

## **AN EMPRESS OF DINDORI : RANI AVANTIBAI**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

The untold tale of Rani Avantibai etched her mark in the annals of history. The queen of dindori also known as Rani Avanti bai lodhi she was the Empress of the Kingdom of ramgarh near jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh in the colonial period. she is famous for her uprising against the britishers in the Revolt of 1857.

With the help of this paper I want to highlight the contribution that she made as of women, as a queen and as a wife in the freedom struggle where it was rare to see a women who is in power rising and revolting against britishers. With the help of ethnographic data methodology I am going to highlight the various events and history behind Avantibai. The aim behind this paper is to highlight how she used Gorilla war tactics and refused to surrender herself to the britishers and made a great impact on the papers of history. I am going to present all the great achievement that she made with her bravery which may influence the contemporary youth and women's. Queen Avantibai break the barriers of being just a woman and a queen who is not allowed to participate in freedom struggle. Orientation of this paper is surrounded by the event taking place in Ramgarh of Madhya Pradesh and in the life of Empress of Dindori.

The main question is How in the patriarchal society the woman outshine the others and fearlessly fought against the cruelty and befitting against the male bigot.

**Keywords** : Avantibai, Dindori, Independence, Britishers.

### **Introduction**

Rani Avanti Bai Lodhi the queen of dindori district in the state of Madhya Pradesh is one of the unsung freedom fighter and brave women who played major role in the struggle against the britishers from the region of central India. She has shown Braveheart and a great personality which became a role model for several youth of India. She was the queen of dindori and still

joined hand with the common people and rose against the britishers. Rani Avantibai is honoured as a warrior queen and is an important and inspirational figure in the history of the Indian freedom struggle. The 1857 war of Independence witnessed her bravery and loyalty toward her people and throne.

### **Early life**

Avantibai Lodhi was born in Lodhi family on the date 16 August 1831 in Mankehadi village district [Seoni](#) Madhya Pradesh.. Her father's name was Jujhar Singh he was also one of the glorious kings of central region.. Avanti was married to Rajput Prince Vikramaditya Singh Lodhi, the son of Raja Laxaman Singh of Ramgarh (present-day Dindori).

Laxman Singh fell sick and later died, After his death it was a brave queen who assumed the throne and ruled over the Kingdom, which was disapproved in the eyes of Britishers. Moreover the English people refused to consider Avantibai's sons (Aman Singh and Sher Singh) legitimate heirs to the throne as they were minors. Avanti had with Laxman Singh named Aman and Sher Singh. In 1851 Raja Laxaman Singh died. Raja Vikramaditya again became the King of Ramgarh. As a Queen she seriously administered state affairs. As the mother and caretaker of the minor sons, the state power came to the queen. The queen ordered the farmers of the state not to obey the any instructions and duties of Britishers. This reform work increased the popularity of the queen and she became the queen of common people.

### **Doctrine of lapse**

This was introduced by Lord Dalhousie in 1848, it was an arbitrary annexation policy that allowed the East India Company or governor to snatch away any Indian kingdoms whose king died without a direct heir. In keeping with their land-grabbing intentions, in 1851, the British declared Ramgarh as a 'Court of Wards' and appointed their own administrator for the kingdom in place of Avanti Bai. Avanti became furious. Angered at this unjust and insulting decision, the furious queen threw the administrator out and declared war against the British.

Avanti Bai's next step was sending urgent messages to the rulers of neighboring kingdoms to join hands together with her in the war against British subjugation. In her strongly-worded letters the feisty queen wrote:

“If you think you have a duty towards our enslaved motherland, raise your swords and jump into the war against the British. Otherwise wear these bangles and hide your self in houses”

Unsurprisingly, Avanti Bai’s appeal succeeded in rousing a wave of revolution in the central part of India . Neighbouring kings supported her. By 1857, the entire region had joined the armed rebellion the queen was Leading from the front, the fearless Avanti herself raised an army of 4,000 and personally led it against the British troops.

### **The Revolt of 1857**

May 1857, when news about the rifles using cow and pig fat began to make rounds everywhere. In the villages started preparing for a rebellion. Queen of dindori decided to send her words through handwritten notes urging people to pick up arms and fight .

Britishers were Expecting an easy victory over them. So the army of British assembled their full force and launched a massive attack on Ramgarh, setting the town on fire. As such, the queen was forced to move with her family to the forested hills of Devharigarh. Though the queen Avanti Bai was not the one to give up without a fight. Using guerrilla warfare tactics, she attacked the camp of British and then, plunging the camp into chaos. But unfortunately, her incredible fighting spirit was no match for the might of the British military machine in all its brutal strength.

### **The Main incident**

Rani Avantibai led her troops to a village named Kheri, near Mandla. While the British expected an easy victory, they were shocked to be defeated by avantis army. They had no choice but to back down while she controlled Mandla from December 1857 to February 1858.

The British did not take this slight with grace. Britishers were so Determined to wipe out her rule, they retaliated with brutal force and attacked Ramgarh – and no amount of passionate patriotism and love for her people could stop them from crushing her army with military strength. They set the region on fire and Rani Avantibai had no choice but to seek safety in the hilly forests of Devharigarh.

Still, the queen did not give up. By Utilising guerrilla warfare techniques, she infiltrated the General Waddington’s camp and disbanded his forces. Unfortunately, a fighting spirit was not enough against sheer battle power. Eventually, she found herself trapped by British forces,

who had surrounded Ramgarh. Knowing that her defeat was imminent, she found it better to sacrifice her life than to be taken at the hands of the enemy.

### **The Sacrifice Queen**

On 20<sup>th</sup> March 1858, she fell upon her own sword and became a martyr. Her last words are said to have been: “हमारी दुर्गावती ने जीते जी वैरी के हाथ से अंग न छुए जाने का प्रण लिया था. इसे न भूलना बड़ों” (Our Durgavati vowed to never let the enemy get their hands on her while she lived. Don’t forget this).

She found it better to sacrifice her life than to be taken at the hands of the enemy whom she hated. She is among the viranganas (heroic women) lauded by groups of people involved in the events of 1857, other examples of whom include Rani Laxmi Bai, Asha Devi, Jhalkari Bai, Mahabiri Devi and Uda Devi.

### **The Bestowal She left behind**

After India’s independence, Avantibai has been remembered through performances of kewadantiya and folklore. One such folk song is of the Gond people, a forest dweller tribe of the region, which says

“The Rani who is our mother, strikes repeatedly at the British. She is the chief of the jungles. She sent letters and bangles to other (rulers, chieftains) and aligned them to the cause. She vanquished and pushed the Britishers out, in every street she made them panic, so that they ran away wherever they could find their way. Whenever she entered the battleground on horseback, she fought bravely and swords and spears ruled the day. O, she was our Rani mother”

Rani Avantibai’s story did not necessarily make it to mainstream narratives, it continued to live through local folklore, theatre performances and written across the official documents and writings that recorded the events of that time.

### **The Importance Rani Avanti deserves**

The woman, A Queen who sacrificed her life without losing her honour has been forgotten by the Indian history. She is just sustaining under oral literature and as kewadantiyas. She deserves much appreciation just like we give to Rani lakshmi bai and other freedom fighters of the Revolt of 1857. Otherwise we will losing a gem and her story which may influence and inspire various sections of the society.

### **Conclusion**

Its her loyalty to her people and throne, she is an icon of rebellion, sacrifice and martyrdom in a long, brutal history of fighting colonial rule. Not much is known about Rani Avantibai who is, today, honoured as a warrior queen and an important, inspirational figure in the history of the Indian freedom struggle – notably, the 1857 War of Independence. Very little has been written about her.

She is often compared to her contemporary Rani Laxmi Bai of the neighbouring province of Jhansi. It is true that there are many similarities in the story arcs of their respective lives. Both were born outside royalty and subsequently married to kings. Both assumed monarchy due to unusual circumstances in their families. Both died fighting to keep their respective states independent from British administration.

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