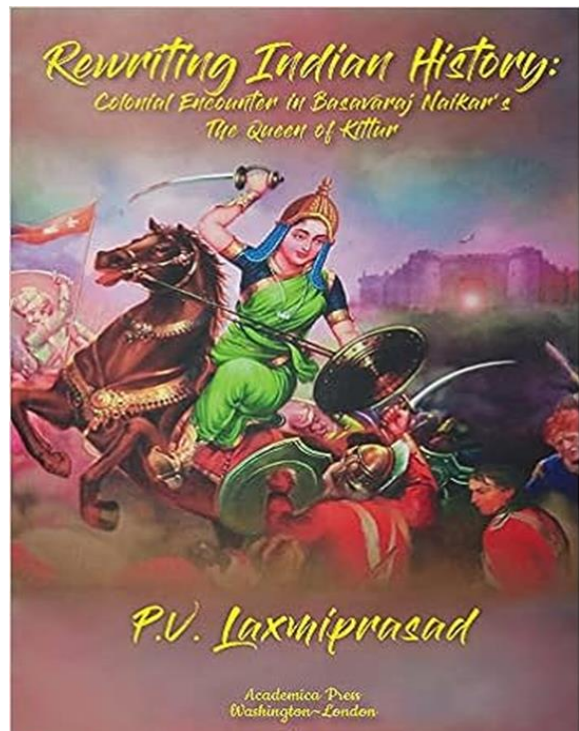


***Re-writing Indian History: Colonial Encounter in Basavaraj Naikar's The Queen of Kittur* by P.V.Laxmiprasad, Academics Press, Washington, USA, 2022, ISBN: 9781680532524. Pp. 90.**

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Re-writing Indian History: Colonial Encounter in Basavaraj Naikar's The Queen of Kittur is an appraisal by Dr. Laxmiprasad P.V., an erudite scholar who is interested in writing about the glory of his motherland. The critical volume starts with the biography of the renowned Basavaraj Naikar, followed by the preface by the author. The work is divided into an elaborate Introduction to History, followed by an interesting character sketch of the Rani of Kittur (Chennamma). The work further proceeds to discuss the Doctrine of Lapse and East India Company. Then starts the Appreciation of Queen of Kittur, and ends with Conclusion.



The author Dr. P. V. Laxmiprasad is a distinguished academician, a learned scholar, an eminent critic, a resource person, and a noteworthy editor. With 42 books to his credit, his writings exhibit his passion for English literature. While narrating the story of 1824, when the East India Company exercised authority over India, the writer tries to present a striking character sketch of the Queen of Kittur, Rani Chennamma. The character as depicted in the work by Laxmiprasad, stands as an epitome of royalty, courage, and heroism, the qualities to be emulated by today's young women. Keeping up the tempo to Naikar's narration, Laxmiprasad too does the historical rendition so brilliantly that the readers feel engrossed and thrilled.

‘Introduction to History’, simply brilliant, the author has brought out the real meaning of history by equaling it to science and making it a knowledge acquired through experimentation. The job of a historian is said to be more difficult than that of a scientist. This is interesting and to those who are trying to remove History as a subject from education is an eye-opener.

The facts of Nature and the facts of history are not facts in the same sense of the word. The facts of Nature are what the scientist can perceive or produce in the laboratory under his own eyes; the facts of history are not at all: all that the historian has before him are documents and relics from which he has somehow to reconstruct the facts. Further, he sees that history is an affair of spirit, of human personalities, and that the only thing that enables the historian to reconstruct it is the fact that he himself is a spirit and a personality. All this is excellent. The historian, beginning from his documents, constructs in his own mind what professes to be a picture of the past. This picture is in his mind and nowhere else; it is a subjective mental construction. But he claims that this subjective construction possesses objective evaluation. (10)

It’s the story of a brave woman who rebelled against the British, and against their Doctrine of Lapse principle. Chennamma was born on 14 November 1778 and died on 21 February, 1829. She was a trained warrior who after getting married to Raja Mallasarja who was a Peshwa and became the queen of Kittur. As Rani Chennamma lost her husband, and her son subsequently, the British occupied the kingdom leaving no chance to the adopted son of the queen. This led to the rage of the queen who revolted against the British.

The author explains that with an idea to annex the Indian states to the British Raj, the latter introduced the doctrine of lapse which made them quite unpopular and led to the rebellion of many Indian princely states, one such being Kittur. Rani Chennamma who wished to make her adopted son the legal heir to the throne, failed to do so because of the principle, which led to her revolt against the British.

Under this, the author explains how the East India Company entered India, how it tried to establish its monopoly, and finally how it failed due to the Indian mutiny in 1857.

This section begins with the quote of R.C. Chulki who reviewed the novel: “The Queen of Kittur is a highly absorbing historical novel in which the author has neither distorted the facts nor exaggerated them. Neither has he suppressed the truth, nor has he sacrificed it for the sake of convenience” (IBC, 13). The author then proceeds to describe the personality of King

Mallasarja as a devout and religious Desai king who patronized temples, and scholars. There were internal conflicts, and Peshwas were against Tipu Sultan, and the British. His chief queen was Rani Rudramma, who gets troubled by the killings of her relatives. The King is portrayed as a valiant fighter and a lover of arts. He wishes to receive the cooperation of other kings to fight against the British. As part of the talks, Rani Chennamma is given in marriage to King Mallasarja by the Desai of Kakati. The wedding ceremony is described in detail by the reviewer. Thus, Rani Chennamma enters Kittur as the second wife of Raja Mallasarja, and acquires the history of the kingdom and the fort from Rani Rudramma.

The narration further proceeds to describe the plan of the king to befriend the British, much to the disappointment of Baji Rao Peshwa, who wanted to see Raja Mallasarja dethroned. Raja Mallasarja dies of chronic illness, making his son Sivalingarudrasarja the heir to the throne. The British occupies the kingdom, and, in the fight, the son of Chennamma Sivabasavaraja dies a warrior. After a few days, Sivalingarudrasarja also loses his life due to illness. Then Rani Chennamma declares herself the Queen of Kittur.

“Gentlemen, you all know that dark clouds have gathered upon the kingdom of Kittur. Sawai Mallasarja is still a slip of a boy. I, therefore, have to act as his guardian and virtually manage everything. But a mere woman that I am, I cannot go ahead without your help and cooperation. I, therefore, appeal to you to forget your individual differences and get united for the welfare of the kingdom. I would like to know if you are willing to offer me whole-hearted support” (116).

Master Sivalingappa, the adopted son of Rani was though considered the future king of Kittur by its people, the British didn't recognize him, and this led to the implementation of the Doctrine of Lapse. Rani sensing the danger was successful in uniting the people of Kittur in fighting against the British. In a series of events that ensued, on the battlefield the Queen of Kittur killed the British agent Thackeray. The British under the leadership of Chaplin soon plot a conspiracy that lead to the arrest of the Queen, much to the rage of the people of Kittur. Rani is imprisoned and dies a warrior prisoner.

To conclude, the reviewer mentions how Naikar has portrayed the character of the Queen and ends with a comment on the writing style of Naikar.

Rani is patriotic, her address to the fellow countrymen rouses fervor, zeal, and patriotism to protect their motherland from the hands of the British.

To put it in brief, the author's review of the novel with sub-headings is clean and neat making it easily comprehensible. He uses simple and direct English. The reviewer retains the local works to sustain the native flavour. Though at some points, the detailing and elaboration make it dull, the string of events, well structured and organized, the gripping narration make it a sure pick. The reviewer establishes himself a great lover of history, a patriot, and an admirer of valiant women of India. It is one of the significant contributions by P.V.Laxmiprasad on historical novels. Truly, the work becomes an immortal form of literature in Indian Writings in English.