

'Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability'

Comics historian Paul Gravett selected 'Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability' as one of his top five political graphic novels, as CNN reported on [Monday 23 May 2011](#). The Prince Claus Fund supported the publication of the novel in 2009 to enable the makers to raise national and international awareness to the problem of caste-discrimination in India.

Makers and organisation

The graphic non-fiction work, written by Srividya Natarajan and S. Anand, hinges on the artwork of Durgabai Vyam and her assistant Subhash Vyam and is published by Navayana Publishing. Navayana is India's only publishing house that focuses on issues of caste from an anti-caste perspective and had already received support by the Prince Claus Fund in 2004 for their pioneering objectives: publishing for social change, creating international awareness on caste-based inequalities in India, and lobbying and working to ensure diversity in the public sphere.

The book

Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability can be described as a graphic version of B.R. Ambedkar's experiences of untouchability in the 1920s and the 1930s, juxtaposed with untouchability experiences from contemporary India. Ambedkar was one of the frontrunners in fighting discrimination and opposing the caste-system in India. By showing different instances of untouchability the authors point out how untouchability is a persistent, present-day issue.

Gravett praises the novel for being 'an important book which highlights one of the biggest denials of human rights still in existence on the planet.' And according to Gravett it is the story as well as the drawings in which it is presented that makes the book special. The artists have defied the conventional characteristics of graphic novels by infusing traditional Gond art, creating a very unique book.

Graphic novel

For a while now artists have been taking the medium of the comic from the equal presentation of words and pictures towards a mean of aesthetically addressing to political and social issues. With striking visual packaging, Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability will ensure that the issue of untouchability will have an immediate appeal to both general readers and children across the world.

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Paul Gravett on CNN



Links

website Navayana

website Navayana: Publishing for Social Change.

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