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## ULLAL QUEENS' STRUGGLE AGAINST PORTUGUESE

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### Abstracts

Ullala was a small province of Tulunadu which was ruling by the ruling family of queen Abbakka. Portuguese were trying to establish colony in the coastal Karnataka during the time. They were struggling a lot for the supremacy. As a part of it they tried to defeated queen Abbakka also. But she successfully fought against the Portuguese. As a woman she made a great battle here. Common people also helped and gave whole heard cooperation to her. Here there is a small study about queen Abbakka and her legacy.

### Objectives

- To get a great inspiration from the Queen Abbakka.
- To know about the power of queens in the male dominating society.
- To spread about the great queens of local area in the international level.
- To give an inspiration to the women.

**Key words:**Portuguese, Abbakka, struggle, Ullala, spirit, meet.

### Introduction

Before the advent of the Portuguese in India, the Arab traders enjoyed the monopoly of the trade in horses being brought from west Asia, which they used to sell mainly to their co-religionists, the sultans of Bijapur. Hence Bijapur's staunch rival, the rulers of Vijayanagara befriended the Portuguese on their arrival and allowed them to trade at the ports of the empire with an intention to secure horses from them from abroad. But in the long run the Vijayanagar rulers found the Portuguese unreliable and unscrupulous. Nevertheless, lack of a strong navy prevented them from restraining the Portuguese from their rapaciousness and thuggery activities in coastal Karnataka. The Portuguese considering themselves the lord of the seas extracted tributes from the minor chiefs ruling over coastal Karnataka and on refusal looted and burnt towns and ports. They also prevented merchants and chiefs from undertaking navigation without a sailing permit (cartaz) which was issued by the Portuguese authority in India. It was under these circumstances that two queens of Karnataka, Abbakka the senior and Abbakka the junior belonging to the Chauta family confronted the Portuguese

The Chautas were a minor family of Jaina chieftains who ruled over a small territory around Puttige from about 12th to 18th century. They followed the matriarchal system (aliya santana) of succession. The Chautas used to carry their maritime trade from the port town of Ullala near Mangalore and this place was considered as the richest and abundant land by the Portuguese.

### Hiriya Abbakka

Abbakka senior who ruled from 1544 to 1582 A.D. was a staunch opponent of the Portuguese and worked in close alliance with several chiefs of Kerala in opposing the expansionism of the Portuguese. Her first encounter with the Portuguese took place in 1555 when she stopped paying tributes to the Portuguese when they attacked her ally, the Kolathiri Raja of Cannanore. The Portuguese sent a fleet of 21 ships under Dom Alvares da Silveira against her and Mangalore was almost lost. The ruler of Calicut mediated and ended the crisis. Three years later in 1558 she once again



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assisted the Raja of Cannanore in a naval engagement near Mangalore against the Portuguese led by Luis de Mello. In 1566 the Portuguese declared war against the ruler of Cannanore and Abbakka stopped tributes to the Portuguese. An expedition sent against her under Joao Piexote after some initial success ended in a disaster with Piexote himself being killed. This made the Portugal viceroy of India, Dom Antao de Noronha himself assume command of a large fleet of ships and 3000 men and attack the fort of Mangalore in September 1567. In the battle Abbakka had a face a set back and withdraw from the field. But her resolve to challenge the Portuguese was as strong as before and she built a fort at Ullala.

## Kiriya Abbakka

After the demise of Abbakka the senior, her daughter (her sister according to the Italian traveller Pietro Della Valle) Abbakka the junior began to rule from Ullala. Like her predecessor she was also a strong opponent of the Portuguese. The junior Abbakka had married Lakshmappa Bangaraja, the Banga chief who ruled over a principality around Puttur. It is said that relations between the couple strained due difference of opinion with regards to the stand to be taken against the Portuguese; while Abbakka was for opposing them, the Banga chief was against antagonising them. Later the queen divorced the Banga chief and returned back the jewels given by him. Offended by this gesture one day the Banga chief captured but later released her. To avenge this insult Abbakka launched an attack against the Banga chief who took the aid of the Portuguese while Abbakka was rendered help by the Keladi king, Venkatappa Nayaka. Venkatappa Nayaka sent a powerful army and took all the possession of the Banga ruler and destroyed his fort.

In 1617 a ship belonging to Abbakka laden with spices on its way to Mecca was captured by the Portuguese. Enraged Abbakka attacked the fort of Mangalore belonging to the Portuguese and burnt it. The Portuguese under the command of Francisco de Miranda Anriques attacked Ullala with a big force but was repulsed. The following year that is in 1618 Luiz de Brito e Mello came to provide relief to Francisco de Miranda Anriques; but a shift offensive by Venkatappa Nayaka led both Mello and Anriques lose their lives. This incident was a great news in Europe as Abbakka the ruler of a small principality had routed the armies of the king of Spain (Portugal was under the control of Spain from 1580 to 1640 A.D.)

The Italian traveller Pietro Della Valle who was in Persia when he heard about the exploits of Abbakka was very eager to meet her. His wish was fulfilled in December 1623 when he met Abbakka at Ullala. Pietro Della Valle had a good impression of the queen whom he describes as wise, active and having a graceful voice. At the time of his visit the queen was personally supervising the construction of a channel. According to Pietro Della Valle the Chauta rulers were tolerant towards their Christian subjects though their adversaries, the Portuguese were involved in activities like destroying temples and forcefully converting Hindus to Christianity.

The resistance by the Abbakkas against the Portuguese shows their valour, fierce independent spirit and an uncompromising nature against tyranny. Though they ruled over a small principality they could not be overwhelmed by the might of a European power which ruled the seas.

Rani Abbakka, the great Tulu queen regarded as the first female freedom fighter of India, is not only known for her valour who repulsed the Portuguese army, but also her strength to unite people of different faiths against the armed forces of a foreign state.

The queen hails from Karnataka, which is, currently, communally divided. A region witnessing revenge killings among Hindus and Muslims, this state has a great lesson to learn from the legacy of Rani Abbakka, when Muslims and Hindus unitedly fought under her leadership against the Portuguese.

Rani Abbakka Chowta was the first Tuluva queen from Ullal province of the present Dakshina Kannada district. She represented the Chowta dynasty which ruled Tulu Nadu, comprising strategic regions of coastal Karnataka.



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The Portuguese forces, after establishing their rule in Goa, turned their focus on capturing Mangaluru, Ullal ports. The brave Rani Abbakka, who left her husband and came back to her father, repulsed the Portuguese attacks for four decades, leading the army from the front.

She is regarded as one of the foremost woman warriors and bravest of the fighters. Historians say Rani Abbakka has not been given her due place in India's as well as Karnataka's history.

Abbakka's uncle Tirumalaraya crowned her as the queen of Ullal. She married Lakshmappa Arasa Bangaraja II. However, the marriage did not last very long, as Rani Abbakka returned to Ullal.

Ullal port was a prosperous port and hub of the spice trade to the outer world and the Portuguese, Dutch and British had clearly set their eyes on it.

Knowing about the crouching foreign forces waiting for a chance to take over Ullal, the local chieftains united, forgetting their communal reservations.

Rani Abbakka gave equal representation to Hindus, Jains and Muslims. During her rule in the 16th century, the coastal region was an example of unity and integrity for the entire nation, as Hindus and Muslims stood shoulder to shoulder in every aspect.

When the Portuguese, unable to find traitors, came to know that Rani Abbakka's estranged husband nursed a deep grudge against her, they launched attacks on Ullal from 1555 to 1568.

After Ullal was captured, Rani Abbakka took shelter in a mosque. She gathered an army and launched an attack on the Portuguese, in no time. Her army fought with valour and killed General Joao Peixoto after which the Portuguese had to retreat.

She forged an alliance with the Bijapur Sultan and the Calicut (Kerala) rulers. However, she was captured by the Portuguese army and sent to jail later.

Folklore has it that even in prison she revolted and died fighting. Her tale has been told through Yakshagana, the famous local art form of the region.

The foreign enemies could not find internal enemies and destroy their local kingdoms as Hindus, Muslims and Jains were united. Patriots are still waiting for the day when people of different faiths will unite against the common enemy.

## Conclusion

The Veera Rani Abbakka Utsava is held every year to commemorate her bravery and awards are given in her name. In 2003, the Indian postal department issued a special cover on Rani Abbakka. The bronze statues of the late queen are installed in Ullal and Bengaluru. The Indian Coast Guard Ship ICGS is named after Rani Abbakka.

Karnataka, which is presently in the news for Hindu-Muslim clashes, was once united and together repulsed attacks by foreign occupying forces.

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