanishakhete, Nawidemak, and Malegereabar.<sup>10</sup> A hundred and fifty years after Alexander was repelled by the Black Queen, the Romans under Patronius, the Roman governor of Egypt in 30 B.C., tried to conquer Ethiopia, and again a *Kentakes* stopped them. Queen Amanirenas neutralized Patronius’s army, defeated his garrison at Cyrene, and drove the Roman legions northward. Not only did the Roman fail to take her country, Queen Amanirenas took parts of their, holding a tether attached to seven captives. The *Kentakes* of Ethiopia left many monuments to themselves. Amanishakhete, Nawidemak, and Malegereabar com-

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missioned numerous bas-reliefs in the ancient site at Nagaa, picturing them armed with one and two swords, battling lions, and subduing enemy war leaders.<sup>11</sup>

A medieval Arab writer, Magrizi, noted a corps of women lancers in the Beja tribe living between the Nile River and the Red Sea. D'Arnaud in 1840 found a battalion of spearwomen protecting the king of Behr on the Upper Nile and explorer Pigafetta, the women soldiers of the Monomotapa (modern Zimbabwe). Edward Lopez described a troop of women archers who served in the army of the King of Monomotapa. Deham saw the women of the Fellatah tribes fighting in battle with men. Henry Morton Stanley, in his famous search for Dr. Livingston, confronted a troop of riflemen fighting for King Mtesa of Uganda.<sup>12</sup> Feats of female military prowess are noted for the Lango of east central Africa as well as for the Mpororo, Latuka, Fanti, and Ubemba. Sir Richard Burton, travelling in Somalia in the nineteenth century, cited the women warriors and added, "*In muscular strength and endurance, the women of Somal are far superior to their lords.*"<sup>13</sup> Some African women warriors so impressed their people and sometimes their enemy, that they were considered immortal or in possession of supernatural powers. In A.D. 350 Mujaji became the first queen of the Lovedu through her fame as a sorceress and rainmaker. Armed with a spear she led her warriors in battle and was so effective as a warrior that the Lovedu thought her incapable of being killed. The rainmaker not only directed armies but also ruled as a Queen, possessed and accepted in ritual marriage the daughters of prominent tribal chieftains.<sup>14</sup>

The succession of warrior queens ended with madness occurred in the central African region of the Congo in the late 1500s and early 1600s. Queen Mussasa, leading troops that include a female battalion secured a kingdom along the Cunene River. Her daughter, Tembanduma, succeeded her in a revolt in which her mother was deposed. Queen Tembanduma's sanity disintegrated slowly. She once tried to convince her people to train all girls in martial arts and to grind boys into an ointment that would ensure immortality for females in battle. When her women rebelled, she changed her order to include only captured male children. In a battle she lost an eye and was terribly disfigured. A chronicler who saw her in action wrote, "*The host that attacked old Lattaku was led by a ferocious giantess with one eye.*" She died after being poisoned by a lover.<sup>15</sup> The most famous African women warrior of the seventeenth century was without a doubt, Zinga Mbandi. She was born in 1580 in west central Africa, Daughter of the *ngola*, King of Ndongo. Zinga Mbadi is first heard from in 1620 when on behalf of her brother, the *ngola*, she attempted to negotiate the independence of ndongo with the Portuguese governor. She demanded the release of her father, exiled by the Portuguese to the Kwanza Islands, and solicited their help in driving out the Imbangalas, who had recently occupied a portion of a territory claimed by Ndongo. Those observing her in these weighty negotiations were impressed by her energy and intelligence.<sup>16</sup>

A vignette from Zinga's first encounter with the Portuguese summarizes what people who dealt with her came to expect. When she ushers into the governor's reception room during her negotiations in Launda in 1620, she found Governor de Sousa seated on a large

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chair, while the attendants, she included, were left to stand. Without hesitation, she ordered a servant to his hands and knees and sat on him. Then, eye to eye with the governor, she introduced herself formally.<sup>17</sup>



Picture 3.: Queen Zinga in conversation with the Governor of Portuguese in 1620

Zinga's perception of the Portuguese gleaned from the intense hours of negotiation in La-unda convinced her of their hostile intentions, despite their claim of friendship and she responded by organizing a women's army attacking their outposts. Her women's bows, arrows and spears were no match for the weapons of the Portuguese soldiers, and she was defeated. However the Portuguese would face Zinga man more times.<sup>18</sup> Women held more power than men in Zinga's court. Loth observes: *"The women in the queen's retinue displayed military skills, strength and bravery; they learned to use weapons and went to war with the queen."*<sup>19</sup> Zinga was accompanied during these years by Captain Fuller and a company of sixty men whom the Dutch had placed under her command. Fuller describe her during a ritual sacrifice as dressed in men's clothing draped in animal pelts with a sheathed sword dangling from a loop at her neck. A battle axe hung from her belt and she held her bow and arrows in other. She rang these bells as she leapt *"according to the customs, now here, now there, as nimbly as the most active among her attendants."* She then pulled a white feather through the hole in her nose, a sign for war, and moved toward her victim. The Dutch captain wrote that she cut off the man's head and *"drank a great draught of his blood."* When she died at eighty one, her body was publicly displayed, dressed in her royal robes as the ngola of Ndongo, with her bow and arrows placed in her hands. As per her dying request, when her body was interred, she was re-costumed as a Catholic nun with the bow and arrows replaced by a crucifix and rosary.<sup>20</sup>

Twentieth-century wars of liberation proved a fertile ground for women warriors. They composed an integral part of the Algerian independence movement. The French captured, killed, and executed them as they did it with the male combatants. In the 1950's women comprised five per cent of the guerrillas who fought in the Mau Mau war to liberate Kenya

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from British control. This war was fought mainly by warriors of the Kikuyu men who resisted the presence of women as they had no women warriors tradition. But in the first years of war the women proved themselves sufficient and guerrilla leaders in 1953 agreed that, depending on military excellence, women could be promoted to the rank of colonel.<sup>21</sup> Wanjiru Nyarmaratu, a Mau Mau women fighter, joined the revolution as a teenager, initially carrying supplies to the male guerrilla's. She raised money and collected clothing, medicine and scrap metal for making weapons. In time, her expertise impressed the upper level leadership who allowed her to recruit fighters and dispatch them to the various regiments as they were required. As an acknowledgement of her excellence in the Mau Mau military efforts, she was appointed a judge of the Mau Mau court, which passed sentences, including the death penalty, on anti-Mau Mau crimes. Some of the executioners of the military court were females.

The African women warriors' tradition has flourished into modern times. When Dr. Hastings Banda founded the modern state of Malawi in 1964, he did so with the military support of a five thousand strong all women army warriors who were crucial in maintaining internal order and in guarding the dangerous border with Tanzania. Teuri Ropa Nhongo, also called "The Blood Spiller" led guerrilla fighters in the Zimbabwe liberation movement of the 1970s. Two days after she commanded a successful fight against a Rhodesian contingent, she gave birth to her daughter. As late as in 1987 in Uganda, Alice Lakwena inspired her Holy Spirit Movement to war in a popular uprising.<sup>22</sup>

## INDIA: KALI'S DAUGHTERS

India's varied topography, its high mountains, vast river systems, and lushy plains and jungles with their promise of endless plenty, has long been a magnet to nomadic invaders. Sometimes after 1200 B.C. Aryan invaders from north of the Black and Caspian Seas poured into India through the passes of the Hindu Kush Mountains and up the valley of the Indus River. They came as chariot-riding warrior pastoralists, led by a raja, or chief. Cattle husbandry was their passion. The animals served not only as the basis of their diet but also as money. Raiding a neighbour's herd was considered a worthwhile endeavour. Hence, warfare was rampant.<sup>23</sup> The raiders quickly conquered the native inhabitants and in time formed the basis of the classical civilization of India. It would be a world of men, but at the outset women had many prerogatives. They could influence choices made by their families concerning whom they would marry, and they participated in religious ceremonies and played important roles in social affairs. Further, they were allowed to remarry at the death of their husbands. These freedoms would be lost in the centuries to come but were witnessed and recorded by the first non-Indian travelers into the region.<sup>ibid</sup>

The Greek Chronicler Strabo, one of the earliest Westerner to penetrate India, noted that the noble women of the Indian courts were trained to handle weapons and routinely accompanied the male warrior's into battle. Such women at times rose to absolute control of their domains as observed in the states of Malabar, Travancor, and Attinga by early

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travelers. Centuries before the time of Christ, Alexander the Great swept through the Middle East at the head of his Macedonian cavalry conquering Egypt, Persia, and numerous lesser Kingdoms. In 326 B.C. he charged at the Western portals of India and was met at the Battle of Hydaspes by King Porus and his allies. One of the Indian Commanders on the field that day was the women warrior Queen Masaga, embodiment of Kali, the Indian goddess of war.<sup>24</sup>

Two hundred years before Alexander's attack on India, Queen Nayanika was ruler and military commander of the Satavahana Empire of the deccan region (South central India). The princes of the Deccan, particularly the royal houses of the capital city of Hyderabad, in a centuries old tradition, maintained a female guard of Urdu-Bengani, or "Camp followers" who possessed legendary courage and devotion.<sup>25</sup> In 300 B.C, princess Kumaradevi married Prince Changragupta and they ruled their two kingdoms as co-regents. Both were of the Kashatriya, or warrior caste, where the military / executive function of the warriors was instilled in women as thoroughly as in men. This training of women continued in the Maurayan Dynasty founded by Kumaradevi and Chandragupta. A long tradition of women warriors in the Kerala state is reflected in the weapons called Theyyan, which is still centred in the city of Malabar. And in southern India, the Nayars maintained a small female army, which in a history that spanned centuries, was never defeated in battle until it faced the guns of the British army.<sup>26</sup> The Rajput caste (Kashatriya), with its strong emphasis on marital women fielded armies that always comprised at least on all-women troop. The unique way they tied their saris enable them to ride in battle. As with the other castes and local populations mentioned, the women of the Rajput commonly studied martial arts and fencing.<sup>27</sup>

Queen Orrisa assumed regency when her son died in the late ninth century and immediately involved herself in military adventuring. Queen Kurmadevi of Mevad commanded her armies on the battlefield in the late twelfth century. Queen Didday of Kashmir ruled as full sovereign for twenty two years, and Queen Jawahirbai fought and died at the head of her army. South in Sri Lanka, Queen Sugala led her armies against the southern king, her nephew. When pressed by the Royal forces, she guided her forces into the mountains, where she built a number of forts. Sugala held out against the king's army for ten years and is remembered in Sri Lankan history as "Sugala the rebel queen fearless".<sup>28</sup> In the thirteenth century, Sultana Raziyya ruled in Delhi. A Persian historian who met her wrote, "*Sultana Raziyya was a great sovereign, and sagacious, just, beneficent the patron of learned, a dispenser of justice, the cherisher of her subjects, and of warlike talents.*"<sup>29</sup> When her father named her as his successor just before his death, rioting broke out in the city. Raziyya saw to the quelling of the riots, personally riding as a soldier to pacify her city. She tamed the potentially disruptive bureaucracy and nobles by creating and dispersing a variety of impressive-sounding royal appointments.<sup>30</sup> As she solidified her power she dressed like a man, wearing a turban, trousers, coat, and sword, and she appeared in public unveiled. The sultana believed this masculine image would strengthen her control of the empire. Both she

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and her husband died in battle in 1240 while leading her troops in a bid to suppress another rebellion.

In the fourteenth century, Queen Padmini, a Rajput of Chitor, responded impressively to the insult of a Muslim enemy commander. Her husband, Rama, was captured in a skirmish outside the walls of Chitor and taken to the mogul's camp. Queen Padmini soon received a letter in which the mogul contemptuously suggested that he would return her husband alive and unharmed if she would become his mistress. In answer, she led a hand-picked squad of fifty-nine men in a surprise attack against the mogul's camp, killed him, and returned her husband to safety.<sup>31</sup>

Chitor was a scene of many heroic exploits of India's women warriors. In one losing defensive fight, Queen Karnavatti, dressed in armor, defended the city for several months with the aid of a retinue of women warriors. When all seemed lost, she ordered a great fire built. As the flames leapt high, she walked into them, followed by her female captains. Queen Durgautti of Gurrah, Hindustan, like the aforementioned Queen Padmini, battled a mogul, Asaph Khan. He assailed her with an army of six thousand horsemen and twelve thousand infantrymen. She responded with fifteen hundred war elephant and a six thousand man cavalry. Armed with a lance and a bow and arrow, Queen Durgautti rode a war elephant in the front lines and crushed the khan's army.<sup>32</sup> Her domains were so rich that Asaph Khan recognized his army and with additional artillery success until he fell, which caused a general panic among the troops. They retreated, but the queen drove her war elephant at the Muslim army and railed her men for one more try.

As the two sides engaged, Durgautti was hit in the eye with an arrow. She broke the arrow shaft off, leaving the point in her eye, and continued her charge. When she was hit again, she demanded her elephant handler kill her for that she might be taken by the enemy. He refused, so she wrenched the dagger from him and killed herself.<sup>33</sup> Queen Nur Jehan faced the Mogul General Mohabat Khan in the early 1600s with more success than that experienced by the heroic Durgautti.<sup>34</sup> For twenty years she remained the de facto leader of Hindustan, ruling for Sultan Jehangir. All responsibility of empire fell to her, including the wars aimed at his empire by Mohabat Khan. The queen, mounting a strong offense, gathered her army and set out to intercept slowly approaching Mohabat. The chronicles portray her riding in the Hoodah of a war elephant with a bow and four large quivers of arrows tied to the inside. In the late 1600s and early 1700s, many noblewomen of the Maratha warrior caste led their armies against the British invaders. Queen Ahalyabai was among those Indian noblewomen observed by the British with their troops in the forefront of the fighting. The warrior Marathan princesses also served as notable stateswomen. An Anglo Indian officer of long standing once observed to English philosopher and economist John Stuart Mill that, if a Hindu principality was vigilantly and economically governed, if order was preserved without oppression, if cultivation was extending and people were prosperous, in three cases out of four, it was under a women's rule.<sup>35</sup>

The violence of the Indian revolution forced another Indian Queen, the Rani Lakshmbai of Jhansi, into action against the British. The noble princess born Manukarnika in 1830 and

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reared in a place in Benaras was educated not only in the basics of reading, writing, history, and mathematics, but also in riding, sword fighting, and archery. Married about 1842 to the Raja of Jhansi, the rani soon came to dominate the weak-willed raja. When their marriage failed to produce a son, the raja, with the rani's blessing adopted one and designated him heir apparent. The British did not honour the raja's wishes that his adopted son succeed him with the rani as regent and annexed Jhansi after the raja's death on November 21, 1853. Furious, the Rani Lakshmbai appealed the British decision. The exchanges between the rani and the empire were disrupted by the outbreak of the Indian revolution and for a time the rani was left alone to rule Jhansi. Her warrior nature emerged as she commanded her troops in a number of skirmishes against local groups she felt were infringing on her territory.<sup>36</sup>

In 1857, a massacre of British men, women, and children in Jhansi by Indian rebel fighters turned the anger of the British against Rani Lakshmbai. The British at Star Fort in Jhansi had surrendered, had laid down their arms, and were walking from the fort when the rebel leader ordered those shot. The government in London claimed they had appealed to Rani Lakshmbai to relieve the embattled garrison of British soldiers and military families and that she had instead given the rebels money, horses, and supplies. She replied that rebels were threatening to blow up her place if she did not pay their blackmail.<sup>37</sup>

As warfare became her prime preoccupation, she wore a costume of her own design that blended her image of herself as queen and warrior. She put away her costly saris and donned jodhpurs and a silk blouse with a low cut bodice. On her head was a red silk turban and her hands were heavy with gold and diamond rings. A sword with a jewel-encrusted scabbard hung at her hip, and two silver pistols rested in her sash.<sup>38</sup>

While Sir Hugh set out with British Forces to take Jhansi, Rani was prepared to fight for Jhansi. Rani raised an army of fourteen thousand and set them to work enhancing defences of Jhansi. The British surrounded the fortress town on March 20, 1858, and prepared their siege. The rani gave orders to her soldiers and organised the women of Jhansi to be part of the defence. The British describe watching the women of the city firing batteries, carrying ammunition, and relieving men on the battlements. In the midst of it all, the Rani, her banner proudly flying from the highest turret, fought along the walls with her troops. One of the British units she faced, the fourteenth Light Dragoons, noted in their historical records that she was "... a perfect Amazon in bravery. Just the sort of daredevil woman soldier admires."<sup>39</sup>

Seeing that Jhansi would fall, the Rani slipped out of the fortress with several of her guards and rode for the rebel stronghold of her neighbour Tatya Tope at Kalpi. Her absence was discovered by British, who pursued her. A better rider, the Rani astride a champion stallion soon outdistanced all but one, Lieutenant Bowker. The Indian accounts state that the two fought with swords at Bhandar, a crossroads where the Rani had stopped for nourishment. The queen disabled Bowker and continued into Kalpi, ultimately traveling over one hundred miles in a twenty-four-hour period. Rani Lakshmbai was welcomed as a hero by the warriors of Kalpi, the armies of the various Indian nobles who had joined the rebel

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cause. She enhanced her reputation by leading troops to take the British fortress at Gwalior, a much needed morale boost for the rebels. On this occasion, Rao Sahib, the rebel commander, presented Rani Lakshmbai with a fabulous pearl necklace he had "liberated" from the treasury at Gwalior as a token of gratitude for her contributions. Rao Sahib's "gift of honor" was vindicated shortly thereafter when the rani led a successful defense of Kalpi against the British when Tatyá Tope was away raising new troops.<sup>40</sup>

The rani of Jhansi fought her last battle on June 15, 1859. On the morning of the final British attack against Gwalior, she dressed in armour, belted on her sword and pistols, and rallied her soldiers with the parting words, "*If killed in battle, we enter heaven, and if victorious, we rule the earth.*" She fought on foot and on horseback, moving fearlessly into breaches in the walls to stop the rush of the British infantry. In some editions, on the second day battle, Rani Lakshmbai was killed. Lord Canning, present at the battle, wrote in a notebook found after his death in 1862 that the Rani was shot in the back by a trooper of the Eighth Hussars. When the mortally wounded Rani turned on the soldier and fired at him, he ran her through with his sword.<sup>41</sup>

She was taken into the fortress by her troops. According to the legends surrounding this battle she died after distributing the famous pearls to those who had stood by her. She was cremated, and her ashes were buried with great ceremony in Gwalior. Sir Hugh Rose wrote in his epitaph, "*The Rani was remarkable for her bravery, cleverness and perseverance; her generosity to her subordinates was unbounded. These qualities combined with her rank, rendered her the most dangerous of all the rebel leaders.*" The squadron commander of the Eighth Hussars added that "*in her death, the rebels lost their bravest and best military leader.*"<sup>42</sup>

During the time that the rani of Jhansi led her soldiers against the British, Prince Ranjeet Singh of Lahore had a female guard composed of 150 women. They carried bows and arrows, and richly uniformed, rode white charges in formal parade. During the same time at Lucknow, traveller's accounts described a body of female soldier uniformed in red tunics and green trousers, carrying muskets and swords. Court accounts reveal that the shifting of various power factions at the highest levels of government was often driven by the influence of the female army.<sup>43</sup> The tradition of the women warriors of India has continued into the twentieth century. The struggle against the British in the 1900s led some Indian women into roles of terrorist and assassin. Madame Chand, a leader of the Indian Independence Movement, called on the Indian living in Europe to practice with firearms so they could "*shoot the English out of the land we love.*" She died in her mid-seventies believed by some of her followers to have been a reincarnation of the war goddess Kali.<sup>44</sup>

Bengal produces notable female terrorists, who as a group were "*elite, articulate, unique, and few in numbers.*"<sup>45</sup> Bina Das was one of five female assassins working for independence in the 1930s. One of the youngest Indian freedom fighters, Rani Gaidinliu, joined the cause in the 1920s at age thirteen and was leading guerrilla fighting units by age sixteen. Captured by the British and jailed for fourteen years, she was freed by Nehru in 1947.

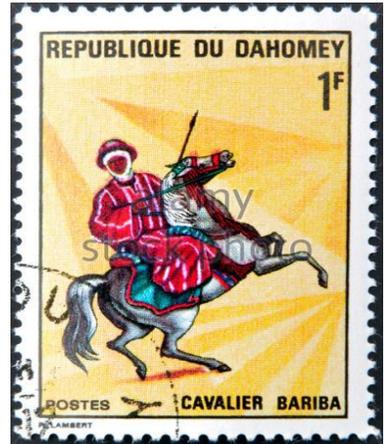
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And lastly in World War II, Colonel Lakshmi Swaminathan commanded an all-women battalion called the Rani Jhansi Regiment as enemy force in Burma.<sup>46</sup>



Picture 4. Rani Laxmi bai postal stamp from 1857-1957  
India



Picture 5. France postal stamp of  
Dahomey

## CONCLUSION

The issue of women serving in the military has repeatedly been subject to much debate and controversy. There are essentially two fundamentally opposing positions on the issue. One position holds that any form of exclusion of women in military constitutes an act of Discrimination or sexism, the sole objective of which is to irrationally defend a 'man's domain'.<sup>47</sup> History states that women were no less in terms of projecting leadership under combat situation and there were some kingdoms which might have not got their existence if the charge were not taken by their queens (warriors) and the good state and efficient military has certain domains to fulfil. The history illustrates when those domains were fulfilled by the leaders regardless of gender the victory was surely on their head. Africa and India were colonised almost in the same era and the love for the country has created the need to build an efficient army that could save their motherland from foreign invaders. The good state term include various elements territory, population, government, but the most important is military. Effective and efficient military can keep the state functioning. Be it the Amazon women warriors or the queen of Jhansi Lakshmi Bai they have once common aim to achieve that is to save their motherland and during this process they formed efficient mili-

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tary, projected their military planning and execution skills and proved that warrior is a warrior regardless of gender and have common aim to achieve.

The history of including women into the armed forces and also in para-military groups is a quite long (the contributions in De Groot / Peniston-Bird 2000). Whether as camp followers, nurses, revolutionaries, spies, soldiers in disguise or as regular female soldiers and as supreme commanders, women have engaged in a multitude of classifications and trades and continue to do so (Wheelwrite 1997; Jones 1997; Seidler 1998; Blythe 2001). In addition to these roles, women have been subject to military activities as non-combatants; they have been taken as hostages and trophies, they have been killed, they have been wounded and they have been tortured, raped and utilized for prostitution (Enloe 1989; Albrecht-Heide/Bujewski-Crawford 1991; Pollock Skjelsbaek 2001). Thus, women are enmeshed in the military and its activities in a huge variety of ways. Yet the focus in this article was on the integration of females into the armed forces, an area in which in recent decades, notable developments have occurred. Indeed, in the course of time, women have remarkably extended their military roles to even include combat thus challenging the common view of the armed forces as a male domain and the male-warrior paradigm (Dunivin 1994). This process of 'normalization' of female participation in the military can be attributed to a mixture of different factors, among them in a first approach. Women have been granted access to the military in times of military emergency, i.e, in times of war. They have been recruited when there was a shortage of military personnel and they themselves have forcefully demanded their inclusion in the process of women's emancipation.<sup>48</sup>

It tends to trivialize or even ignore the overwhelming biological and sociological evidence stacked against women gaining unlimited access to all facets of military life, while simultaneously alleging a discriminatory agenda on the part of those objecting. The opposing view holds that the full inclusion of women, particularly access to combat roles, results in force degradation and a general lowering of standards to the point where modern militaries largely stand to forfeit their sustained deployment ability and war fighting capabilities. To substantiate this allegation, the case against women in combat-support or combat roles tends to emphasize biological and sociological limitations.<sup>49</sup>

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