CHAPTER IV
CAUSES AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF DISPUTES

In 1824, the Desai of Kittur who did not have a son and was on his death bed, adopted a boy and named him as his successor. The British Masters, however, refused to accept the right of the adopted child to the chieftaincy and in accordance with the doctrine of lapse demanded the surrender of Kittur. This was resented by the widowed queen, Rani Channamma, who raised the banner of revolt against the British policies, and anti-Administration. She put up a valiant fight against the mighty British, who finally succeeded in annexing Kittur. In 1829 there was a second rebellion in Kittur, under the leadership of Sangolli Rayanna. This was also put down and Rayanna was captured and put to death of Nandgad in Khanapur taluka in 1830. Then the Government of Bombay brought under the regulations, territories of Bombay-Karnataka region which had been acquired either by conquest from the Marathas or by treaty and agreement from other states. These territories were formed into a district and named as Dharwar, which was divided into two collectorates in 1836 and the head quarters of the northern collectorate was actually shifted to Belgaum in 1838.

Shivalingarudra Sarja Alias Bapu Saheb was a poor successor to Mallasarja. His health was poor and he was more interested in literary pursuits. He wrote three books in Kannada. His wife Veeramma, came from a respectable family of the Desai of Shivangatti also known as Shamshedabad. It is said that he brought one Ganiga Chennabasappa, a Nayyayaka Scholar from Mysore, and studied philosophy under him and became well-versed in religion and philosophy. He was still young and inexperienced and was surrounded by unscrupulous sycophants and flatterers.

There were groups among the officers in the courts. One group was headed by Sardar Gurusiddappa who completely identified himself with and owed complete allegiance to Rani Channamma and another group of disgruntled self-seekers was led by Venkatrao and Mallappa Shetty, who were interested in weakening the Government for their own selfish ends, and were without scruples. They, had contacts with British Officers and leaked official "Secrets" to them about the affairs of the state. The British were only too willing, nay eager, to know about the affairs of Kittur which they wanted to grab on some pretext or the other. Young Shivalingarudra Sarja fell an easy victim to the wiles of Venkatrao and Mallappa Shetty who were in the pay of the British and were prepared to sell Kittur for petty personal gains.
Shivalingarudra Sarja assumed the reins of the 'Desgat' in 1816. In 1817 and 1818 Bajirao Peshwa came to a crisis. There was open rift between them and the British were keen on vanquishing the Peshwa once and for all, so that he would not hinder their expansionist plans. The British started their attack on the Peshwas from the South on 20-3-1818 and after 22 days of resistance, the Belgaum Fort fell on 12th April. With the fall of Belgaum, all the Peshwa's territory came under the English. In November 1817, Mr. Elphinstone, the Commissioner of Deccan, wrote a letter to the Desai of Kittur, seeking help and support in the event of a fight against the Peshwas. In 1818, the British attacked the Belgaum Fort which was under the Peshwas and during the seizure which lasted from 21 March to 12th April 1818, the Kittur Desai Shivalingarudra Sarja helped the British with men and material. By 12th April the Peshwas were completely routed and the Belgaum Fort was taken over by the British. Thus, the Peshwa territory South of Belgaum, including Kittur, came under British rule. Soon thereafter Shivalingarudra Sarja was sent for by Thomas Munro, Commissioner of Dharwar, and he was made to enter into an agreement on 28th July 1818 under which Kittur could retain its territories on condition of payment of an yearly tribute of Rs.1,75,000/- to the British. However, under the agreement, he was asked to hand over Khanapur taluka to the British to enable them to keep

their army and maintain it from that income. They, however, assured them that the Kittur rulers would be treated honourably and there would be no interference in the internal administration of the state as long as they did not do anything which would harm the interests of the British.

Munro's Agreements with Kittur:-

a. The British consented to allow possession of all lands held by the Desai of Kittur first made under the Bijapur Sultans and later under the Peshwas.

b. The British agreed to continue all the privileges, titles and other marks of royalty which were enjoyed by the Desai from the beginning.

c. On account of the recognition of the continuous and close friendship and cooperation between the British and the Kittur Chief, the British placed the Desai on a different and higher footing than even the Patawardhans, not to speak of all other Jageerdars. Though the Desai was a tributary prince, he enjoyed a special status and political privileges. This can be seen from Elphinstone's letter to the Governor General dated 18th June 1818.

d. The obligation of maintaining 473 horsemen and 1000 infantry and of rendering service when called upon by the Peshwa, was removed, and thus the autonomous character of the state was recognised.
However, the condition of surrender of Khanapur to the British, was a humiliating one. It also deprived the state of its strategic advantage and a substantial part of its income. Rani Channamma was extremely unhappy about this. She was helpless. She conferred with His Holiness the Swamiji of Kalmath and after good deal of discussion and deliberations, they came to the conclusion that it was much better to watch the developments carefully and wait for a more propitious occasion. She believed in the adage that "discretion is the better part of valour", and decided to bide her time. At the moment, she felt helpless, and she concentrated her energies on patching up the differences between the rivals of Shivalingarudra Sarja in dealing with the affairs of the state. She tried to instil patriotic feelings, courage and confidence in him. The British, in turn, were watching the developments in Kittur and waiting for a suitable opportunity to interfere in its affairs. Rani Channamma's restraint and clever strategy precluded any such possibility.

As days passed, Rani Channamma assumed more and more control over the affairs of the state and she was virtually its ruler. She had youth, courage and sagacity. She was charming, robust and good looking. She was well-versed in sword fighting, horse-riding, archery and state craft. In the courts, she presided over the meetings with great dignity and ability. She could take quick decisions, and her decisions were timely
and in the best interests of the state. Kittur again started flourishing and becoming strong and prosperous. Rani Channamma's fame spread far and wide. She maintained her fighting forces in an excellent battle-ready condition.

"In 1822 Thackeray, the Principal Collector of Dharwar, wrote a letter to the ruler of Kittur alleging that the state was giving shelter to thugs and robbers and that, therefore, the tranquility and peace in the area was disturbed". He threatened to take serious note of these and that the consequences would be grave. These allegations were baseless and flimsy and it was evident that the British only wanted some pretext to grab Kittur. Wiser counsels, however, prevailed and the proposed intervention was stopped. The British were afraid that any attempt to interfere in the rallying of the Deccan Chief would go against them. They, therefore, bided their time and remained ever alert to seek a plausible reason for justifying their interference in its affairs.

Shivalingarudra Sarja was functioning only as a nominal head of the state. He was bed-ridden and was languishing to death. He died in September 1824, after a rule of about eight years, Rani Channamma assumed full control and became the Queen of Kittur.

Mallasarja had two wives, Rudramma and Channamma. Rudramma, the first wife, came from the famous Desai family of Tallur, the descendants of which family are still there. She was herself a brave lady, well-versed in the art of warfare. There are several references in historical records and writings to confirm that she personally took part in the fight against Tippu Sultan in the battle of Desnur when Tippu's army was vanquished and driven back. She was brought up and educated by her family in the highest traditions of such Desai families. She knew Urdu and Persian and helped Mallasarja in his official correspondence. Most of the letters exchanged between Mallasarja and Tippu Sultan were drafted by her. Channamma was Mallasarja's second wife.

If Mallasarja was happy with his talented first wife Rudramma, one may ask why he married a second lady. The episode of Mallasarja's first encounter with Channamma which led to their marriage has been described in a number of poems and folk-songs.

Mallasarja was almost an unacknowledged leader of the small group of patriotic chiefs of the Deccan states. He was deeply worried about the incessant battles between Tippu and the Peshwas which rendered the plight of the smaller states most uncertain and miserable. Moreover, these constant battles among these powerful rivals enabled the foreign invaders, especially the British, to make capital out of this unfortunate situation, and by weakening both, to play the game of divide and dispossess. Mallasarja, who was a great patriot, could not reconcile himself
to the British becoming more powerful and he was saddened to see the big powers, like the Peshwas and Tippu, falling a prey to the British wiles. He wanted to organise all the Desais and chiefs, including the Raja of Kolhapur, into a well-knit united group which would be a force to reckon with to fight the British. He wanted to do this quietly but effectively, without giving any clue to the British about his intentions. He, therefore, went on a tour to meet all the Desais and chiefs of the Deccan states in whom he had confidence. On one such tour, he visited Kakati, a small "Desgat" in Belgaum district, the birth place of Rani Channamma of Kittur. The place is mentioned as "Kakatiyabada" in a record dated 1250 A.D. Mamadapur of Yadava Kauharadeva. Its ruler Dhulappagouda Desai was a powerful fighter in the northern part of Karnataka. Kakati was at that time in Sangli state. He halted at a place near Kakati and sent a word to Dhulappagouda Desai about his intention to meet him, and waited for a reply from the Desai. He halted for about a day in this place.

It was reported by the villagers that a maneating tiger was prowling in the area and had created panic and anxiety among the farmers. They requested Mallasarja to kill the tiger and save them from its meance. So Mallasarja who was a skilled hunter, set out into the forest with his small group of attendants. They were ultimately able to spot the tiger. Mallasarja

took aim and brought down the ferocious animal with a single arrow. When he reached the spot where the slain tiger lay, he found to his great surprise, by its side a fully armed maiden who claimed the dead tiger, and who was quite angry with the stranger for having interfered with her sport. Mallasarja looked at this robust, good looking damsel who looked every inch a queen. Channamma, then, was in the prime of her youth. This daughter of Dhulappagouda Desai and Padmavati was born in the year 1778, and was at that time 22 years of age. She was beautiful and agile.

Mallasarja's gaze held this comely maiden and he was struck by her youth and beauty. He then looked at the tiger. It had two arrows in its body and the maiden claimed that it was her arrow which had brought down the animal. Needless to say the Raja was overcome by her beauty and courage, and lost his heart to her. On coming to know that she was the daughter of Dhulappagouda Desai, he felt extremely happy. He told her about his intention to see her father. He allowed the dead tiger to be taken by Channamma and showered praises on her for her bravery.

The next day, when Mallasarja went to Dhulappagouda Desai's house, he first talked to him about his plans to unite all the

Desai of the Deccan states in the interest of their survival and for preparing themselves to face any eventuality of fighting the foreign invaders, like the British, the Portuguese and the French. After that he told him of the chance meeting he had with his daughter Channamma and hinted about his intention to marry her. "Dhulappagouda Desai was naturally delighted at this splendid prospect". Mallasarja told her about his first marriage with Rudramma, who was a very brave and talented lady. Channamma did not mind this. She was prepared to be his second wife.

In those days polygamy was very common among the royal families. She promised Mallasarja that she would regard the elder queen as her own elder sister, and adjust with her and that she would never make her unhappy. Soon thereafter the marriage was solemnised at Kakati and when Mallasarja returned to Kittur he had with him by his side, his brave, clever, and lovely second wife Channamma.

Channamma was very keen that Rani Rudramma's son Shivalingarudra Sarja should succeed Mallasarja. She herself suggested this. Even fate conspired to fulfil her wishes. Her own son Shivabasavaraj died early, after a brief illness, Veerarudrasarja also died within a few years. Shivalingarudra Sarja, the son of Rudramma, survived as the only claimant to the throne of Kittur after Mallasarja. Rani Rudramma, as already said,

was a woman of learning and scholarship. She was becoming more and more interested in religion and philosophy. She gradually retired from public life and started to spend more time in her religious pursuits. The Swamiji of Kalmath used to give discourses and narrate stories from epics and other religious classics to her. She started spending more and more time in reading and worship.

Channamma was deeply interested in state-craft. She could not harbour injustice and cruelty. It was this quality which endeared her to her husband and the people. She began to aid her husband in the administration of the state which was being pulled hither and thither in a tug of war between the contending mights of the Marathas, and the British. She was, in every sense, a friend, philosopher and guide to her husband. Gifted with courage and foresight, she loved the people and freely mixed with them. She did her utmost to help the poor and the needy. She was always in close touch with her army and her military leaders and was quick to appreciate acts of bravery and rewarding brave soldiers with generous gifts. Channamma, thus, steered the ship smoothly for eight years after Mallasarja's death, keeping Shivalingarudra Sarja as the nominal head.
The Question of Adoption Leads to Dispute

The British continued to wait for an opportunity to interfere in the affairs of Kittur and finally annex it. They were watching closely all developments in the state. Shivalingarudra Sarja had, for a long time, been keeping indifferent health and was more or less a nominal head. It was Rani Channamma who was virtually ruling the state. Thackeray, the chief political agent and collector of Dharwar, visited Kittur on 18th May 1824 on the pretext of meeting the ailing Shivalingarudra Sarja. The agent carried with him some medicines and during this visit he spent some time with Shivalingarudra Sarja and discussed with him matters regarding Kittur affairs. At this meeting, Shivalingarudra Sarja did not mention anytime about his intention to take a boy in adoption although the thought was present in his mind. Both his brothers had died young, and he himself had no issue. The question as to who should succeed him in the event of his death was worrying him. However, he was discreet and did not broach the subject of adoption with Thackeray. Thackeray was the man who first gave the idea of the doctrine of lapse to Dalhousie who applied it successfully in the case of Rani of Jhansi and others.7

7. Shridhar Telkar,"Kittur Channamma Rani"
Sadanand S Desai, Kakati, (Belgaum), 1992, pp.24-25.
Shivalingarudra Sarja's health continued to deteriorate and in the month of June his condition was so bad that he sent for his confidential assistants and confided in them about his intention to take some boy in adoption. Among those present at this meeting were Kannur Mallappa, Kannur Veerappa, Subedar Mallappa and Sardar Gurusiddappa. Shivalingarudra Sarja asked members present in the court and there were many persons aspiring to give their children in adoption. He was afraid of intrigues among the different groups. He held this boy Shivalingappa by his hand and told them all, "I think this boy is a suitable successor to me in all respects. I, therefore, desire that he should succeed me and I beseech your consent and approval".\footnote{Sadashiva Wodeyar: "Rani Channamma," (in Kannada) National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1996. p.29.} The relatives who were present and the confidential assistants consented to this. The boy Shivalingappa was finally brought over to live with the family in the Kittur Palace and get initiated into administrative affairs. However, again in the first week of July the health of Shivalingarudra Sarja deteriorated rapidly, causing much anxiety. On the 10th of July 1824, Shivalingarudra Sarja drafted a detailed letter to Thackeray, unequivocally expressing his desire to take Shivalingappa in adoption. "Being extremely ill and reduced, I feel desirous to appoint an heir to the Samsthan and have to this end appointed and confirmed by seal, Mallasarja (The original name of which adopted son was Shivalingappa of Mastmaradi) as the Sar-Desai
Sar Deshpande and Nadagouda of Hubbly, the Sar Desai and Sar-Deshpande of Azumnagar Suruff, Khanapur, Suruff, Chandgad, Suruff, Supa, etc., to the Samsthan. I rest with you therefore in your goodness to continue him in the Samsthan which has been enjoyed by my ancestors and myself by your liberality".  

However, Shivalingarudra Sarja's health improved somewhat and, therefore, this letter was not immediately sent to Thackeray for nearly two months. After that, he was keeping fairly good health until again in the first week of September his condition began to deteriorate and Gurusiddappa had to go to Sindholi, Marikatti, Khodanpur and Mastmaradi in Shahapur Taluka, and Subedar Mallappa to Chikkos in Murgod Taluka. Their mission was to bring some "Four or Five young boys belonging to the families of his close relatives so that out of them he could finally choose a successor". Accordingly, Gurusiddappa went to Sindholi and Mastmaradi and brought with him four boys. Subedar Mallappa could not bring any one with him as all the children of close relatives were sufficiently advanced in age. Of the four boys brought by Gurusiddappa, Shivalingarudra of Mastmaradi was finally chosen. It appears he was healthy, agile and bright looking. He said that he would give the final approval for the adoption ceremony when he felt that his end was near. He addressed a letter to Balappagouda of Mastmaradi about his intention to adopt the boy.

"I have no children of my own. We have decided to get your son Shivalingappa here and adopt him as our son. My health is not good. So you are required to bring your son as soon as you see this letter. We shall adopt him with the insignia of the Royalty and hand over the Samsthan to him. You are a near claimant among our brothers".  

The adoption ceremony:

On the 11th of September, 1824, his condition was very precarious and he felt that his end was near. That afternoon at about 2 P.M. he sent for his Sardars and other assistants and finally gave orders to perform the adoption ceremony. Accordingly, the boy was brought and after the preliminary ceremony like "Mangala Snana", he was decorated with the "Sikka", the insignia of Desaiship. He was named "Sawai Mallasarja" and invested with the sovereign power over Kittur as the legal successor.

Rani Channamma was anxious about the future of Kittur. She had suspicions about the evil designs of Thackeray and also about the intrigues of some of her court assistants like Kannur Mallappa. She wanted to avoid any possibility of interference.

by Thackeray in the affairs of Kittur. She sent for all the important leaders and Sardars like Kannur Mallappa, Sardar Mallappa Shetty, Gurusiddappa, Himant Singh, Narsing Rao, Guruputra Veerappa etc., and appealed to them to sink their differences and to show undivided loyalty, and to give un stinted support and assistance to the state in this hour of crisis. Her fervent appeal evoked spontaneous response in almost everyone. They pledged their whole hearted loyalty to the state and participated in the adoption ceremony. However, it appears that Kannur Mallappa and Venkata Rao, who actually participated in the ceremony and also pledged support, had sinister intentions at the back of their mind. Rani Channamma, as a gesture of confidence, handed over the letter written by Shivalingarudra Sarja to Kannur Mallappa and asked him to proceed to Dharwad along with Sardar Mallappa to deliver the letter to Thackeray. She hoped that in this hour of crisis they would remain loyal to Kittur and support the continuance of the "Desgap" after the adoption which had taken place that afternoon. Shivalingarudra Sarja survived for about twelve hours after the event. He died in the early hours of the next morning i.e., at 4 A.M., on Sunday the 12th of September, 1824. The letter which was carried by Kannur Mallappa and Sardar Mallappa was delivered to Thackeray on the 12th morning. Thackeray suspected the bonafides of the letter as it was dated 10th July, 1824. He thought that the letter must have been a forged one or must have been got signed by Shivalingarudra Sarja after he had been unconscious, by the interested persons
with a view to retaining power over the state. He immediately sent for the Civil Surgeon at Dharavad, Dr. G.H. Bell, and asked him to proceed to Kittur and ascertain the condition of the Desai. Accordingly, Dr. Bell went to Kittur and on his return, reported to Thackeray what he saw there. This report is dated 17th September 1824.12

The discrepancy in the date mentioned in the letter of Shivalingarudra Sarja was a sufficient excuse for Thackeray to start a probe into the veracity of the contents of the letter. The agent seized this opportunity. Within two days of the death of Shivalingarudra Sarja, on the 14th of September, he proceeded to Kittur and ransacked the palace, intimated the officials and the members of the royal family and did everything possible to prepare grounds for the annexation of Kittur to the British domains. The detailed letter which he addressed on the very day to Chaplin, the Commissioner of the Deccan, shows clearly the working of his mind and also the steps he took to fulfil this long cherished desire.

Shivalingarudra, Desai of Kittur, was the first to break the peace. He became indignant as intermission of the honours due to him as Patel of Tarinal, a village belonging to Kurandvad, near Belgaum, were denied to him and he therefore attacked it with a large force in 1822. This reversion to the old state of things brought down on him a heavy rebuke from the Government, but was passed over.

12. See Appendix - I for the original, p.275.
The Desai died in September 1824. He left no children and the endeavour made by his Karbhari to pass off the son of the Patel of Mastamaradi as the adopted son of the late Desai was the cause of an outbreak, which ended in the resumption of the principality. What occurred need not be minutely described, as captain West has so lately related all the circumstances. It transpired that the Karbhari had put a pen into the dead Desai's hand, and with it has signed his name to a forged deed of adoption. The boy was thus put forward as the Desai's adopted son. He would have been allowed to succeed, had he been a descendant of the old Desai's or a near connection of the late Desai's families line. Thackeray found that the boy was neither and while his reports were under consideration, the tragedy occurred which cost him and many others their lives, and finally ruined the old Kittur Family.

On the 21st October 1824 Thackeray, wishing to make arrangement for the safety of the treasure at Kittur, proposed to call on the late Desai's step-mother, without whose orders the headmen of the village had objected to act. She refused to see him that day bidding him all on the next day. Then also she still declined to see him, and as Thackeray heard that "Shetsandis" and Peons were assembling in Kittur from all sides, he thought it time to take precautions.

Captain Black, with a troop of Golondaz, was with him. He was directed to bring two guns into the Fort, and post them at the gateways. Next morning "when the artillery officer went to change guards, he found the outer gate locked, and the inner court full of armed men, and was refused admittance. Several messengers were then sent by Mr. Thackeray, but as they were not attended to, he ordered up the other two guns, and declared that if the gate was not opened in twenty minutes, he would blow it open. At the expiration of the specified period, Captain Black, Captain Sewell, and Lieutenant Dighton of the Golondaz, were preparing to blow open the gate when a sally was made from the fort by the peons, who seized the guns, and cut down the officers and all with them. At this juncture, Mr. Thackeray came up on horse-back and attempted to quiet the insurgents, but fell by a shot, and was cut to pieces. The remnant of the British detachment was then attacked and cut up and Messrs. Stevenson and Elliott, Assistants to the Political Agent, who had concealed themselves in a house, were made prisoners, with some native officers and sepoys. These prisoners, terror stricken, and baffled, were brought before Channamma. She received them with courtesy. "The Englishmen were rather puzzled about the manner in which they were received and the treatment meted out to them. The English prisoners were given all the facilities and comforts. They lived like guests and not like

prisoners".\textsuperscript{15} The British historians have admitted it a worthy of remark that Messers Stevenson and Elliot were well treated throughout this short period of captivity.

These English prisoners could have been tortured, hanged or trampled under the feet of the elephant, but Channamma was noble and a cultured lady. And so they were alive. No time was lost in repairing the mischief done to the prestige of British authority.

\textsuperscript{15} Shridhar Telkar, "Kitlu Rani", Sedanand S Desai Kakati, Belgaum, 1992, p. 35.
Mr. Thackeray's letter to Mr. Chaplin dated 14th September, 1824 says, one of the Principal servants of Kittur named Kannur Mallshetty came to me about noon on the 12th instant to say that his master was dying and to deliver a letter of which I submit a copy announcing the adoption of a son. The letter is dated the 10th July, and mentions that the adoption had then taken place.

Mallappa stated that when he left Kittur on the 12th instant, the Desai was insensible but that the ceremony of adoption was performed on the morning of that day and that a salute was afterwards fired in honour of the event.

Having heard many reports regarding the Desai's death, and having every reason to believe that no regular adoption has taken place, I asked Mallappa whether it was not desirable that the Civil Surgeon should visit his master, and on his assenting I requested Mr. Bell to proceed to Kittur. That gentleman immediately did so, but found that the chief had already expired and from the appearance of the corpse, there is every reason to conclude that the death had taken place before Mallappa left Kittur. Therefore, if the Desai had even appointed for and obtained leave to adopt, there would have been strongest grounds to doubt whether he had availed himself of the permission.

On my return from Kolhapur, the Desai requested that

16. See Appendix—I, for the original, p. 277.
I would send him medicine and pay him a visit to Kittur. On my way to Dharwar I complied with the request and had a long conversation with him on the 18th May but although he was dangerously ill and spoke very freely of his affairs he was entirely silent on the subject of adoption.

Hearing of the intrigues of the Desai's servants, and thinking it probable they might in the event of their Master's death allege that he has failed to apply to Government for permission to adopt. Merely from ignorance of the proclamation on the subject, I took occasion about six weeks ago to have this proclamation repeated with several others in the presence of the "Wakeels" of the different chiefs, so that they might all be fully aware of the measures necessary to legalize adoption.

After the Desai's death, I reminded his head servant of the circumstance and asked him how he could reconcile his assertion as to the time of the adoption with the date of the letter announcing it. Mallappa did not attempt to explain this contradiction and from all I have heard it is evident that although the deceased might have been much impressed by his interested servants he never intended to apply for permission to adopt, and that if the ceremony of adoption took place at all it was not performed until the Desai was either dead or quite insensible.

The child alluded to in the letter is a very distant collateral relation of the late chief, and it does not appear
that either he or any other of the Desai's relations had a right to succeed on the score of descent, to the newly elected Samsthan of Kittur. The boy in question is said to have been selected and introduced for purpose of adoption, but for the reasons already stated it seems evident that this was a manoeuvre of the Desai's servants whose only object was to perpetuate their own influence. It is to be remarked that the Desai's signature in the outdated letter is scarcely legible, and that the characters are quite different from the usual handwriting, which was remarkably good and distinct.

The family of the deceased consists of his widow whose age is only 11 years, his step mother and the widow of his brother, who is about 16. The rest of the relations are descended from collateral branches, so remote that I have not yet been able to trace the common ancestor. Whatever, therefore, be the decision of the Government regarding the succession, if the estate be not resumed, a long minority must occur, and I trust you all approve of my having proceeded to Kittur in order to make local enquiries respecting the adoption, and to take measures for securing tranquility and preventing abuse.

In the first place it seemed expedient to summon all the Sardars and heads of Departments and after they had acknowledged their responsibility, to inform them, that as the adoption appeared illegal and as the Desai's widow was a minor, the subject of the succession would be referred to Government and that in the meantime it would be my care to preserve order, to
protect the country, and to see that every man performed his duty according to "Mamool".

Hearing many different and no satisfactory account of the state of the treasury, I consulted the treasury, I consulted the principal members and servants of the family, on this subject. They stated that the Desai was entirely his own cash keeper, that he wrote his own accounts and trusted no one with his treasure, and as their information was extremely unsatisfactory, it appeared desirable that no time should be lost in examining the cash accounts and in sealing up the treasury so that the whole might remain in deposit, pending a reference on the subjects.

I, therefore, requested Messrs Stevenson and Frere who came with me to accompany principal servants to that treasury and to see the whole secured in their measure under the late Desai's seal as well my own. This measure has been adopted and from what I have since heard, I am convinced that it has prevented much plundering. It did not appear necessary to count the treasury, and the locks of some of the chests did not obey the keys, but from the Maratha memoranda in the Desai's own hand, which were found in the boxes that were not opened, it is probable that the treasure contains about 8 to 9 lakhs of rupees.

Report says that there are hidden treasures; a large amount that were hoarded in the time of former Desai's, but the
principal servants officers that no credit is due to this report and that Mallappa, the late Desai's Father, when at Poona a few years ago, expended 25 lakhs of rupees.

With respect of the characters of the late Desai's servants, they are probably as respectable as these usually found in similar situations but as they have not produced a single account that is satisfactory, as they have endeavoured in some instances to deceive me and as the affairs of the estate would not be safe if left exclusively in their hands, I propose for the present to conduct the administration by means of two Joint Managers, one on the part of Government and one on that of Desai's family. This arrangement will enable me to check abuses and preserve order without interfering in the usages of the country and the customary system of Management.

A large balance of last year's "Pesheesh" is still due, but this can be realised at any time from the cash in deposit.

With regard to the claims of the family, I have not yet succeeded in procuring a satisfactory account of the pedigree, but from all I can learn, it appears that as he has left no sons or brothers, his widow is the only person who can be considered in any respect as her and in order that it may be decided whether the terms of "Sannad" extended to her, I submit copy of the article which relates to the succession.
I hope very soon to send you a genealogical account of the family, in the time of the deceased Desai's father about all the relations who had my pretensions to a share of the estate, are said to have been put to death and the collateral branches that remain appear to be so remote that I doubt whether any of them could succeed, even had the "Samasthan" of Kittur existed as an independent state during the time of the common ancestor.

From a careful reading of Mr. Thackeray's letter to Mr. Chaplin, it can be easily seen that on finding excuse to annex the state of Kittur, it is also evident that he was aware of the possibility of the Desai taking a boy in adoption which is clear from the statement in paragraph 5 of the letter. The letter further reveals that he was avaricious about the wealth of the state, which made him suspect the people around the court who might in his opinion pilfer its wealth. Although he knew that Channamma was a capable lady and was ably managing state affairs, he wanted to make a pretence of safeguarding the interests of the state affairs, and of the widows and brothers of Shivalingarudra Sarja.

There is also a cunning insinuation in paragraph 8 in his reference to Channamma. It is intended to insinuate that there were differences among the members of the family themselves, The tenor of the letter betrays an indecent anxiety to take over the management of the state on any pretext. The points
made out and the doubts raised in the letter are of hypothetical nature. Briefly, his contentions were:

That the Desai had no idea of adopting a son. This is a blatant lie, for although the Desai did not express any such thought to him during his meeting in May, later he did come to know about it from the statements made by Kannur Mallappa and Sardar Mallappa when they were interrogated by Mr. Thackeray himself.

His second contention was that no adoption took place at the instance of the Desai, But there is sufficient evidence to show that the adoption did take place as desired by the Desai and he himself did adopt the boy. Even the details of the ceremony have been described by an eye witness in a Marathi letter, It appears from his letter that he could have known this truth if he had tried more patiently but he was too eager to suspect regular adoption.

His third contention was that even if the adoption took place it was not legal as previous permission was not obtained. But the Kittur Desais enjoyed full autonomy regarding internal matters and there was no need for them to take any such permission.

In their own family history, after Veerappagouda Sar-Desai's death in exile at Miraj, his wife Parvatevva adopted Mallasarja as his successor. Although the Kittur Desais at that time were subordinate to the Peshwas, they did not take any permission from the Peshwas to take Mallasarja in adoption. Kittur Desai
had entered into a covenant with Sir Thomas Munro in 1818 under which the "Desgat" had been continued to the Kittur rulers on the same conditions as existed between the Peshwas and the Kittur Desais. There was nothing in this covenant binding the ruler of Kittur to seek permission for taking a son in adoption or restricting the adoption of the natural descendants of the ruler in the Male or Female line. Even if the adoption had taken place immediately after Desai's death, it was legally correct, for under Hindu Law, widow possesses the right to adopt an heir to her husband when he dies childless. The contention, therefore, that the adoption was not legal was thoroughly untenable.

His next contention was that the adopted child was not a direct descendant of the Desai. It can be seen from the covenant entered into by the Desais with Sir Thomas Munro that there was no such condition.

With these insufficient, partial and baseless arguments and hypothetical doubts, he held the view that the state should lapse to the East India Company, and in case it continued under the Kittur rulers there would be long minority and he should be entrusted with the responsibility of conducting the Government of Kittur.

Only one point which needs to be explained. Why was the letter of 10th July 1824 delivered as late as on 12th September 1824. The reasons are obvious. There is evidence to believe
that Kannur Mallappa himself was interested in giving his son in adoption to Shivalingarudra Sarja. Similarly, there were many other relations who were aspiring to give their children in adoption. If the actual adoption was made public, there would be open rivalry and intrigues among the relatives and officers in the court. Therefore, the letter was not sent to Thackeray immediately. Only when it became certain that Shivalingarudra Sarja was about to die, i.e., on the evening of 11th September 1824, after the confidential meeting addressed by Rani Channamma when she made fervent appeal to all of them to safeguard the interests of the state, the letter was handed over to Kannur Mallappa and Sardar Mallappa Shetty late in the evening to be delivered to Thackeray.

It is also true there are some discrepancies in the statements of Kannur Mallappa and Sardar Mallappa Shetty when they were interrogated by Thackeray regarding the time of death of Shivalingarudra Sarja and of the adoption ceremony of Shivalingappa but it should be remembered that Kannur Mallappa himself was a disgruntled person of doubtful loyalty. He would himself have liked some misunderstandings to have been created between Channamma and Thackeray. It is also possible that both Kannur Mallappa and Sardar Mallappa frightened and shaken by the anger of Thackeray who was a petty despot, that they might have in their nervousness blurted out things which obviously are in themselves contradictory.
William Chaplin, Commissioner of Deccan, stationed at Pune, seems to have believed most of what Thackeray wrote about the developments in Kittur. He too, like the typical imperialists of the East India Company, seems to have been anxious to annex Kittur to the British territory. They seemed to be in league with each other. On the 20th of September, 1824, Chaplin wrote to the Chief Secretary, William Newnham in Bombay forwarding Thackeray's letter. In this letter Newnham has stated as follows:

Had the adoption of a son been regularly made with the previous permission of Government, there would, I presume, be no doubt about the policy of continuing the succession, an adopted son being equal in the eye of Hindu Law of a son born in wedlock. This adoption, however, is obviously obtained, the ceremony having been postponed till the Desai was reduced to extremity. The degree of consanguinity too of the pretended is so remote, that the Kittur Vakil nowhere can't give me any trace of it. I am, therefore, anxious to receive as soon as practicable, orders of Government for my guidance in such a delicate conjunction of circumstances. In the meantime, the measures adopted by Mr. Thackeray will, I think, meet the approbation of Government.

As the Estate has only recently been formally recognised as a "Samsthan", which I fancy, may be construed chiefship or

17. See Appendix - I, for the original, p.281.
principality, it would be an unpopular measure, perhaps to resume it. This, however, is the natural course to follow. If the adoption be not confirmed, and it will be in conformity to the terms of the "Sannad".

If the adoption be confirmed, I think, it will be for the advantage of the minor and that Mr. Thackeray should take the management of the Estate into his own hands till the heir be of age to assume it, there being, I fear, no persons belonging to the family with whom the responsibility could safely be trusted.

In the meanwhile, according to his decision conveyed in a letter to Chaplin, Thackeray appointed Haveri Venkata Rao and Sardar Mallappa to look after the treasury. He gave them detailed instructions to keep a watch on the place and ensure that nobody entered or left the place without being searched. Even the movements of the members of the royal family were restricted.

The Chief Secretary, Newnham, however, seems to have been more open and fair minded and reluctant to precipitate matters. Chaplin again, in this letter of 23rd September, 1824, wrote to Newnham forwarding a copy of the pedigree of the family received from Thackeray, the Political Agent of Dharwar, while forwarding this letter he remarked, as follows:

As this paper is drawn out by the interested servants of
the late Desai and is unsupported by any documentary proof, I fear that no reliance whatever is to be placed upon its accuracy, particularly, as all the affairs of the estate seem to be purposely involved in some mystery, which leads the Political Agent to think that there is some truth in the report of some of our native public servants having received considerable rewards when the new "Sanad" was issued to the late chief. Mr. Thackeray is, however, making further enquiries touching the genealogy of the family the result of which will be forwarded when finished.

In the event of its being the pleasure of the Government to continue the estate in the hands of the present claimant, I get leave to suggest the expediency of entering into some stipulations for the better management of the police of the territory which being intimately intermixed with ours, requires to be placed on a more efficient footing. The introduction of a system of custom duties more analogous to that which is established in the British territory is also essential, and it should be clearly understood that the local mint of Kittur is not again to be opened.

It has been usual to take a considerable "Nuzar" on confirming the succession to an heir of the Desaiship and on the accession of Mallappa Veerappa Sarja the sum of Rs. 90,000/- was levied on this account, as this sum was doubtless exclusive of private gratification to the ministers of the Peshwa's
court. I think that Rs. 1,75,000/- or one year's extra "peshees" would be moderate fine or relief on the present occasion, when there appears to be no male descendant existing of the branch of the late Desai.

On the 24th September, 1824, Channamma wrote another letter to the Chief Secretary forwarding another alleged confidential letter from Shri Venkata Rao, the manager on the part of the Government at Kittur in which he stated that:

The Desai died about 10 P.M. on 11th September and not on the 13th as reported, that three of the principal servants concealed the fact and on pretence of sending the balance of "peshees" (Gifts) to Dharwar took Rs. 1,50,000/- from the treasury and three caskets of jewels: that without consulting the family and old servants, they made up the story of the adoption, the ceremony of which was performed in the following morning and that the late "Karabharee" Mallappa has large sums of money belonging to the late Desai in his possession.

These statements, Mr. Thackeray informs Mallappa, are confirmed by other accounts that have reached here. Although Mr. Thackeray is unwilling until he shall have received the orders of Government as to the management of Kittur estate, to disturb the existing orders of things, he is of opinion that it will not be safe hereafter to continue the authority of
"Karabharees" to so intriguing a character as Mallappa who is a present Joint Manager with Venkata Rao, one of the Head "Gumastas" of the Dharwar Kucherry.

Newnham replied to this letter on 25th September, 1824, conveying the approval of the Government in council to Thackeray's actions. Newnham, however, seems to be a fair minded person who did not want to precipitate any action in Kittur which would appear unreasonable. While approving Thackeray's actions, Newnham expressed his own apprehensions about the former's statements. He wrote:

Not having the whole "Sannad" referred to, the Governor in Council is not altogether without doubts as to the footing on which the chief of Kittur is placed towards the British Government. From the nature of the grant, however, and from the expressions in the article of the "Sannad" transmitted by Mr. Thackeray, it may be inferred that although the Kitturkar and his descendants were constituted sovereign princes during the continuance of the direct line and were thus in a situation materially different from that of Jhargaards, yet there was nothing in the "Sannad" to prevent the territory reverting to the company in the event of complete extinction of the family to whom it was granted. It is on

18. See Appendix - I, for the original, p. 283.
this supposition that the following instructions are grounded but before you carry that into effect, you should be careful to satisfy yourself by an examination of the "Sannad", that the position is correct.

If nothing should appear in the "Sannad" to release the Kitturkar from the ordinary obligations regarding adoption, it will be necessary for the sake of impressing the other Jahagirdars with a clear idea of the rights and intentions of Governments, to notice the irregularity that has occurred. With considerable strictness in the commencement, however, we may ultimately abate the rigour of our proceedings.

It should, therefore, be announced that the British Government does not recognise the adoption as having made (if made at all) without permission of Government and as being besides as yet entirely unsubstantiated by proof of any kind, if that has not already been done, and should afterwards commence an enquiry into the circumstances of the adoption.

The first point to ascertain was the relationship of the person's adoption to the Desai if it should appear that he is a descendant of the Desai who possessed the country before the conquest of it by Tippu Sultan and he would be the Desai's nearest heir. Even if no adoption had taken place, all informalities in the adoption may be viewed with indulgence and any clear proof of Desai's intention to adopt may be considered as sufficient.
If he is a near relation descended from the old Desai's, even the fact of the adoption may be considered immaterial and he may be admitted at once on the conditions to be hereafter noticed.

If on the other hand, it shall appear that the claimant is neither the descendant of the ancient Desais, nor a near connection of the late Desai by the female line, the adoption should not be admitted however correct in point of form and the principality should be considered as lapsed and should be annexed to the Company's territories, proper provision being made for the females in the Desai's family and for all his old servants and departments.

I now come to the condition on which Jahagirdar is to be restored. If the person said to be adopted should prove (contrary to the accounts hitherto received) to be so near a relation of the Desai as to make it probable that the permission of the British Government to adopt would have been given if solicited and if the reality and the regularity of the adoption be established, the principality should, in that case, be given without any alteration in the terms or in the language of the "Sannad", further, than may be required to remove any ambiguity that may have been found to exist in the former one.

If the adoption should have been irregular although the person was of the description explained in the last paragraph or if the adoption should have been perfectly regular though
the person adopted was not so nearly related to the Desai, in either case, the principality should be eventually given up to him, but not without new terms such as may hereafter be settled for establishing the mint or the other inconvenient privilege and arranging such exchanges and other adjustments as may be necessary for the consolidation of our territories.

The private property of the Desai should, in all the cases supposed, be disposed of according to the Hindu Law of Inheritance, and if the Government should be entitled to any part of it, should not be taken until the most liberal consideration had been given to the claims and circumstance of all connections of the deceased.

After receiving this letter of approval for the measures taken by him with regard to the affairs in Kittur, Thackeray became more and more tyrannical. As his report of 14th September, 1824, reveals, he had entrusted the management of the state jointly to two managers, one representative of the state and the other the British Government. They were charged with the responsibility of the administration of the state and safe custody of the treasury. Venkata Rao carried false and malicious tales to Thackeray and Mallappa Shetty was removed from the office. He threatened and intimated the Sardars and other officers connected with the court. He appointed "Amaldars" to examine the accounts of several villages. The victims of such intimidation were Kannur Mallappa, Kittur Gurushantappa,
Sardar Mallappa, Narasingrao and others. He dismissed several employees in the palace without consulting the members of the royal family or their trusted advisers. He appointed a Mamalatdar and a few other servants to look after the affairs in Kittur and ordered that nothing should be done without the express permission of Haveri Venkata Rao who was foisted on the Kittur officials. They were threatened with severe punishment if they disobeyed him. The treasury was entirely under the control of Thackeray and his assistants. He placed a guard of government sepoys on the plea that, "It was dangerous to continue the Desai's guards as sentries over the treasury amounting to ₹10 lakhs, lost under pretence of an attack from plunderers, they should themselves commit depredations upon it". Thus, under the pretext of safeguarding the treasury, as many as thirty British Government sentries were posted at the east and west gates inside the fort. The Desai's guards were also allowed to continue on duty. Thackeray issued orders to the key men to furnish bonds, thus rendering themselves responsible for the safety of the treasury. Channamma, who was considerably annoyed by these acts of Thackeray sent Rachappa, the Vakil of Kittur Samsthan, and Lingopant Vakil to wait upon H.E. Mount Stuart Elphinstone, Governor of Bombay, to put forth the grievances of the royal family. This, they did, on the 8th October, 1824, but the appeal did not evoke a favourable response from Governor Elphinstone.

Thackeray also wanted to create some misunderstanding
among the members of the royal family. He sent secret messengers to Veeramma, the widow of the Desai, and tried to poison her mind that the alleged adoption was not in her interests, and that it would leave her destitute. Veeramma, however, as all members of the royal family, did know of all nobility of Channamma's character. Every one knew that Channamma had herself volunteered to offer her son as a bodyguard to Shivalingarudra Sarja, the son of Rudramma, but unfortunately he had died early. Her love and affection for the members of the family, and her pride of Kittur "Desgat" were bywords in Kittur. The willy machinations of Thackeray, therefore, did not work.

Channamma was alive to the situation and bided her time. The fort and her palace also were surrounded by the British guards and posted everywhere to carry news about the happenings in the palace. The Sardars and other officers were not allowed to meet her, nor was she allowed to meet people of the state. Who loved and adored the family, were treated with scant respect and even their restricted movements were watched closely.

The situation was becoming unbearable. To add insult to injury, Thackeray ordered that Shivalingappa, the adopted son, should forthwith be sent away from Kittur. There was a sinister motive behind this move. Shivalingappa's presence in Kittur would keep alive the hopes of the people of Kittur to regain sovereignty for the state. Rani Channamma was very much annoyed by this order. She was not prepared to stay in Kittur
if the heir to the throne was sent away. She requested Thackeray to allow her and Veeramma to go to Pune and Bombay and if this request of theirs could not be granted, then to allow them to go to Banaras. Thackeray's reply to this request was that Channamma alone would be provided for her expenses. He also stuck to his decision that Shivalingappa, the adopted son, should leave Kittur without any further loss of time.

Unable to tolerate the Agent's high handedness any longer, on the 11th October, 1824, Rani Channamma and Veeramma addressed a Joint letter to Chaplin. The translation of the text of the letter is as follows: 19

We sent you, through Rachappa, account of the proceedings of the "Samsthan", the receipt of which communication you have not acknowledged.

You have always known the support which the "Samsthan" has hither received from the gentleman (here referring to Thackeray). He continues to act as he thinks proper. We have never interfered with him in any manner. There is a certain polite attention due to us which we have always received from you. Unmindful, however, of the respect to which we are entitled sahib, Mr. Thackeray requested an interview with us: We feel that the "Samsthan" was in his hands and that to him we must look for everything, replied to all, respecting which he asked us.

19. See Appendix - I, for original, p. 289.
We never go out. For friendship sake, however, we had an interview with Mr. Thackeray. To this, God has reduced us. We have endured everything patiently, but to you we look for ordering the continuation of the whole "Samsthan".

Sahib is taking an account of the stables, "palkhanas", "silendar", "sebundies" etc. Every minute thing is subject to scrutiny.

We can have nothing that we wish for. We find it, therefore, difficult to remain and show ourselves in the "Samsthan". It rests, therefore, with you to support the "Samsthan" and maintain its reknown. We have placed at the head of the "Samsthan" a child "Chiranjeev" in whose name the seal has been engraved. It is now pre-emptorily desired that he be sent away. The child was kept in the "Samsthan" but an opportunity for obtaining orders respecting him did not occur.

The child was here. What was the usage of the "Samsthan" to do, was done, and no novelty occurred. It was the act of the assembled dependents of the "Samsthan" and the child can't therefore, be sent away. It will not be proper for us to remain.

The tyranny exercised here is becoming intolerable. Feeling confident that you would relieve our pain and support our honour, we sent a Vakil to represent to Mr. Thackeray, that he having taken charge of the treasury of the "Samsthan" and possessed himself of all the deeds and "Sanads" and having
appointed his mamalatadars, there was little advantage to us
to remain in the "Samsthan", that we had heard the promises
of making arrangements for us but, after his proceedings of
the nature described, we begged, therefore, for permission to
go to Poona and Bombay for the attainment of our wishes and
that failing in that quarter we proposed going to Banaras.

To this message we received answer that as we were about
to depart we need not have made the reference to him and that
we might go.

His language towards us differs daily. He is constantly
charging the vassals of the "Samsthan" with wrong. These per­
sons have lived happy in the service until the present. How
are they now to seek for employment elsewhere. Having been
once employed they can't be discharged. The language described
has been altered towards them who have faithfully and peacefully,
performed their duties. How can they now be mal-treated.

We have written and sent you this statement for your infor­
mation. By ordering Mr. Thackeray to continue the "Samsthan"
you will acquire fame. The garrisoning of the forts with
strangers, your subjects, is a measure now in contemplation.
A rumour of the arrival of troops from Kaladagi has reached us.
New servants or troops from Kaladagi have been into employ.

In a word, arrangements are making for no other purpose
than the full resumption of the "Samsthan". To collect troops
and drive out the child and to meet every word of remonstrance by rigour are acts in contemplation. We inform you of the circumstances.

Finally, we must look to you to give us possession of the "Samsthan", to support us as in former days, and thereby to acquire renown. Except yourself we have none to assist us. Feeling confidence in you, we have endured patiently all that has been done to us. Rachappa will inform you of the rest.

Chaplin remained quite indifferent to the requests of the royal ladies. Rani Channamma waited patiently for a week for a reply, from Chaplin. She finally made up her mind to face the crisis boldly. On 28th October 1824, she called all the Sardars and officers of the court and addressed them. She appraised them of all the steps taken by Thackeray to humiliate them. She was enraged at the treatment meted out to the members of the royal family and to the officers of the court. In an impassioned speech, she declared:

"Kittur is ours. We are masters of our own territory. The Britishers say that the adoption is not valid because we did not take their permission. Where is it stipulated that we should take their permission for taking a son in adoption. The political agent Mr. Thackeray, in his insolence of power has said that we have lied regarding the adoption. He is prepared to believe the words of a mere servant of the company
like Dr. Bell, but is not prepared to believe us. These Briti-
shers have come to our land on the pretext of carrying on 
trade and now seeing that we are quarrelling amongst ourselves, 
they want to grab our land and rule over us. They want us to 
pay them huge sums of "nazarana", They might have vanquished 
other rulers in this part of the country by their cunning and 
wicked manoeuvres. If the Peshwas have done some wrong to us, 
let us not forget that they are our own kith and kin. Some 
day, they may realise their follies and join hands, with us, 
to drive away these foreigners from our sacred land. Are 
these Britishers our kith and kin. Do they belong to our 
country. Thackeray and his sycophants are labouring under a 
great illusion that they can vanquish Kittur, a small state, 
in no time. They are certainly mistaken. They do not know 
that the people of Kittur love freedom more than life. This 
sacred land of Kittur has been sanctified by the blood of thou-
sands of martyrs who have fought for independence and held its 
banner of freedom flying high all these years. We are no doubt 
a small state. Our army compared to the British may be small 
in number. But they are not mercenaries. Patriotism and the 
love of this sacred soil and love of freedom, flows in their 
veins. Each one of us is equal to ten of their soldiers. We 
will tell Mr. Thackeray and Mr. Chaplin that we will not submit 
to them whatever be the consequences. Kittur will fight to 
the last man on its soil. They would die rather than be slaves 
of the British".
The inspiring speech of Rani Channamma roused the valour of the people assembled. The swords of the Kittur soldiers flashed. In one voice they all shouted, "Long Live Kittur". "Long Live Rani Channamma". Their shouts and the sound of bugles resounded on the ramparts of the Kittur Fort, The call to battle had been sounded.

An interview was conducted with Tatyasaheb Desai at Kittur dated 20th June 2000 Shree Desai stated as follows regarding Kittur Rani Channamma and her revolt against the British.

Kittur Channamma belongs to our family. Kittur was a state during Channamma's period. We are all grandsons of Channamma. Now Channamma's contribution has become the household talk of common people. She is the Second wife of Mallasarja. Her native place is Kakati. At her young age Channamma was married with Mallasarja. In those days, kings were allowed to marry more than one wife. Polygamy was in practice. Channamma's fight has become a model for the people of Karnataka towards the love for their motherland. It was by her only that Indian freedom struggle started. She is considered as the star and symbol of freedom struggle.

Mallasarja's kingdom was rich and people were happy in all respects. The same was continued by Shivalingarudrasarja. He was the most intelligent and capable ruler. He was given the "Sannad" (Authority Letter) by Thomas Munro in the year 1818.
So it became totally one whole kingdom and Kittur territory was fixed. He treated all his people equally and never discriminated among the rich and poor. He levied taxes on the people according to their professions. The kingdom began to fall after the first war of Kittur, that is in 1824. The walls of the fort started collapsing day by day. There was nobody to protect the fort.

Speaking about our State Government he said the State Government has totally neglected us. We have sent a number of letters of request but they have been of no use. But recently, the government has started the Kittur Festival in Kittur. It is also awarding the people for their excellent contribution towards social-service. But this much is not sufficient. But Government should protect the Kittur palace and fort. Government also should give compensation to the descendants of the family of Channamma.

Government has identified us as a descendant of Channamma and has sanctioned land and pension. But this is not sufficient. He said he will fight for the compensation till his last breath. Thomas Munro's "Sannad" says that Kitturs kingdom should continue from Generation to Generation and "Putra" to "Putra" and so we are the sons and we want to claim the right and get compensation.

Shree Desai further continued: "Now I am 85 years old. I have grand daughters and grandsons. I request the Government to compensate me and put an end to my struggle. I have one wood machine factory. But it is not working properly. I am facing
"LAND DISTRIBUTION OF LINEAL DESCENDANTS OF RANI KITTUR CHANNAMMA"*

133

Khanapur No.RD 61 LBM 66,
Taluka SANGALOE
3rd NOVEMBER 1966.

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* PROCEEDINGS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF MYSORE, DATED 11-7-1966, GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION SENT TO DIVISIONAL COMMISSIONER, BELGAUM DIVISION, BELGAUM FOR IMPLEMENTATION.
DISTRIBUTION OF FREEDOM FIGHTERS PENSION FOR LINEAL DESCENDANTS
OF RANI KITTUR CHANNAMMA *

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<td>Shri. Annanadeo Mallappa Desai - Kitturkar</td>
<td>₹100/-</td>
<td>G.O. No. DPAR 134 PES 85 (Political Pension)</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>&quot; Shankar Mallappa Desai - Kitturkar</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>&quot; Bapusaheb Appasaheb Desai - Kitturkar</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>&quot; Tatyasaneb Bapusaheb Desai - Kitturkar</td>
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<td>&quot; Koushoo Bapusaheb Desai - Kitturkar</td>
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<td>&quot; Narasheb Bapusaheb Desai - Kitturkar</td>
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<td>&quot; Mruthunjaya Bapusaheb Desai - Kitturkar</td>
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<td>&quot; Dhasaneb Bapusaheb Desai - Kitturkar</td>
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<td>&quot; Shashikant Bapusaheb Desai - Kitturkar</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>&quot; Kashinath Bapusaheb Desai - Kitturkar</td>
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* The Research Scholar after scanning through the original records, has compiled the above Table.
difficulty to lead my life. Till now I have spent more money for printing of Channamma's photos and to get compensation. Even now some belongings of Kittur Channamma are there in some of the families in Kittur. I myself here (Kittur) seen the weapons and flags. I have kept the name of Channamma to my grand daughters. This brings me happiness, but I am sad that I have never seen the face of my Great Channamma. But anyhow the Government may consider my request through this interview and bring Justice to me.

Another interview was held with Jayawant S. Desai, Kakati, Belgaum District, Dated 29th July 2000 about Rani Channamma.

Jayawant S. Desai resides in Kakati near Belgaum. He is 62 years old. He has served in the army and retired as a Commander. He is a blood relation of Channamma from the fourth generation. "Channamma is our Grandmother. We respect and worship her. I have three children, two sons and one daughter. My elder brother is staying in America. He is an Engineer. His name is Sadanand S. Desai. In America, women's day is celebrated in the memory of Channamma. During the speech her name came first, because they believe that she was the first lady to fight against the Britishers".

In Kittur, the main reason for the war with Britishers was the adoption of Shivalingappa. On this point, Channamma argued, "Who are the Britishers to interfere in our personal matters?"
But the Britishers did not care and always interfered in the matters of Kittur Kingdom. This led to war.

According to Jayawant Desai the coronation of Shivalingappa took place after the death of Shivalingarudrasarja. During her childhood days Channamma learnt all the skills of war from her Guru.

In the Second Battle field, Kittur lost because of the internal enemies and incorrect directions given to Channamma's loyal soldiers. Some soldiers were also bribed by the Britishers and thus they got all the secret information regarding the strength and strategy of Kittur army.

Kittur kingdom was helped by the neighbouring Kings and Soldiers. But there was lack of co-ordination and proper direction. Because of these, the battle was lost. Kakati is the native place of Channamma. This has been destroyed because of the carelessness of the people. Government has also not cared. This could be a very good Tourist place. But Government has not taken any measures about this. We have given many appeals (letters) to government to improve the birth place of Channamma.

Jayawant Desai also stated that, "God has given me everything and I don't expect any help from Government in the name of Channamma".
Channamma's property belongs to Raj Desai who is staying in Dharwad. He has decided to sell this property.

Channamma died in Bailhongal Jail. Nobody gave poison in her food. But it was a natural death. The main reason to adopt Shivalingappa was based on caste. He belonged to the same caste of Channamma. No other person belonging to other caste was permitted to be adopted by the Kittur family. The successor should be either blood related or from the same caste. Sangolli Rayanna though brave was not accepted as successor because he belonged to a lower caste. But he did not object and fully supported the adoption of 14 year old Shivalingappa. Rayanna's main aim was to release Channamma from Jail. But unfortunately Rayanna was captured and hanged at Nandgad. At present Channamma's name is a household talk and her life is presented through dramas and songs.

Another interview with Smt Girijabai Chandrakant Desai, Belgaum, Dated 29th July 2000. She stated about Rudramma and Kittur Administration as follows:

Smt Girijabai Chandrakant Desai, 50 years old, is a near relative of Rudramma, the first wife of Mallasarja, Her native place is Belavadi. Smt Girijabai is the daughter of Appasaheb and Maneshwari Desai of Belavadi. She was 14 years old when she was married with Chandrakant Desai. The researcher interviewed her and below is given a gist of the interview.
Smt Girijabai Chandrakant Desai stated that she was the fourth generation relative of Rudramma. "I was married in the blood relationship of my mother. Laxmibai is my mother-in-law and Basawant Rao is my father-in-law. My husband is the only son for them". Smt Girijabai also stated that at a very early age Rudramma was married to Mallasarja. She had two children. Rudramma and Channamma though being the two wives of Mallasarja, their relation and understanding was cordial and they behaved like sisters and friends and they never quarrelled regarding the family matters. They dedicated their life towards the welfare of the people of Kittur and they treated them like their own children. Mallasarja quarrelled with Tallur Desai. During this quarrel Mallasarja seized some territories of Tallur Desai. Because of this, Rudramma was angered and quarrelled with her husband. Rudramma came to her native place Tallur and stayed there only. As Rudramma was away, Mallasarja was going on hunting. On the way he took shelter in Kakati near Belgaum. Suddenly, he saw a tiger and wanted to kill it with his arrow, But at the same time another arrow came from opposite direction, which killed the tiger. Mallasarja observed the arrow and he was very pleased that Channamma was standing in front of the dead tiger. Thus he offered to marry Channamma. Thus this marriage took place accidentally.

In 1324 when Channamma fought with Britishers, there was an important supportive role played by Rudramma. In the battlefield,
Channamma being well-trained brave lady used the good tactics and finally won the war with the Britishers.

The people of Kittur called Rudramma and Channamma as their mother. They gave full respect and love to them. They always obeyed Rudramma and Channamma's ideas. But in the mean time Rudramma was ill. She had serious cough and this took her life. She was buried on the banks of river Malaprabha near Sangolli.

After the death of Shivalingarudrasarja, Shivalingappa was crowned as the next ruler of Kittur. He was the adopted son of Gowda of Mastamaradi village. Smt Girijabai said that after the death of Shivalingarudrasarja the coronation ceremony of Shivalingappa was conducted. But this was not accepted by the Britishers. They argued that Shivalingarudrasarja died without a son and secondly Shivalingappa was not a blood relation and this was not legal. When Tippu Sultan captured Mallasarja and kept him in Jail. Rudramma played a key role in getting the release of Mallasarja. If Mallasarja could not be released the Kittur Kingdom would have been merged with Mysore Kingdom.

Smt Girijabai Desai continued her talk and further told that in Kalmath there was a swamy by name Madivalappa. He was the Furu of Kittur Kingdom. But Girijabai told that there is no proof about the birth of Madivalappa. As per their ancestry it is learnt that Madivalappa was found sleeping on the Banana Leaf. This Madivalappa's words or decisions or Ideas were treated as
final and accepted by the people of Kittur. He was just like a
God. Bapusaheb and Madivalappa were very close to each other. 
But later there were some differences of opinion between the
two regarding the administrative matters. Bapusaheb went on a
pilgrimage. In the meantime he appointed another Guru in place
of Madivalappa. When Madivalappa returned to Kittur he came to
know the injustice done to him by Bapusaheb. So Madivalappa was
very upset. He took some mud in his hand three times and threw
it saying that the Kittur Kingdom will not survive and would be
destroyed. Listening to this, Bapusaheb ordered his soldiers to
capture Madivalappa but it was not possible. Finally Madivalappa
went to Garag and spent his last days with his disciples.

Smt Girijabai Desai also told that actually the main cause
for Kittur war was the coronation of Shivalingappa and his cere­
mony took place without the permission of Britishers. The Bri­
tishers argued that Shivalingappa was crowned as the King after
the death of Shivalingarudrasarja. After the war, all the sol­
diers and people of Kittur took the wealth and fled on norses and
elephants in all directions, and some time later Kittur was evac­
uated. Thus Kittur came under the control of Britishers.

Girijabai Desai further said, "Though I am the relative of
this Kittur family, I have not received any help or compensation
from the Government because I have not got any records to prove
it". During the freedom struggle in 1942, the records kept in
Tallur village were destroyed and burnt by the activists. Anyway, Tallur Rayangouda had collected some records and shown to the Government. The Government has given some land and pension as compensation.

Anyway, now there is an idea in the minds of people to erect a statue of Rudramma in Tallur village. At present an "Akkana-balaga", an association of women is established. Through this "Balaga" or Association they have started some welfare activities in the name of Rudramma.

When Kittur Channamma was kept in Jail, brave Sangolli Rayanna continued his fight against the Britishers. But unfortunately, he was captured and hanged at Nandgad. Nandi flag is the official flag of Kittur Kingdom. It was accepted from the time of Mallasarja. In this flag, there is a sword, sun, and moon, cow, and its colour is red. Nandi means God and the symbol sword stands for courage.

In this way Kittur Kingdom was destroyed and ruined. But the names of Rani Channamma and Rudramma are still alive in the minds and hearts of people of Kittur and Kannadigas.
In 1829, Sangolli Rayanna, a Soldier in Channamma's army, assembled an army of his own in order to wrest Kittur from the British and restore it to Channamma's adopted son. He was assisted in this by the chief of Surpur. However, Rayanna was betrayed by his own men and was handed over to the British. He was hanged to death by the British.

An interview was conducted with Mr. Puttaiah Siddaiah Swami in the month of 12th May 2000. This swami has been very poor and he has had half a dozen children. He is still living at Nandgad and working at the ripe old age of 95. As is the wont with such Swami, this village Swami lives on the various types of foods, grains, vegetables or fruits or other gifts given by the people. The Swami has been worshipping at the "Samadhi" of Sangolli Rayanna. He has done a great deal for the maintenance and preservation of this historical monument. The village leader called Aragavi Basappa Babu was able to collect an amount of Rs. 30,000/- by contribution and ticket sales etc. and Puttaiah Swami has been able to make use of this money for the repairs and maintenance of this monument. Former Chief Minister of Karnataka, the leader of the Janata Dal, Ramakrishna Hegade, sanctioned, during
his regime, an amount of rupees one lakh for the monument.
Another Chief Minister, the earlier one, Devaraj Urs,
(Former Chief Minister of Karnataka), visited this place,
Nandagad and inaugurated the monument pillar (Ashoka Sthambha)
erected in front of Rayanna's grave. The Swami also narrated
the story of how Rayanna was captured by the Britishers with
the help of his friends who betrayed him. The British
imperialists promised Mr. Venkana Gowda of Khodanpur and Shri
Lingana Gowda of Neginal that they would be given 300 acres
of land if they succeeded in killing or capturing alive Sangolli
Rayanna. As the later events made clear, the plan succeeded
and Sangolli Rayanna was captured. Mr. Lakappa who was mainly
instrumental in misguiding Rayanna, played the dirty trick.
It was Rayanna's habit every morning to take his bath in the
tank near the village. He never left behind his sword. Even
at the time of the bath he would hold the sword in between
his teeth. On the appointed day Lakappa accompanied Rayanna
to the place of bath and volunteered to hold the sword until
the bath was over.

However, when Rayanna was busy with his bath, the sword
was thrown into the tank. Thereafter, a blanket was thrown
over Rayanna and he was tied hand and foot to a cot and was dragged to the hill-side. This was how Rayanna was captured by the British with the assistance of his treacherous friends. A story has it that Shantanand Swami of Handibadaga was a Guru of Rayanna and this Guru had given Sanjivini (life giving substance) to Rayanna. Rayanna had concealed this gift in his thigh and no one knew about this except his mother. Because of this life perpetuating gift, Rayanna could not be killed by hanging although the British authorities tried thrice. It was said that in the nick of time, the rope would give way and the hanging could not be effected. The British authority were said to have got in touch with the Monarch in England and the Monarch, while expressing surprise, desired to see Rayanna and adopt him.

While breathing his last, Rayanna asked for water repeatedly but no water was given to him in his last moment. Rayanna, as a result, cursed the people of the place that they would suffer from sacrcity of water all through the years to come. In this place there was a banyan tree. The original banyan tree has disappeared, but a branch of that tree has been planted on Rayanna's monument, i.e., Samadhi. Married women who have no children are said to worship at the tree and tie cradles to the branches as a prayer for begetting offspring. There are
twelve temples in the place surrounding Nandgad. People generally go to these temples but a few do not go to the burial place of Rayanna due to caste prejudices. The Swami remarked that as far as he was concerned, Rayanna was his god and he was sure that one day all people of Nandgad regardless of their prejudice, would come and worship at the place where Rayanna was buried.

Another interview was held with Mr. Gangappa Vittappa Kuri of Sangolli village in the month of 14th May 2000. Kuri has been a simple farmer and he has been well-informed about Sangolli Rayanna and he has also proudly played the role of Sangolli Rayanna in village dramas. According to Kuri, Rayanna was brave and intelligent and he began his service as a "Walikar" (Village Watchman) at the age of 25. He worked as a soldier in the army of Channamma and Mallasarja. After the death of Mallasarja, Rayanna became virtually the right hand man of Kittur Channamma. Rayanna had an old house by the side of the river Malaprabha. However, as a result of floods his shelter was completely washed away. When Rayanna was 10 years old, he lost his father. His mother played an important role in bringing him up. Rayanna's elder cousin was a farm labourer. Rayanna did not receive any education. Kuri was glad that India's Prime Minister, Indira
Gandhi visited Kittur and, while praising many qualities and achievements of queen of Kittur and Sangolli Rayanna, she exhorted the people to remember the qualities and be grateful to the great leaders because they had fought against the British to preserve their lands and freedom. She went on to say that Kittur Channamma's name stood high in the list of those who fought for the freedom of the country against the British rule. She would ever be remembered and continue to inspire young people for generations. Rayanna's uncle, Lakappa, played a very important role (with the British authorities) in the capture and how he was hanged by the banyan tree at Nandgad.

Kuri hoped that the Government of India would provide some compensation to the Rogannavar family, the family of Rayanna, and would also provide some funds for the setting up of a statue of Rayanna at Sangolli. He also believed that the Government should come forward with a proposal to start some suitable institutions in the village. He was sure that people of Sangolli would never forget Rayanna, the freedom fighter.

Information regarding the early life of Rayanna was also obtained from some cassette recordings. Rayanna has been an inspiring figure in the history of north Karnataka and Kittur in particular. He has been rightly immortalised in the song and legend of the region. The new class of cassette recorders
who had to make records did not have to go far in search of a popular subject. They had it in the legendary role Rayanna played in the history of Karnataka and the Kittur region in particular. Being a song, this composition does not narrate the subject logically or in the usual historical sequence. Incidents are narrated in a dramatic style to heighten the effect and the heroic personality of Rayanna.

One incident relates to the visit of a white man (a Britisher) to the village (Sangolli). People of Kittur came to Sangolli and enquired about Rayanna. His mother Kenchavva told that Rayanna had gone out. Then some persons saw Rayanna approaching the house. The people asked the old lady to hide the white man (lest he should be harmed by Rayanna). Rayanna's mother flatly refused to comply with the request. She said that the white people had enslaved so many of our country-men and there was no justice in protecting them. Rayanna was her true son. He was like a tiger. It would be a shame to tell him not to oppose or fight against the British.

A landlord of the village informed Rayanna that the British had brought an army against the Kittur people. Chaplin was leading the army. Rayanna was unperturbed and defiant. He observed that these (the whites) were the people who had fomented disputes among Indians and they should not be spared.
The Village Folks observed that the Britishers were cruel people. They were non-vegetarians (They ate the meat of Fox and dog). Rayanna replied that such cruel people themselves should be devoured. He warned the village people that if they sided with the British, their heads would be chopped off. He said that he was not afraid of death and he would certainly like to die for the sake of Kittur and its people. Looking at his mother, he said that such people were responsible for bringing the Britishers to our country. They were digging their own grave.20

A little later, Rayanna had a meal in his house and returned to Kittur. He met the queen and told her about the army that had come under the leadership of Chaplin. The queen told Rayanna to be ready with the people of Kittur to put up a fight against Chaplin. Rayanna assured that he would do it. He was not one of those traitors who harmed the interest of the motherland. Unless the British were driven away, the people here could not live in peace.

Chaplin sent the British ambassador to negotiate with the queen. The British wanted a treasury of peace. But the queen found the terms unacceptable and a decision was taken to face the British on the battlefield. The ambassador was asked not

to utter even a single word (more) and quit. The queen ordered mobilisation. Rayanna was asked to alert and assemble the people of Kittur to put up a determined fight against the British.

Another incident relates to the village Kulkarni (who had given a loan to Kenchavva Rayanna's mother). Now the Kulkarni demanded the money back. When Kenchavva was unable to repay the loan, as a punishment, a stone was put on her head. Kenchavva cursed the Kulkarni, saying that the same fate would await his mother and sister and that he would be properly punished by her son. In the meantime, a near relative arranged to repay the pending amount. Now the Kulkarni requested the protection from the Mamlatdar. That officer did not help. He said that if he gave protection to the Kulkarni, who would give protection to him.

In the meantime, Rayanna was released on bail by Mellagari Rangappa. Rayanna straight went to the house of the Kulkarni and chopped off his head. At this time, Channamma was in Jail (at Bailhongal). Rayanna put on the clothes of a Sadhu and met her. She could not recognise him. Rayanna threw away the garb and touched her feet. Channamma blessed and urged him to continue his fight. She also advised him to seek the assistance of the ruler of Kolhapur. However, that was not available. Rayanna's immediate aim was to free the queen from
the Jail. The recorded cassette touches on the last days of Rayanna. As usual, he went for his daily bath at village tank and there his relative Lakappa took the sword and threw it into the tank and soon he was pounced upon and tied hand and feet. He became a prisoner of the British. Rayanna spoke a few words to his mother. He said that he had not done any injustice nor had he done anything wrong. At that moment, his mother collapsed and breathed her last.

Before being hanged, Rayanna spoke a few words to his people. He advised them to continue to unite and fight for the state. His was a heroic death. The name of Rayanna cannot be forgotten. It will remain fresh in the history of Karnataka and India.

We have given in the preceding pages a brief account of the life and early circumstances of Sangolli Rayanna. This account has been pieced together from the data collected from various sources. The documentary data were the first to be used. These have been supplemented by the interviews which the researcher had with important persons who could give information on Rayanna. In such cases, duplications are likely to be encountered. May be treated as a popular source of information and in this context the most important incidents in the life and career of Rayanna have been highlighted. For the genealogy, reliance had to be placed on the traditional
sources of information. In this case, the Halbar community people have been quite useful. If we depend merely on the family sources or information given by relations, we are likely to face inadequacies because the present family members may not have sufficient information specially on the older generations. The Halbars are something like the family historians and they also have written records. The Halbars have been doing this work for generations and hence they keep information on the earlier generations also. In this sense, they are almost as authentic as the Government record keepers but in a sense they are more informative because their forefathers have passed on data on the earlier generations also. In this case, we have been able to obtain the continuous history of the family from 1226 A.D.

The present members of Rayanna's family are not so well off. So many relations of the freedom fighters in the recent times have been favoured with pensions and other benefits. These benefits are given both by the Government of India as well as the State Governments. Rayanna's family members and others have been lucky in as much as the State Government, specially the two Chief Ministers, Ramakrishna Hegade and Devaraj Urs, have come forward with donations and assistance, for the maintenance of Rayanna's monuments. However, this has not solved the problem of pension for the not so well-off descendants of Rayanna. Nor should this cause any surprise.
In this, as well as other matters, one needs to be well-connected. Bogus cause comes to light at least once in a while. Office records may not always be available. And they may not always be authentic. When one is somewhat poor and neglected, one needs a strong godfather. Rayanna's descendants seem to have lacked such a helpful person and hence their rather indifferent circumstances. Rayanna himself was not well off and this seems to have continued down the line.

Another significant thing about Rayanna's rise and career is that although he belonged to a lowly backward caste and although he was poor, he managed to get, and he was given a vital position in the affairs of the Kittur State. This speaks volumes of his honesty, loyalty and straightforward fight. Rayannas, have gone to the gallows for the sake of freedom for their country, in their fight against the British imperialists. It speaks well of the queen too who had entrusted Rayanna with so much of vital fight. In spite of the Kittur rulers belonging to the upper castes, they did not stop taking the common people, the low-caste people, into confidence, to protect the state and bring freedom and happiness to its people.

Sometimes Rani Channamma of Kittur is compared with Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi. The policy of annexation was in itself unexceptionable. Even apart from considerations of selfinterest on the part of the British, it was not to the
lasting good of India herself that her political map should be disfigured by a plethora of semi-autonomous and backward principalities. Enlightened opinion would have heartily endorsed Dalhousie's policy if its execution had not been capricious. None could doubt or challenge the right of paramount power to regulate successions to vacant gadis in the state or to mete out the extreme punishment of annexation to those which became guilty of gross misrule. Even the doctrine of lapse would have been upheld if the whole field of the states' relationship with the paramount power had been defined on the basis of well-understood principles.

Gangadhar Rao, alias Baba Saheb Newalkar, the Raja of Jhansi, died in 1854 without a male issue. Ignoring the solemn undertaking of 1817, Dalhousie ordered the state's annexation. Rani Lakshmibai, the widow of Gangadhar Rao, vainly protested against the British Government's wanton violation of its plighted word. To add "Meanness to injury", as Malleson rightly remarks, the Governor General granted her a pittance of 6,000 Dollars a year, which was further encumbered with the debts of her late husband. Lakshmibai was a young and spirited woman who regarded the whole transaction as a calculated affront to her husband's illustrious family and a gross injustice to herself.*

*V.B.Kulkarni, "Heroes who made History". Hind Kitabs Limited, Bombay, 1951, p.201.
Three years of British Raj in her beloved Jhansi had convinced her that no nation could be happy or prosperous under foreign rule, even if the fetters were made of gold. There was no community of interests between the alien rulers and their subjects. The whole system was, in her eyes, unnatural and degrading to her people.

June 9, 1857, was a memorable day for the people and the Rani of Jhansi. The standard of Swaraj, which had been handed down three years before, proudly fluttered again on the ramparts of the historic fortress. The event was one of thanksgiving and rejoicing. The people of Jhansi adored their Rani. She had all the noble qualities that entitled her to their affection and esteem. She was pious, gentle, generous, wise and brave. She was, in short, an extraordinary woman.

The following quotation from Malleson bears eloquent testimony to the sagacity of this remarkable lady. He writes; "She proved herself a most capable ruler. She opened a mint, fortified the strong places, cast cannon, raised fresh troops. Into every act of her Government, she threw all the energy of a strong and resolve character. Possessing considerable personal attractions, being young, vigorous and not afraid to show herself to the multitude, she gained a great influence over the hearts of her people. It was this influence, this force of character, added to a splendid and inspiring courage,
that enabled her some months later to offer to the English troops, under Sir Hugh Rose, a resistance which made to a less able commander might even have been successful. A great tribute this by a historian from whom such unqualified encomiums could not be easily elicited.

The valiant Rani was, however, battling with an in-exorable fate. The cause of the so called 'rebels' was indeed a hopeless one. In the rest of the country, the revolt had not been carefully planned nor was it carried out with the foresight and determination so essential in an undertaking of such a momentous character. In March 1858, the British Army, commanded by Sir Hugh Rose, invested the fort of Jhansi, which was garrisoned by 11,000 men. The heroism with which men, women and children defended the fort constitutes a landmark in the history of Indian chivalry. With indefatigable energy, the Rani surprised everything and cheered up the defenders infusing into them her own indomitable courage and determination.

On the night of April 4, 1858, Lakshmibai donning the robes of a trooper, boldly sallied out of the fortress. Accompanied by a sleek band of retainers, she rode to Kalpi, where she was joined by the redoubtable Tatia Tope, Rao Saheb Peshwa and their adherents. Sir Hugh Rose would have

22. Ibid., p.203.
given anything to secure the person of the Rani but the discov-
ery of her escape was made too late for successful pursuit. The revolutionaries decided at Kalpi to give battle to the enemy. In the action fought at Kuncngaon, the Rani disting-
guished herself by her superb valour, but the odds were heavily against the revolutionaries.

The Rani of Jhansi decided not to return from the battle-
field except as victor, "I am ready", she declared, "with all my heart and soul to do my duty." Her preparation for the final trial with fate is described by Mr. Savarkar. He writes, "She donned her usual military uniform, rode a noble steed, took out her gem studded sword from the sheath, and ordered the army under her to march on".

Historians have fully recorded the skill, the heroism and the tenacity with which she fought on that fateful day says a British Writer, "Immediately the beautiful Rani went over the field and made a firm stand against the array of Sir Hugh Rose. She led her troops to repeated and fierce attacks and though her ranks were pierced through and were gradually becoming thinner and thinner, the Rani was seen in the fore-
most rank, rallying her scattered troops and performing prodigies of valour. But all was of no avail. The camel corps, pushed up by Sir Hugh Rose in person, broke her last line. Still, the dauntless and heroic Rani heeded her own.

23. Ibid., p. 205.
The battle was lost, but Lakshmibai was still in the thick of it. Her horse, a noble creature, sensing danger to its mistress's life carried her away from the stricken field in spite of her efforts. It fled like a winged bird, but before the beast and its fair rider could reach a place of safety, it stumbled while fording a stream. The Rani was overtaken by a Hussar who ignorant of her sex, cut her down. Thus on June 18, 1858, perished Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi, the great heroine of India, whose memory is kept alive in history, song and ballad, so that generations of her countrymen might draw inspiration as much from her exploits as from her suffering and sacrifice.