

## RUDRAMADEVI - THE WARRIOR QUEEN OF KAKATIYA DYNASTY

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**Abstract:** Rani Rudrama Devi, destiny's queen, was a 13th century Kakatiya warrior ruler. An able administrator, the boldest of warriors, a compassionate ruler, an indomitable conqueror, an adorable daughter and a loving mother - she can be given any title and it would perfectly fit Rudrama as if it was coined for her. She was Queen mother to her people, compassionate to their problems, and responded accordingly. Furthermore, she was an understanding leader, and her taxation as well as revenue to run her kingdom depended upon the circumstances therein. Rani Rudrama made herself answerable to her subjects. She was a commander who rode a horse as well as wielded a sword as no other person in her kingdom could. The Kakatiya Dynasty has to be credited with the opportunity it surfaced for Rani Rudrama Devi. She was a committed ruler who took an active part in governing the country and strove very hard to promote the best interests of the state. In spite of the wars which frequently disturbed the country, people in her kingdom remained content and happy under her rule. Rudrama strengthened the fort of Warangal still further, making it highly deterring for the enemy. She had a deep moat dug around the fort to fortify it to a greater extent. This paper is an attempt to discuss the overview of Warrior Queen of Rudrama devi in Kakatiya dynasty.

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**Introduction:** Rani Rudramadevi was born in 1262. Her father Ganapatideva was the founder of Kakatiya Dynasty. She was one of the most prominent women rulers of the Kakatiya Dynasty in Indian History. Rudramadevi ruled the Kakatiya Dynasty from 1262 to 1289. Our past has seen monarchies rising to power and some dramatically falling. However, it has mostly remained a patriarchal set up for the longest time. Rarely have we seen the space dominated by females. Among these rare women, we had Razia Sultana, the scintillating ruler of the Delhi sultanate who received massive antagonism for her being a woman. Amongst them was also the 13th century Warrior Queen of Kakatiya Dynasty, Rudrama Devi.

Rudrama Devi was born as Rudramba to King Ganapathideva. She was the only child of the King Ganapathideva, who was the ruler of the Kakateeya Dynasty. He ruled the entire territory from Warangal the capital of the Dynasty.

The Kakatiya Dynasty was one of the major dynasties that ruled over Telangana and had major contributions in shaping its history and civilisation. Hanumankonda, a hillock lying in between the rivers Godavari and Krishna, formed the foundation of the Kakateeya Empire. Warangal, which was then called Orugallu, formed the capital of the Dynasty which ruled over the Telugu country from about 1150 AD to 1323 AD.

Since Ganapathideva had no sons, he performed the Putrika ceremony and formally designated Rudrama Devi as a son. For her male recognition, she was named Rudradeva. On the advice of the Prime Minister, Ganapathideva also nominated Rudramadevi to be his 'male heir'.

She rose to power in her early teens when she was appointed co-regent and ruled alongside her father. She maintained the designation that was bestowed on her and ruled as a King. She wore male attire and maintained a similar demeanour. She was later married to Veerabhadra, prince of Nidadavolu with whom she had two female children.

Rani Rudrama devi's succession to the throne was opposed by many small rulers and nobles, including her own relations. They simply hated being under a woman's authority. With evil thoughts, all the

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enemies at once started to besiege the Orugallu Kingdom. Rudramadevi handled these situations with great courage and suppressed the enemies with her fierce forces. In this way she proved the worth of her enthronement as queen. During Rani Rudrama reign, the mighty Yadavas of Devagiri and Cholas attacked to conquer the Kakatiya Kingdom but the attempts failed due to the strong determination of Rudrama Devi. Rani Rudramadevi ruled four decades with good administration, love of justice, equality among the people and administrators and spreading the peace. So during her ruling period, historians called the golden period in Andhra History.

**Objectives of the Study:**

1. To analyze Rudrama Devi rule as one of the most outstanding queens of all times in Indian history.
2. To describe the nature of the Rani Rudrama devi's administration
3. To examine the succession of Rudrama Devi to the throne.

**Methodology:** The research is based on secondary data. It's exploratory and descriptive in nature given the nature of the present study, it was required to collect information from the secondary sources. Secondary information was collected from research studies, books, journals, newspapers, ongoing academic working papers .

**Rudrama Devi ( 1262-1289 ):** The succession of Rudrama Devi to the throne in 1259 became a historical event. It unfolded a new chapter in the history of our country, the reason being that history had rarely witnessed a woman ascending a throne. She was not only well-versed in the art of warfare but could also withstand the attacks of enemies, instilling a deep sense of awe and fear in the hearts of enemies. Since Rudramadevi was the first woman ruler to have ascended the throne in South India, she became a country wide inspiration for centuries to come.

Her father Ganapatideva had himself been a successful ruler for a long time, loved and worshipped by his people. He had made a conscious decision to enthrone his daughter as his successor, creating history in the process. Such a decision was unheard of in those times, but reflected his unstinting faith in Rudrama's strength and capabilities as a ruler. Rudrama was an embodiment of the power of women, which was in sharp contrast to the general belief that women were the weaker sex. Ganapatideva's decision, which was entirely opposed to the then prevailing royal situations, traditions and beliefs, to place Rudrama on the throne proved his strong conviction and sense of judgment which is praiseworthy. There were probably a few reasons as to why Ganapatideva entrusted the throne to his daughter; his wife, the Queen, had borne no sons, which in turn caused other male members in the immediate family to lust after the throne. These members conspired and connived to join hands with neighbouring foes. Amidst such unrest within the family, Ganapatideva felt a deeper confidence in Rudrama, sensing her ability, prudence and solidity to control and withstand internal and external opposition.

Ganapatideva's vision of Rudrama Devi's success was opposed at the most basic level, where polity and society viewed women as subordinates and not the other way round. This negativity was put to rest when Rudrama Devi proved her essence and made a mark as one of the greatest rulers of the Kakatiya kingdom.

**Early Life:** Sensing her innate strength and focus, Ganapatideva made Rudrama go through the rigours of training in horse riding, sword fight, and other arts of warfare, under the guidance and tutelage of her early Guru Sivadevayya. She had a fine sense of politics, administration, statesmanship and public governance. Even before she ascended the throne Rudrama made herself familiar with people and places, visiting several parts of her kingdom, pilgrimage centres and gaining enough knowledge about them. The Pottugallu inscription of Karimnagar dated 1235 AD and the Yeleshwar inscription of 1246 AD, bear testimony to this fact.

Under her Guru's keen supervision and training Rudrama mastered the art of leading the army, planning and execution of facing as well as overpowering opponents on the battleground, and penetrating into the enemies' planned war moves. He made her understand the science of politics, administration and the rules of battle. Jayappa, her maternal uncle, taught her fine nuances of the art of dance and moulded

her into a fine artist. Konkanabhattu, her other teacher, acquainted Rudrama with literature and music. By the time Rudrama reached the age of 15, she had bloomed and blossomed into a beautiful young lady, well-versed in various subjects, necessary for a ruler. She grew up to be strong, capable and grounded, ready for future challenges. Her father Ganapatideva shared his vast knowledge and experience of politics and public governance with her. Making her a part of his daily administration, he made Rudrama at ease with the battle field at every given opportunity. He started giving her responsibilities to make her familiar with the various aspects of ruling by which she became quite adept and soon exhibited a keen sense and mastery in ruling with concern and welfare of the people in her heart.

Even Rudrama's attire was more like a male and she conducted herself like a man and a ruler. Gradually, she transformed into an epitome of strength and valour, ready and capable of taking over the reins of the kingdom from Ganapatideva

**Marriage:** By this time, as Rudrama had attained marriageable age, Ganapatideva was looking for a right suitor for her, one who would match up to his daughter in all aspects of looks and valour. He found Prince Virabhadra, son of King Indushekhara of Nidadavolu, to be the most suitable. By then, Virabhadra was well known for his innumerable deeds of valour and strength along with qualities of a great soldier and fighter. Probably another conscious reason for Ganapatideva might have been to win over the enemy with this alliance and put an end to a probable enemy attack from that quarter. It is said that Rudrama had put forth this condition, that whoever she would marry must win over her in battle. Virabhadra readily agreed to this condition. The two prepared for a fierce battle in the presence of excited and anxious onlookers comprising ministers, subordinate kings, commander in chiefs and an unprecedented crowd of people who came to witness this extraordinary event. Both of them were in top form. They fought ferociously with different weapons, exhibiting the skills of fight that they had honed over the years. Rudrama and Virabhadra were completely focussed with only victory over the other as their goal. It is believed that they continuously fought for three days and nights at a stretch with no result in sight. Finally, Ganapatideva stepped in and declared them equally proficient, a true match and suitable for each other. Rudrama agreed for marriage as she had found an equal in Virabhadra.

Ganapatideva performed their wedding with great pomp and grandeur, befitting the royal couple. Their marriage has been told and re-told many times, over the years by writers, story tellers and bards. They had a harmonious marriage but this did not shift Rudrama's focus from responsibility towards her kingdom or its people. She gave full support and strength to Ganapatideva who was at the fag end of his life, by taking on more responsibilities in the kingly duties.

In the Juttiga inscription of 1259 ad, there is mention that Rudrama Devi rose to the throne in 1259 ad. In this inscription one also finds the first mention of Rudrama's marriage. Her marriage can be traced back to approximately 1235 ad, as the Malkapur inscription of 1261 ad and the Palakeedu inscription of 1269 ad help us in assessing these timelines. In these inscriptions one finds mention of her grandson Prataparudra as a child. He was the son of Mummadamba, Rudrama Devi's daughter.

Unfortunately Rudrama Devi lost Virabhadra very young. She was facing extremely tough times at that juncture, taking care of her ailing father and moaning the death of her dead husband. However, she did not succumb to sorrow and despair nor did she neglect her duties. Instead, Rudrama channelized all her strength and energies in discharging her duties as a ruler both of them had a harmonious marriage but this did not shift Rudrama's focus from responsibility towards her kingdom or its people. She gave full support and strength to Ganapatideva who was at the fag end of his life, by taking on more responsibilities in the kingly duties.

**Rudrama Devi: The Queen:** Following the loss of prestige after the Pandya invasion, her father retired from the public sphere passing on the control to Rudrama. The powers now were vested in the hands of Rani Rudrama Devi. Scriptures suggest, she individually started ruling from 1261. Around 1266 she lost both her father and her husband. After the demise of her father, Rudrama was finally coronated in 1269. She was now officially the Queen of the Empire. However, owing to her gender, several oppositions

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including that of her stepbrothers came her way. Harihara Dev and Murari Dev who refused to submit to a woman's authority later rebelled against her.

**Accomplishments and Legacy:** Despite the antagonism she faced because of her gender, she rose up as one of the greatest warriors of her time. She drove back the Yedava King of Devagiri forcing him to finally sign a peace accord. She also introduced a new policy of recruiting people from the non-aristocratic background as commanders in the army as well as the administration. It was a radical step to take at that time. It is believed that she put forward such a policy to gain the trust of the commoners and thereby win new loyalists.

She also captured important forts like Renadu, Eruva Mulikinadu, and Satti. Her accomplishments include the completion of the Warangal fort that her father had begun. It involved the addition of a second wall and a moat to the structure which was built to protect the city against future sieges.

History believes Rudrama Devi was one of the most outstanding queens of all times in Indian history. She played an active part in governing the country and maintained the best interest of her people. Despite the interruptions from neighbouring empires, her people remained contented under her rule. While her gender was no barrier for her, she faced the ill will of others owing to her gender.

The Venetian traveller Marco Polo on his visit to the kingdom later spoke of her administrative qualities in high capacity. He appreciated her benign rule and greatness. He described her as a lady of discretion and appreciated her manners of justice and equity.

Through the annals of history, gender has time and again proven to be an 'impediment' and a tool of suppression. The thirteenth-century witnessed the rise of two such legendary queens who were downtrodden against their gender.

Razia Sultana, daughter of Iltutmish ascended the throne of the Delhi Sultanate in 1236 CE. In a sphere that was dominated by men, queens like Razia and Rudrama Devi fought their way to ultimately rule their kingdoms. However, the century is a testament to a sadder reality of suppression of these women despite being in the highest echelon. Razia's reign lasted for four years. Minhaj-i Siraj writes that "She was endowed with all the admirable attributes and qualifications necessary for Kings. But her sex was her greatest disqualification."

At a time when purdah formed the larger part of the Mughal customs and attire, Razia rose against the practice deeming it obstructive. Razia too discarded conventional female attire and dressed in qaba and kulah which were elements of dresses worn by men.

Attire and appearance become a common denominator in both these examples. Through the vicissitudes of history, the need for women to endow themselves with conventionally masculine traits and project themselves as men is symptomatic of a larger contradiction.

The concealment of identity has been used as a tool by women down the ages to have chance to put themselves out in the public sphere. From historic queens like Razia and Rudrama Devi to modern authors like Mary Ann Evans and J.K. Rowling, the struggle to step out of the household has been a struggle against their feminine existence.

**Conclusion:** Rudrama was the first woman to be coronated, because of which she became a matter of pride not only for the Kakatiya dynasty or India but for the entire woman race. She was not just a ruler but one who fought valiantly and defeated hardcore and more experienced enemies. Despite ascending the throne in difficult times, she rose above hurdles, internal objection and revolts, and enemy rebellion, to give a reign of love, peace and concern for her people. Furthermore, her achievements have come to be forever etched in the history of women of India. She personified all that stood for confidence, bravery, commitment, and proved that every woman endowed with such qualities could rise to be another Rudrama. The well celebrated Queen Laxmi Bai, known as Jhansi Ki Rani drew her inspiration

from Rani Rudrama Devi, who was compared to Goddess Kali in the battle field. Rani Laxmi Bai was addressed and commemorated by her ministers, chiefs, and subjects as the great Rudrama of the Kakatiya Dynasty. Indian history has thus, time and again witnessed the strength and power of women embodied in these fine examples of Historical Queens.

Renowned world historian and traveller, Marco Polo who landed at Motupalli near Chirala and visited Mutfli Fort, saw a state of flourishing sea trade, land trade, agriculture and economy of people in the Kakatiya Kingdom. The prosperity witnessed by him, was attributed to the highly competent rule of the then Queen Rani Rudrama reigning from her capital Warangal.

Not merely yesterday or today but for generations to come, Rudrama Devi will remain an inspiration to one and all, transgressing narrow gender equations. Rani Rudrama lived, fought and sacrificed her very life for her motherland, defining patriotism for India.

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