



The Rani of Jhansi: Gender, History, and Fable in India

Harleen Singh

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Colonial texts often read the Indian woman warrior as a cultural anomaly, but Indian texts find recourse in the mythological examples of the female warrior. Rani Lakshmi Bai's remaking transforms the mythologically viable, yet socially marginal, figure of a woman in battle into bounded and meaningful feminine roles such as daughter, wife, mother, and queen. Women and the home were integral to how nationalist discourse envisioned the modern, yet traditional, Indian nation. The Rani remains a metaphoric referent of the home, and is an abiding symbol of the nation, reinvented as authority, power, and tradition. The depictions of the Rani signals what is at stake in representing the unrestricted woman in the public sphere. The book extends the discussion on what constitutes the historical archive of the gendered colonial subject and the postcolonial rebel by being attentive to the vexed figures produced within the competing ideologies of colonialism and nationalism.

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