



Pink Sari Revolution: A Tale of Women and Power in India

Amana Fontanella-Khan

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A triumphant portrait of a fiery sisterhood changing the lives of India's women.

In Uttar Pradesh—known as the "badlands" of India—a woman's life is not entirely her own. This is one explanation for how Sheelu, a seventeen-year-old girl, ended up in jail after fleeing her service in the home of a powerful local legislator. In a region plagued by corruption, an incident like this might have gone unnoticed—except that it captured the attention of Sampat Pal, leader of India's infamous Gulabi (Pink) Gang.

Poor and illiterate, married off around the age of twelve, pregnant with her first child at fifteen, and prohibited from attending school, Sampat Pal has risen to become the courageous commander and chief of a women's brigade numbering in the tens of thousands. Uniformed in pink saris and carrying pink batons, they aim to intervene wherever other women are victims of abuse or injustice. Joined in her struggle by Babuji, a sensitive man whose intellectualism complements her innate sense of justice, and by a host of passionate field commanders, Sampat Pal has confronted policemen and gangsters, officiated love marriages, and empowered women to become financially independent.

In a country where women's rights struggle to keep up with rapid modernization, the story of Sampat Pal and her Pink Gang illuminates the thrilling possibilities of female grassroots activism.

10 illustrations

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