

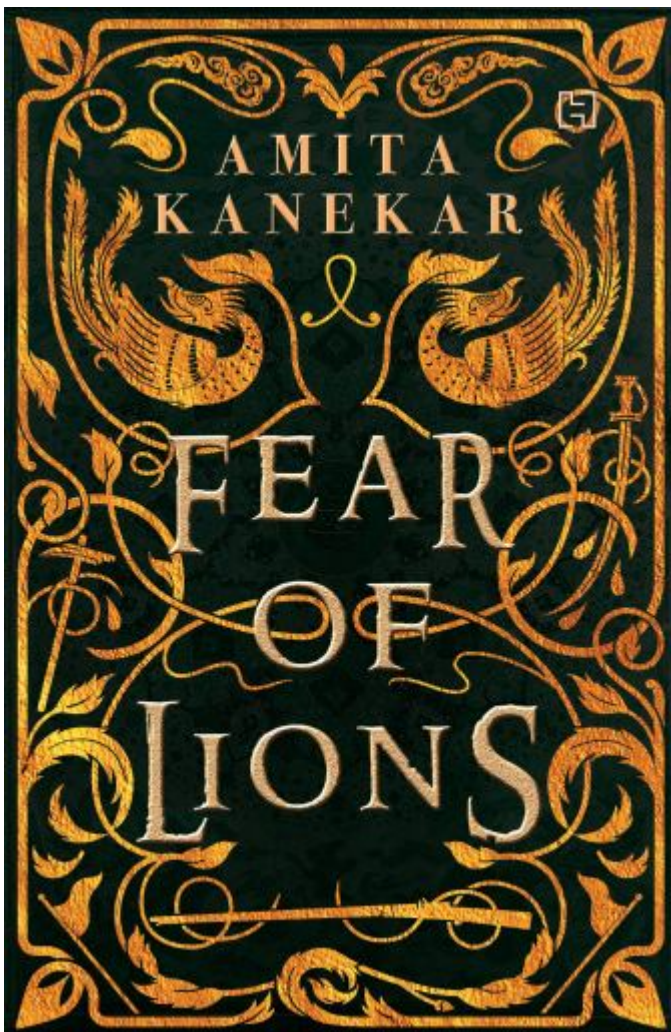
Courtesy: Umang Kumar, Madras Courier.



In Amita Kanekar's second novel, set in northern India, a dimly remembered uprising forms the underlying theme of a richly-textured and multi-layered story. This remarkable uprising was organised by and made up of what one might call the truly subaltern.

Review: Fear of Lions

The rebellion, by a group which called itself Satnami, loosely translated as the "Believers in the True Name" or the "Truth Seekers," during the reign of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb was a sideshow in history, barely documented and indistinctly remembered, if at all. As Amita Kanekar, the author of Fear of Lions, puts it, even soon after the rebellion it "belonged to the past." The revolt occurred in and around the town of Narnaul, in the present-day north Indian state of Haryana, en route to Ajmer, a city in Rajasthan.



Despite the event itself being obscured by history, Kanekar painstakingly endeavours to excavate and resurrect it with detailed research without projecting it in a sensational manner. She employs, as her central narrative, a romantic quest not directly connected to the rebellion that functions as one of the story's chief thread that runs like the spine through the story.

The story transports the reader to the grand world of the Mughals. Yet, in parallel, Kanekar | 1

gently unravels a tale of historic oppression under the institution of caste, including the practices of untouchability and “unseeability.” Against this background arose an almost unthinkable resistance, brought about by women wielding muskets, swords and daggers.

Review: Fear of Lions



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