

PRIYA'S MIRROR

PAROMITA VOHRA
RAM DEVINENI
DAN GOLDMAN



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PRIYA'S MIRROR

STORY BY
PAROMITA VOHRA
AND RAM DEVINENI

ART BY
DAN GOLDMAN



Oh look, Sahas, what a beautiful place.

Shall we stop?



There's something strange about this place.

My heart suddenly feels so heavy.



Sudden nightmares filled Priya's sleep, images of the day she was raped.

As she regained control of her life--

--she knew she wanted to help others do the same.



Are you Priya?

I've been looking for you a long time.

Yes, who are you?

I'm Rafi, and I need your help.

You're known to everyone for helping women find their courage.

My village was destroyed by a plague.



The land is no longer fertile.

So I went to work in the castle beyond the hills.

It's the home of Ahankar, and in it he runs a sanctuary for women who have been wounded and disfigured by acid.



So Ahankar is a good man then, helping those who've suffered?

One night I went wandering around the castle and saw the most beautiful sight.

That's what I thought.

My friend the moon returns from his sojourn.

Her name was Anjali. She was singing.

His face lights up as he sees me from afar..

Every night that week I waited anxiously for her to appear in the same spot.

Her voice was mesmerizing.

It reminded me of home.

One night, I got the courage to go up to her:



Huh!

Please.

Don't be scared of me.



I've been listening to you every night.



But aren't you frightened of me?

Or... disgusted?

Disgusted? Afraid?

No, I'm enraptured by the beauty of your singing.



We talked till late.

We told each other everything, and she told me what happened to her.

I was in my final year of law school and had exams that day.

I knew I'd done well.

This guy, Raj, kept harassing me to go out with him.

But, I was not interested and told him many times.

Over the years, I endured dozens of painful operations--

--on my eyes, nose, ears, throat, lips, and hands.

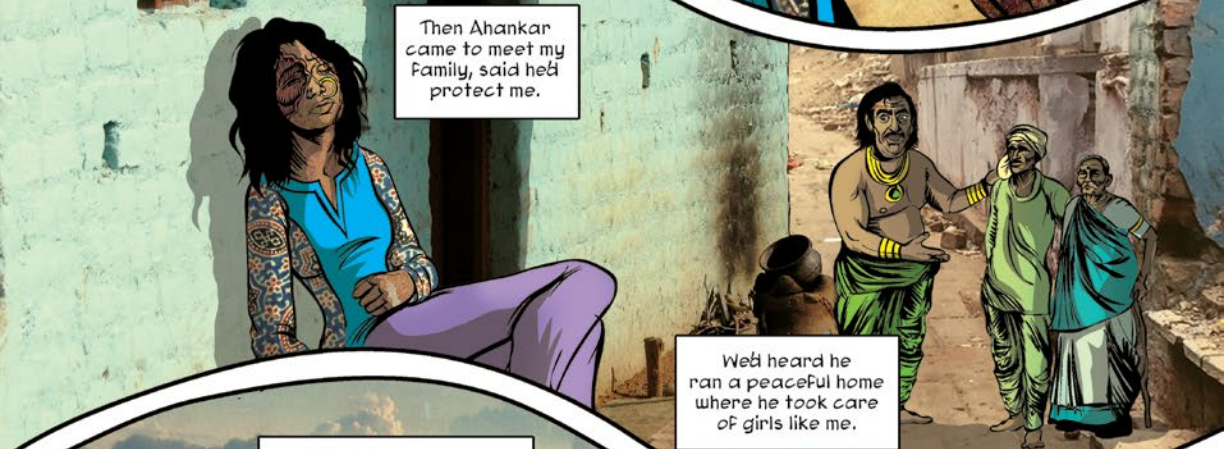
That day, I felt confident so I turned to confront him. But...



My results came a month later:

I Finished First in my class, but my success was ruined.

I couldn't get a job. People were Frightened of me.



Then Ahankar came to meet my family, said he'd protect me.

We'd heard he ran a peaceful home where he took care of girls like me.

I felt there was no place for me in the world, so I went with him.



Before we knew it we were in love. I asked her to marry me.

She said yes-- but only with Ahankar's permission.





How dare you turn your filthy gaze on her.

Trying to mislead a vulnerable girl with false hope, huh?

I know men like you!

Sir! I love and respect her.



To my shock--

I found a way to escape--

--I was thrown into the dungeon.

--but I only thought about going back to get her.



Surely she can leave, no matter what?

This isn't a prison, right?

It is a prison for Anjali and the others.

There is no way out except to break Ahankar's control.



Surrounding the castle is a moat filled with acid spewing from Ahankar's mouth.



He is a demon disguised as a benevolent man.





No one can love you! Remember that!

The outside world is cruel! It destroys those who are weak!

Those who say that are fooling you as our sister Anjali was fooled.

It has no place for people like you.

You are safe only here--

--away from the world--

--in my care!

He is lying.

How can he think he's helping them?



Oh Goddess Parvati -- help them see the truth!



How can I defeat this villain Ahankar?

He has imprisoned these women in their fears.



Before you confront Ahankar--

--you must understand where he has come from.



Before he became Ahankar,

he was a young man named Prem.

And he was in love with a young girl--

--named Kusum.



Kusum, I--
I-- um...

Do you think
you might finish
that sentence
today--

--or shall I
come back
tomorrow?

I wrote
this for you.



Oh my, the
great poet of
tomorrow--

--has
written a
poem for me!

Handwritten text on a piece of paper, including the words "I have written" and "for you".



Hey,
Kusum!

Who's this
loser?



Take it!

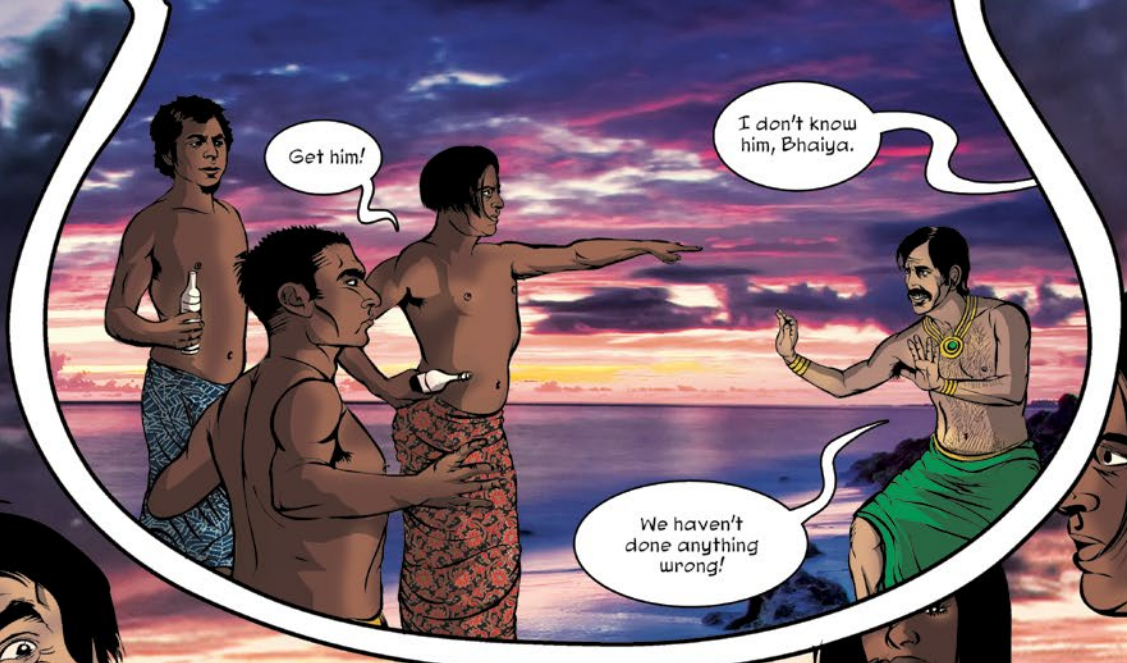
If my
brothers see
me with you--

-- they
will kill both
of us!



No, don't
be scared.

I'll take
care of you.



Get him!

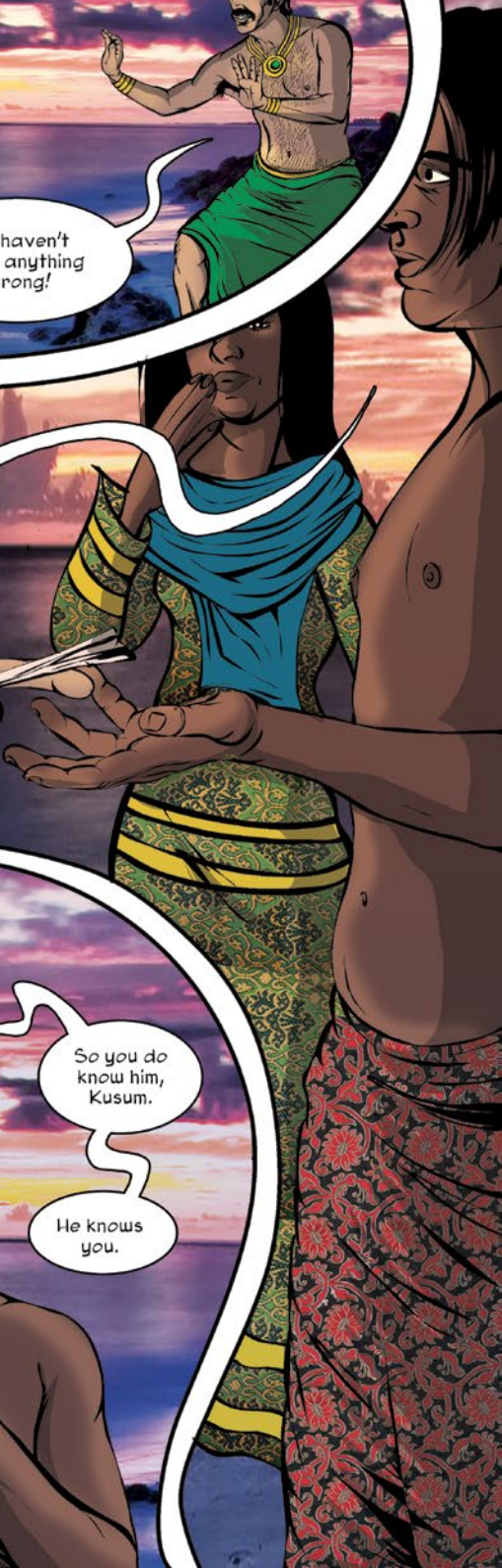
I don't know him, Bhaiya.

We haven't done anything wrong!



Aaahhh!

What's that in your hand?



Oooh it's a poem.

So you do know him, Kusum.

He knows you.



Kusum, you should be home!

Not roaming about on your own talking to strangers.

That will teach you to harass my sister!

Stop, I'm not...

ACID

Here, drink this-- it will make you into a man!

OH SHIVA,
SHIVA, PLEASE
DON'T LET HIM
DIE BECAUSE
OF ME.

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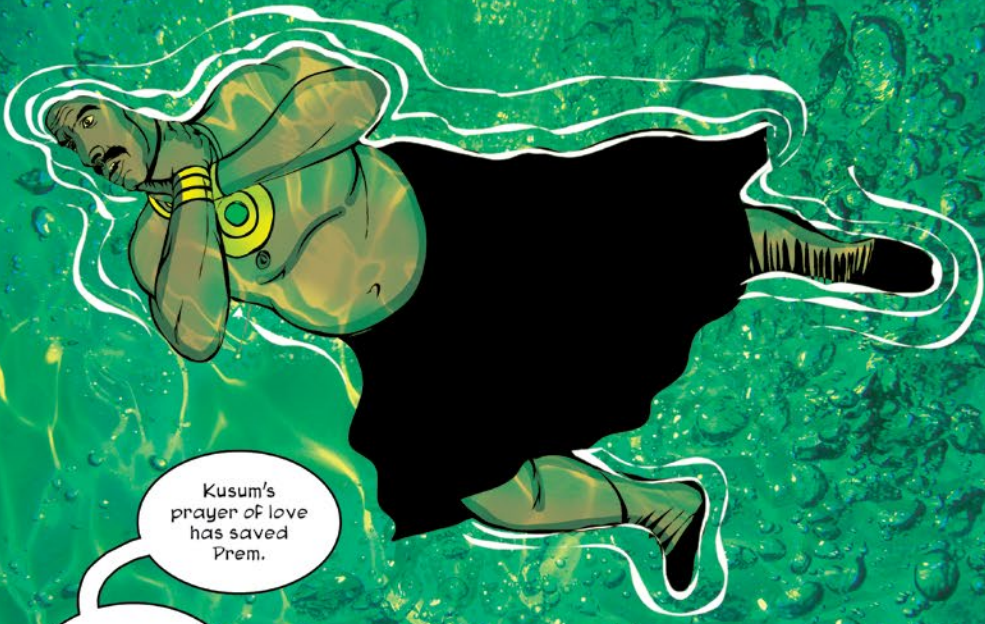
OH SHIVA, PLEASE DON'T LET HIM DIE BECAUSE OF ME.

OH SHIVA, PLEASE DON'T LET HIM DIE BECAUSE OF ME.



Shiva gave Prem a powerful boon--

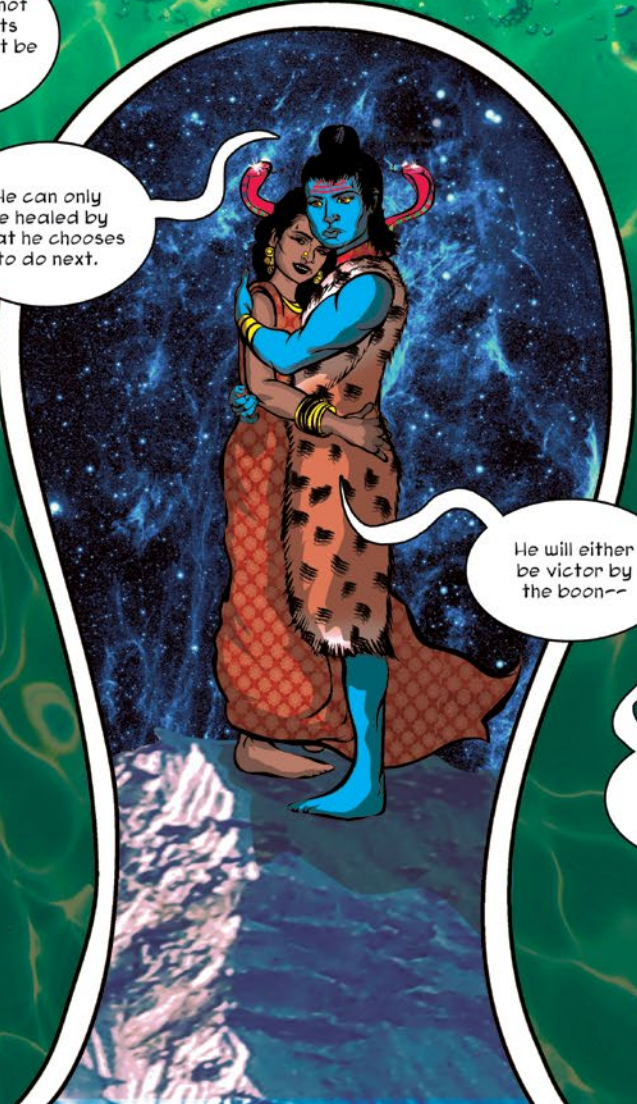
--enabling him to survive the acid forced down his throat.



Kusum's prayer of love has saved Prem.

The acid will not kill him. But its effects cannot be removed.

He can only be healed by what he chooses to do next.



He will either be victor by the boon--

--or the victim of his wounds.



But, Parvati's
Fears came
to pass...



Prem became
the demon
Ahankar



Ah!

Kusum,
please forgive
me.

I promise to
take care of
you.

Ahankar built a
castle sanctuary
and hid her from
the world.

She became
a prisoner of
her own guilt.

She kept her
story to herself,

but found
comfort with the
other women.

Wherever Ahankar went,
Flowers stopped blooming--

--and the land
became barren.



How will I stop him then?



Use this mirror of love to show others their own courage.



Remember your own journey.

I refuse to be trapped by my fear.



That is your weapon.

I stand with Priya!

I stand with Priya!

I stand with Priya!

I stand with Priya!





Anjali, don't be startled.

I'm Priya, a friend.

Rafi has sent me.

But Rafi escaped and he sent me to find you.

Ahankar threw Rafi in the dungeon when he wanted to marry you.

That is not true.



Rafi is a liar.

He abandoned me like everyone else.



Only Ahankar cares about me.



Still, I could never leave my sisters.

You can all leave.

Do you even know our stories that you speak so glibly?

I don't want to be part of a world that won't listen to me, that thinks it's my fault that I've been destroyed.

I cannot forget how the police kept asking me, "why did the boy throw acid on you? You must have done something?"

I was in an abusive relationship, and he felt that, to be a man, he had to beat me.

When that was not enough...

My parents went bankrupt taking care of me.

People threw 30 buckets of water on me and yet when my father came and held me, his shirt got burned.

When that boy threw acid on me, I lay on the road, burning.

We all have similar stories. How many do you need to hear?

There is nothing for us outside. You cannot understand what we've been through.

It's not like that. I too was like you, except my scars could not be seen.

I was raped and cast aside.

It was hard. But I could make myself whole again.

But I learned I could find strength by believing I was more than a victim.

Perhaps. But you could hide your pain from the world.

We have no such escape.

Why should we hide our wounds?


And why should we hide because of our wounds, sisters!

Someone reduced you to only your face.


But you are so much more.

Look into this mirror and you'll see.






How could you be so cruel as to show an acid victim a mirror?



Just one look. Please.



I'll look.



That's me--

--a lawyer fighting for my sisters!



I was really good at carpentry.

And you still are!

That's me painting-- People love my art.

You just have to be strong enough to remember that.



What's going on here?

Ah, this girl has come and fed you these stories, has she?

Believe her at your own peril.

The world is evil and cannot change.

No! We can change--

We want to try to go out into the world.

We want to be more than victims and outcasts!

--and the world will change with us.

You think you
can combat my
venom~

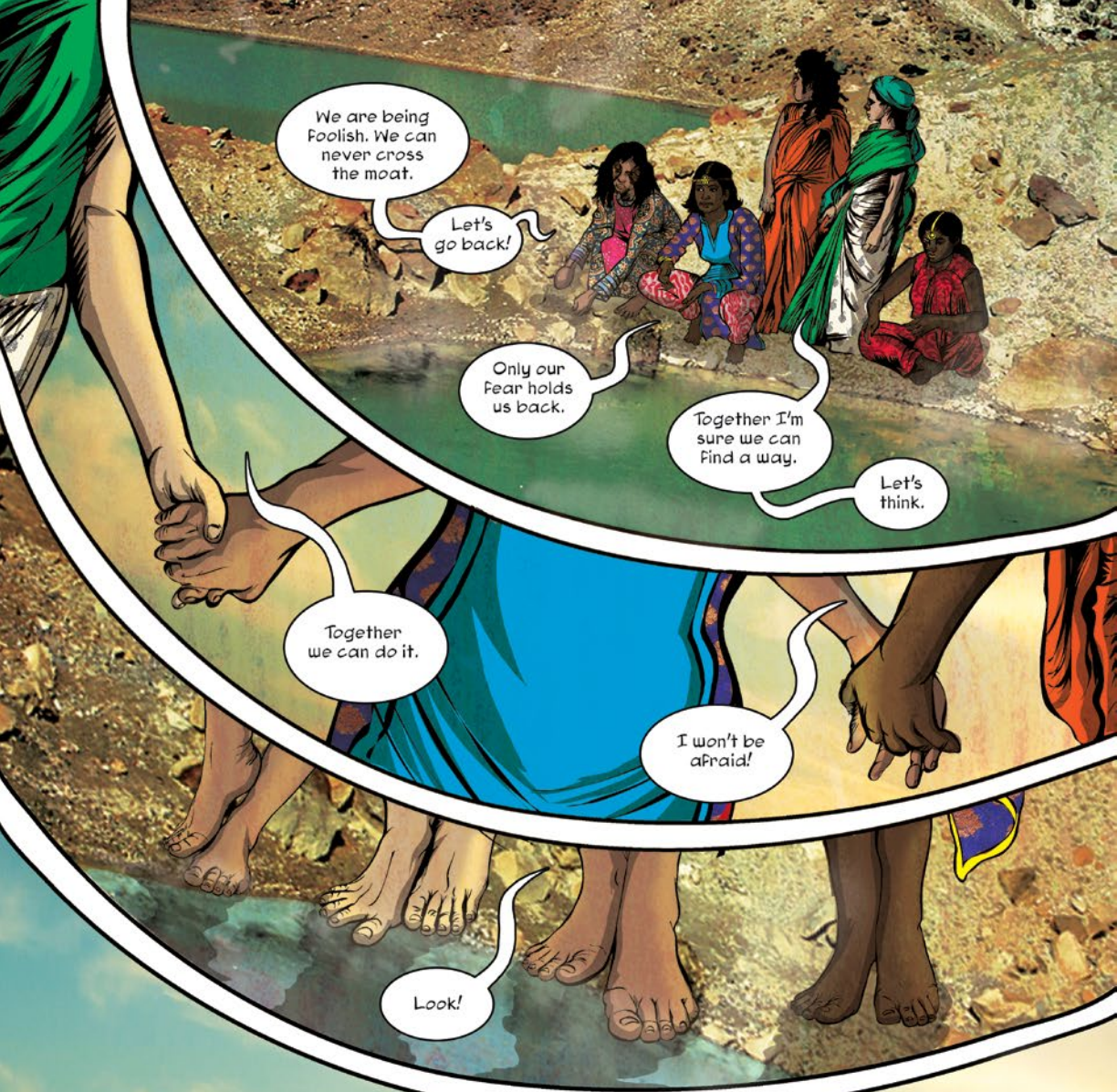
~with
these Feeble
ideas!





Run, sisters!

Get out of here!



We are being foolish. We can never cross the moat.

Let's go back!

Only our fear holds us back.

Together I'm sure we can find a way.

Let's think.

Together we can do it.

I won't be afraid!

Look!




The acid is turning into water.





АННННН!



A tiger with a human face in a mirror. The tiger is orange and black striped, and the human face is a man's face with a mustache, wearing a crown and a red garment. The mirror is cracked and surrounded by white energy lines.

Ahankar saw himself in the mirror of love.

A man with green face paint and a yellow pendant, looking shocked. He is wearing a green and yellow outfit. A speech bubble says "AHH!".

AHH!

My--
power is--

--gone!

A man with a mustache, wearing a green dhoti and a yellow pendant, kneeling in a rocky landscape with a lake and mountains in the background. A speech bubble says "You have won!".

You have won!

Are you
happy now?



We are not at war with each other, Prem.

What was I before? Weak!



Controlling others is not strength.

That's what you have made me again!

Take this mirror: Find your true courage.

Show others there is another kind of strength.



Are you coming with us, sister?

What is your name?



My name is Kusum.

Perhaps I will stay a while, and show him how to use the mirror of love.

A year passed and...

MIRROR OF LOVE CAFE

...Anjali and the others built an art center and cafe.

Priya, do you know that after I got my law degree, we fought a case together?

Selling acid is now illegal.

People have been hearing about the cafe from everywhere and dropping in.

I never knew I liked business so much!

MIRROR OF LOVE CAFE



I wish I could remain.

But there's much to do--

--and I feel a sadness to the east I must investigate.



Priya will return in
PRIYA AND THE LAST GIRLS



Using the augmented reality APP view the stories of these courageous women speaking in their own voices.

DAN GOODMAN 2016

As Priya travels across India, her message is spreading.



Dharavi, Mumbai

#standwithpriya



Connaught Place, New Delhi

Priya is a "Gender Equality Champion" — UN WOMEN

RAM DEVINENI, Producer and Co-Writer
DAN GOLDMAN, Artist
PAROMITA VOHRA, Co-Writer

SHUBHRA PRAKASH, Co-Producer & Hindi Translator
KARINE BENDER, Portuguese Translator
NATALIA CONTRERAS DE LA LLAVE, Spanish Translator
MILA FAHREN, Italian Translator
MARGARITA KOROL & DAVID ROJAS, Co-Producers
RUCHIRA GUPTA, Advisor
ROHIT PRAKASH, APP Designer
MANIK JHINGON with COMMUNICATIONS SOLUTIONS, Printer

www.priyashakti.com

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Co-produced worldwide with Mahendra Singh Foundation. www.mahendrasinghfoundation.org

Co-produced with Natalia Ponce de Leon Foundation in Colombia. www.fundacionnataliaponcedeleon.org

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Rattapallax

wevolve

MAHENDRA
SINGH *foundation*



Council on
the Arts

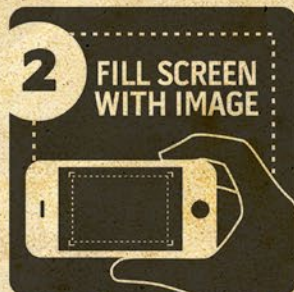


NPDCL

Every single page of PRIYA'S MIRROR also contains
bonus augmented-reality content viewable with

blippAR  

Download the free APP at blippAR.com and scan the comic book's pages to view animation,
real-life stories, films, and other interactive elements that take you beyond the story.



**Post a selfie with Priya using #standwithpriya and join the
movement to fight gender-based violence around the world!**

Priya's Shakti is the first Indian comic book of its kind – not only confronting teenagers with the sensitive issue of sexual violence, but also engaging young people through its innovative use of augmented reality technology. – REUTERS

A new superhero has arisen in India in the wake of the brutal gang rape on a Delhi bus two years ago: Priya, a mortal woman who is raped herself, but who fights back against sexual violence with the help of the goddess Parvati – and a tiger. – THE GUARDIAN

A path-breaking superhero who fights for women's rights and equality. – INDIA EXPRESS

A woman vanquishes her fears and dismisses the ridicule, speaking out as a survivor and becoming an inspiration to thousands of women in India who have faced the same ordeal — a modern-day female superhero. – VICE NEWS

WEvolve believes that it's time to speak up, act and share more stories that inspire us to end gender violence. Young men and women have the opportunity to change social norms. Today's digital and social media gives young people a reach and a power that is unmatched in modern history. WEvolve provides the tools and language to empower young people to open their minds, become leaders of a new era, engage their peers and elders, and to think and act differently. **#WEvolve**

Gender violence persists in many forms and has huge human, economic and social consequences. The World Health Organization estimates that over 1 billion women worldwide, have or will experience either intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Violence against men, which is both under-researched and under-reported, is also an important gender based violence issue

While efforts to tackle gender violence vary, WEvolve focuses on the causes of gender violence and looks to understand and address the social norms and deeply engrained cultural values at the root of it. This includes understanding the motivations of the perpetrators and exploring family and decision-making, privacy, youth sexuality, male and female honor, the unacceptability of divorce, and expectations of child obedience.

www.weveglobal.org

A woman with long brown hair, wearing glasses, a purple turtleneck, a black cardigan with white polka dots, and blue jeans, stands in front of a brick wall. She is holding a white object in her hands. To her left is a large mural of a tiger's face with green eyes. To her right is a mural of a woman in a pink and green sari with gold jewelry. A speech bubble above her says "I STAND WITH PRIYA!".

I STAND WITH PRIYA!