

# THE GREAT INDIAN MILITARY PERSONALITIES IN WARFARE – AN ANALYSIS

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## **Abstract**

Warfare throughout history has been participation by men and women. So many authentic and accurate records are sprinkled all over India in different places which throw light on the ancient art of warfare and military leadership. In India, so many great personalities were leave their records of warfare and tactics to us. The present paper “The Great Indian Military Personalities In Warfare- An Analysis” through the coloured lights especially the Great Epic Ramayana –Lord Rama’s Warfare, Great Epic Mahabharatha –Lord Krishna’s Warfare Advice; The Rig Veda- Dasarajan Warfare; King Porus War with Alexander; Chandra Gupta Maurya’s War with Seleukos Nikator; Rajaraja Chola –I’s Warfare; Rajendra -I’s Naval Warfare; Prithviraj War with Muhammad of Ghur; Krishnadeva Raya of Vijayanagar Emperor and General SHFJ Manekshaw, the then Chief of Army Staff of Indian Army are some vital specimens contenders of this research study in detail approach. Apart from men, women have also played crucial role in warfare. According to Indian history, several women warriors have led the belonging region in front, fight many crucial wars. The Rig Veda mentions a female warrior named Vishpala, Queen Rani Rudrama Devi of the Kakatiya dynasty, Rani Abbakka Chowta of Ullal (Tulu Nadu), Rani Velu Nachiyar, the princess of Ramanathapuram and Ahilyabai Holkar, Queen of the Malwa kingdom and other women personalities were tried to expose their braveness to save the Indian Sub-continent at various time.

**Key Words :** King Porus Warfare, Chandra Gupta Maurya’s Warfare, Rajaraja Chola –I’s Warfare; Rani Velu Nachiyar Warfare, General SHFJ Manekshaw Warfare

## **Introduction**

Military History of India is largely an unexplored subject. Scholars have covered mostly the administrative, social, political, cultural, economic and religious aspects of great rulers of India, but they have been either silent or written little about the military matters. Because, military historical literature found in India primarily find personal accounts and mostly very rarely available. Army plays an important role to ensure national security. Throughout the ages, decisive battles have taken place in the World at various occasions and

places effecting the fate and history of the nations concerned. India is not devoid of these, and here too a number of decisive battles have been fought in the past.

Ancient Indian army was consisting of four categories Viz, the Chariot Corps (Rath Vahini), the Elephant Corps (Gaj Vahini), the Cavalry (Vaji Vahini) and Infantry (Padati). The Chariots Corps was used to attack or counter attack the enemy's rear and also used to occupy enemy's position suddenly. Oxen were used as transporters to carry chariots over long distance. Horses were used in chariots only on the battlefield. Elephant Corps was used in the role of armour Viz. flank protection and protect surprise consequence in front. Also elephants were used for engineering works like building roads and camping grounds, water crossing and destruction of field defences. Cavalry was used to break the obstacles, flank protection and pursuit. Horses were used for speed communication of messages at the time of battle. Infantry or the foot soldiers were more supportive. It was an integral part of an army. They played escort role for close contact.[1] In the war they used various war equipments like spears, swords, bows and arrows. Before the invasion of Alexander due to lack of authentic records, India is not having any records related to military history.

## Methodology

The study would be both descriptive and investigative. By the way of historical research methodology, several information's are collected from different kinds. In this research, both primary and secondary sources are used.

### Objectives of the Study

The main aims of this paper are: -

- (a) To review the current literature of the study area.
- (b) To bring out the leadership excellence of the two epics Ramayana and Mahabharatha.
- (c) To know the military divisions of the Ancient India.
- (d) To evaluate the Indian Tribe Derbikes War with Cyrus
- (e) To known the King Porus War with Alexander
- (f) To illustrate land expeditions and naval expeditions of the Imperial Cholas.
- (g) To study the excellence of the Cholas navy.
- (h) To know the Military achievements of General Sam Manekshaw.
- (i) To explore women leadership in warfare.

## Indus Valley Civilization in Warfare

Only limited authentic and accurate records are sprinkled all over India in different places which throw light on the ancient art of war and Indian military leadership. The Harappan or Indus Valley Civilization (3000-1900 BCE) people were basically peace loving. Indus Valley people were used simple, medium weapons and some type of blades for self protection. Also a small number of swords have been found in excavations.[2] For their defensive, they constructed massive fortification walls used mud and backed bricks in various

sites like Kalibangan,[3] Kuntasi,[4] Banawali,[5] Lothal,[6] Pabumath, Desalpur, Rojdi,[7] Surkotada, Kotada and Gola Dhoro in India; Harappa, Kot Diji, Bala Kot, Sotka-koh, Sutkagen-dor in Pakistan.[8] The seals of Indus valley civilization there was a pictorial writing system based on the Semitic system through not fully deciphered. A small male torso in limestone found at Harappa is the most notable piece of sculpture. No single name was identified as military leader in the history of Indus Valley Civilization. Also, they did not know the use of the horse in warfare but possibility of usages of Bull. The other important piece of evidence that the Harappans had probably large vessels capable of being used at seas is a naval dock yard unearthed at Lothal in Gujarat dimensions are 710 feet long and 120 feet broad.[9] The measurement suggests that it might have been either as a dock for large sized sea going vessels for business transportation cum sea warfare usages.

### **Great Epic Ramayana –Lord Rama in Warfare**

The two epics Ramayana and Mahabharatha created the fundamental framework around which the Indian civilization is built, it is significant that both the epics are about the wars fought under the aegis of our greatest heroes, Lord Rama and Krishna. Lord Rama's great achievement was himself he organized, trained and personally led an army against the greatest emperor Ravana of Lanka (Ceylon). In every day battle, he would visit wounded and killed, at the end of the day he sat down with his advisor to plan the strategy of the next day battle. The end of the war, Lord Rama emerged as a great military personality.

### **Great Epic Mahabharatha –Lord Krishna's Warfare Advice**

The Mahabharatha sketches the battle, which lasted for eighteen days. The force level described as 18 'Akshaunis', seven with Pandavas and eleven with Kauravas. The strength of Akshaunis was 1,09,350 men which is equivalent of a modern Field Army. When, Lord Krishna describing his high points in various fields tells to Arjun. The armies in the Mahabharatha age were organized in chariots (Ratha), elephants (Gaja), horses (Ashwa) and infantry (Padatee) in a triangular (Vyuha) pattern. The Vyuha relied on a well laid set of battle drills to ensure swift decision and action and to reduce the fog and friction of war. The conference of the period emphasized valour, honour and fidelity. With help of Lord Krishna, the technical military adviser of the Pandavas, they won by the battle.[10]

### **The Rig Veda- Dasarajan Warfare**

The Rig Veda gives us interesting details of the Dasarajan, the battle of Ten Kings about 1900 BCE, the war fought on the bank of the Parusni (Ravi) river, which Sudas, the Bharata king of the tribe, in the surprise attack and crushing defeat on the confederacy of the ten kings.[11]

## Indian Border Land Tribe Derbikes War with Cyrus

According to three Greek writers Herodotus, Ctesias and Xenophon mention that Cyrus (558-530 BCE), the founder of the Achaemenian empire of Persia conquered some parts to the north western borders of India (not the land west of the Indus). The Indians fought on behalf of some border land tribe of the name of Derbikes against Cyrus and inflicted a wound on the emperor who died of it.[12]

## King Porus War with Alexander

During Alexander's campaign, his representative created fear to opponents to leave the battle field on his great name. King Porus, who ruled kingdom between rivers Jhelum and Chenab. The two armies met on the sandy Karrai plain in battle of Hydaspes in May 326 BCE. Porus deployed his army in front his elephant in such manner for defence to strike enemy's cavalry, infantry armed with heavy two-edged swords along with long bow deployed in both sides and rear. Also, heavy weight chariots were deployed both flanks behind the cavalry. Alexander's troops attacked front and back side.[13] Indian king Porus fought with great courage and found captured with nine wounds on his body[14] but did not flee the battle-field. Alexander won the battle because his army had greater mobility particularly of the cavalry and mounted archers, while the Indians were badly equipped with slow-going elephants, infantry and archers on foot.

## Chandra Gupta Maurya's War with Seleukos Nikator

With the key advice of Kautilya, Chandra Gupta Maurya extended his kingdom from Afghanistan in the northwest; Bengal in the east; the Himalayas in the north and the the Vindhya ranges in the south. Under the military leadership of Chandra Gupta Maurya, outmatched Seleukos Nikator who had been a general of Alexander the Great, in his northern campaigns to Afghanistan about 303 BCE and able to claim Aria (Herat), Aaropanisadi (Kabul), Arachosia (Kandhar) and Gedrossia (Makram) regions from Greeks.[15] Chandra Gupta Maurya was the first Indian military (King) personality controlled larger army and overthrew the foreign army i.e., Greek army from northwest region.[16] The Greeks in return were presented 500 war elephants. The rivalry was replaced by friendship that culminated in the matrimonial between Chandra Gupta Maurya and Seleukos Nikator.

## The Imperial Chola's Army and Naval Power

The imperial Cholas have a brilliant standing Army with more than 1.5 lakh troops.[17] During the region of Rajaraja I and Rajendra-I they had three wings of the army or '*Munrukai Mahasenai*' which is found in the inscription.[18] Army consisted of chiefly infantry (*Villigal*-bow men, sword men and Spears men), cavalry (*Kudiraisevakar*), elephants (*Yanaiyatkal or Kanjaramallar*) and all these wings were well disciplined. [19] The Chola army in the early period was called '*Kaikkolapperumbadai*' which means a big army of men

distinguished by the strength of their arms.[20] The Chola army had as many as 31 regiments and later extended upto 70.[21] Also a new prominent regiment was called '*Velaikkararpadai*' and it contained 14 regiments. It divided into two types i.e *Idangai Velaikkarar* and *Valankai Velaikkarar*. They were the most permanent and faithful troops in the royal service. Their designation involved that they were ever ready to defend the king and his cause with their lives when the occasion arosed.[22] The Chola army was spread all over the country in the form of local garrisons. The cantonments were called '*Kadagams*'. [23] The regiment '*Viracola-anukkar*' seems to have been connected with the protection of temples. During maritime journey generally *kalam, mitavai, kappal, odam, padahu, kattumaram* are used but no records are available to know about their ship-industry or naval strength of the Cholas. As per epigraphical, archaeological and Travellers' records Kayalpattinam, Periapattinam, Devipattinam and Nagapattinam were important port town of coast. These ports had maritime relation with the Arabian, Southeast Asia and China countries'. It is interesting to note that during this period there was an active horse trade in this coast with the Arabian countries by the merchants of West Coast of India.[24] Imperial Cholas had the merchant ships that have been assembled to carry troops. While *Kattu Maran* was the basic floatation element that represent a mobile expeditionary proposal for soldiers to be carried a ground.[25]

### **Rajaraja Chola –I's Warfare**

Rajaraja was the greatest of the imperial Cholas and was son of Parantaka II and Vanavan Mahadevi. During his Southern Campaign, he defeated the pandya ruler Amarabhujanga,[26] the Chera ruler Bhaskara Ravivarman Tiruvadi[27] in Kadalur Salai (a part of Trivandrum)[28] over the naval fleets and breaks the supremacy in west coast by the Chola ruler Rajaraja I. When Rajaraja established maritime power in south India and his contemporary in Ceylon was Mahenda V, who frequently allied themselves with the Pandyas and Cheras. Hence he extended an invasion of Ceylon[29] was happened before 993 A.D., because it was included Rajaraja Cholas 8<sup>th</sup> regal year '*Meykirti*' in 993 A.D.[30] When Rajaraja's strong naval troops landed in Ceylon, and easily acquired control the northern part of Ceylon.[31] During the war the Anuradhapura, the capital of Ceylon over 1000 years was destroyed and Polonnaruva was made the new capital.[32] Anuradhapura was given a new name as *Jananathamangalam*. [33] Then, he found his chance and made himself king of Northern Ceylon which became the territory under the name of *Mummudi-Chola-Mandalam*. [34] Rajaraja Chola-I completed his career of conquest and by capturing 12000 Islands[35] which were identified with the Laccadives and Maldives situated to the south-west of Chera country in the Arabian Sea. This naval expedition shows the naval power of Cholas.

### **Rajendra Chola –I's Warfare**

Rajendra Chola I (1014-1044 A.D.), the great son of Rajaraja Chola I, who further extended naval expedition and fully controlled Ceylon, Anadaman and Nicobar Islands.[36] He travelled more than 2500 nautical miles from Tamil country (one side travelling distance)

and fought battles on land, after his navy defeated Sailendra Empire, Vijayatungavarman became prisoner in the hands of Rajendra I's strong Naval fleet in Sumatra Islands in 1025 A.D.[37] Also, he defeated Java and neighbouring Islands[38] Cambodia, Thailand, Malaya, Kalimantan, (Modern Borneo) and Sulawesi (modern Celebs) Islands and controlled the sea routes from India to China. Here, Rajendra-I was an outstanding personality acted as Land Commander and Naval Admiral. None other military leader in India could possess such an extraordinary achievement so far.

### **Prithviraj War with Muhammad of Ghur**

In 1191 A.D., Muhammad of Ghur marched to Punjab and fought in the battle of Tarain against Prithviraj Chauhan, the powerful king of Ajmer and Delhi. In the first battle for the lordship of Hindustan, Muhammad divided his army into three divisions and extended them on his front. Prithviraj opened the attack and continued to keep up a concentrated fire. Muhammad of Ghur's two flank having been defeated and disappeared and he was seriously wounded and had retired to Ghazni. It was a great decisive victory of Prithviraj Chauhan against a foreign invader,[39] but a year later 1192 A.D., he further met Prithviraj, by used mobile tactics and captured Prithviraj, later killed and Muhammad laid the foundation of Muslim rule in north India.[40] The Chauhan ruler also displayed exceptional carelessness on the night before the battle by treating in festivities and allowing his troops to do the same.

### **Krishnadeva Raya of Vijayanagar Emperor**

Krishnadeva Raya, the great Vijayanagar Emperor united the South India. For easy and better administration, he had divided his territory into more than 200 Nayakdom. Nayakas were the vassals of the Vijayanagar rulers, were able to supply 3,20,000-foot soldiers, 21,600 horses and 235 elephants to Vijayanagar.[41] Nuniz has given an account that Achyuta Raja maintained six lakhs of soldiers and 24,000 horses sent by his nobles.[42] In fact, after passing of Krishnadeva Raya in 1529 A.D., the signal for all the opponents of Vijayanagar to recommence their attacks on that kingdom. Prataparudra Gajapathi and Ismail Adil Shah made concurrent attacks upon Vijayanagar in the confidence of recuperating what they have lost during the earlier times. 'In 1565 A.D., the central forces of the Bahminis Sultanates of Bijapur, Golkonda, Ahamed Nagar and Bidar defeated the army of Vijaya Nagar empire in a decisive battle at Talaikota'.[43] Due to disloyal of Nayaks Vijaya Nagar emperor lost the war.

### **Indian Land Encroachment by British**

The first direct sea route from Europe to India via Cape of Good Hope was opened by Portugal representative Vasco-da-Gama who reached the coast of Calicut in May, 1498 A.D. Later, the European nationals Viz., the Dutch, the English and the French came to India primarily for the purpose of trade. It was only afterwards that they realised the necessity of entering into Indian Politics and occupy the Indian Territory. 'The first English company

initiated to trade in 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1600 A.D and established their factory at Surat in India in 1612 A.D.’[44] Afterwards, they established their factories in Ahmadabad, Ajmer, Agra, Patna, Kasimbazar, Calcutta, Dacca and Bombay.[45] In 1708 A.D., the import of Indian goods in England was to five lakh Pounds, it increased to 17 lakh pounds in 1740 A.D.[46] For their personal and business safety from local and external they laid an army in India. Slowly entered internal administration, gradually encroached our country, suppressed local rulers by forcefully and finally entirely controlled Indian sub-continent till 1947 A.D.

### **General Sam Manekshaw**

After independence, India fought 1948, 1965 and 1971 war with Pakistan and 1962 war with China. In 1971 A.D., when General SHFJ Manekshaw was the then Chief of Army Staff (COAS) of Indian Army and Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. At the time, conflict between east and west Pakistan aroused, Gen. Manekshaw as Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee utilised his World War-II experience, freely exchanged his ideas amongst chief, and could plan on unquestioned armed forces supremacy and blockade on the east. At the time Operation Chengiz Khan was the code name assigned by Pakistan and to pre-emptive strike ‘in the gap between 17.40 to 18.06 hrs on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1971, aircraft of the Pakistani Air Force mounted simultaneous attacks on several Indian Air Force airfields. The airfields subjected to air attack were Srinagar and Awantipur in the Kashmir Valley; Pathankot, Amritsar and Sadek (near Ferozepore) in the Punjab and Uttarlai (near Barmer) in Rajasthan’.[47] General Manekshaw had made full use of the eight-month’s interval from 26<sup>th</sup> March to 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1971 and prepare for operations in the east. On 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1971 onwards General Manekshaw implemented his war strategy plans with effective manner and frequently General Manekshaw gave messages through all India Radio broadcast to the Pakistani troops in Bangladesh on 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1971 for surrender. Pakistan troops started to surrender with in short duration. The 1971 conflict, under military leadership General Manekshaw, Pakistan not able to stand 13 days and war was closed within 13 days. On 16<sup>th</sup> December, 1971, at 16.31 hrs the Pakistani forces under Lt.Gen. A.A.K. Niazi, along with 93,000 Pakistani forces unconditionally surrendered and a new nation emerged. Bangladesh became a reality. For this brilliant land campaign, the credit rightly went to the armed forces leadership, particularly the Army Chief, Gen. Sam Manekshaw.

Indian troops won their last great victory against a foreign army of importance in 303 B.C, when Chandragupta Maurya’s army defeated Selucus Nicator. After 2,300 years of unremitting defeats of Indian armies against every invading army, Gen. Sam Manekshaw made the country experience the shine of a stunning victory against the Pakistan Army. That would remind Field Marahal Manekshaw’s unique position in Indian Military history.[48]

### **Women Leadership in Warfare**

Warfare throughout history has mainly been participation by men, but often women have also played crucial role. According to Indian history, several women warriors have led

the belonging region in front, fight many crucial wars and documented in several written records. Some of the Indian women leadership involvement indicates by accident of birth or family connection or others by force of circumstance from humble origins. The following is a partial list of outstanding women who participated in warfare. 'The Rig Veda RV-1 and RV-10 (1200-1000 BCE) mentions a female warrior named Vishpala, who lost a leg in battle and returned warfare'[49]. Razia Sultana, was the first Muslim women ruler of Delhi in India from 1236 to 1240 A.D. She took military training, led armies and administered her kingdom. She defeated her brother with the support of the people of Delhi and set up proper and complete law and order in her empire[50]. Queen Rani Rudrama Devi of the Kakatiya dynasty on the Deccan Plateau led her troops in the battle and was killed in the battle in 1289 A.D.

Rani Abbakka Chowta of Ullal (Tulu Nadu) became one of the earliest Indians to fight the colonial powers and she broke down several Portuguese attempts to capture her territory in the latter half of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century[51]. In 1564 A.D., Indian Queen Rani Durgawathi was a Rajput, led her forces against the Mughal Emperor Akbar's General Asaf Khan, While fighting bravely with enemy and she scarified her life for his region.[52] Chand Bibi (1550-1599 A.D.) also known as Chand Khatun or Chand Sultana, was an Indian Muslim Women warrior. She acted as the Regent of Bijapur (1580-90 A.D.) and Regent of Ahmednagar (1596-99 A.D.). She is best known for defending Ahmednagar against the Mughal forces of Emperor Akbar[53]. In 17<sup>th</sup> Century, a Sikh woman Bibi Dalair, Rani Velu Nachiyar, the princess of Ramanathapuram, the Queen of Tamil origin to fight against the British and won against the British in 1780 A.D., Kaur fought against the Mughals by rallying 100 Sikh women against them. She was killed and Sikhs considered her as martyr. In 17<sup>th</sup> Century, Karnataka State Shimoga district Keladi Nayaka dynasty had a brave Queen Keladi Chennamma, who ruled over 25 years of the Keladi kingdom of India and fights the Mughals Army of Aurangzeb.

In 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Ahilyabai Holkar, Indian Queen of the Malwa kingdom personally led troops into battle.[54] Sikh princess Bibi Rajindar Kaur led 3,000 soldiers to rescue her cousin who was defeated by Hari Singh in 1778 A.D.[55] In 1796 A.D., Sikh princess Bibi Sahib Kaur led armies against the British and won battles against a British General[56]. formed a woman's army named "Udaiyaal". On destroy the British stock ammunition, she used the first human bomb [57]. During the Great Revolt of 1857-58 A.D., Rani Lakshmi Bai from Jhansi region led battles against the British [58]. During World War-II, Subhas Chandra Bose encouraged women brigade of the Indian National Army (INA), Rani of Jhansi Regiment. He chose the term Rani as a symbol to create a patriotic nationalistic feeling and an imagery of powerful, efficient women and to develop the characteristics of active leadership and responsibility [59] headed by Captain Lakshmi Swaminathan. From ancient period to Independence, women tried to expose their braveness to save the Indian Sub-continent.

## Conclusion

Above said are some instances of Indian personalities who either stopped or defeated invaders. Indian military leaders won various great victories against foreign troops/local in battle fields but so many authentic records are till untraceable. However, due to lack of internal unity and having consisted of small kingdoms they were not able to achieve victory against the invaders. King Porus, Chandra Gupta Maurya, Rajaraja Chola –I, Rajendra -I, Prithviraj, Krishnadeva Raya and SHFJ Manekshaw are some vigorous sampling challengers who fought against enemies with brave and courage with various war strategies. Apart from men, women have also played crucial role in warfare. Several Indian women warriors have led the belonging region in front, fight many crucial wars by Queen Rani Rudrama Devi, Rani Abbakka Chowta of Ullal, Rani Velu Nachiyar, Queen Keladi Chennamma Queen Ahilyabai Holkar and Rani Lakshmi Bai. The Mahabharatha sketches the battle, which lasted for 18 days; 1965 Indo-Pak conflict was of 22 days duration while the 1971 conflict with Pakistan was closed within 13 days. In future war may be a too short time; war technology and weapons are too much advance; reaction time also very less, sacrifices of lives in battle field for nation also may more but the Indian combatant's leadership whose patriotism will warranted always for nation against enemies.

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