

# JHANSI

## A Historic Land



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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## Glimpses of Jhansi's History

Jhansi Through The Ages

•  
Newalkars of Jhansi

•  
What Really Happened in Jhansi in 1857?

## Attractions in and around Jhansi

Jhansi Fort

•  
Rani Mahal

•  
Ganesh Mandir

•  
Mahalakshmi Temple

•  
Gangadharrao Chhatri

•  
Star Fort

•  
Jokhan Bagh

•  
St Jude's Shrine

•  
Jhansi Cantonment Cemetery

•  
Jhansi Railway Station

•  
Orchha

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# INTRODUCTION



Jhansi is one of the most vibrant cities of Uttar Pradesh today. But the city is also steeped in history. The city of Rani Laxmibai - the brave queen who led her forces against the British in 1857 and the region around it, are dotted with monuments that go back more than 1500 years!

While thousands of tourists visit Jhansi each year, many miss the layered past of the city. In fact few who visit the famous Jhansi Fort each year, even know that it is in its historic Ganesh Mandir that Rani Laxmibai got married. Or that there is also a 'second' Fort hidden within the Jhansi cantonment, where the revolt of 1857 first began in the city.



# GLIMPSES OF JHANSI'S HISTORY

## JHANSI THROUGH THE AGES



Jhansi, the historic town and major tourist draw in Uttar Pradesh, is known today largely because of its famous 19th-century Queen, Rani Laxmibai, and the fearless role she played during the Revolt of 1857. There are also numerous monuments that dot Jhansi, remnants of the Bundelas and Marathas that ruled here from the 17th to the 19th centuries. But few realise that the history of this region is far more ancient, with many earlier dynasties also leaving their mark.

During the prehistoric era, most of what is today's Jhansi district was covered in thick forest. Paleolithic tools discovered in the neighbouring district of Lalitpur tell us that this region was once inhabited by prehistoric tribes. Between 600 BCE and 300 BCE, Jhansi and its surrounding regions formed part of the Chedi Mahajanapada, one of the 16 kingdoms and oligarchic republics that emerged at this time in ancient India.

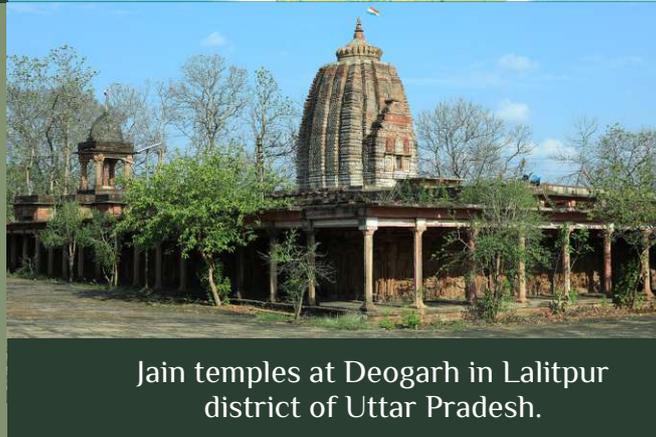
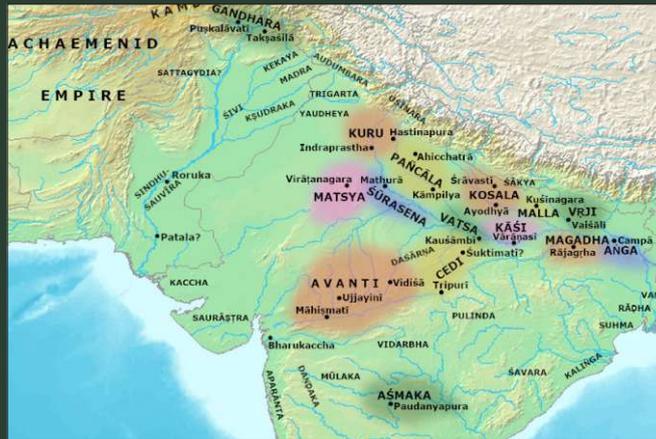


Cliffs along the Betwa river at Deogarh in Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh.

# JHANSI'S EARLY HISTORY



By the 4th century BCE, the Jhansi region was conquered by the Nanda Dynasty of Magadha, which was soon replaced by the Mauryas. It formed part of the Avantiratta province under Mauryan rule, headquartered at Ujjain in present-day Madhya Pradesh. A Brahmi inscription found at Eirach, dating to the 1st century BCE, tells of the rule of a local chieftain named Aditi Mitra. This was followed by the reign of numerous dynasties, including the Sungas, Satavahanas, Vakatakas, Nagas, Guptas and Hunas, among other local chieftains, all the way down to the 9th century CE. An inscription dating to 862 CE, found within the remains of the Deogarh Fort in present-day Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh, speaks of the rule of Mihira Bhoja, the Gurjar Pratihara Emperor, in this region during this period.



Jain temples at Deogarh in Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh.

# CHANDELA RULE



It was Chandela King Yashovarman (r. 930 CE – 950 CE) who established an independent kingdom that included much of the Jhansi region. The Chandelas of Jejakabhukti, who ruled much of present-day Bundelkhand (a swathe of land spread across parts of Uttar Pradesh and neighbouring Madhya Pradesh) between the 9th and 13th centuries, were originally feudatories of the Gurjar Pratihara Empire. They would become famous for the beauty of their capital, Khajuraho, now in Madhya Pradesh. Numerous inscriptions found inside a well at Raghunath Mahal, within the old city of Jhansi, tell of an ancient settlement or township that might have existed here during the Chandela period. It was then called Balwant Nagar. During the 12th century CE, the region witnessed a series of conflicts between Delhi's ruler Prithviraj Chauhan III and the Chandelas, with Jhansi and the surrounding region changing hands several times. The rise of the Delhi Sultanate in the early 13th century coincided with the decline of the Chandelas. This period also saw the rise of the Khangars as a local power. In 1288 CE, the rule of the Khangars was replaced by that of the Bundelas, through a series of royal plots and intrigues.

With the rise of Bundela power, the Jejakabhukti area became known as Bundelkhand. In 1538 CE, Bundela ruler Rudra Pratap established the town of Orchha in present-day Madhya Pradesh. His son Bharti Chandra made it his capital the following year. By the early Bundela period, the original Chandela township of Balwant Nagar (today's Jhansi) had become neglected and fallen to ruin.



## HOW JHANSI GOT ITS NAME

It was only in 1613 CE that the Bundela Raja of Orchha, Bir Singh Ju Deo (r. 1605 – 1627 CE), a friend and ally of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605 – 1627 CE), began to focus again on the Balwant Nagar area, building a fort on an uninhabited hill called Bangira Hill near the original Balwant Nagar settlement. The settlement that developed around this fort marked the beginning of Jhansi town as we know it today. The Jhansi Fort still stands. A palace called Mauj Mahal was also built here, and is now known as Panch Mahal.

There is a popular but apocryphal story about how Balwant Nagar came to be renamed Jhansi. During the construction of the fort, it is said, the King of Jaitpur (also in Bundelkhand) paid a visit to Bir Singh Ju Deo. Bir Singh pointed towards the hill and asked his guest if he could see anything there. The Jaitpur King looked closely and replied that he could see

something "jhain-si" (indistinct). And so Bir Singh named the area 'Jhainsi', which later became 'Jhansi'.

The 17th century CE saw a series of conflicts between Jhajar Singh, the successor of Bir Singh Ju Deo, and Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628 – 1658). As each power tried to expand their territory, Jhansi and the fort came under Mughal rule by 1635 CE. Then the early 18th century saw the rise of a powerful Bundela ruler, Raja Chhatrasal, who recaptured territories in Bundelkhand from the Mughals between 1707 and 1722 CE.

In 1729 CE, the Mughal army led by Mohammad Khan Bangash attacked Raja Chhatrasal and the Maratha Peshwa Baji Rao I arrived from his capital in Pune, in present-day Maharashtra, to rescue him. In gratitude, Raja Chhatrasal offered a third of his kingdom to the Peshwa. This marked the beginning of Maratha rule in Jhansi.

# THE NEWALKARS OF JHANSI



While Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi has gone down in history as one of India's greatest freedom fighters, with her battle against the British colonial rulers immortalised in numerous books, plays and movies, few are aware of the rich history of the Newalkar Dynasty to which she belonged. Here's how they came to rule the region.

Soon Maratha Peshwa Baji Rao I was gifted Bundela territories which included Jhansi, by a grateful Raja Chhatrasal in the early 18th century, after the Peshwa helped him fight off a Mughal army, the Peshwa divided these territories into three parts or subas or provinces, with a Subedar or governor appointed to administer each.

The first part was given to Sardar Govind Ballal Kher and it comprised mainly Jalaun, Sagar and Gursarai. The second part was given to Ali Bahadur, son of Baji Rao from his second wife, Mastani. This comprised of areas such as Banda and Kalpi. The smallest part, which comprised Jhansi, was given to a minor official named Naro Shankar Motiwale.



*The Fort Jhansi*

# RAGHUNATHRAO NEWALKAR

## The Founder of Jhansi State



The patriarch of the Newalkar dynasty was Raghunathrao Newalkar, the headman of Pavas village in Rajapur district of the Konkan in Maharashtra. Newalkar's sons and grandsons served the Peshwas, who were so impressed with them that they rose to high positions in the army. Due to their valour and loyalty, the Newalkar family was given the village of Parole in Maharashtra in jagir or as a land grant.

It was the great-grandson of the Newalkar patriarch, also named Raghunathrao, who was sent by the Peshwa to Jhansi to quell a rebellion that had broken out there. The revolt had been led by a local Gosavi chieftain, who had forced the Maratha Subedar to flee Jhansi in 1756 CE. Raghunathrao re-established Peshwa rule and, as a reward, was given Jhansi as a jagir and made Subedar of the principality in 1769 CE.

Raghunathrao came from a long line of military leaders within the Maratha Empire, and maintained a large army in Jhansi to ensure that the territory was not reclaimed by Bundela kings. Raghunathrao was accomplished in other fields too. He could read, write and speak in English and enjoyed keeping up with the latest developments in science. Jhansi remained peaceful during his reign.

When he died in 1796 CE, he was succeeded as Subedar by his brother Shivrabhu, also a brave warrior. Then, during the chaotic reign of Peshwa Baji Rao II (r. 1795 – 1818), amid a battle for the throne in Pune and the decline and eventual demise of the Maratha Empire, Shivrabhu decided to take advantage of the confusion and stopped sending administrative reports and taxes to Pune, the seat of the Maratha Empire. Shivrabhu declared the quasi-independence of Jhansi state and himself as the first Raja of Jhansi.

## SHIVRAOBHAU NEWALKAR

### From Subedar to King

It was during the reign of Shivrabhu (r. 1796 to 1814) that the British first came to Jhansi. They were looking to expand their influence in Bundelkhand, where most of the Bundela Rajas were under the suzerainty of the Subedar of Jhansi. Hence the British felt it would be wise to make friends with the ruler of Jhansi. On 18th November 1803, Shivrabhu and the British signed a treaty of friendship. On 6th February 1804, they signed a second such treaty. Under this one, Jhansi undertook not to enter into relations with any other foreign power.

Shivrabhu ruled Jhansi for 18 years and, during that time, relations with the British were cordial. He suddenly fell ill in 1814. Realising he would not survive long, he named as his successor his grandson Ramchandrarao, son of his deceased eldest son, Krishnarao. Shivrabhu then retired to the banks of the Ganga to spend his last days as an ascetic, and died soon after. Since Ramchandrarao was a minor, the kingdom was ruled by his mother Sukhubai, as regent. Sukhubai served as a regent for 5 years.





## Sukhubai

### The Regent Queen of Jhansi

Queen Sukhubai, the widow of Raja Shivrachau remains one of the most notorious names in Jhansi's history. Ruthless and power hungry, she made several attempts to assassinate her own son in the hope of gaining total control of the throne. Eventually, Ramchandra Rao had her imprisoned for life. Years later, overcome by remorse, Sukhubai swallowed a diamond and took her own life.



## Ramchandra Rao Newalkar

### Chaos Rules

In 1817, the British signed a new treaty with Ramchandra Rao. His relations with the British would remain friendly too. He even came to their aid in a battle at nearby Kalpi, helping the British defeat a brave, rebellious Maratha, Nana Pant.

But at home, Ramchandra Rao's reign was one of chaos and neglect. The revenue and power of Jhansi state shrunk considerably. When Ramchandra Rao fell ill and died in 1835, he left no heir, and the British swooped in. His wife had adopted her sister's son Krishnarao but the British declared his claim to the throne invalid. Instead, they placed Raghunath Rao II, the uncle of Ramchandra Rao, on the Jhansi throne. He proved incompetent and extravagant, and using these as reasons, in 1837, the British took the state directly under their control.



## RAJA GANGADHARRAO NEWALKAR & RANILAXMIBAI



After the death of Raghunathrao II, four names were in contention for the title of ruler of Jhansi: Krishnarao (the boy adopted by Ramchandrarao's wife), Raghunathrao II's wife and Raghunathrao II's brother Gangadharrao. A commission was set up by the British to discuss the candidature. This commission recommended Gangadharrao. The recommendation was accepted by the colonial British government and Gangadhar became ruler of Jhansi in 1843. There were conditions. Until he married, Gangadharrao would not have full rights over the kingdom. And, in exchange for the British maintaining a subsidiary force in Jhansi ostensibly to protect it, he was forced to cede part of his territory to the British.

Raja Gangadharrao carried out several reforms in the administration, strengthened the Jhansi army, expanding it to 5,000 soldiers, an additional 2,000 policemen, 500 cavalry and a 'special force' of 100 men and 4 cannons.

After the death of his first wife Ramabai, he had married a young girl named Manikarnika Tambe in 1842. The wedding took place in the Ganesh temple near the Jhansi fort. According to Maharashtrian tradition, the girl was given a new name: 'Laxmibai'.

Gangadharrao and Laxmibai had a son, but he died when he was only four months old. Overcome by grief, Gangadharrao died on 21st November 1853. After Gangadharrao's death, the British announced that they were annexing Jhansi under the 'Doctrine of Lapse'. What they hadn't expected was that the Rani would put up a fight. She famously said: "Main meri Jhansi nahi doongi" and the rest, as they say, is history.

## WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN JHANSI IN 1857?

Rani Laxmibai's battle against the British is so legendary that statues of her dot cities and towns across India. A rare and riveting account of that time is recorded in a travelogue by a man who witnessed them first-hand, Vishnubhat Godse (1827-1904), a Brahmin priest from the village of Varsai in Alibaug district of Maharashtra.

In those times, it was common practice for Brahmin priests to travel from one royal court to another, participating in religious ceremonies and seeking dakshina (alms). Godse's account of events in Jhansi brings to life the heroic tale of Rani Laxmibai and the kingdom she fought to retain.

The priest had learnt from a family friend that the Queen of Gwalior, Baijaba Scindia, was planning to conduct a massive yajna or religious ceremony at Mathura. Godse, who had fallen on hard times, decided to head there. His uncle, also a priest, decided to accompany him, and together they began their journey to North India ('Hindustan', as Godse calls it) on 30th March 1857. Godse had no idea, of course, of the kind of year it was set to be or the historic events he would come upon, witness and record.

He was in Jhansi when the Revolt broke out in 1857. He was in Jhansi when the city fell and its people were massacred. He would eventually leave the troubled kingdom and travel across North and Central India for three years, before returning to his village in 1860, and writing his travelogue. He called his account Majha Pravas (My Journey). Written in Marathi, it reads like a diary in some parts and a news report in others.

It was on 1st July 1857, in the British cantonment town of Mhow, in present-day Madhya Pradesh, that the Godse and his uncle first heard of the Revolt. Not sure what was happening, they continued their journey north, through Ujjain to Gwalior. Here, they received news that the yajna at Mathura had been cancelled as a result of the troubles.



## THE WAY TO JHANSI



After a brief stay in Gwalior, the two priests decided to try their luck in the court of Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi. Godse's uncle knew Moropant Tambe (Rani's father), and of this decision Godse writes: "There were no more obstacles on the way as the rebels and Company troops have left Delhi due to the stench caused by dead bodies of men and animals, and the soaring prices and scarcity of water.

The combat in Dilli has ended and they have gathered in Kanpur, where a battle is underway. As such, there will be no trouble on our way to Jhansi. "Hiring a cart for Jhansi and halting at places along the way, we set out on our journey. On the way, we met many people. We heard from them the stories about battles going on everywhere. The entire Hindustan had rebelled."



La nécropole des Rajahs de Jhansie. — Dessin de H. Catenacci, d'après une photographie de M. L. Rousselet.

## ON JHANSI CITY

Godse provides a vivid description of Jhansi as a grand and prosperous city. As a poor Marathi village priest, he couldn't help but compare it to Pune, which for him was the epitome of grandeur:

"The city is densely populated with well-constructed roads... The people here are skilled and are adept in various trades. The bankers and moneylenders are honest and dignified. It is said that in the South, it is Pune, and in the North, it is Jhansi (that are well reputed cities). The best carpets and brass utensils in all of Hindustan are made here. The (miniature) paintings here are matched only by those in Jaipur and nowhere else...

"In the south of the city is a Mahalaxmi temple. Being the family deity of the Jhansi rulers, it is well-maintained. A lot of money has been spent on the construction of the temple. This city is somewhat like Pune in its customs."

Amid the descriptions of grandeur are the humble musings of a simple but observant man: "Even though there are no farms around the city, the vegetables are inexpensive."

## THE REVOLT IN JHANSI BEGINS

On reaching Jhansi, Godse and his uncle met Moropant Tambe, who put in a good word for them with Rani Laxmibai and they began to live under her patronage. In Godse's account, the Queen is always referred to as 'Baisaheb' or 'Jhansiwali Baisaheb'. He provides an account of the beginning of the Revolt in Jhansi:

"Indians became desperate and started rioting by shooting carbines and cannons. It was a small cantonment with a few White people, all of whom were killed by Indian soldiers. Then they came over to Baisaheb's wada and began to call on Baisaheb. They told her, 'You are our ruler. We follow your orders and take salaries from you every month. Now you do whatever is necessary.'

"Later, Baisaheb proclaimed her rule in the city... Thereafter, on an auspicious day, she took up residence in Jhansi as before (the kingdom had been annexed). All matters of the princely state were resumed."



## PERSONALITY & DAILY LIFE OF RANI LAXMIBAI



From Godse's account, we get a vivid description of Rani Laxmibai's personality and daily life:

"Her two qualities worth mentioning are her bravery and her generosity. Mostly, she was dressed in male attire. She used to wear a pajama with a vest of dark purple. On her head, she wore a turban-like cap. On her waist would be a duppatta-like cloth in which a sword would be tucked. Ever since her husband had died, she had given up wearing the nath (nose-ring worn by married Maharashtrian women) and other such ornaments, except gold bangles on her wrists... (and) a pearl necklace around her neck.

"Every day, in the afternoon, she used to sit in the office. The Diwan (prime minister) would stand in front of her with a bundle of papers in his hands. There would be five to seven clerks. The magisterial, civil and procedural matters were handled by her.

"Baisaheb was very fond of physical exercise. At the break of dawn, she would get up and exercise on a mallakhamb pole for 45 minutes. Then, she would ride and train on horseback. After that, she would take a round or two on her elephant. On Tuesdays and Fridays, she would visit the Mahalaxmi temple in a large procession."

## THE BRITISH RETURN TO JHANSI



In March 1858, British troops arrived in Jhansi and laid siege to it. Godse writes:

"After establishing order in Bundelkhand, the Saheb (British) came along with some army and garrisoned at a distance of one and a half kos (roughly 3 kms) west of Jhansi. The Company Sarkar had stuck public proclamations in all the villages near Jhansi, that there was going to be a battle in Jhansi city and after capturing it, there would be a massacre. The rule was that all men above five and below eighty would be sought out and killed. So no one should go there during the days of the battle.

"In the month of Vaishakh, as per their proclamations, the Company Sarkar armies arrived in Jhansi. Suddenly, to the North, West and East of the city, large flocks of people could be seen. Around 60,000 soldiers of the Company Sarkar laid siege to the city. But Baisaheb was prepared for war. The gunners took up positions at the fortifications."

The siege was followed by heavy bombardment, causing havoc in the city. Godse believed that the British had an advantage due to their powerful telescopes:

“On the third night... the battle began. Cannon balls began to rain heavily on the city. All the cannons from Baisaheb’s side began retaliating. The houses in the city collapsed and burned. The battle raged, day and night. For four or five hours, Baisaheb would seem to win. There would be heavy destruction of the Company Army and their canons would stop functioning and then, again, in three or four hours, they would seem like they were winning. Such ups and downs in victory and defeat went on.

“From the seventh day, the fort itself came under heavy bombardment. The Company people had powerful telescopes through which the entire fort and people working in it could be seen. They discovered that there was only one water source and bombarded it with cannons.

“They began to pound (Rani Laxmibai’s) wada with cannons. Everyone was afraid and went to the most secure room in the wada, right at its centre. There were five floors above it. We too went there. The cannon balls fell on the pilkhana (elephant stables) and all the elephants died.

“Baisaheb had a zoo, where there were many different types of animals like parrots, mynahs, peacocks, deer and stags. When cannon balls struck the zoo, all the animals cried out and died at once. There was no end to the havoc.”



## THE FALL OF JHANSI & THE MASSACRE THAT FOLLOWED



On 2nd April 1858, the walls were breached and the British entered the city. Rani Laxmibai was forced to retreat to Jhansi Fort. There was a massacre in the city:

“Baisaheb descended from the fort with 1,500 Afghan warriors while hundreds of British came from the other side. The British came with carbines and the Afghans could no longer defend with their swords. At that time, an old Sardar came to Baisaheb and said to her, ‘Maharaj, at this moment, proceeding and dying by a gunshot has no glory. The British have hidden behind the buildings. Let us retreat to the fort, and rethink our strategy.’ Saying this, he made her turn back.

“Out there in the city, the British got in and with carbines killed every male they came across and set the city on fire. All men between the ages of five and thirty were sought out and killed... What a terrible time the city went through then, no one can imagine.

“When the British found a man, they would torture him until he parted with all his money. But the British did not kill women; they stood at a distance from women and told them to hand over whatever gold and jewellery they were wearing. There were shouts and screams everywhere.”

## RANI LAXMIBAI BREAKS THE SIEGE



Rani Laxmibai and a few of her followers tried to break out of the fort and escape. Most of her followers died during this attempt. Godse writes:

“Baisaheb herself rode a white horse. She wore male attire, riding shoes and armour covering her whole body. She did not carry even a paisa coin on herself. With a resounding war cry of ‘Jai Shankar’, she descended from the fort and, crossing the city, went out through the north gate. The Company cavalry chased them for about a kos and a half (roughly 3 kms). Thereafter, Baisaheb’s horses were no longer in sight.”

## THE HANGING OF RANI LAXMIBAI'S FATHER



Godse barely managed to escape with his life by hiding, but lost all his earnings in the pillage that followed. He was also witness to the brutal retribution and the hanging of Rani Laxmibai's father, Moropant Tambe:

"When Baisaheb broke through the Company Army and left for Kalpi, most of the men with her died. Those who managed to escape were caught and hanged. Baisaheb's father Moropant Tambe was injured and his thigh was almost severed. Yet he rode through the night and reached Datia the next morning. His body was drenched in blood.

"He found a paan shop and he befriended the paan seller, giving him some gold. This paan seller reported him to the Raja (of Datia), who promptly informed the Company Sarkar. The Company brought him to Jhansi in a doli and hanged him in front of the wada."

## THE DEATH OF RANI LAXMIBAI



Godse managed to escape Jhansi and reach Gwalior, where he was once again caught up in the Revolt. Tatya Tope, Rani Laxmibai and the rebels had managed to take the city from the Scindias, who had stayed loyal to the British and rejected the Rani's appeal to join forces with her. What is most baffling is that Rani Laxmibai's death gets only three sentences in Godse's account, and even there is dismissed in the most matter-of-fact manner:

"In the battle (at Gwalior), the Jhansiwali Baisaheb got wounded by a bullet, but she continued to fight. Then her thigh was wounded with a sword and she fell off her horse. Tatya Tope rushed forward and held her dead body. The Baisaheb's body was taken to a designated place and cremated there."

Godse continued his travels and witnessed more fighting, before returning to his village. He finished his travelogue, but asked that it be published only after his death. Perhaps he feared retribution from the British government. He died in 1901 and Majha Pravas was published in 1907. The original manuscript is preserved in the Bharat Itihas Sanshodhak Mandal in Pune. A number of English and Hindi translations of the remarkable work are available.

## DAMODAR RAO

### Jhansi's Forgotten Child

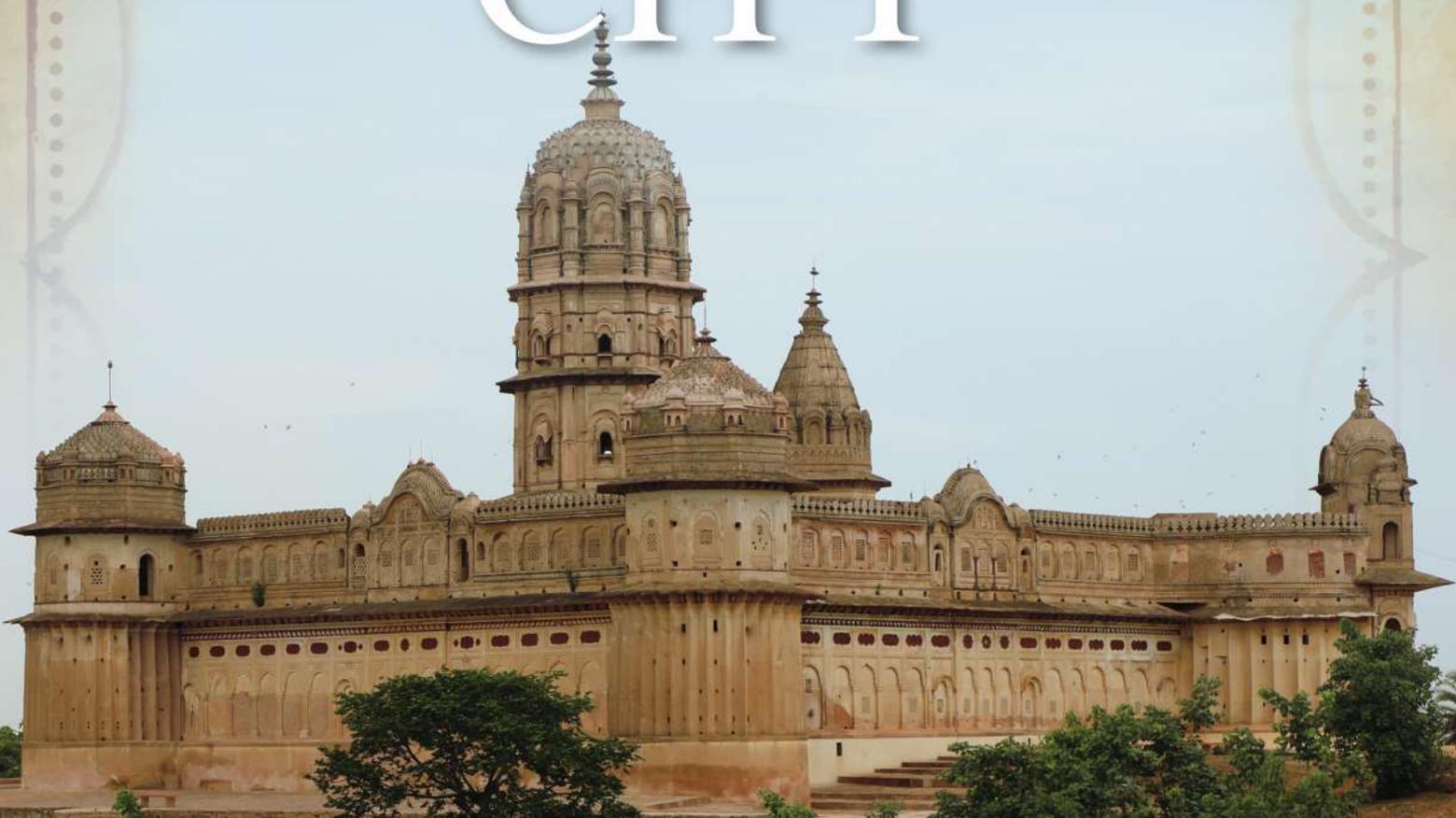


Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi is one of the best known heroes of the Revolt of 1857. Yet very little is known about the little boy, her adopted son, Damodar Rao, who she was fighting the British for. Born as Anand Rao Newalkar in 1849, his parents belonged to a collateral branch of the Newalkar royal family. At a young age of three, he was adopted by Raja Gangadhar Rao of Jhansi and given a new name 'Damodar Rao'. Sadly, on Raja's death in 1853, the British East India company refused to recognize his adoption and annexed the princely state of Jhansi.

Damodar Rao lived with his adoptive mother Rani Laxmibai at the Rani Mahal. After the revolt of 1857 broke out in Jhansi, he moved with her to the Jhansi Fort. After the British army recaptured Jhansi in 1858, Rani Laxmibai and Damodar Rao left for Kalpi and then Gwalior. After the death of Rani Laxmibai in battle on 18th June 1858, young Damodar Rao along with his guardians took refuge in the forests around Chanderi. After hiding several months in the forests, Damodar Rao and his followers surrendered to the British. Since he was only 9 years old at the time, the British treated him leniently. He was assigned a small pension and a tutor was appointed to educate him. Damodar Rao settled down in Indore and passed away in 1906.



# Attractions in and around JHANSI CITY



Laxmi Mandir, Orchha

# JHANSI FORT

## A Symbol of Freedom



If there's a fort in India, apart from Chittorgarh Fort, that symbolises bravery and valour like no other, it would have to be the Jhansi Fort. Located in the heart of Jhansi city, the Jhansi Fort was one of the most important centres of resistance to British colonial rule during the Revolt of 1857. It is this aura that surrounds this grand fort that draws thousands of visitors to Jhansi each year.

In the 11th century, the region in and around Jhansi city was ruled by the Chandela Dynasty, which established a township here called 'Balwant Nagar'. Near the town was a barren hill known as 'Bangira'. In the early 17th century CE, it was the Bundela Raja of Orchha, Bir Singh Ju Deo who realised the military potential of the area. Bir Singh fortified Bangira Hill in 1618 CE, on which the Jhansi Fort stands today and a settlement began to develop around it. These were the beginnings of Jhansi city as we know it today. Bir Singh also built the Mauj Mahal inside the fort, which was later known as Panch Mahal.

From the Rajas of Orchha, the fort passed to the Mughals and then back to the Bundelas under the powerful Raja Chhatrasal. But the Mughals attacked again, intent of recapturing the region.

In 1729 CE, Raja Chhatrasal sought the help of Maratha Peshwa Bajirao I against the armies of the Mughal Commander Muhammad Khan Bangash. The strategy worked and a grateful Raja Chhatrasal gave a third of his kingdom including Jhansi to Bajirao I, who made it the seat of his provincial governors.

Under the Maratha administration, the Jhansi Fort was extensively enlarged. The original Mauj Mahal built by Raja Bir Singh Ju Deo was expanded and called Panch Mahal, or Five-Storied Palace. In 1742 CE, the Subedari or Governorship of Jhansi was given to Naro Shanker, who along with the construction of other buildings, extended Jhansi Fort and added a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. This new extension was called Shankergarh. Naro Shanker also installed a powerful cannon known as 'Bhawani Shanker', which is still seen in the fort today.

In 1769 CE, the Subedari of Jhansi passed to Raghunathrao Newalkar, founder of the Newalkar Dynasty, to which Rani Laxmibai belonged. While Raghunathrao lived in Raghunath Mahal in Jhansi city, the fort continued to be the seat of administration.





Raghunathrao died in 1796 CE and it was during the reign of his successor, his brother Shivrabhau (r. 1796 – 1814), that a city wall and the main gate of Jhansi Fort were added. During this period, the fort boasted 10 gates – the Khanderao Gate, Datia Gate, Bhanderi Gate, Unnao Gate, Bada Gaon Gate, Laxmi Gate, Sagar Gate, Orchha Gate, Saiyar Gate and Chand Gate.

Apart from the famous Shiv Mandir, there's a Ganesh Mandir inside the fort, where the royal family regularly worshipped. It was during the reign of Jhansi's last Maharaja, Raja Gangadharrao (r. 1843 – 1853) that the famous Kadar Bijli cannon was installed on the Jhansi Fort walls in 1850. Raja Gangadharrao had a deep interest in music and drama, and erected a beautiful baradari, the remains of which can still be seen in the fort today.

# PANCH MAHAL



Following Rani Laxmibai's marriage to Raja Gangadharrao in 1842, the royal couple lived in the Panch Mahal. The lowest floor was used for assemblies and meetings, while the first floor was used as their residence. Following Raja Gangadharrao's death in 1853, the British East India Company annexed Jhansi under the Doctrine of Lapse as the Rani had no legal heir, and forced her to leave the fort. So she moved to the Rani Mahal in the city.

In 1857, the Revolt against the British East India Company broke out in Jhansi, just like in other parts of India. As power shifted back to Indian hands, Rani Laxmibai regained control of Jhansi and moved back into the fort. It is from this very fort that on 14th February 1858 she sent out her appeal to others to join the fight against the British.

On 23rd March 1858, a large British army contingent under Sir Hugh Rose besieged Jhansi, followed by heavy bombardment of the city and the fort. A large number of buildings inside the fort were extensively

damaged during this bombardment. Rani Laxmibai fought back along with her army and bravely held out. Among those who were martyred while manning the cannons inside the fort are Ghulam Ghaus Khan, Moti Bai and Khuda Baksh.

On 3rd April 1858, the British army managed to breach Jhansi's city walls. The following day, the Rani along with her entourage left for Kalpi, and the fort fell to the British. The British entered the fort on 3rd April after Rose's troops turned back and then stormed at midnight, shocking the Jhansi troops. This was followed by a gruesome massacre, where on the orders of Rose, no male above the age of 16 was spared. The Ganesh and Mahalakshmi temples were also vandalised, although later renovated by the locals.

After they captured the Jhansi Fort in 1858, the British gave it to the Scindias of Gwalior in 1861, and it remained in their possession till 1886, when it was given back to the British. The fort is currently managed by the Archaeological Survey of India.



# JHANSI'S RANI MAHAL

## Rani Laxmibai's Residence



While a number of buildings in Jhansi are associated with the life of Rani Laxmibai, one of the most prominent but often ignored buildings is the Rani Mahal, where she lived from 1853 to 1857. Located inside Jhansi city, it was in the Rani Mahal that Indian fighters approached the Rani and urged her to take over the leadership of the Revolt in 1857.

Apart from the Jhansi Fort, the Newalkar Rajas of Jhansi had two main palaces in Jhansi city – one was Raghunath Mahal and the other was the Raj Mahal. Both these palaces were built by the founder of the Newalkar Dynasty, Raghunathrao Newalkar, in 1769 CE, when he first arrived in Jhansi as Subedar.

After they annexed Jhansi in 1853 under the Doctrine of Lapse, the British East India Company forced Rani Laxmibai to vacate the fort and move to the Raj Mahal in the old city. She lived here from 1853 to 1857. As a result, it became known as 'Rani Mahal'.

The most magnificent room in the building is the richly painted Durbar Hall on the first floor, where the Rani used to hold her court. It was here that the Rani met the famous British lawyer John Lang in 1854, for her legal battle against the British East India Company, after they annexed Jhansi. And it is here, during one of these meetings, that she is said to have exclaimed, 'Mai meri Jhansi nahi doongi!'

During the Revolt of 1857, the Mahal witnessed several meetings between Rani Laxmibai and leaders like Tatya Tope. When Jhansi was recaptured by the British in 1858, it was extensively plundered by them. Later, it was turned into a kotwali (police station). After Independence, the palace was taken over by the Archaeological Survey of India.

Built around a courtyard, the palace has six halls and numerous small rooms. The most prominent among them are the Durbar Hall and the richly painted private office next to it. The courtyard contains a small well and two fountains, one on either side.

The Archaeological Survey of India has converted the Rani Mahal into a museum, which houses sculptures from the 9th to 12th centuries CE, from nearby places like Madanpur, Baruasagar etc.



# GANESH TEMPLE

## Where Manikarnika Tambe Became 'Rani Laxmibai'



In the narrow bylanes of Jhansi's old city, in the Ganesh Bazaar, is a Ganesh Temple, where Raja Gangadharrao of Jhansi married a young girl named Manikarnika Tambe in 1842. After the wedding, according to Maharashtrian custom, the bride was given a new name – 'Rani Laxmibai'.

This iconic Ganesh Temple is said to have been built in the 1760s CE but it is not clear who built it. While some claim it was Vishwas Rao Lakshman (or Vilas Rao Lakshman), the Subedar of Jhansi under the Maratha Peshwas from 1766 to 1769 CE, others say it was his successor Raghunathrao Newalkar, founder of the Newalkar dynasty.

In 1842, Maharaja Gangadharrao, then a widower, was looking for a suitable bride to marry. After an extensive search, a young bride was found for the Maharaja, named Manikarnika Tambe. A grand wedding took place inside the temple, after which the bride and groom walked back to the fort for the Griha Pravesh ceremony.

The temple continued to be popular during the reign of the Maharajas and there are accounts of special firework displays being held here during Diwali. However, the temple was seriously damaged during the British sack of Jhansi in 1858. It was rebuilt and today serves as a prominent centre of Jhansi's Local community.



# MAHALAKSHMI TEMPLE

## The Kuldevi of the Newwalkars



The Mahalakshmi Temple is intimately linked to the life of Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi and it stands next to a pond known as 'Laxmi Tal'. Eyewitness accounts during the Rani's time speak of how she used to regularly pray at this shrine.

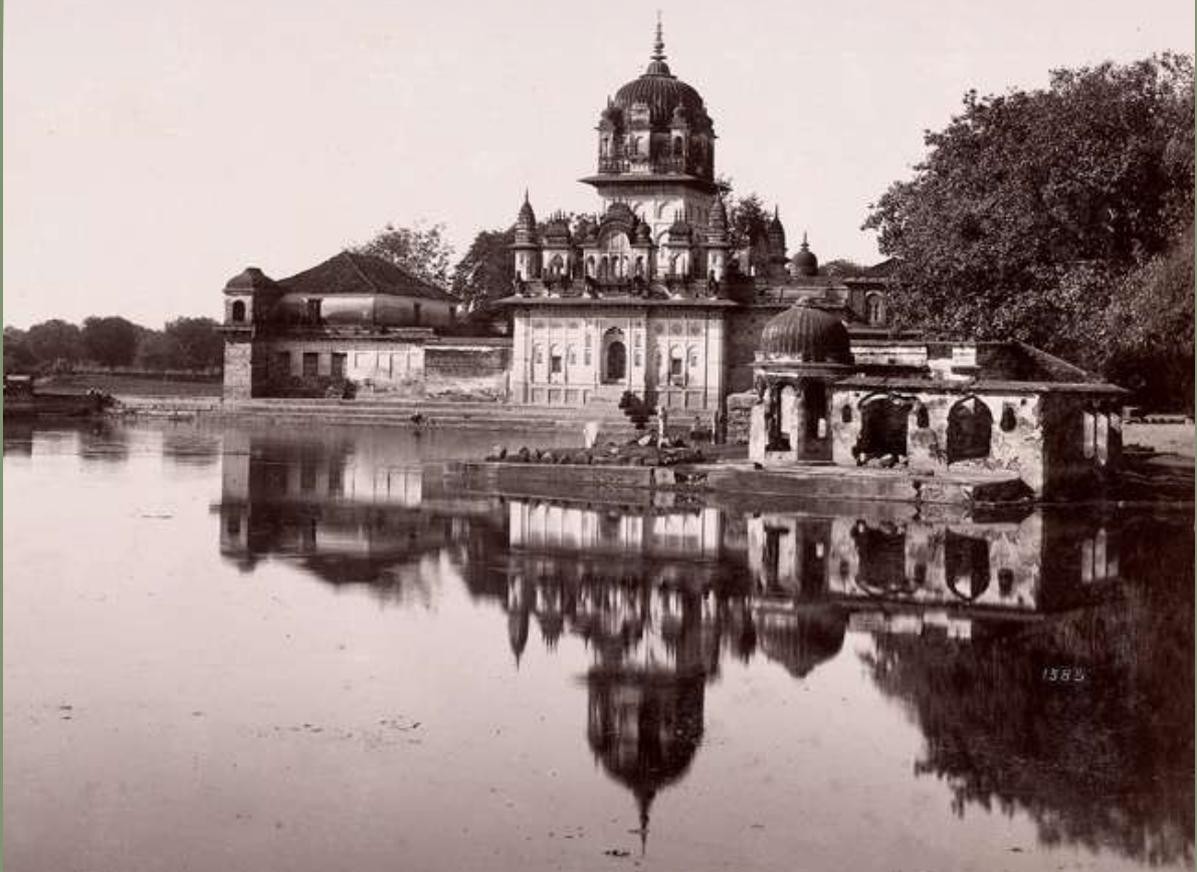
It was the chief temple of Jhansi's Maharajas as it housed their 'Kul Devi' or Patron Goddess. The temple was built in 1769 CE by Raghunathrao Newalkar, the Subedar of Jhansi and founder of the Newalkar dynasty.

The temple witnessed grand celebrations and festivals such as Diwali and Dusshera, and the Maharajas granted several villages in jagir to the temple for its upkeep.



After she married Raja Gangadharrao, Rani Laxmibai used to pray here every Tuesday and Friday. On festivals, she used to hold great *havans* and *pujas* here, following which alms would be distributed to the poor. This continued till 1858, when the British captured Jhansi and the Rani had to flee.

Today, while the grandeur of the temple has faded, it still serves the local community, who visit it to pray to Goddess Mahalakshmi.



# GANGADHARRAO CHHATRI

## A Memorial To Rani's Husband



Right next to the Mahalakshmi Temple in Jhansi city is the beautiful Raja Gangadharrao Chhatri, a cenotaph built by Rani Laxmibai in memory of her husband. Raja Gangadharrao (r. 1843 to 1853) was the sixth and last Maharaja of the Jhansi kingdom. He had ascended the throne in 1843 CE and was an able administrator. He was also a kind human being, who got married to Rani Laxmibai, then known as Manikarnika Tambe, the year before he ascended the throne.



In September 1851, Raja Gangadharrao and Rani Laxmibai had a son, who died when he was four months old. Distraught by the loss, Gangadharrao's health began to deteriorate and he died in November 1853. According to royal tradition, a cenotaph was built in his memory.

The cenotaph is enclosed within a walled structure and is surrounded by a garden. It is a fine example of Mughal-Maratha architecture. Faded remains of paintings can be seen on the chhatri. Next to the chhatri is a baoli or a step-well built by the Rani.

# STAR FORT & Its Role In The Revolt



Walk through the narrow lanes of Jhansi, and keep your eyes peeled as you cross the Sadar Bazar area and enter the cantonment area. Hidden behind row of houses, you will slowly start noticing walls and battlements of a fortification. They have been carefully camouflaged and are almost impossible to photograph. What you are looking at is the 'hidden fort' of Jhansi, also known as the 'Star Fort' due to its star-like shape.

The magnificent six-pointed star fort is unique and is not usually seen in India. It was an architectural design used in castles in Italy and France. The star shape makes the fort less vulnerable to artillery attack.

No one knows who built this fort or how old it is. The Third Anglo-Maratha War ended in 1818. During this time, Raja Ramchandrarao Newalkar was ruling Jhansi as a Subedar on behalf of Peshwas in Pune. After the fall of the Maratha Empire, Raja Ramchandrarao signed a treaty of friendship with the British East India Company, according to which the British stationed a subsidiary force in Jhansi. Built on 1.4 acres of land, the fort was used to house this force, a treasury and an arms and ammunition depot.



This fort played an important role in the Revolt of 1857. It was here that the revolt of the East India Company sepoys actually began in Jhansi. The sepoys in the 14th Cavalry stationed in Jhansi marched into the Star Fort and attacked the British, who took refuge in the main Jhansi Fort. They then marched to Rani Mahal and declared Rani Laxmibai as their leader. Today, the fort is in the charge of the Indian Army and is used for administrative purposes.

# JOKHAN BAGH

## Brutal & Bloody History

One of the most tragic events of the Revolt of 1857 was the massacre of 66 Britishers in Jokhan Bagh in Jhansi, where a memorial stands today. It was a small garden with chhatris and served as the residence of the jogis or mystics, who came to Jhansi or travelled through the region. But this garden turned bloody during 1857.

After the Revolt broke out at Meerut in May 1857, ripples were soon felt in Jhansi and Rani Laxmibai is said to have sought permission to raise a small army for her own protection. It was a request granted by Captain Skene, the British superintendent and senior civil servant in Jhansi.

On 5th June 1857, sepoy in the 12th Bengal Native Infantry and the 14th Cavalry stationed in Jhansi rebelled. They marched into the Star Fort and announced their intention of holding it. The revolting sepoy swept across the city of Jhansi. They started killing British officers and their bungalows were burnt. They also plundered the town and released prisoners from the local jail.

On 7th June 1857/8, the rebels laid siege to the Jhansi Fort, which had been in the possession of the British since they had annexed Jhansi in 1853. They said that if the British peacefully surrendered the fort to them, the European residents would be allowed to leave in safety. When Capt Skene agreed, the gates were opened and the Europeans moved out with all their belongings, expecting to be escorted to the Star Fort.

As soon as the British officers and their families reached Jokhan Bagh, one of the leaders of the Revolt ordered that they be put to death. The first to be killed was Captain Skene. After the Revolt, the British turned Jokhan Bagh into a memorial, which is now in the charge of the Archaeological Survey of India.



# ST JUDE'S SHRINE

## Keeping A Promise



In colonial times, Jhansi was an important cantonment, which was established in 1842. To fulfil the spiritual needs of their troops, the British administration set about establishing churches in the town. St Jude's shrine, however, has a more recent history. Situated in the Civil Lines area, St Jude's shrine was dedicated to St Jude by Father Francis Xavier Fenech, the first Bishop of Jhansi. Fenech, who originally hailed from Malta, spent six years in India before he was posted in Jhansi in April 1929. He was stationed here to develop this territory into a diocese, which is a district under the care of a bishop. Jhansi became a diocese in 1954 and Fenech its Bishop.

Fenech had made a promise to St Jude – one of the 12 Apostles or key disciples of Jesus Christ – and as per that promise in 1947, he built a temporary chapel dedicated to St Jude. A marble tablet serves as the priest's gravestone inside the church, where he is buried.

Another important church in Jhansi is the St Martin's Church, located in the city's Cantonment area. Built in 1859, it functioned as a garrison church for the British army officers stationed here. The most prominent feature of the Church is the beautiful stained glass mosaic depicting Jesus Christ, which was brought across from Europe.



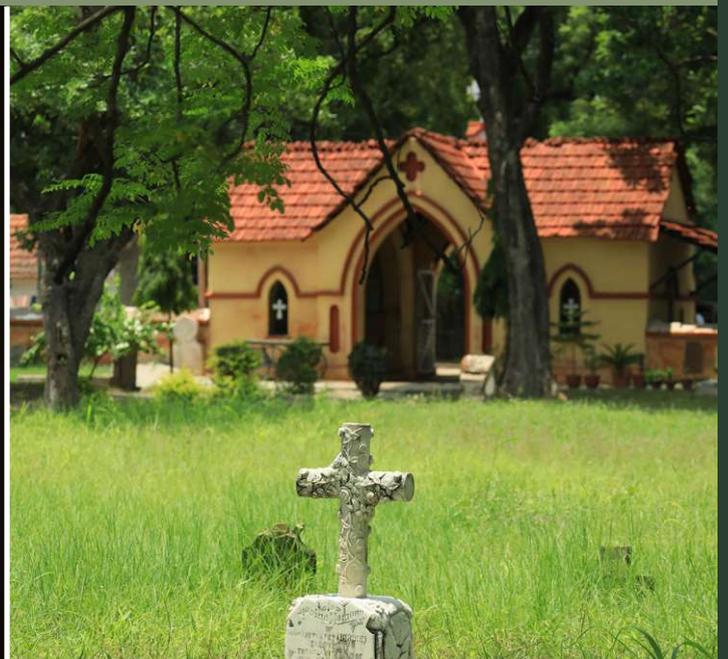
# JHANSI CANTONMENT CEMETERY



One of the most solemn sites in Jhansi city is the Jhansi Cantonment Cemetery, also known as the 'British Cemetery'. Built after the Revolt of 1857-58, it is the resting place of British officers and soldiers who died in the Revolt as well as those who perished in World War I & II. According to official records, the cemetery has 1,698 burials, dedicated to military officers, soldiers and their family members.

Of special significance is a memorial to Captain Alexander Skene of the 68th Regiment Bengal Native Infantry, who was the British Agent in Jhansi during the Revolt of 1857. Skene was one of the first to be buried here along with his wife Margaret. They perished in the massacre at Jokhan Bagh, when Indian revolutionaries killed British officers and civilians who were fleeing the Jhansi Fort during the Revolt, on 8th June 1857.

Spread across 8 acres, the cemetery was restored in the mid-2000s. A chapel was recently added along with stone benches and lights. There is a well laid-out garden too.



# JHANSI RAILWAY STATION



Built to resemble a massive fort, Jhansi Railway Station is a prominent building in the city. Completed in 1889, it is also one of the busiest railway stations in India.

Plans for the station were finalised in July 1886, so that Jhansi could be connected to the rest of India. After land was acquired for the station, the first to be built was a passenger platform, a waiting room and residential quarters for officers and employees. Between 1878 and 1881, the Gwalior-Agra section was built by the Gwalior State. This was followed by the Agra-Mathura railway block, the Gwalior-Jhansi section, Jhansi-Mauranipur section, Mauranipur-Banda section and the Banda-Manikpur section.

It was on 1st January 1889 that the railway station was inaugurated. By 1929, what was then the Agra-Gwalior-Jhansi-Bhopal line was connected to Delhi and Madras, and through them to the rest of India. The heritage structure of the railway station is a popular draw for both tourists and travellers.





## THE WONDERS OF ORCHHA



Deep in the heart of India, 123 km from Gwalior, is the town of Orchha. Known for its magnificent architectural jewels, it has preserved the legacy of the Bundela Rajputs, under whose reign the town greatly flourished.

The kingdom of Orchha was founded by the Bundela chief Rudra Pratap Singh in 1501 CE. He established the Orchha Fort here, which is home to many famous monuments. But Orchha grew to the height of its power under Bir Singh Bundela (r. 1605 to 1627 CE). A man with a commanding personality and a great warrior, he soon acquired large territories and immense wealth.

Bir Singh was also a prolific builder. He commissioned magnificent palaces, temples and gardens in Orchha. Among the splendid monuments in the town is Raj Mahal, which was constructed in the 16th century by Rudra Pratap Singh (r. 1501-1531) but was completed during the reign of Madhukar Shah (r. 1554 – 1592). It boasts lavish rooms, including residential quarters and beautifully decorated balconies. Exquisite mirror work and murals are some of the notable features of this palace.



Another fabulous monument is Jahangir Mahal, which was built for Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605 - 1627), who visited his old friend, Bir Singh Ju Dev, and stayed for one night in the palace. A 17th century marvel, the palace is a three-storied structure marked by beautiful hanging balconies, porches and apartments. Among the other monuments in Orchha is the palace of poetess-musician, Rai Parveen, the beautiful paramour of Raja Indramani Singh (1672-1675).

Orchha is also known for its incredible temples, including the Ram Raja Temple and Chaturbhuj Temple. The beautiful RamRaja temple has an intriguing history behind it. The Idols which were supposed to be installed in the magnificent Chaturbhuj Temple were kept on the ground where this temple now stands. But once kept on the ground, the idols could not be budged. This marked the place holy and a temple was constructed where the idols were kept.



*The Ram Raja Temple is said to be the only temple in India where Lord Ram is worshipped as a 'King in a palace'. Every day, an armed salutation is offered to Lord Ram by the local police.*



Orchha was ruled by its Maharajas till 1947, when it merged with the Indian Union. A city steeped in history, tales and legends, Orchha is truly spectacular!

