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RANI ABBAKKA-THE QUEEN IMMORATALIZED AS 'THE GREAT FEARLESS WARRIOR QUEEN' & STILL FORGOTTEN.

The renowned Indian Coast Guard launched ICGS Rani Abbakka in 2009 at Indian Naval Port of Vizag. It commemorated the valour of a brave Queen named Rani Abbakka, who is not much known.



Queen Abbakka carved a niche for herself as 'The Warrior Queen of Ullal'. Rani Abbakka Chowta was the first Tuluva Queen of Ullal (present day Mangalore) and was crowned by her Uncle Tirumala Raya in 1525 as the Chowta's followed a Matrilineal system of Inheritance.

While inheritance was from female line, the ruler was always a male. Since Tirumala Raya didn't have any children, he chose his niece as a legal Heir. She was married to King Lakshmapa Bangaraja in a Political wedlock, due to which they both remained estranged throughout their lives.

Rani Abbakka Chowta was trained to be a good ruler and administrator right from a very young age. Sword fighting, horse riding, archery, military strategies and political diplomacy were the subjects she was very keen in learning and she learned

them with perfection.



Most Portuguese sources tell us that Rani Abbakka was a great administrator. She was a Jain herself but she never stopped patronising Hindu temples, arts & literature. Her administration consisted of Muslims & Hindus alike. Diversity of her administration & her army was worth appreciation.

In 15-16th centuries CE, the ports on the western coast of India attracted traders from around the world. Portuguese were the most dominating among them, who already started using military power to monopolize the Indian Ocean Trade. They captured Goa from Adilshah of Bijapur in 1510 CE.

By 1534 CE they were in control of Vasai and the island of Diu. By mid 16th century the North Western Coastline was almost completely controlled by Portuguese. The Indian ocean free trade zone was now monopolized by the Portuguese and anybody wanting to trade needed their approval.

Portuguese had superior naval skills and a vast army that made it easy for them to keep things under control and crush the rebellions against their tax policies.

Rani Abbakka's small kingdom of Ullal was a strategic trading port that caught the attention of the Portuguese.



Watching naval fleets from the fort of Ullal is Abbakka II.

Rani Abbakka's small kingdom was situated in western coastal region of India. Ullal was a fertile region & a prosperous port for export of spices & textiles flourishing under the great leadership of Rani Abbakka Chowta. Unfortunately we don't know much about Chowta Chiefs of Ullal.

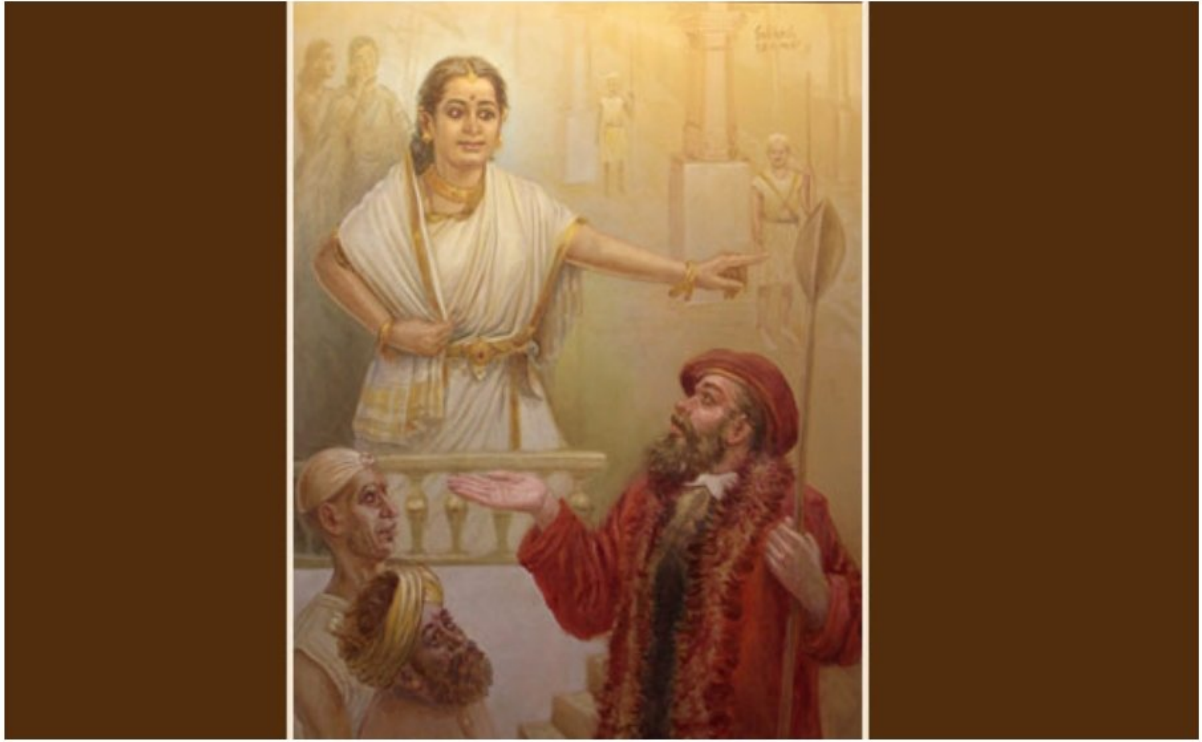


Ullal, a strategic trading port|Neha Parab

What we do know is that Vikru Chowta, who ruled as a legal representative of Vijayanagara from 1390CE was the founder of Chowta Dynasty. Even dates of Rani Abbakka's rule are not clear. As per the book 'Dakshina Kannada Jilleya Prachina Itihasa', King Tirumala ruled from 1510-1544CE

And his successor Abbakka ruled from 1544-1582CE.

Well, Ullal being located at a very strategic location was the next target of Portuguese's conquest. They wanted to exert control on Ullal by threatening the Queen and asking her to do all the trading through them.



Refusal to pay Tribute. Artist is Subhash Kammar.

Queen on the other hand was non-compliant and least bothered about their threats, which added fuel to the already disgruntled Portuguese's motive of complete monopoly. Portuguese therefore attacked Ullal in order to strengthen their claim, which turned out to be a disaster.



Portuguese didn't ever dream of getting such a blow from a thirty something old Queen. Portuguese planned the next major attack in 1556 to capture Ullal. They sent a large naval fleet which was commanded by Admiral Don Alvaro. But Rani and her forces again fought them valiantly.



Portuguese encountered a very embarrassing defeat. The Battles between them kept intensifying & Queen Abbakka every time emerged more powerful. She never lost any battle with the Portuguese. Hers was the most diverse army consisting of people from various castes & religions of society.

B'coz of which she had the tremendous support of the people and was very easily able to mobilize her people to fight the Portuguese. She was called 'The Fearless Queen' among the masses. As the attacks kept increasing, her courage only strengthened.

A Portuguese General named Joao Peixoto with his forces was able to take over Ullal in 1568. Rani being a military strategist had a contingency plan. She retreated with her forces to the forest, mobilized 200 of her best warriors again & attacked General Peixoto the very same night.

So, furious was the Rani & her men that the General was killed & 70 of Portuguese soldiers were taken as prisoners. Later she collaborated with 500 of her supporters across various communities & killed Admiral Mescarenhes, took back the Fort of Mangalore & forced the Portuguese to flee

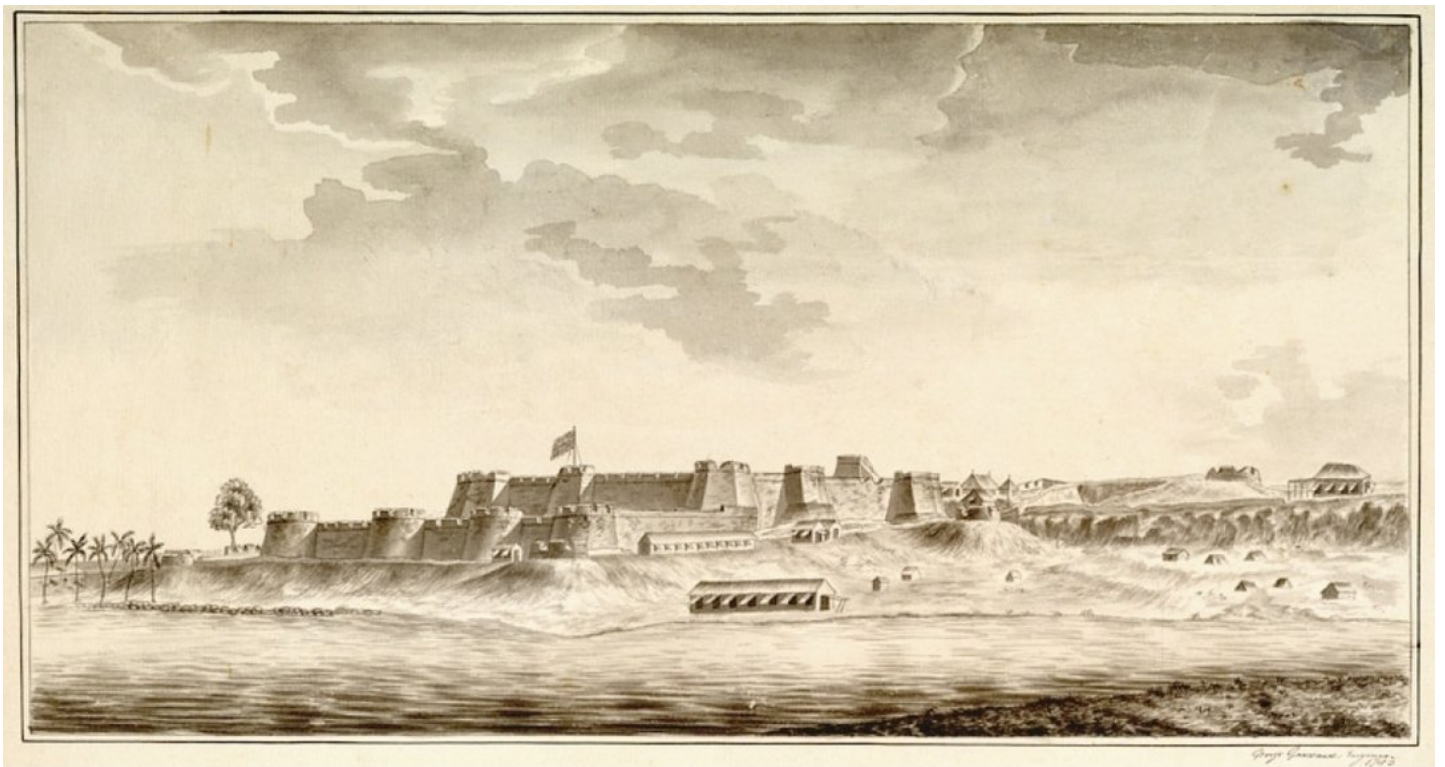


Illustration of Mangalore Fort, 1783|Wikimedia Commons

It was only with the help of her estranged husband that the Portuguese were able to capture her. Her husband betrayed her by conspiring against her with the Portuguese. Finally, when the Rani was captured, she was immediately imprisoned.



The remnants of Rani Abbakka's fort at Ullal

In Prison also, Rani Abbakka started a revolt against the Portuguese who then killed her. There is no exact record of her prison time and it is believed that she was killed in prison. However, various sources give different dates of her death from 1580-1598CE.

Rani Abbakka was succeeded by her only daughter Tirumaladevi.

Her legacy lives on in the form of folk songs, stories & Yakshgana-A form of local theatre in Dakshin Karnataka.

Her memory is cherished in her hometown of Ullal & the Veera Rani Abbakka Annual Utsava is held in her name.



Artist from Yakshagana, the folk theatre of Coastal Karnataka|Wikimedia Commons

The Veera Rani Abbakka Prashasti Award is given to distinguished women on dat day.

Its believed dat there were 4 different queens by the name Abbakka who ruled Ullal, but this was the story of Queen Abbakka II (1544-1582CE) who is immortalized as 'The Great Fearless Warrior Queen'.



Rani Abbakka
Chowta, the
warrior queen
who fought and
defeated the
Portuguese for
four decades.