

Rights Catalog
Angoulême 2012



'The Vyams make their panels sinuous, organic, outlined by dignas, decorative borders normally applied to buildings with colored earth. Their intense patterning, their faces mainly in profile with large single eyes, and their balloons—bird-like for gentleness, with a scorpion's sting for venomous dialogue or the mind's eye for thought—show how traditional artists can reinvent and re-invigorate the medium.'

Paul Gravett
curator, on **Bhimayana**, listed
among **1001 Comics You**
Must Read Before You Die

Where will I go? Who will take me in?

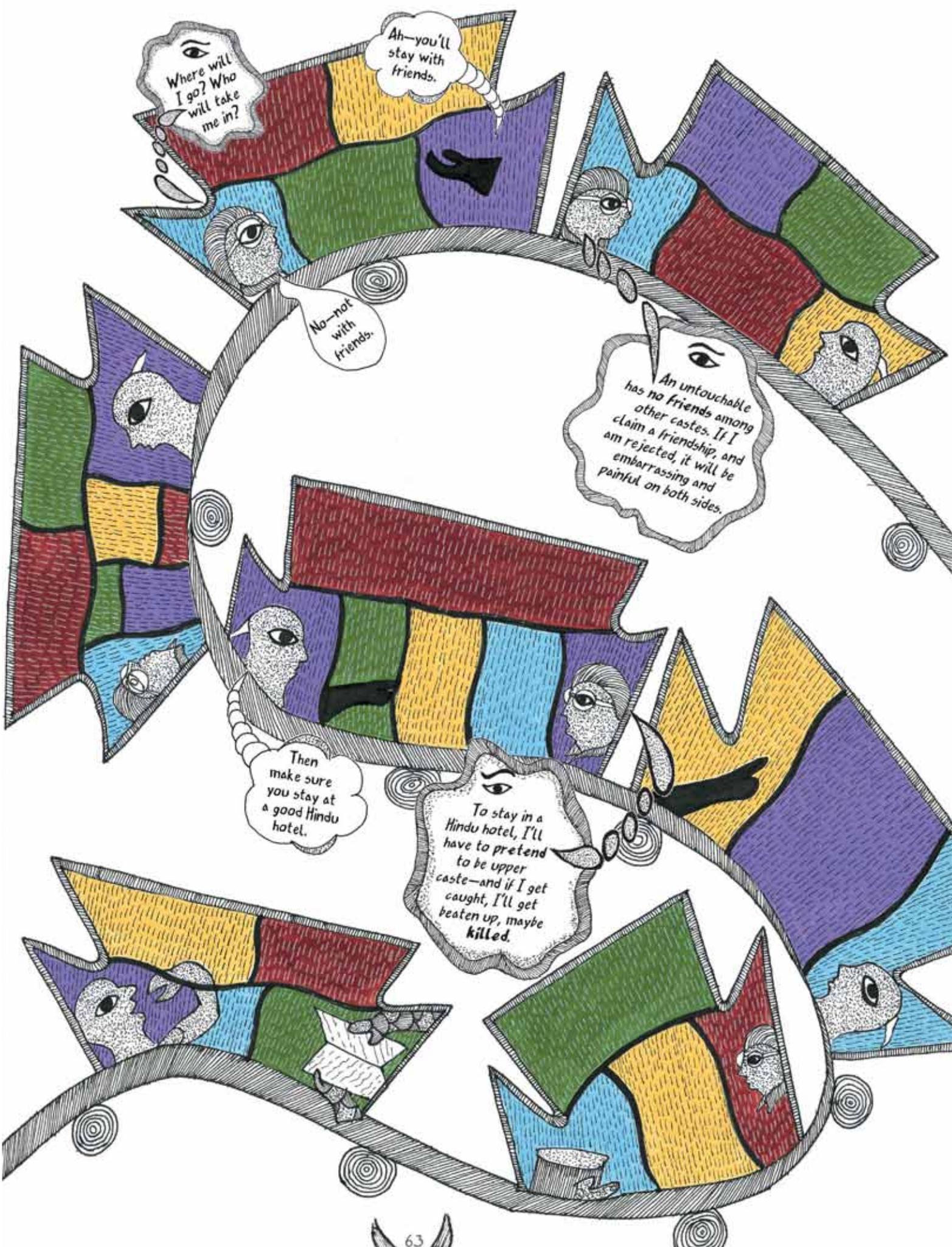
Ah—you'll stay with friends.

No—not with friends.

An untouchable has no friends among other castes. If I claim a friendship, and am rejected, it will be embarrassing and painful on both sides.

Then make sure you stay at a good Hindu hotel.

To stay in a Hindu hotel, I'll have to pretend to be upper caste—and if I get caught, I'll get beaten up, maybe killed.



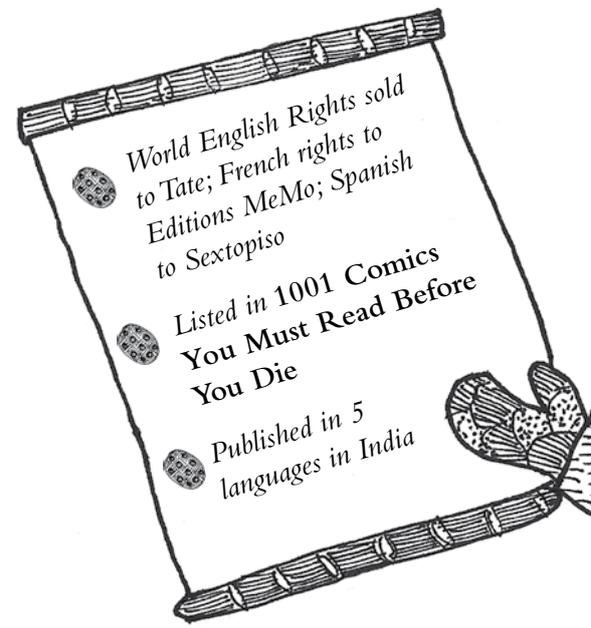
Bhimayana

Experiences of Untouchability

DURGABAI VYAM, SUBHASH VYAM

SRIVIDYA NATARAJAN, S. ANAND

Four-colour on art paper | 108 pages | 8 x 11 inches | Jan 2011



What does it mean to be an untouchable in India?

Why do some Indians despise the touch of others? Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956), one of India’s foremost revolutionaries, recounts his experiences of growing up untouchable and being routinely discriminated against: in school at the age of 10, in Baroda after his return from Columbia University, and while traveling around India.

Battling odds, Ambedkar drafted the Constitution of India and eventually embraced Buddhism. Experiences similar to Ambedkar’s continue to haunt a majority of India’s 170 million dalits. They are still denied water, shelter and the basic dignities of life.

In this ground-breaking work, featuring a Foreword by John Berger, Pardhan-Gond artists Durgabai Vyam and Subhash Vyam interweave historical events like the Mahad satyagraha with contemporary incidents. Defying conventional grammar, they infuse fresh energy into the graphic idiom through their magical art mounted on an epic scale.

A train becomes a snake, a fortress a lion, happiness a peacock. Refusing to ‘force our characters into boxes – it stifles them,’ the Vyams make their panels sinuous, organic, outlined by dignas, decorative borders normally applied to buildings with colored earth. Their intense patterning, their faces mainly in profile with large single eyes, and their balloons – bird-like for gentleness, with a scorpion’s sting for venomous dialogue or the mind’s eye for thought – show how traditional artists can reinvent and re-invigorate the medium. Ambedkar’s plea for justice can be heard again through this beautiful, compelling documentary.

—PAUL GRAVETT in *TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT*

‘An extraordinary book’—JOHN BERGER

‘Unusually beautiful. Unforgettable’—ARUNDHATI ROY

‘A distinctive graphic biography’—JOE SACCO

‘Beautiful, compelling’—TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

FRATERNITY

LIBERTY



Inqilab Zindagdi

End the rule of the queen!

By any means necessary!

I have a dream...

Hasta la Victoria Siempre!

Educate! Organise! Agitate!

Peace! Land! Bread!

Revolution is not a bed of roses.

Slavery, a haven for the death penalty.

There is no such thing as part freedom.

Let a hundred flowers bloom!

Workers of the world, unite!

Pandit, you've got it wrong!

He who invented god is a fool!

Be your own light!

Without education wisdom was lost!

Throw away the brahman's scriptures!

I am hungry for justice!

What do we want? Azadi!

A Gardener in the Wasteland

Jotiba Phule's Fight for Liberty

SRIVIDYA NATARAJAN & APARAJITA NINAN

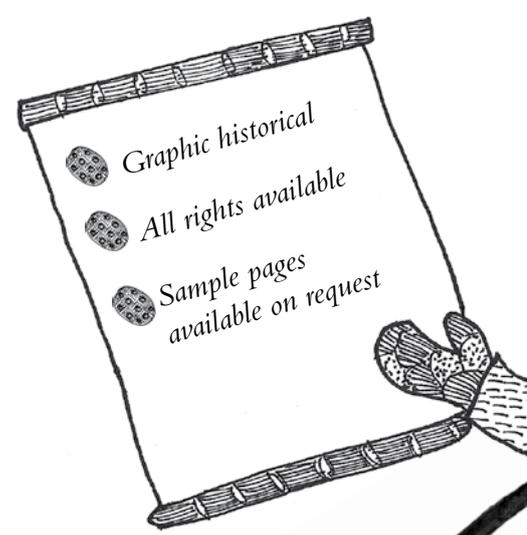
Black and white | 128 pages | 7 in x 9.5 in | Dec 2011

Jotirao Phule wrote *Slavery (Gulamgiri)*—a scathing and witty attack on brahmanism and the slavery of India's 'lower' castes that it engendered. Unlike Indian nationalists, Phule (1827–1890) saw the British as people who could tame the local elite—the brahmins who wielded power simply on the basis of birth. Inspired by Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* and the ideals of Enlightenment philosophers, Phule mounted a critique of the vedas as idle fantasies of the brahman mind. With the objective of liberating the sudras and atisudras, he founded the Satyashodak Samaj (Society of Truthseekers).

Phule dedicated *Slavery* 'to the good people of the United States as a token of admiration for their sublime, disinterested and self-sacrificing devotion in the cause of Negro Slavery.' Written in the form of a dialogue between Dhondiba and Jotiba—reminiscent of Buddha's *suttas*, of Socrates' dialogues—*Slavery* traces the history of brahman domination in India, and examines the motives for and objectives of the cruel and inhuman laws framed by the brahmins.

This revolutionary text remains relevant today, and given Phule's rather graphic imagination lends itself almost naturally to graphic art. Srividya Natarajan and Aparajita Ninan also weave in the story of Savitri Phule, Jotiba's wife and partner in his struggles, who started a school for girls in Pune in 1848, despite social opprobrium. This is perhaps the first time that a historical work of nonfiction has been interpreted as a graphic book in India.

Aparajita Ninan (Appu) worked as a design intern with Navayana in 2009–10 towards a graphic book on Phule's *Slavery*. This is her first book. Srividya Natarajan (Vidya) trained as a Bharatanatyam dancer, and has illustrated books for children. She is the author of the novel, *No Onions Nor Garlic* (2006), a comic satire on caste, and *Bhimayana* (2011).



'THE WORDS AND THE IMAGERY EVOKE THE LAWLESS AMERICAN OLD WEST, PREPARING THE GROUND FOR THE ADVENT OF PHULE AS A WYATT EARP-LIKE FIGURE WHO WILL HELP CLEAN THINGS UP!'

—SUNDAY GUARDIAN

'DIFFERENT PASTS ARE JUXTAPOSED SO THAT A LINE IS DRAWN BETWEEN THE SYSTEM OF SLAVERY AND THE CASTE SYSTEM'

—TIMEOUT

'Now tell me, is there any written evidence that Brahma's mouth, which gave birth to the brahmins, menstruated every month, and that he had to sit in seclusion for four days?'

—JOTIBA PHULE



The Vanished Path

Visits to Buddhist Sites in India

BHARATH MURTHY

Black and white | 250 pages | 5.8 x 8.3 inches | Sept 2012



This comic travelogue seeks answers to the mysterious, near-complete disappearance of Buddhism from India.

Bharath M. travels to some of the historical Buddhist sites in the Gangetic plains trying to understand India's Buddhist past. As a recently converted Buddhist, Bharath seeks to disentangle Buddhist history from the Hindu history of India.

A central mystery of the book is the fact of the near-complete disappearance of Buddhism from India. Though this disappearance has been explained by historians, Bharath tries to understand it from life as it is obtained in Buddhist sites by talking to people. The narrative is light and anecdotal, not pedagogic or documentary. *The Vanished Path* constructs little capsule narratives in each chapter describing the area, the people and the artist's experiences in that area. In the midst of these worldly goings-on, there are digressions into history. We see sequences that are historical, sometimes with the Buddha in it, sometimes Ashoka or another historical personage.

The later portion of the travelogue deals with the revival of Buddhism in India since the late nineteenth century and the mass conversion of dalit people led by B.R. Ambedkar.

Bharath Murthy is the founder-editor of the comics magazine Comix. India. He is inspired by manga, has studied Japanese comics and has made a documentary film about them. He says, 'I have adopted the basic techniques of Japanese comics as the foundation of my work.'

**THIS BOOK WILL APPEAL TO
ANY AUDIENCE INTERESTED IN
BUDDHISM, TRAVEL WRITING
AND COMICS**

**Dalits are dogs.
And when their
dogs start
barking at us...?**

Ruby the bitch barks at some drunk Jat youth driving through the Dalit colony in Mirchpur. Rajinder Pali, son of a Jat zamindar, rightly hurls a brick at her. Yogesh, a young Dalit, objects, and they come to blows. Threatened with dire consequences, two Dalit elders apologise to the Jat elders. To buy peace.

As if you can let them get away with a sorry! The Balmiki Dalits of Mirchpur are getting educated and asserting themselves. The dogs need to be shown their place.

On the morning of 21 April 2010, all because of Ruby—posing candidly for the camera here—18 Dalit homes are torched and two Dalits—17-year old Suman and her 60-year old father Tara Chand—are burnt alive. Ruby, of course, says she didn't start the fire.



I SAW NOTHING, I
HEARD NOTHING AND
I CERTAINLY DIDN'T
BARK AT THOSE
UPPER CASTE GUYS.

RUBY, *Prime accused, Mirchpur*

How to Torture Dalits

A Handbook

AKILA SESHASAYEE

Black and white | 128 pages | 6.5 in x 8.5 in | October 2012

Killing, raping, maiming, humiliating and brutalizing Dalits is as common in India as spitting on the streets and flinging garbage out of a moving car—after all, Dalits are there to clean up behind others.

This useful handbook tells you how it is all done.

1. Treat them like animals, and beware of their animals too.
2. Beat them for listening to songs on a mobile phone.
3. Tonsure an unlettered Dalit for dialling a landlord's number by mistake.
4. Hound them to death when they make it to a place like IIT where they do not belong.
5. Tell the world that their women like to be raped by upper-caste men.
6. Make them eat dried human excreta when they ask for their rightful wage.
7. Parade the women naked and rape them in public if they question your diktats.

After all, this is the land that may well have taught Jim Crow a few lessons in segregation; the land where Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is a perennial bestseller with endless reprints. This is the Hindu culture with which rightwing Norwegian killer Anders Breivik identified.

This handbook is bound to be bought by millions of earnest Indians—in India and abroad. This book also conveys India's real message to the world—violence and torture.

Akila Seshasayee is the founder of SeshDesign. She has earlier worked with *Times of India* and *Down to Earth*. Her typographic covers have been featured by the monthly magazine of ideas, *Seminar*, for over ten years. Akila is also Navayana's designer.

This is her first book.

'JUST AS PEOPLE GIVE SPECIAL TREATMENT TO MENTALLY RETARDED CHILDREN WHEN THEY VISIT THEIR HOUSES, THE DALITS, TOO, OUGHT TO BE TREATED THE SAME WAY.'

—NARENDRA MODI, chief minister of Gujarat, at a function to release his book *Samajik Samrasta*, 1 May 2010

