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Phoolan Devi was born into a poor, low-caste family in Uttar Pradesh, living in a world that gave more respect to a stray dog than to a woman. At 11, she was married off and endured beatings, rapes and persecution. She survived being kidnapped by bandits and became one of them, learning how to shoot like a man. She also found love for the first time, but her lover was brutally murdered. Without his protection, she was paraded naked through villages and gang-raped; but she survived and for three years claimed retribution for herself and all low-caste women, before negotiating her own surrender. After 11 years in prison, she is now free to tell her own story.

I, Phoolan Devi Details

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From Reader Review I, Phoolan Devi for online ebook

Susa says

Kuinka julmaa ja epäreilua voi olla elämä? Tässä kirjassa todella näkyy kastijärjestelmän mahdollistama julmuus pahimillaan... Phoolan Deviä lait eivät suojaat, joten mahdollisuuden saadessa hän ryhtyy oikeaksi lainsuojattomaksi. Väkivaltahan ei ole hyväksytävää, mutta tässä kontekstissa hänen jatkuvaan taisteluun oikeudesta elämään on ihailtava; hänen vaihtoehtonsa olivat joko kuolla ennenmin kuin myöhemmin raa'alla tavalla, tehdä itsemurha tai ryhtyä tappajaksi.

Kaikesta turhauttavasta epäoikeudenmukaisuudesta huolimatta loppu on rauhallisempi ja hitusen toiveikkaammalla puolella. Tämä kirja jää kummittelemaan mieleen pitkäksi aikaa.

Katja Vartiainen says

This book is a horrific read. It is the dictated(I guess) autobiography of the Indian low caste woman Phoolan Devi, who was born into hardship filled poverty and ended up being a dacoit, a bandit queen. It seems that her anger kept her alive through hunger, humiliation, injustice, tens of rapes and beatings. It is a good reminder of how the cast system went wrong in India, and that there still should (she was finally shot 2001, after she had been the member of parliament after her release) be measures taken to guarantee the human rights to all, especially to the poor women. The book is not in itself a literary masterpiece, but one marvels the courage and honor of Phoolan Devi of being the female Robin Hood and makes one ponder about conflict resolution, and how quick a change in habits is possible or is it and how to introduce it.

TalesfromTheEV says

Very triggerific but utterly badass. May you rest in power, Phoolan Devi.

Anna Greer says

I, Phoolan Devi is a true story that will continue to shock you again and again. It seems that the book takes place long ago, yet Phoolan's wild story actually spans from 1972-1995. The depth of the tragedies in Phoolan's life becomes immediately apparent, with the book detailing sexual abuse she faced at age 10 from her 35-year-old husband. At first, I was unsure if I could continue reading the memoir, as it often put me in a mad-at-the-world mood, but I told myself that it is important to understand a story that is unfortunately common place for many young girls.

The tale then continues to depict how Phoolan, an illiterate and oppressed girl, grows into a strong and ruthless woman who defies society in every aspect. Although her actions may seem morally wrong to anyone who reads them today, they resemble a sort of sweet revenge that feels entirely justified for all of the Mallah women in India. First recorded audibly from Phoolan's own voice, it is incredible how this novel is written to so clearly tell the story of Phoolan with no unnecessary embellishments.

Anyone who tasks themselves with reading this novel must understand that its content can be very hard to swallow at times, but I believe that "I, Phoolan Devi" is a constantly astonishing tale and an important read of one extraordinary woman.

nina says

A harrowing read. I found it difficult to read this at times and just wanted to abandon it altogether. The end of the biography is small consolation in light of the ordeals Phoolan Devi had to suffer and ordeals some women are still suffering because of caste, poverty and gender. A terrible story about a remarkable woman.

Mika Auramo says

Ranskalaistoimittaja pääsi haastattelemaan intialaista legendaarista naisbandiittia, ja siitä syntyi mielenkiintoisen inhorealistinen selviytymistarinna, jonka keskiössä on säälimätön kostonkierre.

Luku- ja kirjoitustaidoton Phoolan Devi on sanellut ja tarkistanut ääninauhojen perusteella tarinansa ja hyväksynyt sen. Tuloksena on uskomaton seikkailu pohjoisintialaisessa Uttar Pradeshin osavaltiossa Nepalin rajalla.

Kirja antaa kaiken silmöttömän väkivallan alistamisen lisäksi länsimaiselle lukijalle jonkinlaisen kurkistusikkunan, millaista on elämä Intian maaseudulla. Kun vanhemmat ovat syntyneet vähäpätöiseen lautturien mallah-kastiin, he ovat ylempien kastien armoilla ja nöyryytettävinä.

Phoolanin vanhemmat menettävät perintömaansa ahneen sukulaisen keinottelun takia, ja hänen poikansa jatkaa siitä. Lopulta serkku Mayadinin vaino Phoolania ja hänen perhettään kohtaa johtaa siihen, että hänet pakkonaitetaan Putti Lal -nimiselle miehelle, joka oli kiduttanut entisen vaimonsa hengiltä. Monesti Phoolan yrittää paeta, mutta aina hänet noudetaan takaisin. Vanhempien ei auta muuta kuin alistua ylempiarvoisten tahtoon. Lopulta roistoksi syytetty Phoolan raiksataan toistuvasta, ja hänen selviytymiskeinonsa kymmenvuotiaasta asti on kestää niin kauan, että pääsee kostamaan kaikki kokemansa vääryydet.

Serkun vaino johtaa lopulta siihen, että hän haluaa tapattaa myös thakuri-kastilaisten rosvojen useasti raiksaaman Phoolanin ja palkkaa rikollisia eli viidakossa eläviä dacoiteiksi kutsuttuja metsärosvoja kidnappaamaan hänet. Jännittävien vaiheiden jälkeen monta kertaa kuoleman täpärästi välttänyt Phoolan saa kokea hetken onnea Vikramin kanssa. Silti onnea varjostaa kilpailijan eri Shri Ramin himo Phoolania kohtaan, eikä aikaakaan, kun verilöyly on valmis.

Kilpailivat dacoityhmä sotivat toisiaan vastaan. Heillä on ilmiantajia eri kylissä, ja he pakenevat välillä päiväkausia poliiseja ja jopa armeijaa hyökkäystensä jälkeen. Eri joukkioilla on tapana kulkea pitkin poikin osavaltiota ryöstelemässä ja raiksaamassa. Kun Phoolan saa viimein oman ryhmän, hän johtaa sitä niin kuin mies. Jo aiemmin hän on omin käsin silponut vainoajensa sukuelimiä ja leikannut "vasikoiden" nenää. Kyläpääliköitä kuohitaan ja monia tapetaan. Kuin ihmeen kaupalla Phoolan onnistuu lähimpien miestensä kanssa välttymään teloituksesta tai pidätysksestä.

Seikkailu päättyy kuitenkin Phoolanin kannalta rauhanomaisesti, sillä vuosien taistelujen ja kuukausien neuvotteluiden jälkeen maalaiskylien pidetty bandiittikuningatar antautuu, ja hän onnistuu neuvottelemaan

vielä elossa oleville jäsenilleen hyvät antautumisehdot. Hän pääsee itse viimeisenä vapauteen yhdentoista vuoden vankeuden jälkeen.

Luku- ja kirjoitustaidoton Phoolan on periksi- ja anteeksiantamattomuuden perikuva. Henkilökohtainen kosto saa sinettinsä ja muiden köyhien ja sorrettujen kokemat vääryydet kostetaan. Ne ihmiset, jotka kilvan nöyryyttivät ja vainosivat häntä ja hänen perhettään, saivat pelätä ja kunnioittaa Phoolania. Uhmakkaasta tytöstä kehkeytyi pelätty ja palvottu köyhien puolustaja, joka kosti ankarasti vääryydet (niin raiskaukset kuin muutkin). Aseensa ja monikymmenpäisen ryhmänsä avulla dacoitit piinasivat vallan väärinkäyttäjiä ja ottivat kyliä väliaikaisesti hallintaansa ja rankaisivat ylimyksiä, kauppiaita ja kylänvanhimpia ja kylvivät rahat niille, joilta ne oli riistetty.

Kaiken kaikkiaan teksti on väkevä ja helppolukuista. Tarina etenee kronologisesti. Kirjasta välittyy minäkertojan suoraviivainen ajattelu, määräätietoinen ja periksiantamaton asenne. Niin kauan kuin on elossa, tilit voi tasata.

Catherine Kubiak says

This book was so captivating. What a life Phoolan Devi led! So far beyond my comprehension. She has such a strong spirit to have endeavoured all that she did. Highly recommend!

Kunjila Mascillamani says

I read this book to clear some doubts. When I watched 'Bandit Queen' by Shekhar Kapoor, I'd felt that something was wrong. That it was an upper caste, male narrative. Then I got to know that Phoolan Devi had moved court against the release of the film. So I bought her autobiography. Along with it, I bought 'Outlaw' : India's Bandit Queen and me by Roy Moxham. My research list has grown bigger. I have more books to read before I – I don't know – change the world?

What I found out, was that Shekhar Kapoor was being a complete mansplainer when he made the film. Roy Moxham was obnoxious in narrating 'India's Bandit Queen's story.

The preface is succinct.

'This book is the first testimony that a woman of my community has succeeded in making public. It is an outstretched hand of courage to the humiliated and downtrodden, in the hope that a life like my own may never repeat itself. I should be dead today, but I am alive. I took my fate into my hands. I was born an underdog, but I became a queen.

Phoolan Devi

New Delhi, 1995'

Sexual harassment, rape, gender

In the prologue, Phoolan Devi speaks of the house she was married into, where she was raped as a child.

‘...The only good thing there was the food. I was allowed to eat four chapatis with every meal, and I only wished I could have saved some for my sisters and my brother...’

A child trying to protect herself from the abuser ‘husband’:

‘...I would wear my skirt and my petticoat as well as my blouse and wrap my sari over that, and then tie it so tightly he wouldn’t be able to undo it...’

In Chapter 8 we see how the society reacts to a child coming back home after she was raped by her husband. She was instructed not to disclose what her husband had done to her to anyone.

‘The neighbours entered and began to talk with my parents. Some of them said I ought to go back because it was dishonourable for a wife not to live with her husband. Others thought I should wait a few years at least. They all stared at me as though I had changed somehow in their eyes, and they were trying to work out what it was. I thought they couldn’t have known of the tortures I had been made to suffer. But I obeyed my mother and said nothing, without understanding why it would be me who would have the bad reputation, while he was the one who beat me and tortured me...’

Chapter 9

‘... the whole village was busy deciding my fate – as though I belonged to all of them.’

Chapter 10

‘... Nobody knew the real ages of the women of our villages. There was nothing to mark the time apart from the lines that formed on their faces...’

‘... Mayadin protested to my father that marrying me to another man would be a stain on his good name. When it came to land, we weren’t part of his family, but when it came to the disgrace of being a woman without a husband, I belonged to his family again. The men made the decisions and the women could weep however much they liked, their fears and hopes would always be carried away like the walls washed away by the rain.’

Chapter 15

Here we see how courts are not people friendly. More specifically, not women friendly. See how the language itself is a problem for people seeking justice. About the judge who was hearing the case against Phoolan accusing her of robbing Mayadin’s house, she says,

‘He made some more comments in English to the other judges that I didn’t understand. Even in my own language, he spoke too well for me to understand much of what he was saying.’

After getting bail, while returning home,

‘In Kalpi, I had to ask my way several times as I couldn’t remember the road back to our village. As soon as they realised I was alone, men tried to take me aside. One of them threatened me with a knife, and I ran until I was out of breath, fearing that at any moment, I would turn the corner and see the red and blue sign of the

police station again.'

Chapter 17

After Phoolan and her family refused to pay the Sarpanch for drawing water from the well, she was again raped by upper caste thakurs.

After that, again her mother beat her. She said to Phoolan,

'... she started beating me with her fists, yelling and cursing hysterically. It would be better if you died this time!'

And again, Phoolan describes what the saddening psychology behind it.

'... I knew she didn't want me dead, she was only beating me because she was powerless. It was all she could do. I was the only person she could beat and curse.'

Phoolan had to go to the police station alone to report rape. About it she says,

'... I didn't know how to tell a good policeman from one who beats and rapes, ...'

She, therefore, went back to the police officers who themselves had raped her. And what happened there?

'... He asked me for my name, and the first policeman began to type a report while the deputy superintendent asked me questions. But when I started describing the thakurs and telling him I had recognised some of them, the superintendent stood up and slapped me.'

'Even if they raped you, so what? Don't you have any shame at all, coming here to accuse them?'

He had me thrown out into the dusty street.'

After this incident, the thakurs told people that Phoolan was a 'fallen woman.' People started coming to her house asking for her, to rape her.

'We kept our front door locked. I had to hide all the time. I could no longer sleep at my house. I used to sleep in a tree instead, hidden up in the branches among the monkeys and birds, with fear knotting my gut and tears constantly in my eyes. There were so many thakurs coming around looking for me that the villagers began to worry about the safety of their wives and daughters and I was the one who was blamed. . .'

In Chapter 18:

'I was even more afraid of thakurs than I was of the police. When I had asked the police to keep me in the lock-up, they had just joked that they would be only too pleased to keep me there . . .'

When she was taken by the bandits from her place,

'... I found myself praying only that they wouldn't rape me before they killed me.'

Later,

‘. . . And it seemed they couldn’t agree on whether to rape me or kill me.’

After Vickram killed Baboo when he was trying to rape Phoolan, it was written on a scrap of paper that ‘Baboo was killed in the name of Phoolan Devi.’ Phoolan was told that it was the rule. Now see how the notion of ‘gratitude’ works. Phoolan hoped that they would then let her go.

‘Bare Lal made a face. ‘he has killed in your name, Phoolan. You owe him your life. You must obey him now. Who knows what he will ask of you. You must be patient.’

An argument that we have all heard too many times. It means that the act that the person did, was not because they thought it required action but because they’d get something in return for it. There cannot be a feebler political stance.

The same kind of abuse was what was happening in the marriage that happened between Vickram and Phoolan. The first thing Vickram did after marrying Phoolan is make the members of the gang take a pledge that he shall be their leader from then and Phoolan shall be regarded as a mother or sister. ‘Protection’ was linked to marriage and it was yet another power play that enforced more gratitude on Phoolan.

Before marriage, Vickram asked Phoolan if she liked him. Look at what she felt at the time:

‘. . . I giggled, and I began to cry. I couldn’t help myself. I was disappointed and excited all at once. I had expected him to say I was free to go, perhaps even to bring me back in triumph, but I was still his prisoner, and I had no idea what he meant by his question.’

This is clearly abuse. Phoolan was around sixteen and this man, who was holding her captive was asking her if she ‘liked him’. And look how dangerous this is because what happens in the mind of a sixteen year old when she is shown even some kindness in the midst of abuse.

‘He came towards me and stroked my hair gently. ‘Don’t cry,’ he said. ‘Why are you crying? I’m not going to hurt you.’

His gesture was new to me as well. Nobody other than my mother and father had ever shown me tenderness. No one had ever touched me like that, certainly no man.’

And again here,

‘. . . I had never talked to anyone like that before, for such a long time. I had never talked to anyone at all. It was always orders: come here, do that, shut up. Or insults. Talking was new to me, saying what was on your mind or in your heart, saying the things that choked you, expressing the pain that twisted your heart.’

When people mentioned ‘love,’ Phoolan didn’t understand what they were talking about. It was also because of the difference in dialect but I felt that it was true in the meaning of love as a concept itself. When they uttered the word ‘love’, Phoolan ‘thought it must have been something sweet and delicious because they said it would make me forget the bad things that happened to me.

‘. . . In my village, we spoke Bhundelkhandi, and Vickram spoke a dialect called Chaurasi. Many of the words were different, and I had trouble understanding him. I didn’t know the word love in their dialect. I thought it must be something to eat – because it was something you gave, something sweet and delicious from the way they said it. But I understood his gestures . . .’

This is perhaps the reason why while looking back at it all, as an adult, she thought this about the whole incident:

‘ . . . But many years later, thinking about it, I would ask myself why didn’t this man, if he loved me as he said, just let me go? Then I wouldn’t have become a bandit like him. I would have had a family, children, cattle in the shed, a fire in the hearth.

Or I would have died, and none of it would have mattered.’

In Chapter 21, she speaks about the way she felt about this ‘marriage’ with Vickram.

‘But to tell a man I loved him . . .

No, I couldn’t say it. I couldn’t bring myself to believe I belonged to him, that he was going to protect me.

I had told him I was sleepy, but I couldn’t sleep. I lay with my eyes wide open, staring in the dark. He had promised he wouldn’t hurt me, but she was stronger than me and he was a man, and a man for me meant rape. . .’

Soon, Phoolan realized that Vickram was already married and had children in that marriage. When Phoolan got angry with Vickram for keeping that from her, when she asked how many girls he had kidnapped and then married, he and his friends and relatives made Phoolan believe that it was a normal practice.

Chapter 22

Phoolan Devi speaks as a mallah woman. When she went to take revenge on Mayadin, Vickram told her that she couldn’t do that to someone from her own community. They could loot a thakur but not a mallah. About these rules that were essentially made by men, she says,

‘It was to these rules, the unwritten code, that I owed my life. But I still couldn’t accept it, I couldn’t abide by it, because I was a woman. I had no place in this hierarchy of caste. I was lower than all of them, and the demons I had to slay were more devious. Whatever caste they belonged to, they were all men.’

And in Chapter 23, the following portion further explains what she thought about it

‘I watched a little bird with blue wings flutter away from the shore. He didn’t have to thank anybody except God for the insects he ate; he could sing and fly higher than the tallest trees, up towards the light; he could fly into houses and peck at grain in the stores, and drink water from the stream if he was thirsty. He didn’t have to obey the rules of men. But I still did. Compared to the bird, I was powerless.’

After she killed Mansukh, because Mayadin had escaped, the police put a reward on her head. About it, she says,

‘But what they called a crime, I called justice.’

And then, when she was really going to kill Mayadin, when she got a chance to, she was not let to do that by the males in her gang. Her father said the same thing. Chapter 23

‘ . . . Madhav wouldn’t give me back my rifle, and the jackal Mayadin was trying to pay me his respects.’

When Mayadin offered Phoolan money and begged for her forgiveness, she rejected it this way:

‘Get out of here with your filthy rupees!’ I said. ‘I’ll give you your miserable life for nothing, because that’s all it’s worth, nothing!’

But Vickram accepted the money.

‘Vickram pocketed the fifty thousand rupees Mayadin had brought.’

Phoolan felt that she should not have listened to her father and that she shouldn’t have spared Mayadin. She felt that ‘There was no justice’ for her after all.

Chapter 25,

‘It was an advantage being eighteen years old but looking only fifteen. In a petticoat and lunghi I resembled any other village girl on her way to wash. They didn’t give me a second glance. Phoolan Devi had a reputation as a dangerous dacoit. Just like the villager in the fields, the police too imagined her to be twice as tall as me, armed to the teeth and galloping across the fields on a white horse.’

Chapter 26

‘. . . I only knew how to read faces and how to understand what people said. I could tell the difference between an honest face and an untrustworthy one, between a promise that would be kept and one that would be broken, but that wasn’t enough.’

This is important because in many narratives about Phoolan Devi, one finds a narrative of Phoolan as a naïve woman, who did not know how to make decisions for herself. The truth is that she knew all it took to command people, wage wars and execute ambushes.

Later, in Chapter 35, while she was having talks with politicians about surrendering, she lays emphasis on this fact again.

‘It all seemed to be easy enough for them to understand, it was all just politics, but I had only my instincts to rely on for the truth. My struggle for survival had taught me to be wary. I didn’t know anything about politics, governments or states. All I knew was what I felt in my bones.’

And what a woman feels in her bones is important no matter how irrelevant patriarchy tells her it is. This could be the reason why, during her surrender, the man on the microphone was very nervous and worded it thus, as seen in Chapter 36

‘Phoolan Devi will now lay down her arms.,’ a man announced in the microphone. ‘The government has taken into account her decision to surrender of her own free will. We have accepted her conditions, er . . . No. She has accepted our conditions.

It was the same man who had made the mistake earlier. I couldn’t help myself. I smiled.’

She continues, about the plight of women,

‘. . . A woman couldn’t live alone in the city. She would be easy prey. Without a husband, she would be

singled out, and without a family she would be considered a prostitute. With no one to defend her, any man could take her.'

After murdering Vickram, Shri Ram took Phoolan captive and raped her. He then made everyone in the village rape her. In the following portions you can clearly see how rape is a power crime and what goes on in the mind of the abuser.

'I heard Shri Ram encouraging them, telling them to use me, to take advantage of me while they had me tied up like that.'

In Chapter 29 we see how Phoolan evolved with her experiences. She learned gender politics while she was in Vickram's gang and you can see it in the decisions she took while she formed her own gang in order to take revenge.

'... Balwan had about a dozen men. He offered to let me join him, saying we could run the gang together, but I didn't want to get into a situation like that again. I didn't need anyone's protection this time and I wasn't going to take orders from anybody. I was going to be the leader, I was the one who was going to be obeyed from now on.'

...

'Since I didn't want to join him, Balwan proposed to lend me money for arms and supplies. But I didn't want to owe anything to anyone either. I knew that to be able to assert your will, independence was essential.'

I thought of many women who had said the same. M.D Radhika, feminist and ex-professor, Inji Pennu, blogger, Kani Kusruti, actor. I believe in this. Phoolan did too, and because people who asked for independence were not considered 'womanly' she put it this way.

'... It's simple, Balwan,' I explained. 'I don't consider myself a woman any longer. I don't want anybody's protection, nor their help. I want to control everything myself. If I take a gun from you, I'll pay you for it.'

Truly, this is the only way women can function in this society, in every sphere and profession even now.

There is also a portion that reminded me of the violence people do online to women. A very common phenomenon is that of addressing women 'chechi' [a term used to address one's elder sister but becomes sexually coloured and sexist while in a debate. A sexually coloured form of 'dear' 'darling' 'sweety' used to put women down in online and offline discussions. So it brought a smile to my face when I read this incident where Phoolan was robbing a rich landowner who was robbing peasants.

'No, no Bahanji, I haven't done any harm. I haven't hurt anyone. It's my right!'

'Don't call me your sister! Where is the loot?'

Later in Chapter 32, she talks of how she gave the loot money to women. Another reason why representation is important.

'Most of all, I liked to be able to give money to women. I very rarely gave it to men. They could work in the fields, go from village to village, find money somehow, but not the women. Nobody helped the women, not even their husbands. They didn't give the women a rupee. Without money, women were forced to suffer

hunger and humiliation, and even sell their bodies like sacks of flour, while the men spent their money drinking and gambling.'

Phoolan Devi also speaks about the fame and importance she received because she was a bandit. The Chief Minister of the state had to resign because of her. She was a living legend. And listen to what she had to say about it. In Chapter 33, she says,

'...The radio and newspapers wouldn't stop talking about me.

If only they had talked about me before, I thought, when I was being mistreated and I was the one crying out for justice. But the bad things done by the poor were all anyone ever talked about, not the bad things done to them.'

I thought of the six women who had gone to meet Hadiya. When they were released on bail, social media was busy calling them attention seekers. When will the world realize that people don't enjoy it and the fame they are talking about is a result of their silence, the added collective silence of the society.

In Chapter 35, we can see how oppressed people look for similar people all around them. Phoolan wanted to meet Indira Gandhi, who was the Prime Minister then. She had a reason.

'I had heard of her and I had admired Mrs. Gandhi. She was a woman, like me, after all, in a world of men. I knew nothing about her life but I knew she must have had to overcome many enemies, like me. . .'

She also fought for the women in jail when she was there. In Chapter 38, she says,

'For a time, there was a prison director at Gwalior who was as corrupt and heartless as them. He let the madwomen mix with the common prisoners and die like dogs, their skinny bodies eaten by rats. I couldn't rest after seeing their half-eaten corpses. All the time I was there I continued to rebel and fight. I protested every day against the filth, the laziness and the corruption. I went on hunger strike twice, trying to obtain some decency for us, and I nearly died the second time but nobody cared.'

Phoolan Devi had to spend more time in jail than what was agreed upon during the time of her surrender. Dacoits who had surrendered before her were all let off before her. 'Even in jail, a woman had to wait in silence.' She said about it. It was after eleven years that she was finally out of jail.

Caste

Caste is the context in which Phoolan's story has been told. Her uncle Bihari was from the mallah caste and according to Phoolan <http://kunjilacinema.blogspot.in/2018...>

Asli says

Phoolan Devi will forever be my most loved, cherished and valued book of all time. I have read this book four times and plan on reading it again because, every couple of years, I change and view things differently. My experience reading this book has been different on all four occasions and I just fall more and more in love with this woman and her struggle. She is the most emotionally powerful human being I have ever heard of and I will always hold her as THE role model for women and young girls.

This book should be compulsory to read, especially with what is happening in India today with female infanticide, rape and violence against women. India is a great marker of the condition of women today and the state of patriarchy - it is the second largest population in the world and an economically strong developing country but women are still treated worse than cattle. I think this book is a great reminder of the strength and passion we as women have to have for justice in order to take solid steps towards gender equality.

Please read; man or woman. Read it and confront your own demons. Empower yourself. Recharge your passion and thirst for life and justice.

Mary says

This was a random selection in my biographies of women A-Z reading quest. It was worth reading if only to better understand the lives of the low castes in India. I was aware of how little the average family possesses in India but was not aware of the social, economic, physical, psychological and sexual abuse that accompany low status. If even half of what Devi dictated is true, it is appalling. Devi is a larger-than-life figure and some of her story seems over-embellished. She glosses over the infamous Behmai massacre incident that allegedly led to her murder in 2001 at the hands of a Behmai victim's family member.

Isadora says

very intense especially while learning about the abuse geeta went through

Nitika says

The cover says, " no reader can fail to be on her side". This is in fact true. Before coming across this legendary piece of work done by the author , i just knew that there was this dacoit named Phoolan Devi famously known as "the Bandit Queen". Never have i thought what led her to become a dacoit, no one chooses this as their ambition. Its a must read book.

Heather says

The story of Phoolan Devi is both harrowing and gut wrenching, while also being captivating and inspiring. She is beyond an inspiration and a true example of resilience and power. Her story and the awful things that happened to her are hard to read, but I'm so glad I read this book. It's one of those stories that will stick with me for a long time.

Nnedi says

this is one of my all-time favorite books. phoolan is the inspiration of so many of the characters in my own

stories. i learned how to write a story that is relentless from this book; i learned how to write a WOMAN that is relentless from this book. her story is evidence that a woman born in complete bondage can still have the innate and natural will to fight for her freedom, that that WANT of freedom is not taught.

every few years, i reread this book. it's some serious heavy sh*t. it's also the best telling of phoolan's story (there are biographies, but this one rings the most true, to me).

Katie says

Phoolan Devi is such a strong, resilient woman. It was absolutely fascinating to read her raw story of all that she endured. She is such an inspiration to women everywhere.
