

## DEAR READER,

The incidents that you are about to read in *I Kick and I Fly* are based on true-life experiences that I witnessed as the founder of the anti-trafficking NGO Apne Aap. I have seen the courage of girls just like Heera to never give up. I have seen how kung fu became a central point for girls to suddenly gain confidence and like their own bodies again. I have seen the power of the women's movement.

Sex trafficking continues to remain the third largest organized crime in the world, according to the United Nations. The US Department of State says that the average age of a child trafficked into the commercial sex trade is between eleven and fourteen years old, exploited into their early twenties.

I want to share this story with young people and people of all ages so they not only know what some kids their age go through, but also know how to find helpful clues to stand up to injustice. I want to show them that change is possible and that dreams can come true. I have learned firsthand how important grassroots and collective movement is in bringing about change.

With *I Kick and I Fly*, I am passing the baton to you, the booksellers, the librarians, the readers, who in turn can pass the baton to the next generation of freedom fighters—young people, their teachers, and parents. This is a story that I believe will create opportunities for conversations around gender, sexuality, women's studies, child rights, discrimination, inequality, intersectionality, and social justice.

I truly believe that with your support, this book will contribute to movement for a world in which no human being is bought or sold.

**Yours sincerely,  
Ruchira Gupta**

