

**Visualising Protest Literature via Illustrated Indian Socio-Political
Commentary: A Study of Select Indian Graphic Novels**

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I hereby declare that the data presented in this Dissertation entitled, “Visualising Protest Literature via Illustrated Indian Socio-Political Commentary: A Study of Select Indian Graphic Novels” is based on the results of investigations carried out by me in the Discipline of English at the Shenoj Goembab School of Languages and Literature, Goa University under the Supervision Dr Anjali Chaubey and the same has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of a degree or diploma by me. Further, I understand that Goa University or its authorities will be not be responsible for the correctness of observations / experimental or other findings given the dissertation.

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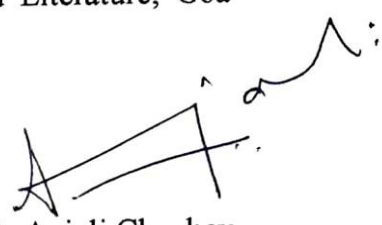
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This is to certify that the dissertation “**Visualising Protest Literature via Illustrated Indian Socio-Political Commentary: A Study of Select Indian Graphic Novels**” is a bonafide work carried out by **Ms. Sapna Harshad Panchal** under my supervision/mentorship in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts** in the Discipline of English at the **Shenoi Goembab School of Languages and Literature, Goa University**.



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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Aims and Objectives

Protest literature is a genre that is inclusive of political and social protest writing. It is a composition with the explicit aim of the author to inspire change in society. The focal attribute of protest literature is to challenge the existing inequity in socio-political structure and critique the dominant power structure, and brutal societal norms to raise awareness about the injustice faced by the marginalised communities. It can be carried out in various popular forms in literature including poetry, novels, short stories, drama and both fictional and nonfiction texts etc. I have chosen the medium of graphic novels for my dissertation because graphic novels are a multimodal, rising-to-prominence configuration for storytelling, which operates using a hybrid form of excessive images and little text, intentionally placed in sequential order. I aim to examine select Indian graphic novels as literature of protest and resistance. The chosen graphic novels are based on the socio-political protest: *River of Stories* (1994) by Orijit Sen is about the Adivasi community's plight due to the construction of a dam. *Munnu: a Boy from Kashmir* (2015) by Malik Sajad is autobiographic, and illustrates life of a Kashmiri boy Sajad who is brought up in the conflicted territory of Kashmir, *A Gardener in the Wasteland: Jotiba Phule's Fight for Liberty* (2011) by Srividya Natarajan and Aparajita Ninan depicts the Indian caste system and its evils, illustrating Phule's struggles to confront and oppose Brahmanical ideology. I have attempted to situate my analysis of select Indian graphic narratives into three prominent protest literature elements: empathy, violence and challenging the status quo.

The hypothesis of the paper is to show that the select Indian graphic novels are a consequential exertion to visualise the struggles experienced by marginalised communities. The hybrid medium of visual and verbal narratives enhances the portrayal of these experiences: as it transcends the limitations of words, in the case of depicting protest literature competently.

My objective is to contextualise protest literature, especially Indian writings of protest, by tracing its origins and exploring storytelling through the graphic medium, in order to observe the manner in which the combination of images and texts blend to convey complex socio-political writing. It also looks at the position of the graphic novel medium in India as it's crucial for reading protest literature and primarily to comprehend how the select Indian Graphic novelists have traced India's socio-political history in their works. Research questions that are central to this dissertation are:

1. What is the role of empathy in protest literature and how empathy is evoked through the medium of the graphic novel? As empathy is the elaborate cognitive process that deals with emotional functioning, looking into this will allow us to explore how graphic novels elicit required emotions, to serve the purposes of protest literature.

2. How violence is depicted in the graphic novel and why is it significant in protest literature? Apprehending that protests establish because of violence, literature of protest deals with the portrayal of marginalised communities, understanding the process in which marginalisation takes place and the manner in which illustration of violence is done in the graphic novel will allow us to comprehend the role of violence.

3. In what way are graphic novels used as tools of resistance, in challenging the status quo? Since the aim of protest literature is to resist the dominant authorities,

and in this study, the chosen medium is a graphic novel, it becomes inevitable to analyse the vessel for resistance, at the same time to analyse how the resistance takes place in the chosen narrative remains constant.

1.2 Literature of Protest

The pandemic showed us a heart-wrenching sight of millions of migrant workers disobeying the guidelines of lockdown. They were travelling miles and miles to their villages on foot, and they believed that they would die due to hunger and not Covid 19. This situation proved that our government administration was incapable and not reliable, during these formidable times. Citizens saw how hospitals were overcrowded, lacking required equipment, from simple beds to ventilation, vaccinations, as well as a basic necessity like food, was a shortage. Looking at the loss of jobs because of lockdown and quarantine, these poverty-stricken workers in metropolitan cities had no option but to protest for their survival. Later, we had a modification in Indian farm laws which forced farmers to gather on the streets of Delhi during the pandemic. So, it's essential to look into how greatly the political systems affected people's livelihood, making them so desperate to risk their lives, disregard laws and come out on the streets. In the *Merriam-Webster dictionary*, protest is expressing disapproval or objection, complaint and "displaying unwillingness usually to an idea or a course of action." We are living in an epoch of political discontentment.

Literature is encapsulated in various forms that serve as an essential component for human civilisation, be it through traditional oral anecdote, cave painting, theatre, or music, to being in a full-fledged intellectual body encompassing written mediums including novels, poems and prose— literature is a legitimate part of the protest

tradition. From being the mirror of society to bringing change in society, the purpose of literature is to serve aesthetic desires that can express, enhance and generate required emotions. It is often deduced to be meant only to entertain and leisure regardless, protest literature is the product of hope, and that situation might get better. It aggressively demands change, it is a medium used to portray the harsh reality and it's an attempt that an author makes to connect with his audience; and fight a battle against injustice, discrimination and suffering in society, hence protest literature is also known as social literature or resistance literature. This kind of literature aims to bring difference, ought to grab the attention of the majority and evoke empathy, especially in cases where the political and social structures are challenged.

Literature of protest came to the surface during the 20th century as a genre. The twentieth century was a destructive period and its literature had to display its atrocity and melancholy, with Nazism, fascism, colonialism, and capitalism at their peak, and the disposal of social order, injustice at oppression were the fabric of social nature, creative expression of outrage harboured by the activist authors to share the sentiments with others. The works included a critique of socio-political scenarios; it was a faithful attempt on behalf of the author to inspire change. It aimed to challenge the existing socio-political structure that is prevalent.

Protest values are based on realism involving active struggles. The modern idea of protest differs from the mediaeval context. Religion and philosophical beliefs were at the heart of the mediaeval protest. The modern canvas of protest demanded much more through class struggle, social structure and philosophy, and political and scientific consciousness. Women fought patriarchy, and men dominated abusive work culture, later on, to add to this canon there were environmental concerns that were

brought to the forefront. Freud, Marx, Camus and Sartre were key figures swayed by the spirit of protest.

During the panel discussion at Harvard, McCarthy on protest literature said "In the same discussion, John Stauffer In his *Forward American Protest Literature* (2006) describes

Protest literature broadly means the use of language to transform the self and change society. By language, I refer not only to words, but to visual art, music, and film. Protest literature functions as a catalyst, guide or mirror of social change. It not only critiques some aspect of society, but also suggests, either implicitly or explicitly, a solution to society's ills."(Stauffer viii)

Stauffer's definition extended to state three requirements; empathy, shock value and symbolic action. Protest literature exemplifies creative manifestation "mode and style of social analysis," it can take up various forms like novels, plays, essays etc. Baldwin argued in this regard saying "What do you mean, protest!... All literature is protest. You can't name a single novel that doesn't protest." Soon he realised "he could only weakly counter that all literature might protest but all protest was not literature." Wright responded to this by saying, "Oh, here you come again with all that art for art's sake crap."

Paul Lauter asks several theoretical questions about what should be considered protest literature: is the text based on a protest movement or the memory of the conflict which we consider protest? Some works may be specifically created with an intention of participating in the conflict like *River of Stories* by Sen was intended for protest, while others may be created for several other purposes like the artistic one which shapes our memory about the conflict /protest through that work the historical

fiction *The Tales of Two Cities* (1895) by Dickens. Lauter also questions the relationship between social action and creativity. Creativity can undeniably play a part in social action, and artists can raise awareness about the issue. However, it is complicated relationships as well, as authorial intentions about social action might be different, even negative, which might lead to a backlash. He also questions the relationship between specific forms (like music or films) and genre and social protest. Questioning if there are any forms or genres that can be closely associated with protest, is crucial to understand how protest and its literature evolve. Other things he points out are:

The question of protest literature is embedded in the ambiguity of both of those terms. 'Protest' is not, after all, a conventional literary term like 'iambic pentameter,' 'sonnet,' or 'fiction.' It is a social dynamic, and the relationship of art --largely produced by individuals -- in such movements is always, at best, ambiguous and conflicted "Do works survive the conflicts in which they engage?". He answered that such works "never fully transcend the moment of creation, nor are they intended to." However, "the revival of political concerns enables us to read these texts anew by reorienting our consciousness." (Lauter 2005)

Lauter points out that protest literature is ambiguous, unconventional and conflicted. He also brings to notice difficulties in what constitutes protest literature. His concerns are relevant. The term 'protest' is altering with time and age. The idea of showing displeasure or opposing any idea is called 'protest.' Protest is the consciousness that originates when a selected group confronts an unfair and inhumane circumstance and decides to end it by speaking out against it and taking action to do so.

“This is not happening today to the same extent. These were relentless people”

(McCarthy) shows the generation gap interim of social action, which might affect the protest literature, as one can assume that if there is no physical movement, there might be a creative revolt, this is just an assumption because, in worse cases of atrocities, there is no literature to flourish during that time. Even though language plays an important role in the protest movement, Subtirelu found out the use of the word 'riot' is conservative and 'protest' of progressive. Protest indicates having a purpose, and being goal-oriented whereas riots indicate being senseless and violent without purpose. Protest literature critique and transient ideology in a broad sense, not just demand change.

According to T. V. Reed, cultural politics, leads to the opposite reaction. He points out that when there is constant cultural resistance in society, it affects the movement, and threatens to be nowhere. He argues that artworks are born out of political aspects despite, very few of them will have political resonance. Solely if they lack an audience, he points out that art aims should not be to inspire, instruct, exhort or dramatize the issue, as important as it may sound, the essential role of art should only be to “critique and transcend ideology” (Reed, 2005). The logic behind politics and aesthetics is rare to have collided, is that it is too cruel to judge art based on its social impact. An example of protest literature can be Thoreau’s essay *Civil Disobedience* (1849) in which he asks the audience if the government shouldn't control the morale of their citizens, making them agents of injustice. He was against slavery and even refused to pay taxes. Majority of African-American writings, feminist writing like *Second Sex* (1949) by Simone de Beauvoir fills up the canon of protest literature.

1.2.1 Indian Protest Literature

The Indian way of life has always been about questioning, where a mere dhobi asks King Ram about his wife's chastity. To question the righteousness of duties and war in the middle of the battleground which takes place between Arjun and lord Krishna. Karna's situation makes us think about why caste precedes morality, Karna was a noble character, born as Kunti's abandoned son, but he wasn't able to procure a high level of education and skill until he lied about his caste, the same goes for the case of Eklavya whose skills were feared, all to make Arjun the best archer. Indian protest literature can be dated back to The Bhakti movement in the 9th century it was against the caste system, which denied the majority of its population made up of Women and Dalits to preach God, hence the Bhakti protestors question the oppressive Brahminical script like *Manusmriti*, Women and Lower caste started developing passion and devotion with the mystic idea of having passionate devotion for their personal God, they strived to unite with Gods, that also emerging roots of spiritual awakening and spread of Buddhism and Jainism, aiming to achieve enlightenment and living in penance to attain Moksha. They believed in brotherhood, and no division, they were against the idea of the idol of worship as well, and these ideas were central to the caste system. There were groups like Nayanar: worshippers of Shiva and Alvars: worshippers of Vishnu, who started preaching songs of devotion and writing songs. There were metrical compositions from vernacular writers, composing bhajan, kirtan, songs and stories in local languages. Social reformers who had written literary works are renowned including Ramanujacharya, Vallabhacharya, Mira Bai, Kabir das, Guru Nanak, Mira Bai etc.

The devotional ideals were entirely rejected by Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and Savitribai Phule as they emphasised providing education to all especially women and

Dalits, they strongly questioned the Hindu Gods in *Gulamgiri* (1885) and after Independence, Dr Ambedkar reformist works, both *Gulamgiri* and Dr Ambedkar autobiographical works have been adapted into graphic novels named *Bhimayana* (2011) and *A Gardener in the Wasteland*. During British rule, their reforms were backed by the English language and education. Indian Independence struggle add a remarkable amount of protest writing both in English and vernacular languages, renounced, *Anandamath* (1882) by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee based on Bengal famine, *Gora* (1909) by Rabindranath Tagore, Lala Lajpat Rai's *England's Debt to India* (1917), others writers like Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu, Tilak, Ghosh, etc after independence protest writing involve Dalit literature, Adivasi literature, women writings, LGBTQ+ writing and much more.

1.3 Getting a Picture of Graphic Novels

The term 'graphic novel' was forged by Richard Kyle in his essay *Capa-Alpha* (1964) is an updated form of the comic which is assumed to be only about superheroes, hence fulfilling the literary requirement, as an intellectual mask that safeguards the format of illustration and text against prejudices. The comic medium was seen problematic as they were fallaciously associated with low intellectual abilities and lacking literary advancements. Hence to deal with criticism it was a crucial requirement for comics to gain a reputation in literary spheres. The term 'graphic novel' brought reputation, it was a marketing technique used by novelists and publishers to get Graphics out of newspaper stands or comic shops and bring them to sophisticated bookstores. Many scholars still consider comics and graphic novels to be the same-they believe that graphic novel terminology is just a facade and that the same issue it deals with can become a genre under comics. Will Eisner simply states

the difference as a 'fat comic,' and Kyle says a graphic novel would require traditional bookbinding and a bookmark while reading, but this reason can't define a graphic novel. Alan Moore was uncomfortable with using the term graphic novel because it came to mean expensive comic books.

Graphic novels and comics share the same language, but scholars believe they are different on a few grounds i.e., in terms of content, form, publication format and audience. Content is a major factor– it is 'serious' unlike comics known for fantasy or fiction stories of superheroes, graphic novels are more inclined toward realism. It may cater to an autobiography which in the graphic medium is autographic, historical fiction, biographies, reportage, documentaries, memoirs etc. This might need an adult audience equipt with critical visual literacy, which is their ability to understand the visual text in their anthropological, socio-cultural backdrop. Following the content, the form is the same as a comic, combination of images and words, but the representational aspect will be different. The term 'graphic novel' self suggests a traditional book structure and avoids serialization. It is a complete narrative, a one-shot formula (Baetens & Frey, pg 13-15). It helps correlate with transmitting graphic philosophy or one-shot ideology. It is the narrative with purpose, is more complex and straightforward with more intentional, in-depth and planned and usually lengthier.

There was a need for graphic format as with developing technology, which brought immense popularity in the twentieth century mainly because there is a change like reading. Today with a low attention span, the preference their reading demands a hybrid format involving words and text. Social media cater to this need of altering their functions to meet the demands, including emoticons, gifs or an increasing amount of memes, in office and classroom settings usage of PowerPoint presentations, with the internet being an integral part of today's world, reading

patterns have profoundly altered for the majority of readers. It is a combination of the best of both worlds, the visual and the verbal– “when powerful written words are combined with powerful drawn images, and the reader can stay focused on any page or panel that he or she chooses for any amount of time, the result is a unique, hypnotic form of poetry available only in the graphic novel” (Tabachnick). In today's age graphic novels aren't limited to print media, and are available in a digital format allowing one to zoom on a panel. This might also have various inclinations, the art has to be device friendly, it would allow a large readership from different cultural backgrounds, would be portable to be read at any time, would be also easily available, and is less expensive.

1.3.1 Problems with Definitions

The graphic novel as a format sprouted prosperously in the late 20 century. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defined a graphic novel as "a fictional story that is presented in comic-strip format and published as a book." This definition brings out analogical difficulties as comic-strip might emanate by a reason of its connection to (misunderstood) comics, meant only for children and published in book format might indicate a link to the traditional book or simply be associated with children's picture books. Thompson takes an interesting take by introducing the term 'graphica'/comics: A medium of literature that integrates pictures and words and arranges them cumulatively to tell a story or convey information (Thompson, 5), pointing out that any format that includes the required arrangement of pictures and words will be sorted under graphica/comic and can be equivalent to literature, the formats included can be comic strips, graphic novels, manga etc; which may have various categories of genres classified under fiction and non-fiction, and would demand literary curiosity.

Thompson clarifies that graphica/comics and graphic novels are a medium. According to Baetens and Hugo Frey, "the graphic novel, as an idea and a publishing phenomenon, has endured and has had a significant impact on comics, literature, film, and many other media besides. Today, the graphic novel has escaped the cultural exclusion of much of the comics' universe and has gained great respect..." (Baetens and Fery 2) This definition brings out the case of marketing tactics we discussed previously. Lila Christensen's definition: 'In contrast to superhero comic books, graphic novels are more serious, often nonfiction, full-length, sequential art novels that explore the issues of race, social justice, global conflict, and war, with intelligence and humour' (Christensen 227). Christensen's definition differentiated between comics and graphic novels in terms of content. This shows there is no distinction based on comics and graphic novels as a medium. In Pramod Nayar, *The Indian Graphic Novel Nation, history and Critique* (2016), he adopts the term graphic narrative as Hillary Chute and DeKove point out that it is a viable term for "serious academic inquiry." Nayar comments "I do not wish to use the term 'comics' due to the emphasis on the 'cartoony' or 'funnies' that the term is semantically loaded with"(Nayar 2016). As it had to house complexities and political and historical memories. Regardless, even though graphic novels and comics are different in terms of the audience and techniques to which they cater, graphic novels are meant for mature adult readers and comics can be read by anyone. Although it's an understatement to consider comics to be devoid of literary aspects. Eniser says "The comic medium is a literary/art form...it aspires for recognition as a legitimate medium"(Eniser 1996). These all definitions are made to the term of the content of the narratives, Scott McCloud described comics as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an

aesthetic response in the viewer" (McCloud, 9). This definition for comics focuses on the transmission of information and production of response in viewers, these features are essential for protest literature, but I felt using the term graphic novel in case of my dissertation is appropriate, as I will be dealing with marginalised narratives and characteristics of graphic novel resonated with my selected text perfectly. But none of these definitions accommodates the significance of platform, and webcomics will soon be relevant in the literary canon.

1.3.2 Basic Graphic Language

- A panel is a fundamental unit of graphic novels/comics, which has the capacity to contain the combination of images and words endlessly. The same images might offer a different experience by reading through the text. It is a

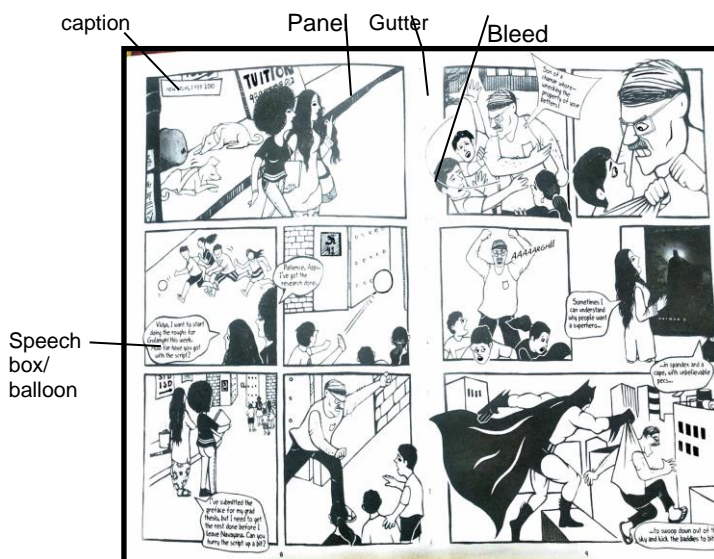


Figure 1- Narrators witnessing caste discrimination, Natarajan and Ninan, *A Gardener in the Wasteland*, pg. 8-9

spatial arrangement that allows juxtaposition, as drawn images are static, unlike photography which contains only one movement, panels sometimes have to show a passing period.

- Framing- the frame/ borders of the panel, when the borders are darker from

their frames one can perceive it to be past events or maybe a different setting altogether.

- Gutters- the space between the panels. It is this gutter where the reader's imagination takes place. The panel might not show the exact action happening. Readers experience closure when the story is drawn in bits and pieces the reader imagines to perceive it as a whole, Gutters through their imagination show, movement to movement which is a transition between movement occurrences, for example, blinking of eyes. Action to action shows how there is progress in certain activities through movement like hitting a ball. Subject to subject is when the scene or action doesn't change only the reader puts additional meaning to it. Scene to scene is the change that takes place in the distance but within the same time and space. Aspect to aspect shows the difference of elements emerging simultaneously within the scene. Non-sequitur images have no logical connection between them.
- Bleed- when the image transcends the frame of the panel and goes in the gutter. For example, in Figure 1 we have images going beyond the panel, which can mean that the boy is trying to protect himself from the abuse is receiving and, in another case, we have Batman's cape outside the panel might mean something that is supernatural and won't happen in reality.
- Speech box/balloon- containing the direct dialogue by a character, eg the conversation between Vidhya and Appu. The thought balloon contains the inner thoughts of the character.
- Caption/ Narration- that narration that gives authentic, omnipresent information. For the progression of the At and timeline. The place is New Delhi and the time is stated in the narration box.

1.3.3 Tracing Origins

Graphic novels developed out of comic strips were presented in newspapers; it progressed in the 19th century; it was satirical entertainment during jingoistic scenarios. The form of storytelling through sequential images has existed outside America and has its unique history, like Manga in Japan and Fumetti in Italy. Roots can be traced to eighteenth-century Europe. Frans Masereel (1889- 1972) is admired as the first woodcut novelist. He was a Belgian political cartoonist for *La-feuille* newspaper. During his lifetime he published forty wordless woodcut novels, which expressed social critics, like *The Passion of Man* (1918), which was about a working-class young man who was unsatisfied with his employer and led a revolt against him. His footsteps were followed by many such as Lynd Ward (1905-1985); their works didn't include text; they were rather sequential stories engraved. Even before these, there were a series of paintings and engravings like *A Harlot's Progress* (1732) and *A Rake's Progress* (1785) created in eighteenth-century England by William Hogarth (1697-1764) depicting the harsh reality of London society, faced by the people coming from the countryside. It deals with gambling, prostitution and moral degradation. James Gillray's (1756-1815) *John Bull's Progress* (1793) wasn't ordinary as it included panels and text, it had four panels depicting an English soldier returning home after the war it was the first time multipanel format was utilised. Swiss caricaturist Rodolphe Töpffer (1799-1846) is renowned as the father of the modern comic by McCloud, the 1837 publication *Histoire de M. Vieux Bois* (*The Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck*) He published *Histoire de Monsieur Jabot* (1833), we see the progress, here it's not only in terms of comics structure being stabilised but also established, just like traditional novels Töpffer works were translated and transported. *The Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck*, originally written in 1827, came to England in

1841 and the U.S. in 1842. His works used panels, more similar to comics, which were sketchy, and not coloured.

Benjamin Franklin (1705-1790), was a satirical cartoonist whose works were published as *Poor Richard's Almanac* in 1732 in an annual connection which sold well amongst colonies and is said to influence and hasten the American Revolution. Topffer's works were published in Humor magazines, during World War I, and *Pulp novels* and fiction were trending. show how the comics started circulating and being appreciated worldwide. The appearance of *The Yellow Kid* (1895) by Richard Outcault increased newspaper sales. Later in 1897, *The Yellow Kid* was soon released in book form, this is crucial because comics got an independent space and binding in the book, stepping ahead of just appearing in newspapers. Humor publication's first comic book was called *Detective Dan* (1935) and three years later Action Comics brought Superman (1938). Popular publishers that thrived are Marvel Comics, Archie Comics and DC Comics, published in the 20th century and are still loved and sold today. *Adventures of Tintin* (1929) by Belgian cartoonist Georges Remi turned out to be a popular comic series which sold around 200 million copies and is translated into 70 languages. This was parallel with the origin of popular American superheroes like *Phantom* (1936) and *Batman* (1939). *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories* (1978). Will Eisner stood out to be considered the first American graphic novel after which there was no stopping the growth of graphic novels. *Maus* (1980) by Art Spiegelman was the first graphic novel to win a Pulitzer Prize. It is a narrative about Holocaust, where he anthropomorphised Jews into Mice, Germans into cats, and Poles into pigs. *Persepolis* (2000) by Marjane Satrap is about growing up in Iran. *From Hell* (1989) and *Watchmen* (2006) by Alan Moore are graphic novels which got a movie adaptation and *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel (2006)

are some great works which portray the complexity of absurd reality, in an innovative format.

1.3.4 Dawn of Chitra Katha

Chitra -Katha literally means picture story, which is not new to the Indian traditional landscape. It's a sequential art engraved on the wall, temple arts, Pattachitra, Buddhist morals, Kaavad, etc. mediaeval influence is on the large scale on iconography in Indian graphic novels. India's comic industry was not as large as in the West, Indian comics were never censored, nor was there a comic counter-culture. Post-independence through *Chandamama* (1947) a new form of the comic narrative was introduced, it was considered more like picture books. In 1964, Indrajal comics in the Indian newspaper and some Western-origin comics like *Tarzan*, *Phantom* etc increased the sales of newspapers in India. Certain comics were also published in magazines in Telugu, Gujarati, Marathi, etc. In 1967, *Amar Chitra Katha* by Anand Pai was a huge success in the Indian comic industry, it was about Indian legend, history and mythical stories. Several publishing houses were operating like Hachette, HarperCollins, and Penguin and others were Tara Books and political press Navayana, those particularly renowned for comics were Blaft and Phantomville. In the 21st century, comics like *Amar Chitra Katha*, *Chacha Chaudhary* (1971), *Tinkle* (1980), and *Bankelal Comics* (1987) were also animated for children to be showcased on television. Indian graphic narratives bloomed. The first graphic novel in India was *Rivers of Stories* (1994) by Orijit Sen, but the graphic novel which became most popular was *Corridor* by Sarnath Banerjee (2004). It dealt with the controversial construction of the Narmada Dam. In the 21st century, India has seen the Graphic Movement where major writers have established themselves; crucial work includes

Bhimayana: Incidents in the Life of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar where Pardhan Gond's art is used. Thought bubbles change into scorpion stings when used insultingly. It potentially depicted the rigid caste system and its evils. *Kari* (2008) by Amruta Patil dealt with homosexual relationships, an urban tragedy. Several graphic narratives deal with the collective Indian historical memory of partition and Emergency. The sale of comics went down drastically because of television and media. Today graphic novels in English as it caters to only a small population of society, and language barriers bring forth another issue of translation of graphic narratives. Even the platform on which it is portrayed. The graphic narrative should not be limited to print media, and also need to appear on a digital platform, not in an ebook but rather in properly designed devices like laptops or phones.

1.4 Literature Review

The capability of the graphic novel depends on its power to articulate intricate socio-political matters via pictorial storytelling. It can endorse social change, by distributing awareness about, sexism, racism, homophobia etc, by itself slashing inactive political scenarios. It can inspire action promoting social change, a graphic novel can be used for healing, justice and social recognition.

The publication of *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* in 1993 by Scott McCloud became a guide to comic theory. This is where comics justified their position in the literary sphere, and regardless of using the term graphic novel (just a commercial term), it saw the medium of the comic as a vessel to support any ideas, it was a ground-breaking work. It was the framework for future researchers to work with, as it not only provided a definition which is to be debated and enhanced, but it also brought forth the view that comics existed for centuries and more. It explained

that comics could be moulded to fit any type of content but this rejected the notion that was given in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964) by Marshall McLuhan, who controversially said that medium is the message, and not its content, which limited the notion of comics in the US as unserious, mediocre. McCloud in his work provides us with the required vocabulary to understand comics— how it is a multimodal vessel, speak largely on iconography, and how it works in order to provide closure. He does this in a very chit-chat conventional manner. How comics in America (can be considered even in India) might have cultural differences, mentioning the mature style in Europe and Manga in Japan. Comics have the potential to grow and learn from the comic style of other cultures.

Hillary Chute in *Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narratives* (2008).

The graphic novel is a medium not genre, the term graphic novel is contested, it's a strategic market term, for commercial use. Believed that it can be simply called a comic because it uses the same language of hybrid images and words as comics. Hillary Chute and Marianne DeKoven prefer the term graphic narrative, Chute emphasises the potential of the graphic narrative form as utilised for bearing witness to social injustice and trauma. As comics/ graphic novels provide us with their material standard, it has a unique ability to communicate history, and extremely traumatic experiences of wars, genocide, and environmental disasters, while reading, readers view life from another person's perspective. The graphic novel's ability of closure would allow the readers to experience shared moral responsibility by parting and recognising their difficulties.

Sidonie Smith's *Human Rights and Comics* (2011), states that graphic novels have gained recognition as a medium. And its accessibility, availability and ability amongst a diverse audience, provide a chance to educate them about complex political

issues in an engaging and straightforward format. Human rights discourses and politics help the readers to identify with the positions of "victim," "perpetrator," and "rescuer" within a regime. Encouraging readers to be aware of violations of human rights with a regime, and proposing the need for action. This medium can be used as a powerful tool to experience the struggle of marginalised communities as the suffering is visualised and can see how the victimisation took place.

In *The Power and Potential of Graphic Novels in the Classroom* (2018) by Michelle M. Falter, she uses graphic novels to teach writing, reading writing, reading, improving critical thinking, visual literacy and problem-solving. She mentions how graphic novels have improved comprehension skills as the human brain learns effectively via visual processing, and images are 60,000 times faster. It helps teach English (in this sense any language) to students with disabilities. It also builds a positive attitude toward literature. In the classroom graphic novels as an appealing format preferred by the student, helps struggling readers, and expand their linguistic and spatial intelligence, hence multimodal, as it deals with prevalent issues. It is valuable for studying societies and understanding concepts of identity and social justice. Analysing graphic novels can improve their creativity and imagination. schools have implemented a curriculum where students draw their graphic novels/comics, which provides them with an opportunity to express themselves in innovative ways. Several graphic scholars are considering including the format in the teaching subjects like computer science and STEM in America.

Developing Empathy with Comics and Graphic Novel (2020), a panel talk on graphic novels included comic book writers, reading specialists, teachers and scholars studying the medium. Anthony Zuiker was part of a publishing house, where books on body images, suicide, autism, and racism were written and published and now they

give it freedom in the school, the prominent issue of school shootings was also made into a graphic novel. This panel discusses how several graphic novels elicit empathy among children. Similarly, the composition of Aaron Basigner's *Graphic Novels as social outreach: Student Seeking Empathy and Compassion through content analysis study* (2014) looks at the students in the classroom might respond to images of loneliness, isolation and alienation. It concludes that they might find it difficult to comprehend hence teachers are supposed to guide the student in reflective thinking about the emotional content, which might be an open discussion among peers. Hereafter sharing sensitive information in the classroom won't be civil. As students might feel threatened to talk about sensitivity and not share, hence teachers should connoisseur only a small group of students when addressing difficult issues to maintain their emotional stability.

Individual versus the Sequential: *The Potential of Comic Creation in Art* comprehensively situates comics into art therapy and narrative therapy. It also shows the potential of Graphic medicine, used to facilitate education and patient care, supporting the medical staff. Graphic medicine is used to improve health education and raise awareness about various medical conditions. There are graphic novels that represent mental and physical narratives, like personal memoirs written during or about a health condition. It also has the potential to represent disability and illness, for example, *Mom's Cancer* (2006) by Brian Fies during Covid 19. *The Quint* published comics by Erum Hour (2020) which were the experience of Covid 19 patients of Rithu Thakur. This indicated there is a growing interest in narratives about illness and health issues to be made into graphic novels operated to bridge gaps between clinical facts and personal experience. Using graphic novels to convey health complexity gives them medical knowledge, gives people the opportunity to comprehend medical

language and gives control over their representational identity. It has the potential for social activism. We also have Ilan Manouach who developed *Shapesreader* (2016) through comics for visually impaired readers.

In Pramod K Nayar's *The Indian Graphic Novel: Nation, History and Critique* (2016) he emphasises putting the Indian graphic novel into the literary and scholarly study, to be included in the canon of Indian writing in English, henceforth the analysis of novels explaining the critical literacy required to study them. Nayar in an interview with Professor Lantix, says that contemporary work on the graphic novel has established almost as a truism that the medium offers a brilliant format to speak of unspeakable pasts, traumatic histories and hidden stories. Their readership of graphic novels in India is very low, but today because graphic novels are very expensive, though libraries and schools/university settings have stocked up graphic novels, it has tough competition with the West though. There have been an increasing number of papers, dissertations and theses coming along, nevertheless, Indian readers' response toward Indian comic books is rather disturbing. They believe that it has no originality of its own and the themes are hand-downs from the West. In regards to support, Indian graphic novels don't receive any help from the movie industries as it does in the West or Japan.

Narrative, Public Culture and Visuality (2014) examine Indian graphic novels in length. It aims to provide data about graphic novels in vernacular languages and translation. It sheds light on the fact that around the decline in the sales of comics in India during the 90s and also the establishment of the first Indian comic convention of India held in 2011 in New Delhi, where political issues found a place in comic books. An example mentioned was a critique of the Commonwealth game by Mallika Sarabhai. He also discusses the Indian comic industry worth 300 crores and sold 12.5

million copies based on the article in *Hindustan Time* (Feb 2010). Recently, according to an article in *Financial Express* written by Anvitii Rai in December 2022, the Indian comic industry has grown to 1469 crores and is estimated to grow 2137 crores by 2029. Mainly the demand is for Japanese manga and Western comics, whereas Indian comics and graphic novels are potentially rising. It mentions that even though there is an Indian comic industry, it must not be cost-effective to support young artists, this is where digital platforms come onto the scene, and this is advantageous for protest literature, as it would cater to a larger audience. Indian digital platforms like Brakarmax created by Sumit Kumar, and Strippy are popular choices along with Instagram, there are other websites as well that publish comics/graphic novels online, even in regional languages. There are special websites only for certain protest comics read as black lives matter, Syrian refugee crisis, queer comics etc.

Looking into the literature of protest, as we already saw there are various Scott Soul in *Protest 101* that bring out several arguments that happen under protest literature. The first question that comes to mind while dealing with protest literature is whether it has any influence on society because it aims to make an impact. But it's not valid to judge success on this basis. Paul Lauter brings out a theoretical argument. In the debate between Wright and Baldwin regarding protest literature, it was concluded that the entire canon of literature can be classified as protest literature. But not all kinds of protest could be categorised as literature. T.V Reed points out the limitations of protest literature, which might not fill what it promises. Indian protest literature has a rich history and Indian graphic novels dealing with protest issues are on the rise, like *Urban Naxals* (2018) by Vivek Agnihotri which looks into the Naxalite protest against the government and *Shaheen Bagh; A Graphic Recollection*, by Ita Mehrotra published in 2021 is the protest against Citizenship Amendment Act and National

Register of Citizen. It is about women who protested for 101 days transforming the role of women in protest.

In this literature review, we observe how themes and goals of protest literature are met in the medium of the graphic novel. It is used to spread awareness and promote social responsibility, also its contributions to classrooms and healthcare prove that graphic novels can portray the struggles of marginalised communities. We also saw the inclusion of the medium in the Indian context; they provide political, and social criticism effectively in an Indian setting.

In this dissertation, I am working on *River of Stories* by Orijit Sen. It is considered to be the first Indian graphic novel that deals with environmental, political and social matters, based on the protest Narmada Bachao Andolan, against building Narmada dam. This narrative provides detail on how the dam resulted in the migrant labour crisis, and the urban idea of progress and development as well as shows us the opinions of so-called “backward people.” The second graphic novel in the study is *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* by Malik Sajad. Kashmir has always been a paradise in Indian eyes, with snowy mountains and breathtaking greenery represented in dull pages using black and grey colour is rather startling to readers. It's a coming-of-age narrative, an autobiography of Sajad who is a young seven-year-old boy brought up in conflicted, Indian-occupied Kashmir. There are random crackdowns, identification parades, gruesome killings and deaths, tombstones and nightmares, along with Sajad desiring to be an artist and help his father, his not-so-good love life, and worse school life. The third novel is *A Gardener in the Wasteland* written by Natarajan and illustrated by Ninan. It is an attack against Brahmanical Vas that enslaves Shudra, ati-shudra and women. The narrative is an adaptation of Phule's biography and his achievement of understanding and reasoning alternate history, to counterattack the

establishment of Brahman myth. This illustration emphasizes the cruelty and shared history of atrocities all over the world. It provides a stage for Savitribai's contribution to be acknowledged. The research gap is that there is no formal analysis of *River of Stories*, *Munnu* and *A Gardener in the Wasteland* as protest literature. Both the medium and the genre have emerged recently, and this dissertation aims to look into how literature combined with artistic intervention creates a powerful social message.

1.5 Author Introduction

Orijit Sen

He is a prolific graphic novelist and designer, he completed his study in Ahmedabad (Gujarat) at the National Institute of Design (NID), in the 1980s, which shaped his novel *River of Stories*, published in 1994, and came to be India's first graphic novel. He is a comic enthusiast, inspired and influenced by Maus "I read whatever underground comics I could get my hands on. These included Robert Crumb and Art Spiegelman. I was blown away by Spiegelman's Maus" (Sen 2017). He is amongst the first founders of Pao Collective, a group of graphic novelists and comic artists based in Delhi who played a major role in collaborating on the award-winning *Pao Anthology of Comics* published by Penguin Books. In 1990, he co-founded People Tree, a centre for design, and crafts his major works include which in collaboration with other artists include *First Hand* (2015) and *Comixense* (2021).

Malik Sajad

Sajad was 14 when he started working as a cartoonist for a regional newspaper, *Greater Kashmir*. He was awarded by President Dr Abdul Kalam, for being the youngest political cartoonist. He studied at King's University College. *Munnu* is his first graphic novel, it's a graphic autobiography where he has anthropomorphised

Kashmiri into Hangul, which is a Kashmiri endangered deer. *Munnu* publication in India was delayed by 6 months due to its controversial content. His recent works also deal with a high political undertone and are published in the New York Times like "*We have been in lockdown for three years*" published in June 2020, when the pandemic hit and lockdowns were imposed globally. His other works include *Endangered* (2011), *Facebooked* (2011) and much more. He was greatly influenced by *Fun Home* (2006) by Alison Bechdel, *Relatively Indolent but Relentless* (2012) by Matt Freedman, *Maus* (1980) by Art Spiegelman and also by Lynd Ward, Keith Haring, Marjane Satrapi and Betye Saar's work.

Writer: Srividya Natarajan and Illustrator: Aparajita Ninan

Srividya Natarajan was born in Chennai. She teaches English and Creative Writing in London, Canada, where she currently lives. She completed her education at the University of Hyderabad earning a PhD in English. She has published *Undoing Dance* (2018) and *No Onions Nor Garlic* (2006). Aparajita Ninan is a talented graphic designer based in Delhi. She holds a degree from the MIT Institute of Design. Both Natarajan and Ninan collaborated not only for *A Gardener in the Wasteland* but also co-wrote *Bhimayana* (2011), the graphic novel based on the biography of Dr B.R. Ambedkar.

1.6 Chapter Summaries

Chapter one discusses the aims, and objectives and puts forward the research questions, crucial for the progression of the dissertation. It equips us with a comprehensive analysis of the Indian scenario in protest literature and graphic novels, and provides background information for protest literature, about and the format of the graphic novel. It deals with the basic graphic language required to decode visual

narratives, protest literature as the genre which aims to look into the narratives of people included and excluded in the process of protest. He aims to inspire social change and bring awareness to marginalised communities, where graphic novels are a medium based on the sequential progression of hybrid verbal and visual language. This dissertation will look at the medium of the graphic novel in conveying the message of protest in Indian scenarios, through the analysis of select Indian graphic novels.

Chapter two discusses the role of empathy in protest literature and how graphic novels elicit empathy. Narrative empathy in the literature of protest is utilised to evoke a sense of responsibility for the marginalised communities among the readers. It looks into various theories like empathy-altruism, according to which, the reader might empathise with the victims enough for them to engage in positive altruist behaviour, but this in turn would lead to issues like going against the dominant class, which might lead to personal distress, leading to complete ignorance, of the issues. And the effect of the same text would be drastically different based on different kinds of readers. Goodreads reviews of the selected text are provided in this chapter, along with authority empathy and techniques to bridge the gaps and humanise the canvas of protest literature; it deals with how narrative empathy is utilised in a graphic format which might lead to reader response. It also deals with the importance of authorial intent and techniques to elicit empathy.

Chapter three tries to understand the why which takes place, looking at the various philosophical and historical theories based on conceptualising violence. Graphic narratives have the potential of showing violence, as the reader becomes the one bearing witness to the socio-political forces that resulted in strategic violence. It deals with the analyses of select novels that have represented the violence faced by

marginalised communities. This chapter deals with postcolonial themes, dealing with the reason and procedure in which the violence took place in the narratives.

Chapter four discusses challenging the status quo and deals with agents of resistance in action in the narrative. It looks at the graphic novel itself as a vessel of resistance and at the same time, the way in which marginalised communities in the narrative have challenged the status quo. They have done it by collectively gathering and voicing out their opinions, and also by procuring education. At the same time, the graphic novelist has used the component of myths to prove the social identity of the narrators and use the technique of reportage, to depict these narratives. Chapter five will conclude the dissertation, by discussing how the objectives of the study are met, along with the scope and limitations of the project.

1.7 Methodology

My research deal with graphic narratives which have intricate socio-political themes, hence for the analysis of the graphic novels, I have applied several comic theories, mostly provided by Thierry Groensteen and Scoot McCloud, along with close reading centralising on ways in which the visual elements and thematic content affect the narrative structure. My research utilises qualitative research methodology. The criteria for selecting the graphic novels under study were based on major historic Indian protests and the ones which are currently relevant. As the protest narrative is written intentionally to spread awareness, I have looked into the inspirations of the authors through various articles and interviews. The protest novelists aim to inspire change and spread awareness about marginalised communities. Hence it is important to look into reader response and so I have chosen Goodreads, a website for book lovers which provides a platform for authors and readers to recommend literary works

to others and rate them. This source of review is more reliable, unlike other platforms like Google or Amazon reviews, which can be commercially biased. However, this method has a limitation because it hardly contained a reader's response to *River of Stories*, as it was republished recently in November 2022, and the older version was unavailable to its desperate readers. I have based my research on three prominent themes of the protest which are further divided into independent chapters, specifically looking at the role of empathy, violence and resistance.

The introduction looks into comprehending graphic novels and protests literature in the Indian scenario; the literature review provides the evolution and current position of Indian graphic novels. The second chapter is based on graphic novels and narrative empathy. I have based this chapter mainly on the empathy studies, and theories discussed by Suzzane Keen. Focus on the authorial techniques is used to evoke empathy and the graphic medium's ability to engage with affective empathy through perspective-taking and cognitive empathy through identification. The analysis of reader response provides a general idea about graphic novels' capacity to make meaning through visual storytelling.

In Chapter 3, I have attempted to conceptualise violence, and how it is perpetuated. I have looked into the theoretical and philosophical approaches of Galtung, Marx, Benjamin and Spivak, incorporating them to understand violence in select Indian graphic novels. This chapter also applies to several postcolonial theories. In Chapter 4, I have tried to examine how graphic novels become a tool for resistance by understanding the themes of history, myth, and the medium of graphic reportage. All this guide me to adhere to my primary aim of examining select Indian graphic novels *River of Stories* (1994) by Orijit Sen, *Munnu: a Boy from Kashmir* (2015), *A*

Gardener in the Wasteland: Jotiba Phule's Fight for Liberty (2011) as literature of protest and resistance.

1.8 Conclusion

Indian protest narratives are updated into a graphic format like *A Gardener in the Wasteland* and *Bhimayana*, and the renowned graphic narrative based on *Urban Naxals* by Vivek Agnihotri focuses on the Naxalite protest against the government and *Shaheen Bagh*; *A Graphic Recollection* by Ita Mehrotra is the protest against Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register of Citizen. These narratives intentionally resist the dominant political forces, and try to provide another perspective to its reader. This chapter will plunge into the rich history of Indian protest literature, which is much earlier than that of the West, along with Indian graphic novels, and also bring forth the theoretical debates applicable to what should be considered a protest narrative, however, this genre remains largely ambitious opined out by Lauter and Reek and problems with the definition of graphic novels might be solved in near future. The literature review shows how graphic narratives are emotionally and intellectually proficient to be used bringing the settings of classrooms and healthcare.

Chapter 2

Investigating Narrative Empathy in the Literature of Protest, Through the Imagery of Resistance.

2.1 Defining Empathy

Empathetic studies have recently gained prominence in the twentieth century. The concept of empathy cuts across the field of psychology, aesthetics and philosophy although it is significantly ambiguous. Susan Lanzoni in her work *Empathy: A History* (2018) brings forth the inexhaustible layers of empathy. She mentions Theodor Reik, a psychoanalyst, who states that “the conception of empathy has become so rich in meanings that it is beginning to mean nothing at all...empathy generally suffered from the lack of a clear, compelling, organizational framework”(Reik,1936). Reik's opinion brings forth the difficulty of providing a proper definition of empathy due to its diverse nature. In *The Art of Empathy* (2013) Karla McLaren attempts to provide a definition: “Empathy is a social and emotional skill that helps us feel and understand the emotions, circumstances, intentions, thoughts, and needs of others, such that we can offer sensitive, perceptive, and appropriate communication and support” (McLaren, ch-1, pg.2). This definition of empathy shows that empathy is not merely a universal ability but rather a subjective skill set, hence it can be taught, developed and improved. Commonly speaking, empathy can be thoroughly understood as the capability in which we seek to understand each other; one endeavour to deduce how the other person thinks and feels as well as share emotions. It is an intricate imaginative activity that inculcates both cognition and emotion, it creates a complex experience where we try to imagine ourselves in a targeted individual's circumstances. This makes empathy a complex

skill that is essential for day-to-day interactions. The term ‘empathy’ can be procured from two roots, in western understanding, it arrives from the Ancient Greek word *pathos* which implies feeling, pity, passion or suffering. The English word ‘empathy’ was coined in 1909 by Edward Bradford Titchener, it is translated from the German word ‘*empathy*’, Freidrich Theodor Vischer along with his son Robert Vischer especially in his essay *On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics* (1873) extolled the term *empathy* which implies “feeling oneself into” or “in-feeling” in German aesthetics, works were focused on idealising artistic creations as it is "the end product of a perceptual process that begins with the eyes and goes on to affect the entirety of our body and psyche.” (Bridge, p. 6), They dealt with how emotional expression was reflected through art. Theodor Lipps played a role in adopting this term from German aesthetics to psychology in 1903. There are majorly three types of empathy discussed by Daniel Goleman in *Emotional Intelligence* (1995). Cognitive empathy is the proficiency to comprehend another individual perspective. It's also known as perspective-taking– knowing how the other person is feeling and what might be their thought process. Emotional empathy is when you are sensitive to another person's emotions, it is a capacity to have a physical reaction to what the other person is feeling as if their ‘emotions are contagious.’ Compassionate empathy is active in nature, along with understanding and feeling for another individual, it goes a step ahead to provide help if needed. This shows that empathy is made up of multidimensional phenomena which involve feeling, imagination, and comprehension.

2.1.1 Empathy and Sympathy

Empathy and sympathy for the longest time were used interchangeably. “Sympathy” for nineteenth-century philosophers like David Hume, Edmund Burke and Adam Smith existed as an aesthetic and moral concept whereas psychologists considering the physiological and evolutionary framework saw sympathy as an interpersonal value. Sympathy is the precursor to empathy; it was rooted in the Greek word *sumpatheia* which meant suffering together. Now we see that these understandings of sympathy are now under empathy. Sympathy is an empathic concern; empathy is an emotion in itself. When circumstances occur sympathy will be a supportive emotion like feeling bad or pity, but empathy will go beyond and feel the same pain. In *Empathy and the Psychology of Literary Modernism* (2014), Meghan Marie Hammond distinguished empathy as “feeling with” and sympathy as “feeling for.” With the enriching field of psychology and neuroscience in the twentieth century, empathy became a faculty of mind and consciousness with a division between the lower level of empathy as “mirroring” and the higher level as “perspective taking.” This process is known as role-taking. Premack and Woodruff developed the *Theory of Mind* which refers to the cognitive ability to understand another person's mind; there are several terminologies used to identify similar concepts.

2.2 Investigating Narrative Empathy

Empathy is an indispensable prerequisite for effective storytelling, as the ability to feel is a fundamental human attribute. Regardless of the format, be it oral, written or verbal, the distinctive proficiency of an author to cultivate a plethora of emotions through text is admirably relished. According to Azar Nafisi,

"A novel is not an allegory... It is the sensual experience of another world. If you don't enter that world, hold your breath with the characters and become involved in their destiny, you won't be able to empathize, and empathy is at the heart of the novel. This is how you read a novel: you inhale the experience" (Nafisi 109).

Nafisi's opinion shows that reading a novel is an active process involving the imaginative ability to experience the novel world, curiosity about the storyline and characters makes empathy and the novel inseparable. Greek philosopher Aristotle spoke in defence of aesthetics in *The Poetic* (335 BC). He gave an explicit notation about how a successful tragedy is capable of arousing emotions of pity and terror, when these twin emotions are purged it causes catharsis. These sentiments are also relevant to foster empathy in a few cases. This is one of the earliest accounts where eliciting emotions is prioritised.

Can reading right fix all our problems and bring world peace? This is a far-fetched claim. Graphic novels or any medium as the mode of representation, to shoulder such a burden would certainly be a naive thought. But reading books, maybe for their escapism qualities may have utilitarian usage. Narrative or graphic storytelling for that matter can play a crucial role to prompt empathy. Narrative empathy defined by Keen "is the sharing of feelings and perspective-taking induced by reading, viewing, hearing, or imagining narratives of another's situation and condition" (Taylor et al, 2002-2003, Keen 2013). It also has a function in the production of aesthetics, where the author's experience is shared in the creation of his fictional work, through the characters or plot, at the same time, the capability to understand the experiences of the fictional character even when they are different

from their experiences. Thus, accepting the differences helps form an emotional association with the reader. Narrative empathy may help to understand people who belong to different backgrounds. This is only possible in certain cases, for example, the description of people living in Africa in *The Heart of Darkness* (1899) by Joseph Conrad is different from Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), hence depending upon the rigidity of the point of view, narrative empathy varies. It would enhance the reader's emotional experiences which may be beneficial for social conduct in real life. Narrative empathy is proclaimed to have therapeutic advantages, as reading doesn't only allow us to understand others but also maintains personal emotional balance.

2.2.1 Theories under Narrative Empathy

Narrative empathy is essential for adequate communication, and for developing moral, social and ethical values. It compasses a considerable number of interesting theories done in the field of literature, psychology, neuroscience, media etc like the *Empathy-altruism hypothesis* given by social psychologist C. Daniel Batson and his colleagues attempt to study whether empathic emotion can lead to altruistic helping. i.e. when people experience compassion, tenderness or empathic concern and sympathy, they might help even when it involves personal sacrifice. The motivation to help is rather for personal satisfaction, for moral and ethical reasons or just to promote prosocial behaviours. In other words, Batson acknowledges that reading narratives can generate empathy for people belonging to marginalised groups, even when the individual is fictional. Batson commented, "The belief that inducing empathy for a fictional character can be used to improve attitudes and stimulate concern for a stigmatized group may well be valid." *Social Identity Theory* contributed by Henri Tajfel suggested that people tend to feel empathy for the people whom they identify as similar to themselves in terms of value, status or maybe just belief. There is a

strong sense of social identity among the members of the group and social comparison is made with the other groups. This brings negative emotions to the members of the opposite group, this also indicates 'othering' and shows that social categorization is real, and makes situations highly complex. In a vast country like India with diverse distinctions, it comes crucial to cut these biases for humanism. This explains why certain books are banned, like Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. Or why certain are more touching or impactful than others. Narrative empathy may overcome this prejudice through effective storytelling. *Affective disposition theory* by Zillmann and Cantor is very much relevant to narrative empathy; it is about the reader's response. Try to explain why and how the reader is influenced by reading or watching movies, it suggests that people who are more experienced emotionally and are sensitive may react more emphatically while reading, than other people who are less emotional. It tries to nest how certain types of audiences engage with narratives.

Narrative empathy for a long time is also used for educational purposes for children and adolescents, children even infants are innate to empathy, from the age of four they tend to get emotional cues. Studies have proven that appropriate stories, fables etc can promote their emotional and social growth and alongside ensure a positive attitude toward others. Including picture books and young adult graphic novels will ensure that their personality is more inclusive. According to Nussbaum, in her work *Upheavals of Thought* (2001), she believes that emotions are the higher faculty of our mind which is proved by empirical research, they aren't mere impulses or energies rather they are cognitive, filled with ethics, logic and reason. There are several Empirical research conducted which show that reading books and comics/graphic novels can surely develop emotions, however, the developed emotions can lead to altruistic behaviour is not proven. There are several suggestions

but the reality remains concrete, the social impact of books and novels is major but it takes more than reading for action to take place. There aren't many studies that prove reading leads to prosocial action, but yes it might transform our belief system or opinion about something, which is crucial to empathising with marginalised communities. Empathy can operate through emotional affiliation, embodied interaction and imaginative simulation, and may require intellectual reflection.

2.3 Visualising Empathy in Protest Literature

To elicit empathy is the major concern for the literature of protest, as it sets forth a connection between the text and its reader, it is paramount for the writer to present the work that evokes empathy toward the victims. The former U.S. president Barack Obama in his interview with Oprah Winfrey said along with the trade and budget deficit "What I worry about most is our empathy deficit." and emphasised how "images, action and stories always speak the loudest." His concern brings forth a connection between political issues of terrorism and empathy, i.e., how the deficit of empathy could lead to terrorism like that of Bin Laden. Empathy in the works where 'images, actions and stories are loudest' are proficiently available in the graphic novel. Graphic narratives help foster the reader's capability to imagine the lives of others, as well as also invite them to consider other experiences, through affection, reflection and embodiment.

2.3.1 How do Graphic novels work?

Communication in graphic novels is based on universal icons, human beings are trained to recognise faces, increasing the possibility for identification, identification works best with iconic abstraction, the character is too realistic, and identification would be difficult. Thierry Groensteen is a major comic researcher, he

rejected the term graphic novels, however, his theories are based on comic language, hence it applies to graphic novels as well. According to him, all possible graphic narratives /comics have one principle foundation which is iconic solidarity which means several images coexist within the given space, they are mutually interdependent. They are hybrid, polysemantic audio-visual and both components of visual and verbal. Where visual is prioritised over verbal, as it's possible to convey meaning in the graphic narrative by only using a sequence of words. Graphic novels cannot be thoroughly defined in linguistic terms, as images are based on resemblances, as there are no such things as visual alphabets or lexicons, and the artist's style is unique to the artist. Rather a basic unit of the graphic novel is the panel which is organised in space and time, they decide the reading path. The breakdown is essential for the artist, as they have to decide what has to be represented essentially for the reader to follow through imagination, the way information is split between text and images is also crucial. There has to be a cognitive approach to graphic novels- that's where empathy comes into the picture, nevertheless, there isn't any proper scientific research done on empathetic studies and comics. He discusses the spatio-topical system which means the surface-level understanding of the graphic novels is done through reading panels as graphic novels as images don't vanish like in films or videos. They are always there, printed to be re-examination, the reader also decides the pace of reading. Hence reading would prove to be meaningful. Graphic images have their materiality, size, and shape whether framed or not, situated in a certain location are intentional and affect the meaning-grasping process, they have a coordinated effect and affect each other. Archaeology is temporal and logical relations, understanding links between non-adjacent, fragmented works with different aspects and fragments of it reveals the true significance. Archaeology provides visual

stimulation to create a deeper level of meaning that can be incurred in reading it as a whole. This may include comprehending the historical, political, and cultural context of the work. Groensteen understands that these two levels i.e., spatio-topical and archaeology, surface level reading and deeper level reading are interdependent, and understanding the text through these two procedures is braiding, as these allow graphic novels to engage in layers of meaning, stimulating the reader intellectually.

The graphic medium allows this procedure to combine images, action and stories to be voiced. Using the combination of images which amplifies the text balloon/boxes, and conveys strong emotions, as visual cues are directly provided to the reader. It becomes an easier and faster process to relate. At the same time, it is also more impactful because of its clarity and directness. This is similar to the process in which readers are expected to juxtaposition the images and the text for example in Figure 1 we see that two characters Appu and Vidya continue talking about their thesis, but parallelly there are observing children who are playing. If one just reads text boxes one won't be able to grasp the entire situation. At the same time, pictures don't depict anything about the thesis.

Scot McCloud speaks about **identification**, which is basically personal involvement with the character, it involves imagination and perspective-taking, i.e. perceiving the character's point of view, in fig 1 we witness the children playing from the back and the shoulders of Appu and Vidhya, through which we are automatically put in their place. McCloud speaks about the human ability to read faces, he says while addressing the reader:

“I’m just a little voice inside your head..., A concept. You give me life by reading this book and by “filling up” this very iconic

form. Who I am is irrelevant. I'm just a little piece of you.... our identities and awareness are invested in many inanimate objects every day" (McCloud , 37–38).

The process of identification is easier with **Iconic Abstraction**. McCloud provides the continuum of the images from the most realistic one to the most abstract emotionless emoticon which is just a circle as a face with two dots as the eye and one straight line as the mouth. According to him, realistic images detract from our ability to make meaning, as it most resembles the person or thing it has its own identity, and the reader might not identify with the image. On the other hand, iconic representation doesn't associate itself with anything in particular, hence, there is no specific identity that can be given to this face or image, and that in turn, can encourage the reader to identify with it. We see that McCloud's work is suited for "in-feeling," as it transfers the readers into experiencing empathy through abstracted, iconic figures. McCloud's emphasis on iconic simplicity has the potential to amplify the identification process. His theories echo similar ideas to Visser's, the notion of the individual projecting feeling into an inanimate object (fictional character) and also Lipps' notion about imagination, like what would it like to be a tree, the case of protest literature, its reader might imagine themselves in the victim shoes.

Focalisation is coined by Gérard Genette (1972), a French narrative theorist, it deals with the perspective through which narrative is presented, when the perspective is taken on, there is the process of selection, omission of narrative information as it doesn't allow you to narrow down and not look at the entire picture objectively. Kate Polak points out that comics invite you to experience (fictional character) through focalisation simply can be understood as the point of view,

analysing the point of view of the narratives can help to uncover and be conscious of the historical atrocities. So again, the cognitive sense helps us identify with the victim's state of mind and affective-oriented empathy helps connect to the feeling. In the case of the graphic novels selected, the narrative perspective or the point of view through which narration progressed through the authors themselves.

2.4 Authorial empathy

Not all works can generate empathy without the author portraying it, authorial empathy plays a significant role when it comes to influencing their audience to connect to what they feel. All three graphic novels in this study have a clear goal, which is to inform the readers about the injustice. And the crucial narrative perspective in the case of the selected graphic novels is the point of view of the narrator, as these narratives are semi-autobiographical. Also, according to Keen

Narrative empathy embraces three distinct areas of communication through fiction: the authorial empathy of writers in the act of creation; the readers' empathy on the receiving end; and the textual evidence that bears traces of strategic empathizing in narrative techniques, formal choices, and the component representations of fictional worlds. I have theorized elsewhere that "ambassadorial empathy is most marked by the relationship between the time of reading and the historical moment of publication when the text gets sent out in the world to perform its ambassadorial duty by recruiting particular readers to a present cause through emotional fusion. That

is, ambassadorial strategic empathy is time sensitive, context and issue dependant" (Keen, "Strategic Empathizing" 486).

She emphasised narrative empathy being a strategic procedure, at the same time it must perform, similar to protest literature. The ambassadorial strategic empathy is crucial to understand in the case of *River Of Stories* as it was published with the hope to stop the dam. Orijit Sen and his family would be posted to a new location every few years as his father was a cartographer for the Indian government. "Perhaps that developed in me an empathy for 'outsiders' and people who didn't fit in"(Sen, Gravett 2017). Sen states this in his interview with Paul Gravett. Sen's empathy for the outsiders, his artistic surge and his care for the environment is reflected in the topographic map, which makes us aware of what is going to be lost in the process of building the dam.

Malik Sajad in his interview with NDTV News Indian speaks about Munnu the incident he mentioned is illustrated in Munnu, his empathy arises also from the fact that he has first-hand experience of the struggles and sincerely desires to change the situation, this can be considered under social identity theory.

"Kashmir characters are depicted as deer, in 2005 or 2006 there was a news story on how this deer was endangered in Kashmir. This news got a big space on the front page, where some people had died. On the same date was more to the brief section on the page. So, I made a cartoon and placed Kashmiri and the deer next to each other with the tagline endangered species..., not just a graphic novel, it is an artwork that comes out of a place regardless of whether being in its conflict zone or not, it's a way of communicating with the world, it is the way of communicating with the people, so that what every form of

storytelling does...., It's me trying to borrow your memory, readers interpretation completes it” (Sajad 2016).

Natarajan in her afterword states “the writing of Jotirao Phule (1872-1890) filled me up with admiration, but if truth be told, Savitibai (1831-1897) lured me in; Phule’s child -bribe, enigmatic in the scanty accounts of their life, carrying out defiance like a quiet but steady flame” (Natarajan 125). This shows her empathy toward unacknowledged Savitribai. Later on, she goes on to say that caste oppression is by no means dead, however, "young urban yuppies wish to believe it is" which marks the proper start page of their graphic novel, Refer to Figure 1 as it shows how they the active caste system in 2010. They aimed to make a point that Phule is relevant today.

2.4.1 Authorial Techniques

A. Anthropomorphism in *Munnu*



Figure 2, COVER PAGE of *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir*, Malik Sajad, 2015

Malik used Anthropomorphism, where he portrayed the Kashmiri citizen as Hangul, an endangered species of deer found in Kashmir to dehumanise and defamiliarize to evoke an empathic response. According to the hypothesis put forward by Keen, people will feel more emotionally attached when they know that the stories told are based on real events, being an autographic

Munnu opportunity as it is based on Sajad's point of view. “Emotional responses evoked by visual artists' strategies of anthropomorphizing animal faces or dehumanizing people's faces and bodies, on the one hand, and the invitations to

narrative empathy proffered by graphic storytelling” (Keen 2011). Because of Anthropomorphism *Munnu* is also a speculative fabulation, a fabula told with facts embedded in it (Haraway 2016). As it is kunstlerroman, it provides a child's perspective, to look at and comprehend the atrocities going on around him, that child's innocence also elicits empathy.

B. Painful imagery- all three graphic novels in the study are entrenched with

painful imagery, depicting violence and trauma. In *A Gardener in the*

Wasteland, Ninan illustrates using montage format figure-3 the painful history

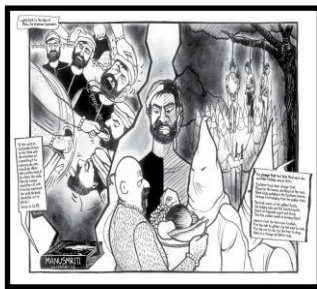


Figure 3, Depicting Atrocities, Natarajan/Ninan, pg 24-25, Dec 2011

of Shudra and African Americans on the left-hand side it is

depicted the torture of Shudra if he comes in contact with

Veda. According to *Manusmriti* verse 4 chapter XII,

Brahman have the right to fill their eyes with molten lead

or chop off their tongue, or kill them by cutting them into

pieces. On the left-hand side is the mob lynching of

African Americans depicted. The images are placed on two

spread pages, highlighting the cruelty of the events.

C. Stereotyping - is a common narrative tool used in visual storytelling. It can

be drawn in terms of physical characteristics, usually, the ones who have

become universal icons. *River of Stories* depicts the ministers as fat and

obese, wearing clean clothes, and Adivasi as thin, and dirty, associated with

poverty. Similarly in *A Gardener in the Wasteland* the Brahmins are depicted

with tilak which is called used in *Munnu*, prideful appearance, fat again, and

shudra, on the other hand, are seen as depicted the same as the Adivasis.

Stereotyping is based on readers' social experiences, which are standardised,

e.g. doctor-like look, which will be someone wearing a white coat and stethoscope.

D. Drastic Comparison within the panel and the page layout.

Graphic narratives are visual storytelling where panels are placed strategically and the



Figure 4, Relku's story, Pg 18-19, *Rivers of stories*, Orijit Sen, 2022

placement has a purpose. When I selected *River of Stories* for study, the book wasn't available. I had an Ecopy of the previous publication, and reading it a single page at once, I

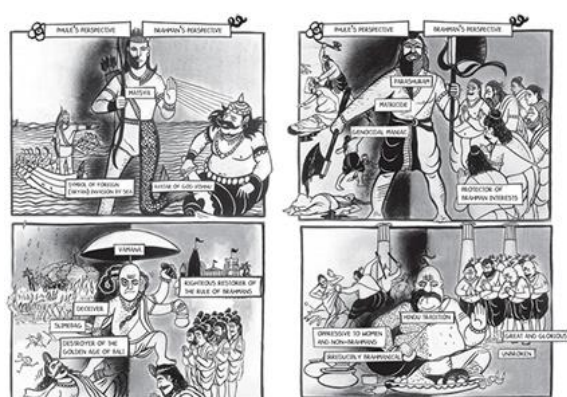


Figure 5, Phule's perspective VS Brahman's perspective, *A Gardener in the Wasteland*, Natarajan and Ninan, Pg 68-69

didn't realise the details of pay layouts, however finally in November 2022 when I bought my printed book, just couldn't help but notice this page layout, while comparing and analysing, the panel, the stark difference between the

experiences of the same character, Relku on the right-hand side of the page is working, thinking

about freedom, confided in the concrete, noisy jungle, and on the left-hand side of the page she is transferred back to the memory still alive about her childhood playing freely, climbing trees (Refer to Figure 4). Figure 5 witnesses the impanelling of two distinct ideologies, and standpoints, one based on reasoning and the other manufactured. Bringing these two distinct ideas together helps the reader to get clarity, and identify easily with surety.

E. Speech box/balloons and compelling wording

The speech balloon, though balloons are two different things in visual narration, allows us to explore what is in action and what is the thought process, which will mostly be different. In Figure 6 the narration box is pointing out the members of the family, it puts more emphasis on them being the victims. Compelling words are at the core of protest, believable yet crisp words to describe the ethos of the narratives, repeated throughout the narrative to drill the facts, and evoke empathise.

F. Colour - Not choosing to use colours and setting with monochromatic black, the first reason that comes to mind is being economical. Secondly, it is also a distinguishing factor between comics and graphic novels. It can also be considered an auteur theory i.e. choice of an author, all texts under study are in a monochromatic style using only shades of black, it is because colour can overwhelm and absorb a lot of readers' attention. Graphic novels deal with complex themes so readers' attention must be on the issues, colour also contains meaning which differs universally in a different context, using colours will not be helpful in that case.

2.5 Reader response

Using visual language by playing a sequence between two or more images, the reader will automatically make meaning regardless of authorial intention. The meaning can be comprehended even if there is none, in that sense, reader response is inevitable. A major concern remains constant as many critics and researchers are currently seeking, that is how are novels or in this case, graphic novels capable of evoking empathy, and positive empathy which results in helping behaviour?

According to Suzanne Keen, empathy is short-lived and insufficiently productive to lead to altruistic action. Many don't empathise with fiction but with autobiographies. Empathy is also generated strongly with first-person narrative. But when there is

personal distress through such narratives, especially in the case of protest novels it would lead to avoidance and negligence from altruistic action as it causes empathy burnout. Research proves that it can bring behavioural change, but the cases in which it directly affects the decision to partake in protest or go beyond helping people in crisis are seldom. We already saw the author's intent, which in all the cases was the same, to bring attention to the marginalised community. The decision to help becomes difficult because of the politics involved and being a protestor would mean doing something illegal, questioning the morality of the readers.

Sen even before he dives into the novel, he provides a beautiful cover illustration of the topography of the region. The inner cover page depicts the map of the area, with minute text in between, like the one in the river that says "some of the migratory fishes will disappear because of the dam." It emphasises rich flora and fauna, like the migratory birds, blackbuck, Sambhar Nilgai, medical plants, car outbid insect species etc as well as portrays the Jamili village which Relku lived happily, and the village the protest to place "Manigram where people of Rewa valley pleaded never to desert their land and waters." These depictions generated environmental empathy among the readers and also made them curious about what happened to the villagers.

The speciality of Sajad's narrative is that it's very natural, and the events he describes apart from important political concerns, his personal life, where young Munnu is in pursuit of his love interest Saima and Paisley, his dreams and love for drawing and sweet, his desire to gain attention in school, his passion toward appearing in the newspaper, his fear and for his family members are small things that set and connect with readers. These relevant experiences of his growing up from Munnu to Sajad who deeply cares for the people of Kashmir, this tale humanises the tragic reality of Kashmir which makes it an empathetic read.

A Gardener in the Wasteland begins naturally with the conversation between Srividya Natarajan and Aparajita Ninan, as they are walking, they talk about their graduation thesis. Ninan expressed interest in working on *Gulamgiri (1873)*, and she asked Natarajan about her script. As their conversation is taking place, another panel parallelly reflects how children were abused by a hierarchist. The narrative strategy is commendable as it situates a diurnal setting, Indian children in the neighbourhood playing cricket or football breaking window glasses are pretty much day-to-day occurrences, however, we see that the children, in this case, haven't broken anything or caused any damage to the owner; the ball has just gone in the house belonging to a Hindu family (evident from the icon of Om on the door) but the treatment they receive is horrific.

A towering, aged man appears and slaps and scares the children, saying "son of a chamar whore- wrecking the property of your betters!" The hierarchist is portrayed as the embodiment of a villain or a monster. At the same time children who were first playing happily and now reluctant and scared, depict how they are easily victimized. Affective empathy is generated among the readers, looking as if these are situations on the page that they might also have either experienced or ignored in reality. By bringing these events onto the panels, readers are to cognitively encounter them. The disturbed facial features of innocent children in pain generate empathy. The next panel about Natarajan wishing for a superhero while staring at the Batman poster says "Sometimes I understand why people want a superhero, ... In a spandex and a cape unbelievable pec... to swoop down out the sky and kick the baddies of the bit" (Natarajan, Appu p.g. 9) situated her in the position of the readers as she, after witnessing such injustice, is helpless. Superheroes are the embodiment of justice, hope as well as empathy.

This self-explanatory, metanarrative alerts the reader that now Batman might take up the non-American issue and come to India to threaten the casteism people, flinging them out the rooftops, however just when we turn the page the narrative is shifted from New Delhi of 1 February 2010 to Poona, western India of the 1840s in a deal village during the time- frame of Phule. This indicated that the superhero isn't Batman but rather Jotiba Phule who fought against rigid prominent casteism without expecting any supernatural help as Batman is busy saving the West; however, it remains unchanged but draws the contrasting imagery of Batman with pecs and cape and Jyotiba Pulhe armed with knowledge. This revisioning of the past allows readers to empathise with the fact that nothing is changed. Readers are encapsulated in the story; they experience a twist on the first turning of the page.

"This also contributes to critical literacy because we see Natarajan herself as acquiring literacy about the past. By incorporating herself into the image-text, the storyteller Natarajan positions herself not as a reliable or authentic narrator but as one who shares with the reader the shock of discovery: the discovery of continuities in social inequity" (Nayar 2016).

2.5.1 Goodreads reader response

Goodreads is an international book lover's community which welcomes over 171 countries and is a platform for authors and readers, they cater to 125 million members and have a database of 3.5 million books. It provides personalised recommendations of the book list and also contains honest book reviews.

Munnu received 4.38 stars out of 5 stars with 1012 ratings, out of which it got 52% positive ratings, 5-star reviews, and 3% of negative ratings, 1 and 2 stars. *Munnu* got positive reviews, many were impressed by the dialogue delivery, and sympathised

with the children brought up in conflicts. People also appreciated it as a personal memoir and learned about a different perspective of Kashmiri history. But it also received negative reviews about, not being able to relate to the narrative structure and biased representation of history:

This novel, focusing on the author's experiences/ life in Indian-controlled Kashmir left me feeling a little cold. Obviously, it's a deeply personal work, and I wouldn't want a dramatisation of his life or a series of embellishments, but the action, in the beginning, meandered a bit too much. The narrative structure wasn't as clear as the later chapters showed it could have been. It took a while to connect with the characters and to make sense of their identity and personality. Everyone came across as rather flat and devoid of traits to differentiate them from one another. Despite this slow start, later chapters were an improvement. Did I learn anything about the political situation in Kashmir? Seeing as I was building up knowledge from nil, the short answer is yes. But it is very much a personal account of the artist's own thoughts on the matter, not an illustrated history of the forces and events that shape Kashmir's current reality. Bermudianabroad

As a reader who knows very little about Kashmir and its conflicts, I couldn't connect to Munnu's childhood with that of mine, but as a student of literature, I could relate to his questioning of various disciplines of knowledge and professions; at the same time portraying the problems of political correctness and personal frustrations as an

individual. But I did learn a lot about Kashmir than what I had read in the media. Divya Hari Rao

Probably one of the best books I have ever read. And that's no mean feat for a graphic novel. The last 100 pages or so would haunt me for days if not a lifetime. I might disagree with the politics (have had a lifetime of conditioning) but one could never argue about the honesty from which this book has emerged. Paresh Tiwari

A Gardener in the Wasteland received 3.95 out of 5 stars with 201 ratings; it got 30 % positive ratings, 5-star reviews and 44% of 4-star reviews, 6 % of 1 and 2-star, negative ratings. It received mostly positive comments based on the simplicity to comprehend the evils of the caste system, but it still received backlash as well for non-Brahminical views.

Amazing book! Never read anything that so effortlessly explains the evils of caste, slashes the perils of hinduism and the struggles Jotiba and Savitribai Phule underwent! I had forgotten all the stories I had read as a kid about the all-girls school they founded, or how a 13 year old Muktabai fiercely wrote and appealed for a free, liberal and an equal society! Hats off to Srividya and Aparajita for making history such a light read! The Graphic format is here to stay! I hope many more youngsters read it as well! Sharayu Gangurde

Jyotiba Phule in his campaign against social exclusion and oppression of the so-called low castes in Maharashtra tried to create a highly improbable and erroneous historical narrative of caste-based oppression in India. The intellectual worth of this work is zero in my

opinion and clearly smacks of serious anti-brahmin agenda with some uncanny parallels with how the Jewish people were caricatured in Europe. Very disappointed to read this work and equally saddened that a premier private university has included this in their curriculum.

Rishabh Shukla

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter dives into empathy studies, it takes a look at narrative empathy through graphic language. It focuses on the ability of visual language to elicit empathy, Empathy has inexhaustible layers of meanings, it is a multidimensional approach. Graphic narratives in the studies are able to evoke strong emotions through visual narrative tools discussed, like stereotyping, anthropomorphism, and drastic comparison among the panel and page layout. However, in the case of graphic novels as protest literature, evoking positive altruistic behaviour is rare. Looking at the reviews of the readers, we understand that there is strong prominence of dual opinions, and all three novels in the study explicitly show the authentic point of view of the dominant side, empathy easily stimulates when both points of view are accurately mentioned; however, the graphic novel in the study have potentially shown the victimised perspective. Graphic novels produce cognitive and affective identification, using the hybrid form of visual and verbal combination impanelling in sequential order to make meaning.

Chapter 3

Reflection of Violence: Victimisation, Marginalisation and Casteism in Indian Socio-political Archives.

3.1 Violence and Protest

Economics proclaims that limited resources and unlimited wants are the root cause for most of the happening, this idea isn't just limited to resources but goes beyond, whether required supplies are lacking or if it is our acquisitiveness. Imperial history proves otherwise. Avarice for power is the cause of violence. This chapter questions the core of society, violence is stringently said to be not tolerated by any religious, social or political system. There are various laws and norms for the held high in the name of peace. However, on the contrary, when the demands are not met in certain cases these systems upholding law and order become violent toward the perpetrator and do what they consider is right and just for the majority. This chapter brings forth the depiction of violence and thought-provoking strategies the graphic novelists have employed in arguments like, the comfort of the majority is so important that the suffering of minorities be neglected and accepted. Debates, such as if the legal is right, bring to the surface the humanitarian crisis which marks the focal concern of any literature of protest. Stauffer mentioned “shock value” but in my opinion, it is when the reader is affected by the description and depiction of violence being inflicted or the realisation that what is depicted is true. Protest writers have to ensure that their narrative portrays the problem in such a way, that readers can relate to the in-hand issue and major emergence, and that it affects them enough. Depicting or telling the truth is paramount, there is a thin line, where protest literature might become propaganda when the reader understands it is too biased, hence, the precise

perspective of the victimised and marginalised has to be realistic. Violence in graphic art also has its limitations when used negatively it can lead to adverse scenarios of opposition.

3.2 Defining and Conceptualizing Violence.

Violence is ingrained in the world at large. Newspapers, video games, and even nursery rhymes for children contain harmless words but denote violence. The etymology of violence dates back to the late 13th-century usage of Old French and English and is rooted in the Latin word *violentia* which meant "vehemence, impetuosity. "Mostly violence is understood as "the use of physical force to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary.) Whereas World Health Organization describe violence as the "intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either result in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation." In both cases, it is associated with 'physical force' used intentionally to harm. Although it can be unintentional and have various degrees of severity which aren't necessarily physical. Violence born out of aggression can lead to serious repercussions which might not only include physical injury or death but attack one's psychological, emotional and social well-being, causing lasting effects of trauma for an individual and community. Oxford English Dictionary (2nd Ed. 1989) provides an interesting take on it: it states violence is "... forcibly interfering with personal freedom." This obstruction of personal freedom affects personal identity. It forces people to lose their dignity and gives birth to an endless cycle of hatred and terror.

In *Violence, Peace and Peace Research* (1969) Galtung classification on violence into direct, structural and cultural, he stated: "violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations"(pg.168) which means when individuals or groups are prevented from living up to their potential directly or indirectly. Direct violence is 'physically harming other humans with intention;' it is on an interpersonal level, also known as personal violence. When direct violence takes place too many times it leads to structural violence, it's a sign that society is weakened and turning intolerable. Structural violence is "the systematic constraint on human potential due to economic and political structures" (Galtung,177). It is also known as institutional violence as structures are involved in harming and marginalising sections of society leading to large-scale discrimination and racism. For example, during British rule, the entire system of politics was based on structural violence, as the laws favoured white authority. This type of violence is responsible for the massive issue of poverty and backwardness. Cultural violence uses "those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence... exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence"(Galtung, 1969). Most of the gender discrimination throughout the world is born out of cultural practices, e.g. Witch-hunts in Europe, honour killings, practices of Sati, widow burning, etc. Even the way dark skin is associated with unholy, and dirty, it's also biblically justified that dark-skinned people are "sons of Ham" whom God cursed to be "drawers of water and hewers of wood." These belief systems give birth to institutions of violence.

Hannah Arendt's *On Violence* (1970) discusses the dynamics and distinction between Violence and power. "Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules

absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its course it ends in power's disappearance" (Arendt pg.56). She emphasizes that power is an ability to achieve common goals whereas violence is the use of force to acquire goals. Power is the capability to persuade, negotiate, and influence others to cooperate and willingly compromise or sacrifice for common goals. But violence arises when power is ineffective, she denies that 'violence is nothing more than the most flagrant manifestation of power,' rather violence is distinct and it acquires goals at the expense of others forcefully. It's based on coercion and domination. Hence the usage of violence by authorities in power is a sign of weakness because it signifies that they are losing power. She argues that violence cannot create but destroy communicative practices.

After understanding the infliction of violence through the lens of how state authorities in power use and abuse violence, let's look at views on resisting forces using violence. Karl Marx did not completely condone violence but rather saw it as necessary for establishing a communist society. As capitalism was dominated by Bourgeoisie, it was required for the proletariat to revolt. He comments "There is only one way in which the murderous death agonies of the old society and the bloody birth throes of the new society can be shortened, simplified and concentrated, and that way is revolutionary terror" (Marx 136). Similar thoughts were echoed by Sorel, he visioned violence as required passion, which is creative, and virtuous, a myth of desired society in mind could help derive a favourable outcome for the proletariat through violence. However, this idea was controversial and seen as the foundation for fascism.

Walter Benjamin in *The Critique of Violence* (1921) essay discusses the relationship between violence law and justice. He was disappointed that the political

system had crumbled and not lived up to the expectation in post-war Germany. The word close to violence in German translation is 'Gewalt' which has several meanings in English that relate to violence in terms of 'institutional relations of power', 'force,' 'domination.' He argues that Natural law is the law that affirms the relation between morality and law, it's the end law, whereas positive laws are means of laws, they are legal systems developed by humans to maintain justice. He argues not in all cases means through positive laws can meet the ends through natural law to ensure justice, as the legal system in that sense is constituted by the Regime of fate. So, the question is what is the legal system's motive, if not to preserve individuals/groups' justice, it is rather to preserve the law itself. That's where violence arises, there is 'law making violence' the attempts that go into making laws, 'law preserving violence.' It's mostly based on the laws which are already made, so mostly violence is inflicted by the legal system. 'Law destroying violence' or 'divine violence' is a "violent explosion of resentment which finds expression in a spectrum that ranges from mob lynchings to organised revolutionary terror..." (Benjamin 157). Divine violence arises because of vexation with society. It does not have any intrinsic goal, leading to the pure destruction of the law-preserving system. Marxist thinkers like Sorel, and Benjamin, believed that Revolutionary violence, Proletarian violence and Divine Violence, which are mostly associated with the revolting and protesting movement, achieve significant political or social change. Where the use of violence is believed to be a necessary factor to overthrow the existing system is required for historical progress. However, violence in any case should not be accepted.

Epistemological violence was coined by postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in 1988, in her essay "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" This form of violence is in which the dominant society suppresses the culture and ideologies of the

minority or subaltern groups. They do it by disapproving of minority cultures and know knowledge as "unscientific", uncivilized, and vulgar. This develops an identity crisis in a marginalised group because their, ways of knowledge, belief system and realities are dismissed and criticised, in the long run, they tend to unfollow their own cultures and fit in the dominant culture, due to which entire marginalised narratives and histories are whipped out of the mainstream discourse.

Another subaltern thinker Gyanendra Pandey in *Routine Violence* (2006) defined "violence written into making and continuation of contemporary political arrangements and into the production of majorities and minorities is what I have called routine violence" (pg.1) this refers to the normalized form of violence, which is perpetuated on the daily basis within society. For example, widows for the longest time had to wear a white sari and cut their hair to devoid themselves of happiness or societal pleasure. Their presence, in any event, was considered inauspicious, they were seen as a burden on family and horribly mistreated, hence preferred sati i.e., burning themselves in their husband's more respectable cremation fire, if not force, than living as a widow.

3.3 Graphic Representation of Violence

In the portrayal of violence in protest literature, violence is as aesthetically possible as it is essential. Aesthetic violence is the core of comics and graphic novels. It is not just what is represented but rather how it's represented. The graphic novel as a medium furnishes a way to portray the seriousness of violence intellectually, in a pictorial form to interpret it, enabling a way to capture the sensitivity of history and textualize it. Violence and literature are entirely hence known as crime fiction, and detective fiction, where cases like homicide, robbery, assaults, and kidnapping are

meticulously portrayed and solutions to murder mysteries with suspense, and suspicion are provided. Typical comics are renowned for representing superheroes, fighting villains to save the world. These are just a few genres under fiction, all forms of representational literature have a conflict, and the major conflict is depicted efficiently by violence. Hence there are no stories without violence. Violent imagery is heavily incorporated, it may be used to physically show violent weaponry, like a gun or a stick, those objects may be utilised or not, they indicate to be used for enforcing violent purposes, and a violent scene of someone being beaten, tortured or killed is also depicted. Violent language, using swear words, derogatory remarks, verbal abuse as well as word art as of onomatopoeia eg. Ahhh!, emphasising noises, screams, cries etc. Panel arrangement and borders amply violent images and words used in the panels, Even colours of used play a major role in graphic novels, for example how red colour is used on the front cover page of *A Gardener in the Wasteland* indicates violence.

Depicting violence has a cruel influence on the reputation of comics, according to psychiatrist Dr Frederic Wertham comics were harmful to children he said "antisocial suggestions from comic books reach children in their leisure time when they are alone when their defences are down" (Wertham, 1967), in his work *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954), he criticised the genre of crime fiction as well depiction of female nudity for him the comics triggered homosexual and anti-feminine. This book got the attention of the U.S. Congressional inquiry on comics due to which some comics had to undergo censorship and get approval from the Comic Code Authority established by the Comics Magazine Association of America. In India, there was no censorship as mostly the comics were written for children.

3.4 Marginalization in *River of Stories*

River of Stories is from the perspective of a reporter named Vishnu who works for *Voice* magazine. It opens with a prologue named *A Dream*, which is Vishnu's dream begins with Vishnu watching television, for Indians cricket is not just a game but rather a matter of pride. A graphic narrative uses icons of national symbols to convey meaning. Cricket is a national icon for India; this opening panel of *RoS* depicts a cricket match along with a speech balloon stating “adding to its recent string of losses, India was all out for 102...” (Sen 8) news shows how India lost a cricket match against Pakistan in Nehru stadium, they are all out at 102 runs in reply to 368 runs from Pakistan, due to which they can't play in the fourth national championship. It's a very strong opening for Indians. Cricket is a matter of pride, entertainment and joy at a larger level. It is associated with the matter of nationalism and patriotism for Indian identity to be established worldwide, a cricketer enjoys the same level of respect as a soldier on the border and the fame of a celebrity. For youth, cricketers are role models and are favoured by every patriarch in the Indian household. It's through these cricket matches heard on the radio and watched on television that most of the Western products and ideas are commercialised and manufactured for Indian audiences. India's loss against Pakistan is seen as hurtful, as the majority of Indians bear hatred toward Pakistan. Just hearing this news Vishnu is disappointed and changes the channel, to the republic day function of Delhi, which starts with the national anthem and goes on to the speech of the “minister of sport and youth affairs” whose introduction is given as “man of vision and energy, a person who personifies the spirit of young India” (Sen, 8). However, the minister's appearance doesn't match his description. He is shown as an old fat man picking his nose amongst the clapping. The minister's name is Khapi. K. Soja which means to eat, drink and sleep signifies

the corrupt and careless nature of the minister. He goes on to say how republic day "marks the victory of our patriotic forces over colonial power" (Sen 8). He considered how the loss of international sports competition is shameful and 'ANTI-NATIONAL' here we see how public opinion is formed through the ministers in power, and how the notion of nationalism is shaped through cricket. The next panels depict the people outside Vishnu's house listening to television. They are drunk and discuss how Sarkar has a solution for everything, and how unemployment and poverty is an 'insolvable' problems. Minister lies and brags about victory in ancient Vedas and talks about how they have met all the IMF conditions and how the government has received foreign aid for multi-million-dollar projects. Vishnu to these remarks, "What rubbish!" This indicates Vishnu is aware of the false proclamation of the minister, to his minister, from the television speaks directly to Vishnu, or we can assume that, is the message to every youth like Vishnu having the same reaction to the minister's speech. Minister calls them "misguided socialists" and blames them for not "understanding progress." He shows the materialistic "fast-track development" of the country. He goes about how satellites are launched into space, revolutionised agriculture, put research based on Antarctica, and by what means the process of building the largest dam and latest nuclear reactors and tallest statues is going on. At the same time, they speak about how the ministers also inaugurated the Barbie doll manufacturing plant the other day, showing how superficial progress has become the national priority. Whereas major issues such as poverty, unemployment and illiteracy are sidelined. Minister stated, "If we waited for every Adivasi to leave the jungle and adapt to the civilised way we will be left behind in the global race!"(Sen,10). He disregarded their necessity, "you say they need food and water, we will give them potato chips and Pepsi cola."

Industrialization and westernization were a colonial hangover, it was an economic and

cultural inferiority complex. These words reverberated with Marie Antoinette's controversial statement during the economic crisis in France when starving peasants couldn't afford to buy bread, she is supposedly known to have said "Qu'ils mangent de la brioche" (Let them eat cake). This led to revolutionary outrage in France. Minister warns the youth of Indian youth through Vishnu, to wake up to reality and face the facts, that they belong to average families which have no money, no connection and they aren't brilliant in studies, hence have no bright prospects. This indicates that the minister is threatening the youth to not interfere in so-called national matters and to get their act together and "fall in line" suggesting the manufacturing ideas of false progress and silencing the youth. The last panel shows Vishnu waking up for his first day on the job as a journalist. When Vishnu is interviewed, she shares an experience. She begins the story by talking about how they were living their lives peacefully before the Sakari people from Ballanpur arrived in Jamili in a van.

Officers on their route to Jamili discussed how the tribal primitive people are responsible for the country's backwardness and that without proper roads, there won't be any progress. They meet up with the villagers and tell them that their village is a forest-received area under the forest department which belongs to the government, hence they can't cultivate their land, graze cattle, take wood or hunt without permission. Villagers try to convince officers by telling them how their fathers and forefathers have lived on this land, they explain their way of life saying this land is our Mata (mother)- "She gives us food and shelter, she takes care of our needs, we worship the tree, the rivers and the hills"(Sen 21). It's impossible to imagine life without farming and hunting for the villagers. Officers tell them how they ought to change with time; they "can't go on living the way their ancestors used to." Officers inform them about government schemes and tell them how proper road construction is

started from Ballanpur to Mathwad and will soon pass through Jamili, which will allow jungles to open up for proper housing, and factories. Which would mean that the Adivasi would have to be displaced, the officer said that it would also mean receiving an education, getting jobs and earning money, instead of wandering like monkeys. Government offices preconceived notions about the people of Jamili. They saw them as a threat to development as well as, uncultured, uneducated people. A police officer (who represents government authority and Westernized lifestyle) comments "Maybe you can begin by learning to put on clothes like the rest of us and tell your didis that if they don't know how to cover themselves, I won't mind teaching them with my own hands" Relku ran home and started crying.

Relku tells Vishnu that Sarkari people (authorities) started coming for surveys, measuring land etc., without their permission. Soon the forest guard became stricter, stopping them from collecting firewood, and entering the very forest where their God lived. They had to bribe nakedar (watchman) with Mahua honey, kill chickens, they could graze battles and make ropes only if they were allowed while Thekadar (contractor) who had all the papers and permits were allowed to bring labourers and cut down as many trees as they wished. It shows how the villagers were violent. Adivasi's simplicity was problematic to them while deforestation was allowed. After some years the road was completed, it was like a big snake from whose belly traders emerged. And they set up small businesses and shops near the road. Slowly they started to take over their lands by force. The panel after that shows the setting of the forest department Ballanpur range where the DFO and contractor are discussing. They say the basic problem in the Jamli area is the attitude of Adivasi, as they think it is THEIR forest. And are openly claiming their ownership of it. Villages complained about trees going to cities, and now they are openly talking against thekedar Antriyo

Singh and Bhuriyo Vasava. They speak about making an example of them. DFO, speaks about talking to the police inspector of Jamli. And tell the contractor not to worry. And says bringing development to these people is his duty and his mission, puts with emphasis on the typical idea of colonisation "Relku said who knows their reasons to pick up on them? Was it because father stood up to the thekedar and his bullies or perhaps, because we had very good land, near the river? This shows their greed for land. Relku mentions Gupta who was the businessman owner of the liquor shop, responsible for getting his uncle Marru addicted to 'inglish' (alcohol) by giving him credit (way of violence through alcoholism) as one of the ways in which whites exploited Native American, it reminds us of Sherman Alexie's poem *Evolution* (1992) when Marru's brother - Antriyo requested Guptaji to stop giving alcohol to Marru, as he can't handle it, and he has stopped working in the farms and comes home drunk and beats his wife... but Gupta doesn't care about him, Antriyo also says that Marru is piling up big debt and they are unable to pay. The same night Marru is beaten up and sent home. Their family was warned to return the debt of eight thousand rupees to Gupta. The next day Antriyo filed a police complaint against Gupta. The police inspector warned him "Be careful of what you say! You are making allegations against a big man... A respected person...and if it turns out to be untrue, you're going to be in trouble (Sen 28) regardless Antriyo filed a complaint, as he felt dishonoured" and for our people, that is an intolerable thing."

Samariyo, Relku and Devla with Budhyakaka to take Marru to the hospital in Ballanpur. The panel depicts Antriyo sitting on Charipai playing the flute at night and there came a police van and forcefully picked him up. And took him to the police station. Officers said " Now how did a jungli like you have the balls to come here and complain against civilized people? Scum! Falsely accusing Gupta saab yo get out of

paying your debts, hey?" They slapped him, beat him up using sticks until he lost consciousness. Officer asked Gupta to put good work for him into the ACP and he knows him personally. Figure 6 depicts the cruelty with which Antriyo was abused, he has fallen, on the ground outside the panels, and the panels now depict Gupta, as victorious, acknowledging the officers of the law, showing the corrupted structural institution, which played a huge role in the marginalisation of the entire community. Where along with his consciousness he also loses his dignity and pride. When Marru is brought back, doctors say that he is in bad shape and that they don't have medicine for him. But Baba says that they will ruin us. They have already taken away our lands and our forests. "I don't know about right or wrong. All I know is that if we stay in their good books, we at least have good in our bellies if we try to meddle with them... We're DEAD"(Sen 31). Gupta put their house on fire (pg 32). This shows the foreshadowing of traumatic events. The entire family had to live in fear, they didn't have any proof, about Gupta, but even if they had it wouldn't matter; they were made helpless, and homeless. This shows the forced poverty, the police made a report saying it was an accident, without any investigation. Marru died in the hospital and they were forced to sell off their land and pay for Marru's debt. She says "One day we were happily cultivating our own land... Living in a house my father and uncles had built with their own hands... And the next day we were on the way to Ballanpur as landless labourers... With no money or possessions" (Sen 33). Relku's story brings forth the entire process in which the marginalisation took place, through the official authorities, and the business-minded capitalist perspective, they were vulnerable to being thrown out of their own land with no security. And her family is broken forever.

When Vishnu visited Ballanpur, he joined the rally to take place in the Manigam and



Figure 6, Relku's father Antriyo being beaten up, Pg 30, *River of Stories* 2022, Orijit Sen

witnessed the manner in which Bazaria

behaved toward Adivasi and Ananad

explains.

Right from the time the first outsiders started

encroaching on tribal land, they have

regarded the Adivasi with a mixture of fear

and contempt... The first settlers were the

Mughal, Rajput, and Marathas expanding

their territories. Over the years, they managed

to drive the Adivasi into the hilly and forested

tracts, and settled themselves into the more fertile valleys and plains... I

suppose it was similar to what white settlers did in the Americas and

Australia...and when the Britisher came?...the same process continued, but

with one big change. The British administration imposed the concept of

"reserved forest" reserved for them to exclusively exploit... Now our

government plans to flood some of their villages out of existence (Sen, 48).

After Vishnu witnessed and wrote the article against the dam, he was

considered to be an idealist and the politicians considered activists as terrorists, who

are funded by foreign countries who want to keep our nation backwards, they are anti-

national to the core! (Sen, 63).

3.5 Victimisation in Kashmir

Munnu is based on the conflicted territory of Kashmir which is politically torn

between three countries, India, China and Pakistan. Pakistan argues Kashmir is under

their control because of its Muslim majority. Whereas India claims Kashmir legally. There is a conflict between Indian authorities and the Kashmiri population as well as Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri pandits, there are also divisions between Resistance groups, one group wants Independence, other wants to make it an Islamic monotheism and join Pakistan. *Munnu* is set in 1993. Is set in a time frame where there are constant, announced and unannounced crackdowns, lasting for several days, these identification parades aimed at Militants lead to several innocent people being killed at the hand of authorities. This can be seen as political violence, there is divine violence that takes place when the frustrated pollution of the society retaliates in a violent form when both, authorities and retaliating members of society in this case martyrs, members of the resistance group involve themselves in the act of violence, results in the victimization of the innocent population, there are several stampedes, shootings, using of tear age, that young children are caught in and death.



Figure 7, Family photo and topography of Kashmir, *Munnu; A Boy from Kashmir*, malk Sajad, 2015 pg.2



Figure 8, Fake scenic background, *Munnu; A Boy from Kashmir*, Pg 3

Observe Figure 7. The family photo chapter begins with a photograph of Sajad with his siblings, placed above the topographical map of Kashmir, showing how Kashmir is a conflicting zone for three countries i.e India, Pakistan and China. The circle is entirely black, with white borders and in the centre lies white Kashmir indicating the ripped piece of land. The photo above the map also indicates the connection between Kashmir and Malik family, which can't be separated, reminding us of Salmeen Sanai, (*Midnight Children 1981*), indicating the history and present state of Kashmir will affect Sajad. It introduces the characters in Munnu's family, settings and circumstances both inside and outside Munnu's house. There are seven members in Munnu's family. Gulya and Haseena are Munnu's parents. Bilal, Shahnaz, Akhtar and Adil are his siblings of which Sajad also known as Munnu (means the youngest) is the baby of the family. The story begins in 1993 at Batamaloo in Srinagar, in the pitfalls under Indian-administered Kashmir when Munnu is seven years old. Bilal during Eid wants to take his sibling to Manzoor studio, for a photo together, one can't help but notice the fake scenery using a photo background (Figure 8). Thinking that the only place fake scenic background is utilised in the not, entire novels are filled with barricades, tombstones, and confinement inside houses and ruins which doesn't match India's idea of Kashmir as paradise.

Home is associated with safety, and Indian soldiers have the symbolic sense of protecting their nation as home, but Kashmiri aren't safe in their own houses. After inspecting the houses, officers put up a Swastika sign. This sign is associated in Hindu culture as sacred, and to be found on the doors of the Hindu household as holy, but here it tends to be indicative of a Nazi symbol symbolizing the similar history of the concentration camp and crackdowns identification parade and destined to lead to genocide. We see that Gulya woodcut artist, had to work as a carpenter, as the

Britishers left and tourists didn't come, there weren't consumers of his art, and he had to change from material wood to embroidery on copper before he used escaped from the crackdown due to his the location of the because wood made no sound, copper noise and he was caught and dragged out along with Bilal from his house.

Gulya and Hassena always worry about their children's safety. Munnu mentions how Gulya is tough on Bilal, so he doesn't follow in the footsteps of his classmates who cross the border and go to Pakistan to receive armed training. They speak about how the neighbour found Ak-47 in the school bag of his son, who happened to be the nephew of Mustafa. Mustafa whom they help once, hanged himself when he was caught, there his twice more times mentions of him being detained and killed, which



Figure 9, Depiction of crackdown and identification

indicated that innocent people were killed, the like the way the 'mechanic' was caught along with supposedly Mustafa, and shot in the face and dragged behind a vehicle in the entire city until his skin came off. Show that the Indian administration in Kashmiri is questionable in Sajan; they rule through fear. The memory of home before the conflict is the memory

which sustains them, when Gulya is reminiscing, Hasenna tells him to stop tempting her children, and several Kashmiri pandits were threatened to abandon their house, which served as schools.

The **school** is disorganised, and all the age groups of students sit in the same class. The school is introduced in the novel by depicting how Munnu (seven years old) drew an AK-47 on his school bag, which made him popular in school as his friend demanded him to draw the same. So, he carved a stamp of AK-47 on an "eraser and met the growing demand for AK-47 in school." As the school principal is

detained Munnu is asked to draw posters, however, the peaceful protest turned chaotic because of city people, who gave the slogan of freedom, due to which the principal wasn't released. And school was shifted to the Rajbagh for students above fifth grade as Munnu was in first grade, and he didn't go. This shows how their education was affected. Later we see that the school is an abandoned house that belongs to the Kashmiri Pandits. Riyaz is a mischievous kid, seeking attention. In chapter Koya Koya Riyaz finds a Hindu religious idol and spits on it. This shows how much hatred the army has gained and how the violence is perpetuated by looking at the surroundings. Schools aren't reliable, Munnu mentions to her mother that the dean will pass him if he draw for him. Hilal leaves school to drive a rickshaw, he was a bright student and a class monitor. Schools prohibit speaking in Kashmiri, and only Urdu is allowed. This is a sign of epistemological violence. The teacher was beaten up brutally for not following disciplinary rules. This is reflective of various postcolonial theories, like that of *Swami and Friends* (1935) and *Midnight Children* (1981) where schools become the source of demolishing minority ideologies through brutal force. They are taught how to be subjugated or get used to the physical abuse of the army.

The authorities disregarded the needs of the people, and the crackdown lasted long so they couldn't meet the necessities of those “who had money to buy food during the restriction” (Malik 45). Luxury items like toffees, cashews and almonds were only available during weddings or Eid. In the case of *Munnu*, Imitaz collects these sweets from the tombstones. Imtiaz not respecting death and collecting things from tombstones suggests how death is normalized and lost its meaning altogether, contrasting from wailing and what Sajad experiences Imtiaz is rather being practical. Another incident is when “after the victim who died with a fake gun named Rehman, her widow was given a cleaner job in school for Rs 600 per month and the

government paid the family 100000... The cost of tea and snacks was Rs 200.” This shows the strategic enforcement of forced poverty in structural violence.

“The imposition of indefinite twenty-four-hour curfews ... for months on end that made it impossible for ordinary citizens to buy supplies and prevented those needing medical attention from reaching the hospital” (Kazi 2010) when Hassena underwent surgery. Just after that restriction was imposed and Munnu takes Haseena on a bike through pole holes, officers torture Munnu for breaking rules, stopping through each inspection they, reached the hospital using M.R.I. report trying to convince them to leave. During election day Kashmiri, they became the target of the Indian army during the crackdown, if they didn't vote, voting meant they were in support of Indian occupation, if they did vote to escape brutality they were regarded as the traitors' resistance group. The civilians were emotionally divided to choose between them, resistance groups were also threatening the citizens who spoke in favour of the army or did nothing to support them. Munnu was threatened by a member of the resistance group, for drawing a cartoon, which they felt was against their beliefs.

Witnessing trauma, "one could mourn, argue, complain or seek justice, but the repetition of the same tragic story got one to deal with death. A survivor could bury his guilt by calling those who were not so lucky "martyrs" numbness buried a lot of pain" (p.g 215).

The funeral of supposedly Mustafa as Munnu was traumatized, he questioned death and felt the grave was dark and suffocating, and he didn't want to be buried when dead. He had a nightmare where he digs up Mustafa's grave just to find his favourite brother Bilal there. After this incident, he kept having nightmares until the soothsayer helped. Even when Ajaz's father tried to shake hands with young Munnu the first thinks that these might be the same hands that buried Ajaz, listening to the mourning

inherited. This division of the group is assigned at birth, and can't be changed, it influences major aspects of life by channelling them into specific roles within society which will determine their unlimited or limited opportunities. The top section of society belongs to Brahman, the scholars, who are qualified to interpret the religious scripts, followed by Kshatriya who are the warrior class who ruled and controlled the administration of their kingdom. The third class known as Vaishyas includes the merchant and traders, the business class of the society. In the bottom are trapped the Shudras, the servants, manual labourers meant for the service of the upper classes. Outside of the class systems are Dalit, the untouchable. There are divisions based on specific occupations, there are about 3,000 castes and 25,000 sub-castes. Caste discrimination is eradicated legally, but socially still exists prominent. In the last few decades, the Government of India has introduced several reforms, and reservation quotas in the education and job section to try and uplift these marginalised communities. According to Dr Ambedkar, caste discrimination could be brought to an end by promoting social integration through social inter-caste marriages, but it's problematic because according to an Indian BBC article posted in 2021, which discussed marriages in India, showed a survey in 2018 of 160,000, and statistics showed 93% of marriages in India were arranged, 2% of marriages were love cum arranged and only 3% were love marriages. This statistic includes all religions. According to the DNA Web news of 10 Oct 2022 report, India has the lowest divorce rate globally at only 1.1% however, it is said to be increasing rapidly in urban areas. Sentiments regaling caste, marriage and beliefs bring forth major issues like domestic violence, honour killings and conspiracy theories like Love jihad.

A Gardener in the Wasteland is “a declaration of war ... against Brahmanism, ignorance, injustice” (Indian Express 2012). It's a biography that has

placed itself into static panels about the radical thinker, anti-brahmin, and social reformer Jotiba Phule along with his wife fighting social oppression, when he realised his position in society, after being humiliated at his Brahman friend's wedding. Gardener is a symbol that highlights the caste of Phule as 'mali' (gardener) but he subverts the caste by going beyond its limitations. Violence is shown through the treatment that Sudhra, Ati-Shudra and the cruel treatment women receive in the caste system. Natarajan and Ninan start the graphic novel with a splash page titled *The Wasteland of Caste* which depicts wet garbage like that of dump areas with flies hovering over them. This image encapsulates the filthy nature of caste. The scene is powerful in the manner in which it depicts, the innocent children being dehumanised, this reflects the animalistic trait of the dominant caste. This narrative is in a montage format where there is no linear pattern followed, it travels in time from 2010 Delhi to the 1840s of Poona. This nonlinear time-travelling element is significant because it



Figure 11, Universalised Ideals, Pg 20-21, *A Gardener in the Wasteland*, Natarajan and Ninan, Dec 2011

shows how structural violence is not changed with time.

Violence is shown through the technique of Natarajan and Ninan depicts the technique of memorialisation. The idea of Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man* (1791)

foregrounds the vision he wants to achieve. In Figure 11, the two-page panel depicts the French Revolution, the liberty, fraternity and equality written on the sky, indicating that these ideals have been universalised in the March to Bastille, including various reformists like Marx, Guru Nanak, Buddha, Ambedkar, Che Guevara, Nelson

Mandela, and others. All appear to be one and their hatred towards oppression and demanding justice. We can also see that Natarajan and Ninan have participated as well. Bringing different histories of atrocities together helps put more emphasis, in order to show that change is possible. Jotiba accuses the European and American regimes of enslaving the people in the same way. memorialising efforts of Sojourner Truth, an American abolitionist, who was the first black woman to win a legal case against a white man. And Harriet Tubman rescued seventy enslaved people in thirteen missions from South America. Show their efforts for freedom that succeed. The two-page depiction of Manu's *Manusmriti*, which prescribed harsh punishments for the lower castes who see, uttered, touched read or memorised Veda is seen on the parallel with American slavery where the Brahman had over the fruit to the Orthodox American southern, symbolising pattern of violence. *Strange Fruit* was a powerful haunting song written by Billie Holiday famous in the 1930s and 1940s. The song became the euphemism for the lynched bodies of African American swaying and hanging from trees; the same is depicted along with the verse of the song in the narrative. The narrative shows the same troubles African Americans received from whites in the U.S. when they went for higher education. Showing the violence ranging across histories is crucial in order to challenge the idea of a rooted caste system in the minds of Indian readers.

Brahmans shared the same power as their Maratha successor. They separated and created their theocracy, governed by scriptural laws. Brahmans were the literate, only authorised interpreter of the shastras. The law favoured the Brahmans and left all the other castes at a disadvantage. To distinguish their kind from others, they wore thread, from the 1840s, Brahmans controlled landholding, the financial sector, the administration, education and religion, and in all these areas they exploited other

castes. Brahmins were intolerant to change and didn't abide by the liberated teachings of Buddhism, Adhi-Sankara re-establish Brahmin Buddhism and his followers killed several Buddhists by crushing them into presses. They accepted Britishers only when it benefited them, it also foregrounds the politics involved in the Independence struggle of India, even though they forced the unity of the caste system to drive Britishers away, they were against equality amongst the caste. They rejected the religious reforms put forth by Jotiba as they would violate the Hindu religion. Critical in mentioning leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and M.G. Ranade, and portraying (not mentioned but depicted) Gandhi, (icon of India) to represent India as Ram Raj, there was a belief of "going back to Veda," Gandhi didn't explicitly reject the caste system. He called Dalits Harijan which means children of God broadly signifying only God will accept them not humans, and they should stay put in either position, whereas Jotiba termed Dalit as Ati-shudra, a term fitting to show the marginality of the community. It is depicted in Savarkar's speech 'O Hindus! Consolidate and strengthen Hindu nationality' and in the same extended panel, they are engaging in such detestable acts as drinking cows' urine to purify themselves from the Dalit's touch any rejecting spring water from them undrinkable (Ninan and Natarajan 90–91).

This also reveals that Britishers and Christianity to some extents were favourable for the upliftment of Dalits and Women in society; it is justified by mentioning Pandita Ramabai, a Hindu mystic who found solace in converting to Christianity. They also put a stop to the practices of Sati and promoted education to colonise the country better but it did indirectly promote equality amongst India. This was one of the major reasons why according to Jotiba, Brahmanical Hindu society was against Britishers.

Violence on part of political authority in present (2010) is mentioned. After Phule's alternative myths, where he describes Parashuram who committed matricide, and infanticide and killed pregnant women, he compared it with the fanatic Hindu mob who were involved in the robbery, rape and killing of the Muslim community. Natarajan mentions it 'Parashuram updated to 21st century, Hindutva style' (Ninan and Natarajan 63-64) they also accused chief minister, Narendra Modi, of not controlling the situation, suggesting that either he was oblivious to the atrocities happening or all-knowing and letting it happen. 1992's issue in Ayodhya about Demolish of the Babri Masjid to be replaced with Rama's temple where the Mughal period historical monument was destroyed, causing communal violence also in 2019 the verdict was given where the Masjid is to rebuild in the same place and also hand over, rather the disputed land to Ram Janmabhoomi temple trust to be built. Another incident that was mentioned was the Karnataka government's banning cow slaughter, the punishment of which was either 7 years of imprisonment or a fine of Rs. 25,000, to which Natarajan reacted by saying "Indian diet is Brahmanical diet" and visually depicting impressed, youth behind bars wearing a t-shirt displaying "I love beef" with knife and fork in his hands, the citizen isn't allowed to have food of their choice.

Jotiba Phule had a progressive mindset; not only educated himself but also his wife Savitri and allowed her to teach girls and untouchables in his school which was not tolerated by the Brahman mob. They accused Govindrao, Jotiba's father of going against religion and not having any control over his daughter-in-law. This shows that a Hindu household is run by a patriarch, in this case, Govindrao, and his not being able to control his daughter-in-law is problematic to a conservative orthodox Hindu Brahman. For them, women ought to look after the household and have nothing to do with education or a job. They threaten Govind Rao, father of

Jotiba that if he doesn't do anything "blood will be shed" (pg 15). Because of their threat, Govindrao separated ways from his son and his daughter-in-law and asked them to either leave the house or close the school. Jyotirao refuses to close the school for him. It's his life's work Govindrao regrets his decision to educate his son as it has given him ideas above his station. This was the way Brahmins emotionally and psychologically threatened Dalit families, by degrading them in their own eyes.

3.7 Women as Victims of Double Marginalization

Relku was traumatised after being sexually harassed by a police officer. She ran home and cried, and her mother asks her what happened, but her response isn't depicted. This brings forth the possibility that Relku might have not mentioned it at home because of social dogma associated with women who are harassed. Also, when Marru returns home drunk, he beats up his wife, showing how alcohol products are used to exploit and distract the Advaisi man, resulting in domestic violence for women.

"A young woman, a girl, is seventeen," married at the age of eight, Savitri bai is stoned by the Brahmin mobs on her way to work, as a teacher to girls and Ati-sudra children, she is accused of derogatory remarks like 'snake woman, shameless sudra - slut, -tramp - witch so you think you can teach school like a man? Go back to the kitchen where you belong.'" Even after going through so much, Savitri Bai's efforts are forgotten or shades behind her husband. Women in Hindu society are treated as burdens and even their menstrual cycle is considered impure. Their only role is to give birth to a male child, adhere to their husbands at home, and cook food in the kitchen. Working women are treated as prostitutes. Another full-page picture is about

how a young girl whose husband is dead is beaten up by the Brahman mob and forced to shave her head. Her brothers don't interfere with what is going on. Under a patriarchal set-up, women and children face the worst outcomes.

Ajaz's sister was raped when she visited her brother in prison. Ajaz retaliated to save his sister, he was killed. Munnu was sexually violated by an army officer, in Bilal's shop, which made him feel unclean. When Paisley visited Kashmir, she faced eve teasing by the locals.

"You know that hundreds of girls and young women are being rigged and filmed naked? Then they are blackmailed to serve top ministers and bureaucrats as a sex slave? But do you know that instead of exposing the predator, people here are curating the list with the names and addresses of the poor women, calling them whore? "and rape victims? They're fucked twice-first by the occupational forces and then by our social taboos and hypocrisy" (Sajad 222).

Novel ends with chapter *Flashlight*, Munnu returning after meeting ambassadors of E.U over dinner. He was given a flashlight as a token, which was solar-powered, in an attempt to reduce global warming. Sunlight in the region of Kashmir to power a flashlight isn't enough. They went back to the hostel, focusing on the cold weather and using an electric blanket, he was on his way back home in the dark using a torch, and dogs attacked him. In fear, he ran to a rickshaw, a woman younger than Sajad was being raped. She said "They're my brother I didn't have a firepot... cold outside... My brothers..."(347) went away and cuddled a dog. Seeing this Munnu walked away. And the man started looking again. This scene shows the

disparity of Kashmir. This is the dramatic irony used by Malik to show the contrasting situation he has witnessed.

3.8 Neglect and Ignorance

Neglect and ignorance are the reasons why the cycle of atrocities goes on, protest literature aims to spread awareness amongst its readers, and the text in the study shows neglect and ignorance are depicted. In *Installation Art* is the chapter in which Sajad is invited to New Delhi, to portray his art, due to the blast in Delhi he was arrested based on suspicion without any inquiry or proof from the Internet Cafe. Sajad was wrongly accused of being a terrorist (stereotypically) people didn't believe him. Malik utilises the manifestation approach of illustrating Islamophobia by representing a Hindu Brahmin-looking icon, he is wearing a tilak on his forehead he questions Munnu, asking if he is Kashmiri, and does he has a passport, assuming it to be a terrorist alienated by Indian, he tries defending himself all in vain. After relentless requests, a policewoman appeared in civies. She represents the Indian's speculation of Kashmiri. She says "you bastard you speak Hindi, why do you have a problem with India?" after finding out Sajad isn't guilty, instead of being apologetic she shouts "Why do you Kashmiri, have such a soft spot for terrorists." and called his work "Anti-India" (pg. 300). Paisley, an artist from the US who visited Kashmir, provides us with a view on how foreigners look at Kashmir, the forefront of the issue of people "exoticising" and "othering" nations. Paisley, belonging to a first-world country, is too carefree to understand the plight of Munnu. She is working on traditional art. Even after exploring Kashmiri, she doesn't have a clue about people's lives there. She loses Munnu's phone near L.O.C, and Munnu freaks out. "what if the police or the army finds my mobile? They might think it belongs to a militant."

Mobile was issued on his passport many in Kashmir are denied passports, "Kashmir's a prison you know and a passport is your bail contract, a reward for behaving. Get it. It's not all fucking breathtaking here" (291). Just like the colonizers who came for resources (art) and didn't care for people, in *RoS*, we see the neglect of people living in urban areas who believe that the government are providing Adivasis subsidies, but Adivasis are the ones who are ignorant about it but they are unaware of the corruption or just neglect it. Normalise the illegal, as seen in the train journey, the contractor in charge is well aware of the corruption, he is unaware of the happenings and neglects his responsibility by saying that it's not his 'headache.' In *A Gardener in the Wasteland*, ignorance is spread by the Brahman, and Dalits are made to neglect their own sense of dignity. This cultural violence is strategically planned using the law books of scriptures, in order to create a functioning system of slavery.

3.9 Conclusion

According to the Indian notion of Violence, it is said that Arjuna had to use weapons against his own family in order to bring order to society, which was his duty. And he can't seek contentment through violence, so using violence to establish control is a pretty old formula. In this entire theoretical analysis of violence depicted in the narrative, we come are the repeated mentioning of the works like Anti-India, terrorist, Anti-national, Indian diet being Brahminical diet, constantly using national identity forged during the independence struggle, to cause violence, and disregarding the fundamental right of an entire community. All three graphic novels mention how the marginalised communities are forced to live in their homes and land, which causes them to become vulnerable and helpless. Graphic novels in the study have depicted violence, especially in *Munnu*, there is hardly any panel that is devoid of death,

tombstones and torture. It represents it all; many might believe that the graphic form is an excessive, over-the-top manifestation; however, the truth is presented from a single perspective. Even though it's just a single point of view, regardless there is some method in the madness. It's undeniable that this is the true experience of someone who is exploited. Graphic novels provide an opportunity for the reader to see how the violence is perpetrated, required to raise awareness, and indirectly they are bearing witness to the atrocities. However, showing too much violence as discussed in the previous chapter, might lead to empathy burnout.

Chapter 4

Challenging the Status Quo: Reportage, Rediscovering History and Folklore.

4.1 Rediscovering History and Folklore.

Protest literature put efforts to provide solutions for the socio-political issues, and artists and authors consider the re-representation of marginalised history as crucial in postcolonial India to connect with their audience to provoke social consciousness. It helps to find the root cause of the problems and engage with the reader's social identity. The graphic novel allows an opportunity for exploring the marginalised which are forgotten and neglected. At the same time, it also with the continuous illiteracy in India especially in marginalised sections of the society plus the language barriers make a picture medium to connect both the literate and uneducated sections. The unheard histories resurface visually. They attempt to explore traditional myths and history in a visually unconventional format. According to Nayar “the visual dimension of the graphic novel contributes substantially not only to our understanding of history but also to a larger question of how history can be represented” (Nayar 14). This chapter is an amalgamation of myths that form ideologies and belief systems affecting which in turn affected our histories and present, myths that are forgotten, the histories lost with no place in the present. At the same time exploring the manners of resistance depicted in the narratives.

Myths are stories passed down from one generation to another, every story is considered to have a social message, which reverberates in the present time; it also plays a crucial role in making history. As it becomes every kid's bedtime story passed on by grandmother as children, we pick up these stories, which make up our

personality. The depiction of myth in Indian graphic novels is part of its Indianness. As *Amar Chitra Katha* has been set for the standard, graphic novelists decide to follow it or subvert it. It is interesting the way graphic novelists/artists have dealt with the myths, history and present. Sen has used myths to evoke the social identity of the readers, as by looking into the myths, especially not the dominant ones but the tribal myths, have taken form, into the pages of the graphic novel, and have become much more than simple documentation. It has transformed the oral tradition of myth to visual representation, taking birth in order to preserve, reflecting on the fact that several, oral traditional myths have vanished, but through Sen graphic traditions the myth itself revives for the aim of preservation and protest. Sajad on the other had just mentioned the Myth of Kashmir as footnotes for the history and presence of atrocities. He in this sense rejects it, and just mentions it as a part and parcel of history. Natarajan and Ninan portray the problems with myths, they show the way myth has the power to corner the majority of the population, women and Dalits. Newton's third law states that every action has an equal and opposite reaction, to counter-attack the illogical myths. He provides an alternative perspective of what might have happened in reality.

4.1.1 *River of Stories*- The Song of All Existence

Mentioning the Bhilali tradition this myth is not entirely related to the areas which will be affected by the dam, they were the tales from unconnected tribal groups of Bhilala and Apa Tani. The employed images were based on tribe drawing styles Saora and Warli. Mixing all these cultural attributes, celebrated the hybridity of different tribal groups with the same posthumanist beliefs of nature and life existing in harmony.



Figure 12, Kunjum Chantu, Pg 15,
River of Stories, Orijit sen, 2022



Figure 13, Relukabbadi, Pg 45,
River of Stories, Orijit Sen, 2022

Vishnu in Indian mythology is part of God's Trinity, lord Vishnu had taken up the avatar of Ram and Krishna on earth, it's Lord Vishnu's duty to show the path of righteousness to humankind. *RoS* character Vishnu is a reporter, in modern times, his duty is to show reality. His life story along with the folklore runs the narrative. Part one, *The Spring* begins with Orijit Sen's most exquisitely artistic pages in *RoS* belong to the magical portrayal of myth passed down. *The Song of all Existence* descended in the Bhilala tribal community of Anjanwara village situated near the banks of river Narmada of Madhya Pradesh as the song of creation. Sen remarkably gives life to this oral tale which is unheard of because it isn't about Rama or Krishna. This Bhilali creation myth is sung by Malgu Gayan (singer) who is a mythical figure, whose help is asked by the Queen as her mountains are changing. Malgu is blessed with "God's wisdom" and has a rangai on his lap, to sing the singing existence, through which calamities can be resolved. Malgu sings about Kunjum Chantu, the Goddess of Earth. On the surface of her fat belly lived human beings, who worried Goodness that if she ever stands up, it would result in the fall and death of humans, hence she decided to

rub some dirt from her chest and shape it into a lump, that was the world created, after which she put life in it by playing, trees, shrubs grass etc. And created creatures that would inhabit this world, the garden of Java provided the blood, and for livestock there was *jinjivi*. This creation myth shows that Kunjum Chantu, created a stable world maintaining the ecological balance. This myth supports the tribe, as it portrayed a self-sufficient and non-exploitative system of living. Malgu wisdom is known through knowledge about how juvar would provide him with blood and "how for lizards there is brown coloured Bengal uphill, for snakes, the ninth al tree with its poisonous flowers of blue and yellow..." Kujum Chantu created the "whole world and all its creatures and food in it for all she created" (Sen 17) this sharing and utilizing the natural resources and interdependence with nature should be what is required and valued, however, thought doesn't fit in materialist, capitalistic model of society where the majority lives, this isn't the case and hence seen as "primitive."

Part two, *The River* witnesses the interweaving of the myth with the reality of destruction that has occurred and requires to be taken care of, splash page depicts the construction of a dam, and the wall of the dam have covered the scenery of mountains, the equipment and machinery like conveyed, trolley and cranes are shown. "The mountains were changing, I came to the mountains, tigers and bears were roaring (Sen 36). This is part of the myth however readers can assume that the destruction of the forest and noise while constructing has caused disturbance to the wildlife, tiger and bears and roaring can represent the machinery or can also be considered as the strongest animal being helpless in the face of neoliberalism. Rani Kajal was crying, "Now what do I do?" She called Ratukamai " Devar, Devar (husband's younger brother) "Our mountain has changed. What should we do?" Ratukamai, "We should go to the maal and get the singer Malgu (Sen 36). They

required the help of a singer Malgu who had all the wisdom. There are two panels with different focal points that show the myth recited by someone in a wooden house located on the top of the mountain. According to the myth, Malgu Gayan will come after four or five days. The next page depicts multiple panels. The first horizontal row of three panels depicts the project office tents, the official inquiry about why the "rock-filled dyke" is delayed, and how they have to appear good in front of the world bank. The next row has one panel showing how offers are speaking about the minister who will personally come, as the loan depends on the report of the world bank and the other three panels and the next row recite myth asking Relukabadi for help through a letter, "Relu, the time has come again to pick up the rangai so that rivers of stories which rises from the souls can flow out" (Sen 37) which is mythical and asks to recite the story of rivers, which are the daughters of Relukabadi and might have the preparation required for protest as if the report succeeds the rivers will be trapped within the walls.

The daughters of Rewa aesthetically depict the myth about how Relukabadi, after receiving the letter, goes with his axe, chisel and matla (pot) in search of a teak tree on the big mountain but finds nothing, and his daughters follow him although he warns not to. After being dejected and crying. He decides to worship using the leaves he collected and a teak tree appears. He is overjoyed, and he tries cutting the tree using his axe, with the first blow comes to blood, and with the second blow comes milk and final blow the tree finally falls, but his matla breaks and water gushes out flowing away his daughter Revli and Devli to Ambarkant, barren Ambarkant adopts them and rename Revli as Ganga and Rewa and Devli as Jamna and Vijali (Sen 46). That is how Rewa was born. The Narmada River also known as Rewa is considered the lifeline of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. Even today some people take the

Narmada parikrama. Finally, the myth re-appearing and intermingles with reality, Sen uses the triple page, to portray his topographical map in the background, in which Malgu Gayan sings his song of creation on the bottom of the pages and protest depicted in several panels on the top of the page, top and bottom of the pages are divided by the river. On the top left corner, there is a small Rewa written along with a drawn boat, below which is written: “a map of stories told yet untold.”

4.1.2 Kashmiri Myth, History and Folklore

Chapter 12 *Footnotes* depict the myth and history of Kashmir in Munnu. Before this chapter, Munnu feels at a disadvantage for not knowing the history of his land, as in the previous chapter we saw that he was the youngest to represent Kashmir to the outside world in Kathmandu, his work was not his own idea after which he explores Kashmiri history. He begins by depicting the chronicle of Rajatarangini, “The River of Kings” written in the 12th century by Kashmiri Brahmin Kalhana, which stated that Kashmiri valley used to be a lake inside which lived, “a demon that terrorised the inhabitant living on the bank” (Sajad 198) as the demon was indestructible in water, a great sage Kashyap rishi sought divine help, to pierce a hole in Baramulla hills, to eliminate the demon by draining all the water. That is how Kashmir evolved. He provides an alternate Kashmiri myth which was about a Dragon who lived in the lake, he was impressed by the Buddhist monk who was meditating on the bank of the river, so he provides him with space in the middle of the lake, monk’s spiritual powers turned him into a valley and pushed away the dragon, later on, the slaves from other lands settled on the valley. Kashmir prospered intellectually, in art and culture, hand weaving, also in farming. The silk route made Kashmir a trade hub,

to be covered by the invaders. The page next to this depiction provided the shape contrast.

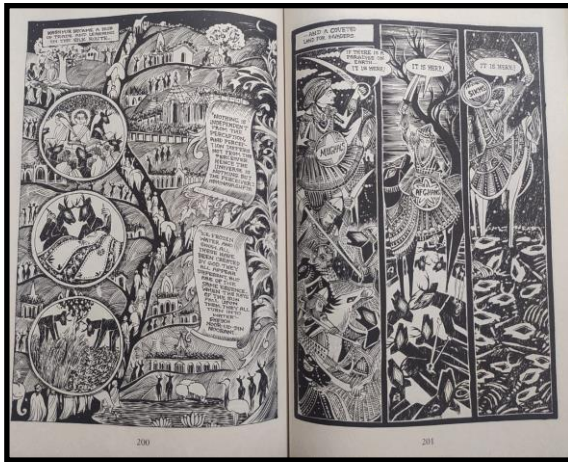


Figure 14, Kashmir turning from a Paradise to a Graveyard, Pg 200-201, *Munnu a boy from kashmir*, Malik Sajad, 2015

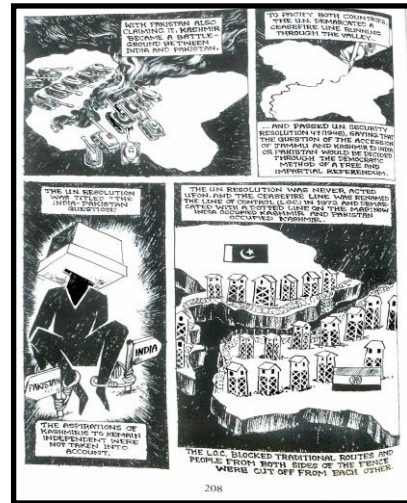


Figure 15, Kashmiri Choices Overlooked, Pg 208, *Munnu a boy from kashmir*, Malik Sajad 2015

The background of all three panels along with the gutter which separates them is filled in black ink indicating the motive of the Mughals, Afghans and Sikhs, was the same, it is again backed by the “if there is paradise on earth, it's here” (Sajad 201). “It here” repeated in the other two panels.

It portrays invasion by the Mughals when they fought, Kashmir tried their best to fight back using weapons, they were looted so much so that they didn't have weapons, or the power to fight back when depicted as dead when Afghans invaded. By the time Sikhs invaded, they were only Kashmir bones on the land. After that, the entire history of Kashmir, of how the British defeated Sikhs and sold it to Dogra Maharaja for 75 billion dollars, completely legally, his mistreatment toward his subjects lead to rebellion, slaughters of around 200,000 Muslims in Jammu were the aftermath of partition, where 300,000 fled to Pakistan. Rebelling against invasion from Pakistan made the Maharaja powerless, and he asked for help from India. And till the present, the atrocities continued. Sajad also speaks about the decaying folk

dance of the Bhand community to Paisley while looking at their miniature sculpture Bhand pather in a museum, he says that the community captured the oppressed faced by the Kashmiri community and presented it in a satirical way to make their audience laugh at the face of oppression. However, the Muslim community disliked them and later abandoned them accusing them of being transsexual as the male played both male and female roles, they became the target of the resistance group and were banned. Later on, the government took in the remaining Bhand community, nonetheless, though they only performed for the government and military officials their plays lacked political satire which was the main component. To which Paisley reacted “that's pretty fucked up.” This blunt assertion exhibits the slight of the Bhand community which is now near on verge of extinction.

4.1.3 ‘The Weed-bed of Myth’

Natarajan has drawn this section with great aesthetics with the black background, illustrating not more than two panels on each page, most of the pages are two spread pages, allowing the readers to deeply absorb the images, which aren't excessively crowded for deeper analysis. His distinctive yet common-sense theory developed from decoding the myth, providing a different identity to the Dalits, as they aren't just untouchable, or impure, but rather the native of the very land who are exploited and victimised for ages. This alternate theory is proactive to Orthodox believers but has the potential to cure and solve the issue of caste. The chapter *The Weed Bed of Myth* is introduced by the splash page of weeds and thorns, Jotiba provides us with an alternate and opposing view on Brahminical mythology. The chapter begins with Vidya and Aparajita discussing Amar-Chitra Katha, comic-based Hindu mythology, where they point out that women are depicted as impossibly curvy

and, good guys are always fair and evil rakshasas are always dung green, where Yudhister empathises on the how every varna should adhere to this own dharma. These were comics targeted at children, which could mould their view of society and what they read would be problematic due to misconceptions about women's figures and racism. They mention how "Phule was one of few people who asked questions: so who made up these stories? Who derived legitimacy from these legends?"

The myth is objectively, and logically, discussed, it is portrayed through the conversation between Dhondiba and Phule, where a series of rational answers are provided by Phule, according to the origin of Varna given by Manu where Brahman was born from the mouth of Brahma, and Kshatriya from hands, Vashyia from the stomach and shudra were from the bottom. He remarks Brahma should be menstruating 16 days each month and states that the story is full of holes this satire is for Dondhiba's comment on Brahma having eight breasts, four belly buttons, four sets of genitals and four anuses? (32-33), to which Phule brings a logical version enunciating that Arayan were the invaders, who came by sea in fast-moving canoes called Mastya, when he remarks that Mastya was born out of Fish, Phule comments, "use your head, Dhondiba Do you see any similarity between fish and man? " This shows that Phule wants people to SEE, observe reality and find the truth for themselves. Mastya troops fought Shankasur who is a native, local chieftain and occupied his kingdom, similarly, Dondiba and Phule discuss Kachha, the Vishnu incarnation of Boar, Narshima, and Bali and Parshurama. We noticed all the descriptions are vivid to all the stories accompanied with reaction, stock of reality. With different points of view the holy, powerful, just God, becomes a coward like Narshima, are invaders, killers and greedy murderers who cause genocides. The tale is depicted in different forms in "Roots of Tyranny" the panel in which two sides are

portrayed with drastically different points of view. The myths in the previous chapter took entire pages so that readers may view the images and introspect and internalise, with the other panel, its myth and reality become sharp and clear as the way Vedas were manipulated by the Brahman, to establish themselves as superiors. This narrative is a satire on history and present caste exploitation on the premises of myths it attempts to visualise the hidden unread reality. This is an ultimate form of protest and resistance and an attempt towards reformation.

4.2 Reportage

Reportage is considered a genre under the medium of graphic novels; it is defined as an action or process of reporting the news. Reportage is meant to be a crucial, factual and objective projection of the true account. Whereas making the graphic novel is a subjective process, requiring creative expression. When we think about reportage in graphic format, we assume it is comic strips in our daily newspapers made by talented cartoonists, however, political cartooning is not the same as reportage, political cartooning aims to be funny and entertaining. And graphic novels aim to be different in that matter. However, the genre of comic journalism, coined by Joe Sacco also known as graphic journalism has gained a tremendous amount of acknowledgement, as it combines a journalistic approach along with an innovative hybrid format of text and words to produce artistic reportage. Journalism is an informative field that aims to gather, assess and present what is happening in society, through the medium of newspapers or broadcasting news channels on television and radio, or simply social media. But the graphic novel is speculated to be a fictional or non-fictional creative work of art, but by presenting reportage through drawn images, its task is to make it believable and provide authenticity to its reader.

Graphic art is not a daily re-telling of the account but weaving a sequential story based on that event. Journalists are the people who are responsible for investigating what, who, why and when the situation occurred, their report makes up the majority of public opinion in society, hence they are inevitably in control of the bigger picture, shaping mindset and ideology. Many suspect the reliability of news reports today, but still, journalists get first-hand experience with both extremes of complicated arguments and issues.

The common thread we notice in the graphic novels under study is their narrators are a part of mainstream media, which are all involved in the investigation. Vishnu is a reporter for the magazine *Voice*, Sajad is a renowned political cartoonist from the young age of 13, now later started working for *Greater Kashmir*, and Vidhya and Appu are research scholars working on their thesis based on *Gulamgiri*. These are the central characters, through them, we are exploring the narratives. There are many strategies used in the text to make the presence of the author (through narrators) believable in the narrative. Providing authentication through the **journalist's presence** is a significant part of the text. Vishnu in the prologue itself is introduced to us as a new journalist. He interviews Rekhu, for his paper on Migrant labourers, and after listening to Rekhu, Vishnu points out "strange, isn't it? You've been working here for years but I never have known that you're been through so much. Marru's debt could have been that big" (Sen 33). This response by Vishnu shows as a report until this interview how little did he know about Rekhu, and he wasn't being judgmental about Rekhu's story. After listening to the root cause of the issue of the migrant population was the dam being constructed, he actively goes to Ballanpur. Whereas Sajad in order to learn about Kashmir's history, and for his information for making a graphic novella Sajad had to go interview people. After Natarajan and Ninan's efforts

to research they travel to the library to read the text they are shown in the Hindu Mythology section, discuss News and observation of their surroundings and the results of their comments in the progression of the narratives.

Providing **facts and documentary evidence** is the method that involves including genuine compositions and fact boxes that are necessary to comprehend the issues, as it will add proper credibility portraying that extensive research has been done by the researcher. It makes the narrative realistic Vishnu in train is reading *The Ecological Impact of the Rewa Dams*, in his conversation with a passenger who works as technical supervisor for J.S Associates, the main contractors for the project, who is pro-Dam, Vishnu reads out facts like NBA (Narbada Bachao Andolan) is one of the world's biggest grassroots environmental movements according to Dr Sundarlal, the famous ecologist report and the tribals of the Rewa Valley are fighting to preserve their ecosystem from destruction by our flawed development policies... And her global eco-forum states:

"The fate of our planet depends on the success of movements like this. The whole world is watching..." According to official figures, dams and reservoirs will submerge land and forest affecting 100,000 people. Around 375 Square kilometres of forest and farmland will submerge... Even if you add another lakh of people to be displaced by the irrigation canal network, it's still nothing compared to the benefits the project will bring. The dam will generate 1450 megawatts of power, the canals will carry irrigation and drinking water to drought-prone areas. People who have been displaced in the past by larger development projects have never been resettled or adequately compensated... Apparently,

people all over the country are forced out of their homes, living as landless Labourers or as urban migrants in slums..." (Sen 41).

Vishnu stated facts and the contractor vaguely answered what he heard and assumed that they had a good rehabilitation program. They're giving land for land, compensation to all the outside, as well as painting thousands of trees. Later he remarks it's the government's headache, not mine. This conversation shows that facts are a powerful source, as it shows the distinction between the contractor who doesn't really care about Advasi and the government. On their other side, Vishnu is on his way to revealing the truth.

In *Munnu*, Sajad clarifies that Kashmir is not a disputed territory but rather an occupation, that it doesn't belong to India or Pakistan, and he also tells the reader that Kashmiri citizens never got a choice to choose for themselves. The truth about Kashmir in *Munnu* can be complicated, as suggested by Sajad himself that the figures and facts keep changing. According to the people because of a single perspective, the important truth of the narrative is the trauma the young children are growing up under occupation, and Kashmiri Pandits who have left. The countless number of deaths because of occupation is visualized in the novel. The text used in the novel in comparison to Kashmir is George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) is a text about the rebellion of animals against their Human masters for freedom and Joe Sacco's works *The Fixer: A Story from Sara Javo* (2003) a journalist comic about telling a tale about Sarajevan man selling his stories to a Western journalist, as he has lost everything in the Bosnian war, Sajad, after going through the novel point out that, they look as if they were born to suffer. *Munnu* in several scenarios to an Indian eye will be scrutinized, based on Relevance Theory as they will comprehend this narrative against

the grain, and might discover hidden meaning through symptomatic readings.

Especially in the case of Kashmiri Pandit representation.

A Gardener in the Wasteland is based on facts and events of atrocities all around the world. It explored Phule's idea of a caste-ridden society being harmful to low caste and women, at the same time, it critiques statements made in Manusmriti a



Figure 16, Vishnu witnessing protest, Pg 50, *River of Stories*, Orijit Sen , 2022

Brahmanical text used for justification of torture. Skilfully used Jotiba Phule's real Speech to the Hunters Commission in 1882 (also provided an illustrated version of the speech), in proper news articles as seen in the previous chapter. It shows poems like *Go, Get an Education* and it also ends with a poem from Savitribai Phule, *Rise to Learn and Act* (1854 from *Kavyaphule*) Savitri bai was the first Marathi poetess of protest.

Camera and Photography is a prominent piece of equipment for journalist inquiry and their inculcation into graphic novels have a layer of meaning. Cameras bring forth metaphors of capturing history, vulnerability and zeal, whereas photography is the moment captured, a static, seized moment which won't be altered and remains in one's memories. For example, in *Munnu and RoS*, the entire procedure of journalism is involved, from When Vishnu reaches Ballanpur and explores the river site. He meets Anand who guides him to the Manigam where the protest is happening. As we can see in Figure 16, Vishnu along with his camera is placed in the top left corner like an omniscient figure, capturing all happening. He says "his is fantastic! I hope these pictures come out well" (Sen, 50) shows his excitement as well as his differential

presence, where everyone is hoping for their protest to succeed; he just wants his pictures to turn out well. Even his Urban artificial presences get just a little presence in the page layout.

In *Munnu* photography it's used to capture the trauma of the victims of conflict, the novel begins with photographs being clicked, and Sajad discovers a photo of a Kashmiri Pandit's family in school. This shows that even though Kashmir pandits aren't there any more, their photo/memory remains intact. For Sajad's project on a

graphic novel about his experiences in Kashmir, he is supposed to take interviews with victims. Some families show Sajad photographs of their missing or dead family members. He met a Mother who has been waiting for his son for sixteen years. This encounter makes Sajad dislike journalism as he finds it cruel he calls his friend and says “you know our stories won't change anything for these people. They need our compassion, not questions. We are just rubbing salt on their wounds and toying with their emotions by giving them fake hope that someone will come to rescue them after reading their stories” (Sajad 229) and his

journalist-publisher friend guides him about taking the proper interview. In this scene, we witness the failures of photojournalism.

Sajad’s friend only asks the questions like when, how, where, which, what, and why, replicating the style of police interrogation. The replies received are in monosyllabic, short phrases, like “my son ...,” “fake gun battle” ..., “probe” ...,” “DNA ...,” “court ...,” emphasizing the fact that her loss and emotions are



Figure 17, Traumatic Interview, Pg 231, *Munnu a boy from Kashmir*, Malik Sajad, 2015

meaningless, only the catchwords in her experiences are required to Sajad and his friend. Whereas Sajad unattached is preoccupied with his camera, his thoughts bubbles are "Angle..., Flash..., Light..., only worried about getting a proper reference picture for his graphic novel, followed by the constant camera sound of "click." When a child shows them their father's grave Sajad keeps clicking pictures. This shows the manner in which Sajad became more focused on the criteria of clicking pictures to avert his focus from the emotional scenario. It brings forward the issue of journalism in certain cases requiring becoming insensitive towards the plight.

Depicting Physical attributes, e.g. Topography in terms of visual stylistics plays an important role in the identification, this reference to the minute things present, which can be Sajad scrape book and Vishnu notepad where details of the protest are mentioned, these details go to their individual panels however, the attributes applied in the sketches of the location also are significant as two texts (*Munnu and RoS*) is location-based whereas *A Gardener in the Wasteland* swifts locations and time. Portraying the beauty of the river and what it means to the people, the greenery, along with flora and fauna being lost in the process of building a dam, into its physical reality, emphasises the seriousness of the problem. Sen has depicted the river through topography. Given all the details of the places for the reader to be familiar with the place. Readers connect to Jamili near Ballanpur which was Relku village. The place where the protest took place, what herbs and animals are found in the place and how the dam is affecting it all. This approach concerns establishing the journalist vigorously reporting on an affair or interviewing people, trying to prove that they were physically attending to the location and witnessed the event themselves; this physical resemblance, depicted by the author through illustrated journalist methods, provides authenticity. In *Munnu*, the image of typography is shown (Figure

6) showing the entire area, whereas later on the location of the Old city, temple, and ruin of Kashmiri pandit houses, are depicted with great detail. In *A Gardener in the Wasteland*, the topography of the way to Navayana is depicted on the first page 'The Seeds of Change' suggesting that the way to Navayana will bring change. At the same time, the traffic and honking are illustrated to portray the picture of urban Delhi. Authenticity is provided through meta-story, revealing the production procedure, research methods, and origins, along with the journalist's opinion about the narrative provides transparency to the readers about the issue of this approach to reporting and can increase public trust. The entire procedure of journalism is shown in *Munnu* and *River of Stories*. At the same time *A Gardener in the Wasteland* the narrative showed how they came across Navayana.

4.3 Exploring Ways of Resistance

4.3.1 Rewa Sagar Andolan

There are several ways in which the text subverts the dominant ideology through its characters' choosing to resist. In *RoS*, the Rewa Andolan itself is the embodiment of resistance. The gathering of the people in the rally starts with an announcement expressing that they aren't here just to stop the building of the dam, but also there to provide a suitable, sustainable alternative model to asset the needs of the country. According to them, an alternative way does not benefit one person at the cost of another. They know the land like no one does and the government along with the urban folk thinks of them as dumb. But they discuss their water-harnessing techniques that have worked for generations. As they went to the Gujra district to solve problems, they helped engineers to restore and expand the old system of hatching and storing water, by building channels and ponds. This shows that even educated engineers like

Anand acknowledged the capability and capacity of the Adivasis and considered the dam as a non-viable proposition, the government didn't even care to ask for their opinion, the people also mention instead of wasting money, the government could utilise building schools. The publishing of the report by Vishnu which is not drawn but rather an actual report from *Insight Voice* magazine with the headline “Monument of progress or wall of despair?” shocked the ministers but doesn't positively affect the urban citizen. Their reaction to the article was negative, as they considered the dam as an epitome of progress opposite to the view of the Adivasis; they regarded the suffering of the few as necessary for the goodwill of the majority. One reader also considered ending the subscription to the magazine. People. Some considered Vishnu idealistic. *RoS* ends with a powerful epilogue: under the Mahua tree, which is the interaction between Minster and Malgu Gayan, the minister is in the helicopter, creating noise pollution evident by onomatopoeia of “Wup Wup Wup” and Malgu Gayan sleeping under the Mahua tree, the minister accuses the Malgu of idling away. He asks Malgu to start working, go to the city and earn money and make a profit to enjoy his life, but Malgu asserts that he was already enjoying his life before he came, content with enough land for his needs. This points out the ingrained capitalist idea of living/enjoying life, which the 21st century portrays and questions the core of what is important for living our lives.

4.3.2 Community Spirit and Cartooning in *Munnu*

The community spirit of Kashmiri to survive is the resisting force depicted in the text, we are told that the Munnu family hosted Mustafa a militant and a family of Kashmiri pandit during emergencies, in one incident young Sajad was caught up in a

stampede was refused by a stranger. Hasenna cares and is also affected by the lives of her neighbours, Blind Abba and Amma were guided by other people to Sajad's house. Community allows the victims compassion and support during loss. There are several



Figure 18, Community mourning together, Pg 35, *Munnu a boy from Kashmir*, Malik Sajad, 2015

incidents mentioned where women and children gather after crackdowns to meet their family members. The scene above is people gathered to mourn for Mustafa. 'River of people were mourning, women were wailing, during the process as custom, the dead had to be given luxurious food items like Cashews, toffees, and dry fruits, people in poverty, abided by the custom only so that the dead would live peacefully in the afterlife. When

Ajaz's sister was sexually abused also with his brother the prison raged against the Indian army officer, and when Ajaz was killed, his father was consoled by the community members. When Abba died and Munnu had to travel, he was reluctant to which Bilal responded by saying that not everyone gets an opportunity to represent Kashmir to the world. This brings out Sajad's moral duty to his community. This stayed with Sajad throughout, in order to change the situation of Kashmiri for the better, for the community.

Cartooning is another motive that helps Sajad resist and subvert the dominant ideology, from a young age Sajad once survived the Army Curfew, by providing his identity as a cartoonist, by drawing a cartoon of the Indian Prime minister, this saved him from being killed in the fake gun battles. It's only through his career as a political cartoonist. His work was able to attend various conferences, and talks and represent his point of view of Kashmir. Even in the incident of the installation art in Delhi, he

was saved because of his ID. He admits that he loved drawing as a child but not as much as he did it for delight as an adult Sajad used drawing to criticise, express and expose the cruelty of situations and time. This graphic novella which he wanted to title *Endangered Species* was titled *Kashmiri Intifada* which means uprising or shaking off this was the only possible way to sell the books, it also correlates to Palestine Intifada and the graphic novel written by Joe Sacco *Palestine* (2001) which were his experiences about the Gaza strip, and diving into the struggles of people of *Palestine*, the introduction to this book was given by Edward Said, an intellectual critic who has provided us with postcolonial concepts like ‘orientalism,’ ‘the Others’ and cultural imperialism.

4.3.3 Procuring Education



Figure 19, Pen becoming dalits arrows, Pg 101, *A Gardener in the Wasteland*, Natarajan and Ninan, Dec 2011

The literacy rate in India today in 2023 is around 75%, according to a Pratidin Times report. Mostly literacy is based just on the ability to read and write which is still available to a quarter of Indian society. According to the census conducted in 1947, the literacy rate in India was just 12%.

(From population census and Oxfamadmin article). This shows the real struggle of Phule before independence to spread awareness about education. As a factor of resistance is directly depicted in *A Gardener in the Wasteland* but can

be utilised in all three narratives. Phule struggled for the right to education, as Savitribai puts it, "education makes you question" as it was the only way to get rid of injustice to women, social inequality, and untouchability, it was vital for emancipation. In 1851, Jotiba Phule established a school for girls at Bhinde, and even

Dalit girls were permitted, which was run by Savitri Bai. He also opened a night school for Shudras and Dalits. He opened Satyashodhak Samaj (truthseeker society) in 1874. Savitri Bai was the first modern feminist, female teacher in India. In the text, there are various visual elements used to emphasise the same the picture shows a gigantic, Brahmin sculpture representing Hinduism captured Dalits in his hand and other miniature Dalits are using the feather pen as arrows in order to destroy the Brahmanical figure and free kind from the hands from Hinduism. This image is shown on two pages, however, the figure is completely occupied on this page. A later depiction of Education could "open their third eye" making women, shudra and ati-shudra more critical to understand how they are exploited, they could become independent, handling their affairs. Phules' urge to burn the Brahmanical scripture was the only chain hindering personal dignity and freedom.

In *Munnu* we have no problem with the education system, plus the occupation constantly hinders their opportunity to learn. This leads to poverty and violence. Hasenna and Gulya want their children to become engineers and doctors, to end up having a certain level of dignity and rise from poverty. On the other hand, in *River of Stories*, Adivasis are considered backwards primitive because they didn't receive any education. This questions the kind of education system we are focusing on— is it the colonial, white supremacist education that fills the capitalist pockets or the education that helps empathise and be critical about oppugning the dominant “idea of progress?” is it worth it?

4.3.4 Challenges of Counter-protest

Protest is integral to every society. In Karnataka, 2022 Muslim community girls demanded to uphold their religious pride and rights in Hindu majority India by demanding to be allowed to wear hijab on school premises their demand was denied by Supreme Court, and the community argued that if Sikhs are allowed to wear kirpan and turban, why hijab is denied, however, it was declared that there is no comparison between Sikh turbans similar case with how Sikh men are allowed to wear a turban and the Supreme Court allowed it. Parallel to this there was an anti-hijab protest going on in Iran. Due to the strict dress code in Iran, even non-Muslims are supposed to wear hijabs, as it symbolises chastity, many women were punished and killed when caught breaching the rule. Even though these situations are opposite, in both cases, be it democracy or Islamic rule, the fundamental question of choice has been denied. Similarly in the US the protests happening about denying abortion rights to be granted to women, these protests succeeded in certain colonies, whereas in other colonies abortion stands legal. In the US Protests happening to allow marriage consent to be reduced to twelve years are some extremely controversial cases. In Japan, protests are increasing to raise the age of marriage from twelve years for girls. This shows the contrasting nature of protest stemming from a distinct cultural belief system. On the other hand, we have an unsolvable environmental crisis, poverty and unemployment in third-world countries. These absurdities of the situation might be covered in the literature. However, the intensity and credibility of the protest depend on the situation and type of people protesting. In Figure 20 we see that Natarajan and Ninan are observing the protesters mostly from Brahmanical backgrounds demanding equality. This protest is understood as giving reservations might mean providing opportunities for a section of society based on caste, regardless of the fact that discrimination based on the caste system is still prevalent, which results in less opportunity for people

belonging to the lower caste, and it's the native thing that the caste system is diminished. The absurdity of the protest is shown Through the poster saying the death of merit, whereas the entire history of Dalits wasn't even provided opportunity, let alone equality, and the other posters depicted. "If the cobbler becomes a doctor, who will marry us." However absurd it may sound but marriage in the caste system is a major concern. It turns out that raising the status to become a doctor would bring dignity, independence, and a free thought process to reject caste marriage. Love marriages in India are only very recent. Bollywood romanticised the idea and still



Figure 20, Counter-protest against reservation, Pg 102, *A Gardener in the Wasteland*, Natarajan and Ninan Dec. 2011

might sound alien to the classrooms in the villages.

In *Munnu* there are resistance groups against the oppression of Indian occupation. All the resistance group members have different ideas regarding Kashmir, some want to join Pakistan, some want independence, others support India, and so forth. Because of the distinction and brutality among the groups, the civilians are targeted. When there is a larger number of counter-protests, the

meaning of the protest that happened in the first place loses meaning.

4.4 Conclusion

Rivers of Stories is considered the first Indian graphic novel. It was published in 1994, and Orijit Sen says that this story is about "the original inhabitants of the Adivasi." In the Goa heritage festival of 2022, where this forgotten tale was introduced, Sen pointed out that the story had to be told, they were the ones who

suffered for so-called "development". The development only catered to included Urban class people in cities. He said that he expected that the novel would generate the similar effects of spirit that Goan youth had, in the case of the Mollem protest. Unfortunately, that didn't happen, the book's audience was aimed to be young adults and college-going youth, used to the one in the middle of the story, but the people included, who have gathered there with an intent to protest against the construction of the dam. Similarly, Sajad, Natarajan and Ninan aim to provide awareness in a way that inspires change "I still meet people who tell me they read *River of Stories* years ago and it helped change the way they looked at things like development and the rights of indigenous people in India. It was translated into Hindi and distributed in small photocopied batches amongst activists too (Orijit Sen in an interview with Paul Gravett, 2017). Sen provides insight into how when a graphic narrative is written it becomes a force of resistance itself crossing across time.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In view of the fact that graphic novels have gained an immense amount of admiration and have the potential of engaging with a plethora of readers across India, In this dissertation, I made attempted to analyse select Indian graphic novels as literature of protest, India being diverse is multilingual, and the hybrid medium made of predominant images and little text do wonders in communicating the narrative of protest. Especially considering the Indian population consists of the youth majority, which makes up the target audience for the visual medium of graphic novels.

Exploring the 21st century as a renaissance for Indian graphic novels that dealt with critical themes of socio-political injustice and activism, these powerful messages could be both accessible (mostly through digital platforms) and engrossing. By examining Indian graphic novels, we gain a better understanding of how contemporary Indian writing in English isn't just writing but rather has evolved a crossed path with visual arts.

My hypothesis was select Indian graphic novels are a consequential exertion to visualise the struggles experienced by marginalised communities. The hybrid medium of visual and verbal narratives enhances the portrayal of these experiences, as it transcends the limitations of words, in the case of depicting protest literature competently. This hypothesis is accepted through this dissertation.

Protest literature in the graphic medium is not entirely limited by language barriers, as images are easily comprehensible to pass on the message of protest. By situating the thematic analysis of selected Indian graphic narratives into the element of protest literature– empathy, violence and challenging the status quo respectively.

This study reveals the manner in which the medium of graphic novels has great potential to effectively portray the struggles and plight of the Indian marginalised community. The graphic novels chosen for the study are *River of Stories* which is about the protest against building Narmada Dam, *Munnu: a Boy from Kashmir* an autographic of Sajad growing up in the conflicted Kashmir, and *A Gardener in the Wasteland* which is an adaption of *Gulamgiri* containing non-Brahmanical views of Jotiba Phule, his biography about the struggle for reform juxtaposed within the present time. It gives us an assertion about the prospect of the graphic medium which illustrates complex socio-political issues, both emotionally and intellectually.

The role of empathy is crucial in the literature of protest, as it aims to bring social change. The selected graphic novelists want their readers to empathise with the marginalised communities so they used different graphic narrative tools to elicit empathy. However, the work of art should not be judged but its social impact, and as evidence showed empathy leading to altruism are rare. The possibility of it ending in personal distress is more likely, for it leads to complete avoidance and neglect of the victimised community because the guilt of not helping haunts them. Other theories suggest that empathy would work if the reader could easily identify with the fictional character. For this reason, graphic novelists use several techniques such as anthropomorphism, defamiliarization, monochromatic colour, montage formats, panelling etc; to generate narrative empathy visually. Graphic novels have been proven to generate emotions and elicit empathy, as empathy is multidimensional, graphic novel tries to provide affective empathy through perspective-taking and cognitive empathy from processes like identification and focalisation. Generating enough empathy required to create social impact is difficult as is evident through the negative reactions from Goodreads reviews. Hence graphic novels situate their

narratives in such a way that it attempts to humanise the faceless presentation of marginalised communities and bridge the gap between them.

Communities are marginalised and victimised through violence; in this dissertation, I have tried to contextualise violence by looking at how it is presented in the narrative. Sen, Malik, and Ninan have illustrated histories of atrocities and depicted reasons and processes of violence that took place. It is through the depiction of violence that the aim of protest literature to spread awareness about marginalised communities is met. Graphic novels serve as a potential medium to depict violence. More than violence the after-effects of victimisation, alienation, helplessness and vulnerability are more cogently represented. Hence graphic novels become an instrument for bearing witnesses.

The making of a graphic protest novel as a medium itself becomes a vessel of resistance. Indian graphic novelists make use of myths to connect to the social identity of their readers. They use comic journalism techniques to make their narrative authentic and believable to their readers and also in fact reflect on their spirit of resistance through the text. In the study, we notice that Kalpavirksha was an NGO that supported *River of Stories* in 1994. Navayana, founded in 2003 by S. Anand and D Ravikumar is an anti-caste publishing house in New Delhi, and *Munnu* had trouble being published in India for its content is politically sensitive, in turn showing how the publishing houses play a paramount role in encouraging literature of protest.

Limitations of this study are that it includes only three Indian graphic novels, namely *River of Stories* by Orijit Sen (new publication of 2022), *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* by Malik Sajad and *A Gardener in the Wasteland* by Natarajan and Ninan, which is insufficient to represent the entire genre of Indian graphic novel. It only looks at Indian graphic novels and Indian protest literature. Consequently, it

overlooks graphic novels from other countries as it is only limited to graphic novels in the English language, hence dismissing the potential Indian graphic novel in vernacular languages and translations. It only focuses on the aspect of protest literature: violence, empathy and challenging the status core, which doesn't allow us to apprehend the scope of graphic literature in other genres. The dissertation is limited because it's based on the availability of resources and a restricted period, due to which the selection of other potential Indian graphic novels wasn't done. Even certain aspects of the graphic novel might not have been thoroughly analysed, because graphic novels contain visual imagery— a single image is equivalent to a thousand words and layers of meanings. Lastly, this study is based on my subjective interpretation, as based on the Indian scenario, and selected graphic novels, hence the hypothesis might not be applied universally.

Considering the potential of the graphic medium in India, it is still growing and not yet developed on par with countries like Japan, the U.S. and Europe, the availability and popularity of American comics and Japanese Manga, in India, in my opinion, is even more than demand for Indian comics and graphic novels, by the Indian audience. Indian graphic novels are expensive and enjoyed by a small section of urban elite readers only. Comics are easily available but have tough competition with Western comics and Mangas. There are very few, and not widespread websites that cater to Indian comics and graphic novels. The print media always need to provide an alternative suited for digital devices, as mostly the renowned graphic novels available online are just photocopies of the prints made into eBooks.

Future research can be conducted by looking into the application of graphic novels in Indian classroom settings. Graphic novels provide an ample amount of active discussion as it explores history, philosophy, and now even in STEM. So the

Indian school syllabus should be updated accordingly. Personally, the first proper graphic novel taught to me in the classroom setting was *Bhimayana* in 2018, at the graduate level. Hence now it can be inculcated in the school classroom, not only in study but also in art classes, an activity to make them draw a sequential story, thus enhancing creativity. There is a requirement for potential empirical research based on how graphic novels/ comics elicit empathy among Indian readers. Graphic medicine is also a potential area of research in literature, looking into the narrative of illness and disability, providing a different perspective altogether.

To sum up, select Indian graphic novels *River of Stories* by Orijit Sen (new publication of 2022), *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* by Malik Sajad and *A Gardener in the Wasteland* by Natarajan and Ninan, are the literature of protest, as they evoke empathy by proving the perspective of the minority section of the society. They potentially depict the ways in which socio-political dominant powers structure establish control and are responsible for the marginalization and victimisation of minority communities. Exploring their plight and struggles, hence reading awareness amongst the readers. Protest graphic narratives are a tool for resistance, challenging the status quo by can inspire change.

Appendix

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