

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Subhadra Kumari Chauhan**

**- poems -**

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## **Subhadra Kumari Chauhan (1904 - 15 February 1948)**

Subhadra Kumari Chauhan was an Indian poetess distinguished Indian poetess, whose compositions used to be very emotionally charged. Her most well-known composition is Jhansi Ki Rani narrating the life of the brave Jhansi Ki Rani, Lakshmi Bai. Of the entire Hindi literature, it is this poem that's most recited and sung by the people of India. The government of India has named an Indian coast guard ship in her remembrance.

### Early Life and Marriage

Born in 1904 at Nihalpur village in Allahabad District in Uttar Pradesh. Her father's name was Dileep Chauhan. She initially studied in the Crosthwaite Girls' School in Allahabad and passed the middle-school examination in 1919. After her marriage to Thakur Lakshman Singh Chauhan of Khandwa in the same year, she moved to Jabalpur.

### Career

Subhadra Kumari Chauhan joined the famous Non-Cooperation Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1921 and became the very first woman Satyagrahi to court arrest in Nagpur. She was jailed twice for her involvement in protests against the British rule in 1923 and 1942.

### Writing Career

She has authored a number of popular works in Hindi poetry. Her most famous composition is Jhansi Ki Rani, an emotionally charged poem describing the life of Rani Lakshmi Bai. The poem is one of the most recited and sung poems in Hindi literature. This and her other poems, Veeron Ka Kaisa Ho Basant, Rakhi Ki Chhunauti and Vida, openly talk about the freedom movement. They are said to have inspired great numbers of Indian youth to participate in the Indian Freedom Movement. Here is the opening stanza of Jhansi ki Rani:

"The thrones shook and royalties scowled  
Old India was re-invigorated with new youth  
People realised the value of lost freedom  
Everybody was determined to throw the foreigners out  
The old sword glistened again in 1857  
This story we heard from the mouths of Bundel bards  
Like a man she fought, she was the Queen of Jhansi"

Subhadra Kumari Chauhan wrote in the Khariboli dialect of Hindi, in a simple, clear style. Apart from heroic poems, she also wrote poems for children. She

wrote some short stories based on the life of the middle class too.

#### Death

She died in February 15, 1948 in a car accident near kalbodi (in Seoni,MP). An Indian Coast Guard ship has been named after her. A Statue of Subhadra Kumari Chauhan has been installed by the M.P Govt.in front of the Municipal Corporation office of Jabalpur.

#### Works:

##### Collections of Poems

Tridhara  
Mukul (1930)  
Yeh Kadamb Ka Ped

##### Well-known Poems

Jhansi ki Raani  
Veeron Ka Kaisa Ho Basant  
Yed Kadamb Ka Ped

##### Collections of Shor Stories

Bhikhre Moti (1932)  
Unmadini (1934)  
Seedhe-Saade Chitra (1946)  
Seedhe-saade Chitra(1946)

## Jhansi Ki Rani (English)

1

The throne got shook, and the tension erupted among the Raajvanshs, the royal heirs of the throne,

In aged India, a new wave of youth was spreading,  
All the inhabitants of India had realized the worth of their lost freedom,  
All of them had decided to get rid of the British rule,

The old swords started glittering again like new ones in the form of the freedom movement in 1857.

From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand) , we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

2

She was as dear to the Nana (Nana Ghunghupant) of Kanpur as her real sister,  
Her name was Laxmibai and she was the only daughter of her parents,  
She had been with Nana from her early childhood, since she was a school student.  
Spear, knife, sword, axe (all different types of weapons used in her time) were her companions all the time.

She had learned by heart the valorous stories of shivaji (a renowned king of Maharashtra) .

From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand) , we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

3

No one could guess whether she was Laxmi or Durga devi (Durga Goddess, also called Bhavani) or reincarnation of Devi durga,

Her expertise in using a sword made the people of Marathward (Pulkit) wonder,  
They learned the war strategy of how to attack the prey,

To ambush her prey and to break the vanity were among her favorite supports,  
Maharashtra-kul-Devi (The goddess of the Maharashtra) was as dear to her as Bhavani (Durga Devi)

From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand) , we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

4

With valor in a grand festival, she got married in Jhansi,  
After her marriage, Laxmibai came to Jhansi as a queen with shower of joy,  
A grand celebration took place in the royal palace of Jhansi. That was a good luck for Bandelos that she came to Jhansi,

That was as Chitra met with Arjun or Shiv had got his beloved Bhavani (Durga) .  
From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand) , we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

5

She came as a good luck to the royal palace of Jhansi and for a log time the palace remained decorated with lighting candles in celebration.

But as days passed the dark clouds of misfortune covered the royal palace.  
She stopped wearing bangles for that was the time for a battle.

The queen got widowed and her fate was very unkind to her.

The royal king had no children when he died and the queen was grief stricken. From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand) , we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

6

So the candle of the royal castle blew off and Dalhousie (a British governor) became very happy in his heart about the situation (that the royal palace had no king or someone strong to defend the throne) . He thought that the time was right to usurp the kingdom. He sent his soldiers to Citadel and raised the British flag on the royal palace. The British rule came to Jhansi as the guardian of an orphan. The Rani saw everything with tears in her eyes that how Jhansi got deserted. From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand) , we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

7

Strong (and Cruel) kings do not care about the cajoling. They (The British Rulers) came to India in the disguise of poor merchants. The British governor (Dalhousi) then extended his influence in India and so the fate of India turned over. He insulted even the feudal and heads of state of India. The queen took the gesture of a maidservant; the maid was the real queen. From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand) , we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

8

First of all Indian rulers lost the capital of India, Delhi and subsequently they lost the control of Lucknow. Peshwa was imprisoned in Bithur and then the Nagpur tragedy occurred. After the fall of Nagpur, it was not a big task for the intruders to take the control of Udaipur, Tanjore satara and Karnatak. They already had the control of Sindh, Punjab and Assam. The tale of fall of Bengal, Madras and many other states was also the same. From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand) , we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

9

Rani(the queen) wept in her quarter for all that disaster. She was rather lost and was sick of the situation. Her ornaments and royal clothes were being sold in the markets of Calcutta. The advertisements for the sale of the royal stuff were being published in the daily newspapers of the British Government. "Buy the ornaments of Nagpur, Buy the Naulakha locket of Lucknow" had been the highlights of such advertisements. In this manner the honor of the royal ladies had to be sold to foreigners. From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand) , we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

10

The cottages of poor were full of grief and the royal houses were also full of insult (the royal ladies were maltreated and insulted by the British intruders whereas the poor folk were also in the clutches of the atrocities by the British rulers) .

Brave soldiers of India had in their mind the prestige of their ancestors.

The name of Ghunghupant and Nana, the titles of the great warriors and their weapons, they have lost all such treasure as well.

The beloved sisters of Nana (queen of Jhansi- Rani) invited Nana to visit Ran-Chandi.

The ritual of the holy war of freedom started because they had to awake the divine spirit of the people of India, which had been sleeping so far.

From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand) , we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

11

The fire of revolt started from royal palace, which became hot like burning sun when reached to the houses of the poor or common folk.

This spark of freedom started from the inner soul of the people.

It captured Jhansi first then spread in Delhi and also engulfed Lucknow.

The freedom struggle was also in full swing in Merat, Kanpur and Patna.

The people of Jabalpur, Kolhapur were also being inspired from others.

From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand) , we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

12

In that great freedom struggle, many brave brothers lost their lives.

Among them were Nana GhunGhupant, Tantya, great Azeemullah,

And many others like Ahmedshah Moulvi, Thakur Kunwar singh, Sainik Abhiram.

Their names will always be shining in the heavens of the ancient history of India, but they were considered rebels at that time and their great sacrifice was considered a crime against the state of British India.

From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand) , we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

13

Well, leave the tale of the bravery of those great men and let us go to the battlefields of Jhansi,

Where Laxmibai is standing boldly like a man among the other brave men.

Lieutenant Walker reached there and proceeded further in the people's army of the brave men,

Rani drew her sword, the beating of the drums started in the heavens,

[The Queen of Jhansi, Translation by Qazi Muhammad Ahkam]

Walker ran away from the battlefield as Rani defectively wounded him. He was astonished on the agility of Rani.

From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand) , we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

14

Rani preceded further and reached Kalpi after taking a hard journey of hundreds of miles.

The horse got exhausted and fell to the ground and the rider (Walker) also fell down immediately.

In the field of Yamuna again Rani was defeating the British.

The victorious Rani proceeded further and took the control of Gawalior.

The British thus left the Vsindia (capital of Gawalior) and their rule ended in Gawalior. From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand) , we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

15

Although the freedom fighters had won, the British army was again getting organized. This time, general smith was in command but he was also being defeated by the brave freedom fighters - he had to be defeated.

Kaana and Mandra (the associates of Rani) were also accompanying her in the war zone. In the battlefield they both were fighting furiously.

But a British commander, Hughrose came from the backside to help his soldiers - Alas!

The British soldiers surrounded the Rani from all sides.

From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand) , we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

16

Though Rani was deeply wounded, still she was fighting and had managed to get through the British army,

But she got stuck because a sewerage canal was there on the other end and she was in deep trouble,

Her horse got stuck there - the horse was untrained, in the mean time, the British soldiers, riding on their horses reached there.

Rani was all alone while enemies were numerous who were attacking her with their sword from all sides,

Rani, who was fighting like a lioness, succumbed to the wounds and fell down. She had to achieve a glorious death in war (Martyrdom) .

From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand) , we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

17

Rani was martyred in the battlefield. Her departed soul was then riding a divine vehicle, moving towards heavens

the Light of her divine soul met with the divine light in the heavens, she was the real heir of divinity,

She was only thirty years of age. She was not a human; rather she was divine spirit (a holy being) ,

Who did come, in the gesture of a female freedom fighter, to give us a respectable life of light and freedom,

She showed us the path of freedom, and taught us the lesson of courage, she taught us what we might have learned.

From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand) , we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she

fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

18

The people of India will remember this debt of yours (O! Rani Laxmaibai) , may you be blessed, dear Rani,

Your this life sacrifice will awake an indestructible soul of freedom in the people,  
History may be made silent or if truth is hanged or killed, or if the drinkers become  
victorious or if they destroy jhansi with cannonballs,

You, by yourself be the memorial of Rani (queen of Jhansi) because you had been an  
eternal token of courage.

From the mouths of the Bandelas and the Harbolas (Religious singers of Bandelkhand)  
, we heard the tale of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi relating how gallantly she  
fought like a man against the British intruders: such was the Queen of Jhansi.

Subhadra Kumari Chauhan

## The Queen of Jhansi

### 1st Stanza

The throne was shaken and tensions rose among the Raajvanshs, the royal heirs,  
In aged India, new ideas were taking hold,  
The people of all India lamented their lost freedom,  
And decided to cast off British rule,  
Old swords glittered anew as the freedom movement of 1857 started.  
The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders  
So was the Queen of Jhansi.

### 2nd Stanza

She was as dear to the Nana (Nana Ghunghupant) of Kanpur as his real sister,  
Laxmibai was her name, her parents only daughter  
She'd been with Nana since her schoolgirl days  
The spear, knife, sword, and axe were her constant companions.  
She knew by heart the tales of valor of Shivaji  
The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders  
So was the Queen of Jhansi.

### 3rd Stanza

None were sure, was she Laxmi or Durga devi or Devi durga reincarnate?  
The people of Marathward were awed by her (expertise) skill with the sword,  
They learned from her how to fight, the strategy of war,  
To attack and humiliate the enemy were her favorite sports.  
Her love for Maharashtra-kul-Devi was equaled only by her love for Bhavani.  
The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders,  
8) So was the Queen of Jhansi.

### 4th Stanza

Laxmibai was married in Jhansi, with great jubilation  
Entering the joyous city as Queen,  
Grand celebrations were held in the palace in Jhansi, in honor of her coming.  
Just as when Chitra met Arjun or Shiv had found his beloved Bhavani.  
The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders,  
So was the Queen of Jhansi.

### 5th Stanza

Her presence was a blessing at the palace of Jhansi and candles of celebration burned long  
But as days passed the dark clouds of misfortune overshadowed the royal palace.  
She put aside her bangles and prepared for battle  
For fate was unkind and made her a widow  
Grief stricken she was, with no heir for her king,

The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders,  
So was the Queen of Jhansi.

#### 6th Stanza

The candlelit hope of Jhansi had died and Dalhousie was overjoyed at his luck.  
He'd long awaited the time to usurp this kingdom  
He sent his soldiers to Citadel and raised the flag of Britain on the royal palace,  
British rule came to Jhansi as a guardian comes to an orphan,  
While with tear filled eyes the Rani watched as her city became deserted.  
The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders,  
So was the Queen of Jhansi.

#### 7th Stanza

Despotic kings used flattery and lies  
And came to India disguised as poor merchants  
Dalhousie exerted his power, ill-gotten, and changed the fate of India,  
Insulting all of India's leaders, without exception.  
The Queen played the part of a maidservant, but truly she was still the Queen,  
The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders,  
So was the Queen of Jhansi.

#### 8th Stanza

The capital Delhi fell, followed by the fall of Lucknow,  
Peshwa was imprisoned in Bithur and the Nagpur tragedy occurred.  
3) And after the fall of Nagpur, Udaipur, Tanjore satara, and Karnatak fell quickly at  
the hands of the intruders.  
The British already had control of Sindh, Punjab and Assam.  
It was the same sad tale for Bengal, Madras and many other states.  
The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders  
So was the Queen of Jhansi.

#### 9th Stanza

Feeling sick with helplessness the Rani wept bitterly for her beloved India.  
Her royal ornaments and clothes were being sold in the markets of Calcutta.  
This humiliation was published in the British daily papers:  
"Buy the ornaments of Nagpur, buy the Naulakha locket of Lucknow" were the  
highlights of this loss of honor.  
This is how the honor of the royal ladies of India was sold to foreigners.  
The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders  
So was the Queen of Jhansi.

#### 10th Stanza

Both the poor and the royals suffered insult and atrocity at the hands of the British rulers.

Brave soldiers of India recalled the honor of their ancestors,  
The lost treasures, the names and titles of great warriors and leaders, like  
Ghunggupant, and Nana,  
The beloved sister of Nana, Rani, the Queen, invited him to Ran-Chandi,  
To awaken the sleeping, divine spirit of the Indian people, the holy war had already begun.  
The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders  
So was the Queen of Jhansi.

#### 11th Stanza

The desire for freedom was as a burning fire of revolt, from the royal palace to the poor and common folk,  
This spark, which was born in the inner soul of the people.  
It consumed Jhansi first, then spread in Delhi and engulfed even Lucknow,  
In Merat, Kanpur and Patna, the struggle for freedom raged strong,  
Which inspired the peoples of Jabalpur and Kolhapur  
The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders  
So was the Queen of Jhansi.

#### 12th Stanza

In that great freedom struggle, many brave brothers lost their lives.  
Among them: Nana Ghunggupant, Tanya, great Azeemullah,  
And many more: Ahmedshah Moulvi, Thakur Kunwar Singh, Sainik Abhiram.  
Though by the British, they were considered rebels and their sacrifices a crime,  
Their names will always shine in the heavens of the ancient history of India.  
The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders  
So was the Queen of Jhansi.

#### 13th Stanza

Well, leave the tale of the bravery of those great men, and back to the battlefield of Jhansi  
Where Laxmibai stands boldly like a man among other brave men,  
Lt. Walker met her in battle, and pushed back this brave army of men,  
But as Rani drew her sword, drums thundered in Heaven,  
Walker retreated after Rani wounded him, astonished at her skill and agility.  
The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders,  
So was the Queen of Jhansi.

#### 14th Stanza

Rani pursued Walker for hundreds of miles to the (city) of Kalpi,  
Where his horse was exhausted and fell to the ground, Walker was thrown off as well.  
In the field of Yamuna, Rani was defeating the British once more,

Rani pushed back the British and took control of the state of Gawalior,  
The British soon left and ended their rule of Vsindia of Gawalior,  
The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders  
So was the Queen of Jhansi.

#### 15th Stanza

The British army reorganized, under the command of General Smith,  
And still the freedom fighters prevailed.  
Rani was joined in the battle by Kaana and Mandra, and all together they fought  
furiously,  
But, alas, when Commander Hughrose came with reinforcements,  
The Rani was completely surrounded on the field.  
The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders,  
So was the Queen of Jhansi.

#### 16th Stanza

Though deeply wounded, Rani still fought her way through the British army,  
But alas! Rani's horse became mired in a canal at the edge of the field of battle,  
And while she struggled with the untrained animal, the British caught up with her  
there,  
Like a lioness she fought, all alone while being attacked from all sides,  
She fell mortally wounded, the glorious death of a martyr.  
The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders,  
So was the Queen of Jhansi.

#### 17th Stanza

A battlefield martyr was Rani. Her departed soul was then riding a divine vehicle,  
moving towards heavens  
Her light enjoined to the Divine, as a true heir of divinity  
Only 30 years of age, she was a superhuman, she was a holy being.  
In the form of a freedom fighter, she came to give us light and a noble life,  
She showed us the path of freedom and taught us the lesson of courage  
The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders,  
So was the Queen of Jhansi.

#### 18th Stanza

Oh Rani Laxmibai, India will remember you forever, Blessed Rani,  
Your life's sacrifice awakens an Eternal freedom in the soul of India's people,  
History may forget, Jhansi may be destroyed,  
But your name Rani, Queen of Jhansi, will be an eternal memorial of courage  
The Bandelas and Harbolas sang once again of the courage of the Queen of Jhansi,  
How she fought like a man against the British intruders,  
So was the Queen of Jhansi.

[Original: Jhansi Ki Rani ]  
Subhadra Kumari Chauhan