

## #STUDIES

### The Western Sanskrit Studies



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This is the most sacred text in Hinduism, but here, where it was printed for the very first time, it was in English, not Sanskrit. This publication founded Sanskrit studies in Europe. It was the first work translated directly from Sanskrit into English and it was done by first Englishman to master the language. The story goes like this. The impetus for the book came from Charles Wilkins, a clerk at the East India Company. He first learnt Bengali language, then learnt Persian and then turned to trying to master Sanskrit. He wanted to make a translation of the Bhagvat Gita but this wasn't something he could do alone. He relied on the knowledge and expertise of Brahmin pundits, and in his case, we

know that he worked directly with a scholar named Kasinatha Bhattacharya. And the resulting book in 1785 was the first ever printed edition of the Bhagvat Gita. It is a pioneering work of both literary translation and book production, being a result of the collaboration between English and Indian scholars.

It marked the first appearance in the West of the most sacred text in Hinduism, and within a few years, this translation had been rendered into Russian and German too. Its publication also led to a tidal wave of other translations of Sanskrit works in Europe. Charles Wilkins returned from India to England in 1786 because of ill health. He fitted a printing press in Bath with Devnagri type and the first book he produced was the first edition of the Hitopadesha.

## #QUOTES

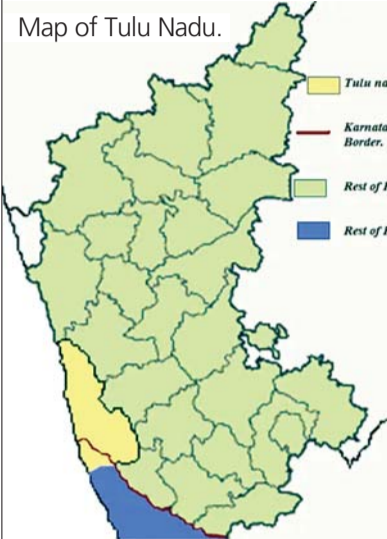
### He Said Napoleon Bonaparte-Quotes



- He said these pithy words, quite apt. A must read.
- Never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake.
- History is a set of lies agreed upon.
- Ability is nothing without opportunity.
- Victory belongs to the most preserving.



# The Unsung Queen



Abbakka allied with the Bijapur Sultan and the Calicut Zamorin and continued harassing the Portuguese. Unfortunately, luck ran out for the alliance by early 1570. The Zamorin general was killed in battle and Abbakka was captured and killed. Abbakka lost the war as her husband assisted the Portuguese by revealing to them her strategies of warfare, which he was familiar with. She was arrested and jailed. However, the warrior that she was, she revolted in the prison and died as a soldier, fighting. The Portuguese now had control of virtually the entire west coast trade. This was to last over a century till another western power, the Dutch, dislodged them.

## ● Kshema Jatuhkarna

Centuries before the anti-colonial resistance in India, Rani Abbakka Chowta fought valiantly against Portuguese colonisation. As the queen of Ullal, she resisted the Portuguese navy's oppressive tactics, forged alliances, led a guerrilla army, and even eliminated their admiral. The tales of Abbakka's bravery live on in folklore and performing arts. Read on to know more about one of India's first female freedom fighters.

## Legend

According to traditional accounts, she was an immensely popular queen and this is also attested by the fact that she is even today a part of folklore. The queen's story has been retold from generation to generation through folk songs and Yakshagana, a popular folk theatre in Tulu Nadu. In Bhoota Kola, a local ritual dance, the persona in trance recounts the great deeds of Abbakka Mahadevi. Abbakka is portrayed as dark and good looking, always dressed in simple clothes like a commoner. She is portrayed as a caring queen who worked late into the night dispensing justice. Legends also claim that Abbakka used the Agnivana (fire-arrow) in her fight against the Portuguese. Some accounts also claim that she had two equally valiant daughters who fought alongside her in her wars against the Portuguese. Tradition however treats all three, mother and two daughters as the same person.

Most schoolchildren know the story of Lakshmbai, the queen of Jhansi, who died fighting British colonialism in India in the 1800s. But only a few have heard of Rani Abbakka Chowta who died fighting the Portuguese three centuries earlier! Rani Abbakka lived in a

volatile era and data about her life is sketchy and incomplete. Yet, it is a story that needs to be told. The Portuguese adventurer Vasco da Gama arrived in Kerala in 1498, ostensibly for trade. But by 1505, Kochi had become a satellite state of the Portuguese, and by 1510, Goa was a full-fledged Portuguese colony. It was clear now that the Portuguese wanted to colonise and not just trade in India. Krishna Deva Raya, the Tuluva king of the Vijayanagara empire, was a major deterrent to Portuguese territorial ambitions. Unfortunately, he died in 1529 and the decline of the Vijayanagara Empire began.

The Udupi-Dakshina Kannada-Kasaragod region, known as Tulu Nadu, was a valuable commercial territory because a lot of pepper and spice trade passed through it. It was a collection of principalities governed by different Tuluva kings who ruled as feudatories of the Vijayanagara emperor. The decline of the Vijayanagara Empire meant that they became substantially more autonomous, but the downside was that they also became more vulnerable to Portuguese hegemony. This is

## #LOST HISTORY



Vasco da Gama before the Samorin of Calicut, by Veloso Salgado, 1898.

was the kingdom itself. The prince who inherited the kingdom was not the king's son but his nephew (because the property belonged to the king's sister now). What if the king had no nephew? The niece could become the queen in her own right. This is what happened in Abbakka's case. Abbakka's uncle Thirumala Raya ruled Ullal during 1510-1544. He had no nephews, and so he trained Abbakka in martial arts and statecraft. While it was not common to have a female head of state, it was certainly not unique. Thirumala got her married to Lakshmappa Arasa (aka Lakkarasa), the Banga king of the neighbouring Mangalore kingdom. The marriage was a strategic alliance during difficult times. In 1544, Abbakka succeeded Thirumala Raya as monarch of Ullal. She stayed at Ullal and raised her children. (Historians have different opinions on why she stayed apart. Was she estranged, or did she follow an Aliyasantana custom of bringing up children in her native home?)

At this time, Indian spices, especially pepper, were highly valued in the European markets. The international spice trade was dominated by the Arabs by virtue of their India connection. When the Portuguese entered India, they tried to know boat and arm-wrist Indian kings into signing monopsonic contracts with them and break the business relationship that they had with the Arabs and Persians. The Portuguese navy was a glorified pirate fleet which harassed Indian shipping. Using their considerable sea-power, they bullied kingdoms on the Indian west coast to pay 'kappa' (protection money). One by one, many kings succumbed to the pressure, but a few resisted. The most powerful



## #DEDICATION

Even today, performing arts like Yakshagana and Bhoota Kola celebrate Abbakka's heroics. Folklore remembers what academia forgot! Between the 13th and 17th centuries, five queens had ruled over Mangalore in the Banga dynasty. But the best example of a powerful queen is Rani Chennabhairadevi, queen of Gerusoppa, another Vijayanagara feudatory in Tulu Nadu. Like Abbakka, she too was a Jain. She ruled for 54 years during 1552-1606, making her probably the longest reigning Indian queen. The Portuguese called her Raina-da-Pimenta or 'Pepper Queen' and tried to control Gerusoppa, but she outwitted them.



Someswar Beach, Ullal, Karnataka.

resistor was the Zamorin, the king of Calicut. Some small kingdoms like Abbakka's Ullal held out too. Abbakka found a natural ally in the Zamorins. Yet, she knew that sooner or later, an armed confrontation would happen.

Abbakka was well prepared when the Portuguese commander Dom Alvaro de Silveira attacked Ullal in 1556. The Portuguese could not break in, but Abbakka could not break them either, and so, a temporary truce was agreed. In 1558, the Portuguese attacked again with a larger army under Louis DeMello. This time, they caused considerable damage to Ullal. But timely help came from some natural allies, the Moplahs of Malabar (settlers of Arab or Persian descent in Kerala) and the Zamorin of Calicut himself. This was too much for the Portuguese force, which retreated. Throughout the war, Abbakka's husband, the Mangalore king, did not help at all. Anyway, peace returned to Ullal for the next few years and Abbakka boosted the



Statue of Ullal Queen Abbakka Devi.

economy by improving irrigation and trade. Ullal was once more a big spice exporter. This obviously did not go well with the Portuguese plans. Around 1568, the Portuguese attacked with a surprisingly large force under General Joao Peixoto and ransacked Ullal. Abbakka escaped and hid in a mosque.

Unfazed, she immediately gathered a guerrilla force of 200, attacked the Portuguese camp and killed Peixoto and forced the Portuguese to retreat. This was followed soon by guerrilla attacks on the Mangalore fort where the Portuguese admiral Mascarenhas was killed.

But the Portuguese managed to recapture the Mangalore Fort. Abbakka allied with the Bijapur Sultan and the Calicut Zamorin and continued harassing the Portuguese. Unfortunately, luck ran out for the alliance by early 1570. The Zamorin general was killed in battle and Abbakka was captured and killed. Abbakka lost the war as her husband assisted the Portuguese by revealing to them her strategies of warfare, which he was familiar with. She was arrested and jailed. However, the warrior that she

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Why did Lakshmappa not come to Abbakka's aid? The popular explanation for this is that Abbakka and Lakshmappa were already estranged. Alternatively, Lakshmappa was probably helpless because Mangalore had already succumbed to Portuguese pressure. Another credible theory is that Lakshmappa's nephew Kamaraya conspired with the Portuguese to seize the Mangalore throne. Kamaraya came to power by 1556, so Lakshmappa's role had become irrelevant then. We need further evidence for a definitive answer.

PS. How did Abbakka, a follower of Jainism which advocates extreme non-violence, lead an army? Throughout history, we find examples of Jain kings heading powerful armies, like Mahendra Varma Pallavan, Arikesari Parankusa Maravarma Pandyan, Bindusara Maurya, and so on. The Jains outrightly condemned killing due to greed and hatred. But they were practical enough to accept carrying arms to protect citizens. To this day, there are many Jains in Indian armed and security forces.

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## #DEDICATION

# Karl Benz The Obsessive Visionary

In 1885, after years of struggle, Karl Benz built his first prototype, what would later be known as the Benz Patent-Motorwagen



Karl Benz, the inventor of the first gasoline-powered automobile, is often celebrated as a visionary who transformed the world of transportation. His journey, however, was not an easy one. Fueled by an unrelenting obsession with his vision of a practical, self-propelled vehicle, Benz dedicated his life to an idea that many considered impossible at the time.

**Early Life: A Passion for Engineering**  
Karl Friedrich Benz was born on November 25, 1844, in Mannheim, Germany, to a family of modest means. His father passed away when he was just two years old, leaving his mother to raise him alone. Despite the hardships, Benz showed an early fascination with mechanics and engineering. At 15, he enrolled at the Karlsruhe Polytechnical School, where he demonstrated exceptional aptitude for engineering. Upon graduation, he took up work in various engineering roles, but his mind was always fixed on one idea: building a self-propelled vehicle.

**The Obsession with the Automobile**  
While working as an engineer, Benz became increasingly fixated on the idea of creating an automobile that could run on gasoline, rather than steam or horses. His obsession with this vision pushed him to experiment tirelessly, even when others dismissed his ideas. At the time, the automobile was a far-fetched dream. The idea of a self-powered vehicle was met with skepticism, and steam-powered carriages were still the norm.

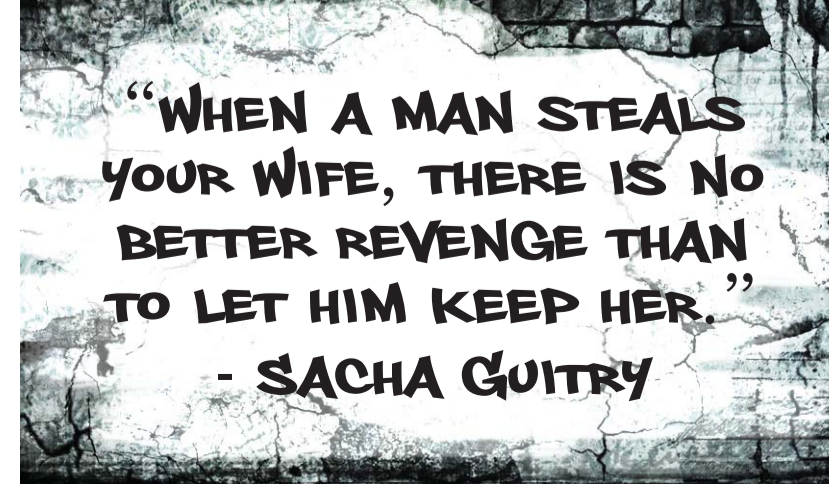
**The Pioneering Drive: Bertha Benz's Historic Journey**  
Benz spent countless hours refining his designs, making numerous mistakes along the way. He faced immense technical challenges, financial struggles, and constant rejection from investors and established engineers. But none of this deterred him. He had established his company, Benz & Cie., and began producing cars. It was recognized as a viable mode of transport. The public was skeptical, and potential customers were unsure about embracing



**Today: A Vision Realized**  
Today, the Mercedes-Benz brand is one of the most recognized names in the world of automobiles, a testament to Benz's relentless pursuit of a dream that no one else believed in.

Benz's life is a powerful reminder of the importance of vision, persistence, and obsession in achieving greatness. He was willing to sacrifice everything, time, money, and comfort, to bring his idea to life, and his legacy lives on in every car on the road today. Karl Benz didn't just build a car; he built a future.

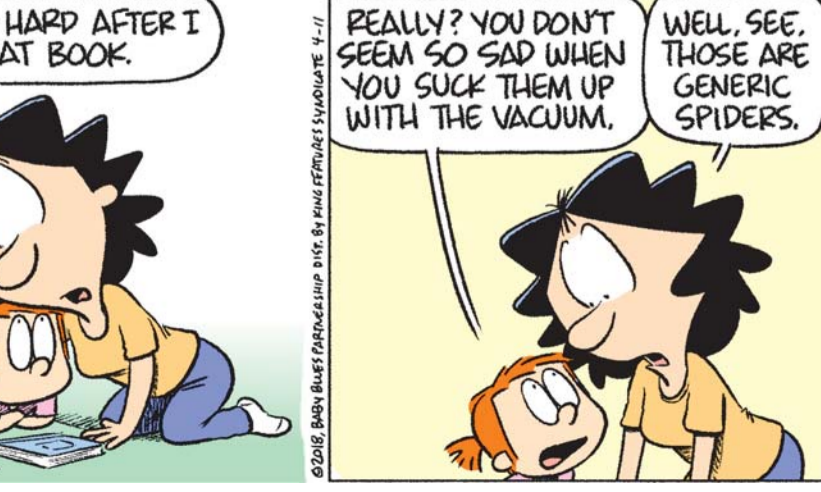
## THE WALL



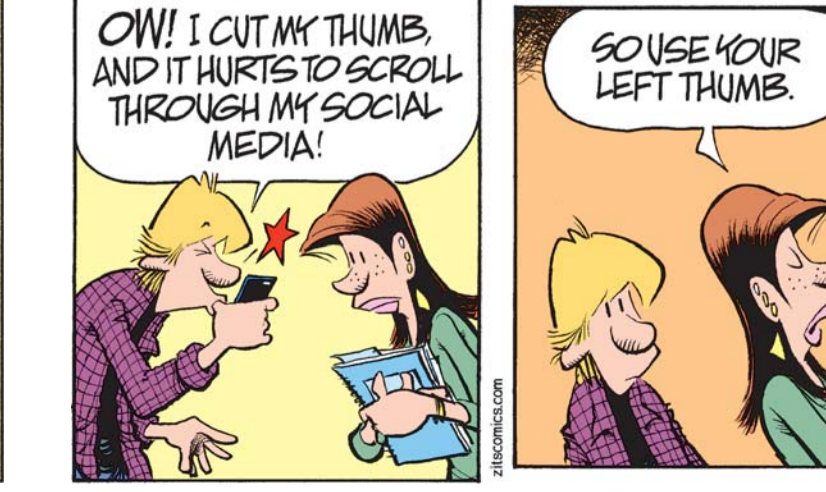
## BABY BLUES



## ZITS



## By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



## By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

