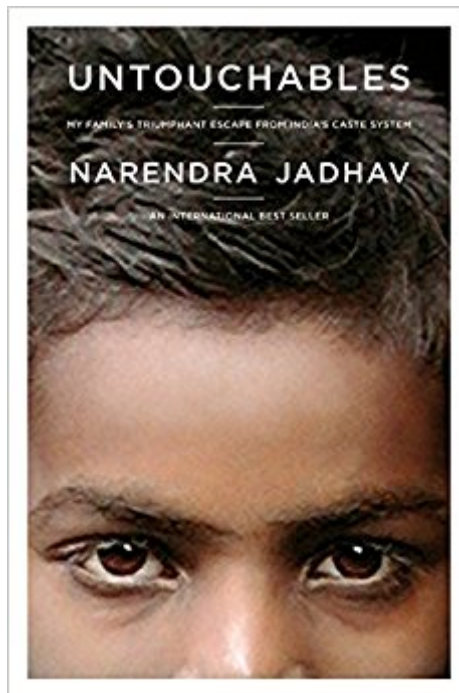




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Untouchables: My Family's Triumphant Escape From India's Caste System



Synopsis

Every sixth human being in the world today is an Indian, and every sixth Indian is an untouchable. For thousands of years the untouchables, or Dalits, the people at the bottom of the Hindu caste system, have been treated as subhuman. In this remarkable book, at last giving voice to India's voiceless, Narendra Jadhav tells the awe-inspiring story of his family's struggle for equality and justice in India. Based on his father's diaries and family stories, Jadhav has written the triumphant story of his parents'—their great love, unwavering courage, and eventual victory in the struggle to free themselves and their children from the caste system. He vividly brings his parents' world to light and unflinchingly documents the lives of untouchables—the hunger, the cruel humiliations, the perpetual fear, and the brutal abuse. *Untouchables* is an eye-opening work that gives readers insight into the lives of India's 165 million Dalits, whose struggle for equality continues even today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Jadhav, head of economic research for the Reserve Bank of India, is a member of India's Dalits—or untouchables—a group that numbers 165 million. His moving memoir is a tribute to his parents, who made it their goal to educate their children, especially his father, Damu, who stood up to the caste system. Jadhav paints a sweeping picture of the twentieth-century human-rights movement led by Babasaheb Ambedkar, leader of the Dalit movement and Damu's lifelong inspiration. Hearing Babasaheb's urging to "educate, organize, agitate," Damu finds the courage to defy his role as the village servant, a tradition dating back 3,500 years. Jadhav embellishes his tale of politics and the

rights movement with poignant glimpses into his parents' everyday lives: how their hut leaked during the monsoons, shelling tamarind pods for pennies a day, the devastation of the plague on families packed into tenements. One of his most surprising revelations is that even today he is asked about his caste, which remains "an inseparable part" of his identity. Deborah DonovanCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"A loving paean to courageous parents, and an indicting portrait of prejudice in modern-day India. This Indian bestseller will strike a chord in the U.S."-- "Kirkus Reviews"

I just received this book and ended up reading the entire book in one night -- it was that enthralling. This is a true account of a Dalit ("untouchable") family in India. The author -- Narendra Jadhav -- born into a Dalit sub-caste, has recorded the journals his father had kept of his parents' resistance against ancient prejudice. Inspired by the Dalit leader, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Damu Jadhav (the author's father) finally had reached his limit on all of the indignities that had been thrust upon him by the higher-caste authorities. He refused to perform an unconscionable duty demanded of him by a village official; for this refusal, he was brutally beaten. This was the beginning of the family's quest for freedom. There are stirring accounts of demonstrations, led by Dr. Ambedkar, where Dalits (including Damu Jadhav and his wife) had demanded their human dignity. This account relates the Jadhav family's struggles, set against the Dalit human rights struggle. Finally the reader sees how the Jadhav family emerged in triumph, having escaped their onerous discriminatory conditions, going through all sorts of conditions to make sure that the children would all receive a good education. Dr. Narendra Jadhav grew up to become an esteemed economist and his brothers and sisters also became eminent in their fields of study. In the cities, prejudice against the Dalits has greatly diminished. Unfortunately, in India's vast rural areas, caste-based discrimination and violence continues to exist in far too many instances. This book lays out a foundation for ways to continue the fight for Dalit human rights.

Do read the Dalit literature it has potential to surprise you and to let you think.

This is a good night time read. The author tells the story about his family confronting the caste system in India. It is not a historical account, but the author lets us know how, thru the years, the "upper" classes in India have treated the "dalits". The author's father deserves all the credit in the world because he was the one who initiated this challenge against the caste system. The dalits still

have a long way to go but looks like their situation is improving. The author's account is simple and to the point, although I think that, at times, the author strays a little too much of the subject giving us a lot of information that is not that relevant to the story. But all in all is a good book that helps us understand and appreciate how people in other parts of the world struggle while we have it easy here in the United States.

Very interesting book

I'm Indian but I grew up here in the US and I wanted to learn about the caste system as I was raised Christian and my family does not believe in this backwards tradition. I've heard stories about the caste system but I thought this book would give me a better understanding of its origins and ideology. The book is actually very easy to read and you could finish it off in a day or two. The language is easy to understand and it flows very well. The story being told is the author's translation of his parents' recollections during the early 1900's under the caste system in India. The book starts out well and hooks you immediately. The beginning story of how the author's father was beaten and treated as less-than-human really helps you to see how cruel the system is. Unfortunately that is really the only part in the book when you are able to see the cruelty of this system. The rest of the book reads more like a narrative. Somewhere in the middle, I started to lose my interest because I was expecting to see more of this cruel injustice but the author started discussing how his parents were walking on the beach, having kids, and traveling back and forth to Mumbai. That didn't sound like oppression to me. As an Indian, I've visited India and I have seen low caste people get treated like garbage and it breaks my heart because, as Americans, we just can't understand that in this society. I was expecting to understand why they do this in India but I didn't get that in this book. Actually, the first thing that came to my mind was that the way the author portrayed the caste system wasn't nearly as bad as what African-Americans had to go through here in the US not so long ago. In reality, I know the caste system in India is far worse and inhuman but the author simply did not portray it as such. Sure, the author's parents fought to stand up for what is right and vowed to give their kids a better life but there are countless other people in India whose story is very different. I was thinking I was going to get some insight into that. It's great that the author wrote a book about an untouchable who succeeded and rose above the oppression but I think the story would have been so much more effective if we understood more about what the caste system is all about, why people still believe in it, and why India just can't get rid of it. Overall, it was a decent read but I didn't come away with a good understanding of the caste system after reading it. Maybe if you are not

Indian, this might be a good starting point but if you are buying this book to understand the Indian caste system, you will be disappointed. Also, the epilogue which is written by Jadhav's daughter really didn't add to the book as it seemed more like she was gloating about her accomplishments. I know she was trying to portray that she, living in America, does not have to deal with the injustices that her grandparents had to but it just didn't come across as such. I'd borrow this book first.

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