

Tracing Western Transnationalism in Indian Graphic Novels

Abinaya Sivakumar

School of Social Sciences and Languages, VIT University, Chennai, India

S. Patchainayagi

School of Social Sciences and Languages, VIT University, Chennai, India

Abstract—The essence of transnationalism is quite dominant in the post-millennial period. It is concerned with the idea of a hybrid society in which diverse cultures swiftly trade their rich cultural history, resulting from the various exchanges brought on by globalisation. Following its expanding economic and political changes, India is now moving forward with its own unique creation of entertainment endeavours. In the present post-millennial era, India is beginning to produce its own graphic novels. This research examines the steps that have helped Indian graphic novels attain extreme commercial success. The paper also discusses how authors like Sarnath Banerjee, Amruta Patil, Malik Sajad, and Vishwajyothi Ghosh truthfully highlight various aspects of Indian society. This study tries to comprehend what it means to be authentically Indian by tracing the presence of transnationalism in Indian graphic novels by Sarnath Banerjee, Amruta Patil, Vishwajyothi Ghosh, and Malik Sajad.

Index Terms—Indian graphic novels, western influence, graphic narrative, transnationalism, Indianness

I. INTRODUCTION

Indian graphic novels are unquestionably post-millennial productions and a foreign extension of their western counterparts. Most Indian graphic narrative writers, according to Dawson Varughese, want to portray current society in all of its glory and ugliness, which is entirely true. The fast-developing economic and cultural prosperity of India in the modern day may be attributable to globalisation's ties with the west, yet the traditional values and morality found within India remain true to its forefathers. Following the gradual increase of western multinational firms in India, there has been a consistent influx of foreign citizens entering India. As the West settles in, they bring their respective cultural and intellectual modules with them. Because of their versatility, Indian and western equivalents can coexist in the same environment. Indian graphic novels are likewise ascribed to the West for their creation and progress. In order to better understand why graphic novels are being referred to as "graphic narratives" and in the hopes of successfully tracing the presence of transnationalism in India, this paper focuses on investigating the presence of transnationalism in Indian graphic novels such as *Delhi Calm*, *Kari*, *Corridor*, and *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir*.

"Transnationalism describes a condition in which, despite great distances and notwithstanding the presence of international borders (and all the laws, regulations, and national narratives they represent), certain kinds of relationships have been globally intensified and now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common – however virtual – arena of activity" (Vertovech, 2009, p.3). The most common reasons behind the presence of transnationalism are globalisation and migration, be it in the form of a tourist or a permanent settler. This transnational interaction will usually give rise to the concept of a highly multicultural society. India in the present era is the perfect example of transnationalism. The steady inflow of migrants has led the natives to steadily exchange their own cultural practices with the newcomers, slowly mutating into a multicultural country. India is a perfect example of a transnational multicultural society. In some ways, transnationalism is helping India break away from the constraints of pre and post-colonial shackles. During the period of colonization, India nightmarishly experiences extreme bouts of untoward societal development and receives derogatory treatment at the hand of the British. Yet, they also introduce the nation to the positive perks of the Industrial Revolution with its railway system, postal service, rights of equality, western education system, and women's empowerment. In Indian society, post-independence is equal to a phase of rebellion. Society is never ready to acknowledge the various benefits that the colonisers left behind. The rigorous violent acts such as the "Jallianwallah Bagh" incident and the imprisonment of the freedom fighters are all being kept alive in recent literary works. Alas, the western forms of government administration, economic lifestyle, social relationships, religion, and art, which they seemingly imparted on the residents of India, are completely ignored. Post-millennialism is the time when Indians are starting to look back on their history without any negative afflictions.

The constant interaction with contemporary western society inevitably leads Indian graphic novelists to focus on a diverse range of thematic ideologies, including feminism, politics, contemporary society, identity crisis, and much more. The vast area of subjects being addressed within these Indian graphic novels makes it difficult for them to occupy the same shelf as Ananth Pai's *Amar Chitra Katha* (ACK)—a collection of illustrative children's comic books retelling of

Indian historical folklore. The credit for the first Indian graphic novel goes to Orijit Sen's *River of Stories* (1994), published under the banner of Kalpavriksh publication. As the first Indian graphic novel, it sets the tone for the other Indian graphic creations as well. Sen brings to the minds of its readers the presence of various mythological tales that are still unknown, following which he moves forth to highlight the struggles of the tribal people, whose lives are thrown out of proportion in the name of the country's development campaigns. Taking a sheet out of Sen's ideology, various writers are beginning to address the positive and negative sides of modern society. They mirror the harsh and serene realities of contemporary Indian society. They aren't like Anant Pai, who only glorifies the positive side of India's cultural history and blemishes the negatives.

Another major contributing factor leading to the steady spread of transnationalism in India is the economic treaties being signed with various western countries. These treaties promote the uniform mutual development of everyone taking part in them. However, these development treaties and the consequent rapid influx of migrants do not unanimously receive the residents' approval. There are always a select few individuals who resent such encroachment by outsiders. These selective few feel that, with the influx of new cultural traditions and practices, the importance shown to the local cultural heritage will diminish. They believe that the strong sense of longing, identity, and loyalty that are synonymous with nationalism are also being lost.

The ideology of interpreting a bunch of graphic novels and comics from a transnational perspective is not a new concept. Countries around the world are beginning to examine their respective graphic literary productions from a transnational standpoint. In the paper "Transnational Girlhood and the Politics of Style in German Manga", Elizabeth Nijdam first describes the steadily growing presence and popularity of Japanese manga in Germany. Nijdam also introduces the gradually increasing number of manga being created by the Germans themselves, which is really surprising to notice since "manga" is universally acknowledged as something that belies the Asian world of literature. Nijdam's actions of wantonly referring to any and all German graphic novels as manga, which highlights the extent to which transnationalism pervades other countries. In the paper, Nijdam goes on to convey that transnationalism has led German authors to "create a form of artistic production that is engaged in radical cultural politics, intervening in German-centric debates on gender, sexuality, and race" (Nijdam, 2019, p. 16). Similarly, the book "Transnational Perspectives on Graphic Narratives" by Shane Densen, Christina Meyer, and Daniel Stein aims to provide an insight into the cross-cultural crossroads and reception towards western comic ventures. Yet, they fail to seek, showcase, or analyze the productive graphic novels and comic books that exist in non-European countries. The flaw in most of the transnational readings is that, most of the time, they depend on learning more about how receptive non-westerners are to western literature. They never consider how non-westerners, such as Indians, project westerners in their literary works.

Another reason behind the spread of literary transnationalism in India and the growing popularity of graphic novels is the steady growth of publishing houses that are being founded in India in this contemporary period. Dawson Varughese, in her book, "Visuality and Identity in Post Millennial Indian Graphic Novels", speaks up about the history and development of the publishing houses found within India. According to her, the production and development of many Indian novels and graphic novels are credited to Western society. She claims that it all started when major international publishing conglomerates like Harper Collins, Hachette, Rutledge, and Bloomsbury relocated to India. It is also because of the wide range of English-reading audiences found in India. Having been introduced to the inner workings of western publishing houses, Indians too began operating their own individual publishing firms. Among the many publishing houses found in India, the following are some of the most popular individual publishing houses run by Indians: Westland publications, Chennai; Rupa publications, Delhi; Zubaan, which later became a part of Penguin Random House, Delhi; Yoda Press from New Delhi; Braft publications, Chennai; Kokaachi, Kochin; Level 10 Comics, Mumbai; and Jaico Books, Mumbai. These publishing firms begin producing and circulating locally made graphic novels, leading to a more affordable sales price that seems satisfactory to the local reading audience. Rather than just catering to the international audience, these publishing houses begin to satisfy the local readers by projecting themes that revolve around the everyday happenings of contemporary Indian society. But these supposed Indian graphic creations also seem to hold a candle to their western counterparts. Those who venture to create Indian graphic novels themselves grew up reading western graphic novels. The market for translated works enables non-English-speaking audiences to enjoy western creations as well. Indian graphic novelists such as Sarnath Bannerjee grew up reading Herge's *Adventures of TinTin* and Lee Falk's *Phantom Adventures* in Bangla (one of the many Indian languages). Following that, the Indian graphic novelists have also begun listing out the numerous western influences that they come across in everyday life within their respective graphic novels. The graphic novels that are being discussed in this paper are under the publishing banners of Harper Collins (Vishwajyothi Ghosh's *Delhi Calm*, Malik Sajad's *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* and Amruta Patil's *Kari*) and Penguin Random House (Sarnath Banerjee's *Corridor*).

Under the influence of the post-independence period and the current postmodern era, the early Indian graphic novels often follow the strict rectangle panel formats found in western graphic novels, such as what Arts Spielgeman has done in *Maus*, and also refuse to experiment outside the norms set by western society. Malik Sajad strictly sticks to the rectangular panels of his western counterpart, and portrays the entire storyline in various shades of black and white. On the other hand, Amruta Patil's *Kari*, Vishwajyothi Ghosh's *Delhi Calm*, and Sarnath Banerjee's *Corridor* do not adhere to any set format. They also tend to dabble with a few pages of colourful illustrations within their respective works. Another notable distinction of their notable rebellion against following the rules is found within the works of Ghosh and

Banerjee, who make use of real-life newspaper clippings and everyday learning pamphlets as a part of their storyline. Moscovici (2000) says that social representation is "a system of values, ideas, and practices" that serves to establish a social order, enabling an individual to learn about the world they live in, communicate with other members of the community through frequent social exchanges, and classify the world according to the above-mentioned exchange of information. Indian graphic novelists such as Sarnath Banerjee, Vishwajyothi Ghosh, Amruta Patil, and Malik Sajad showcase the consequential effects of social representation within their respective works. They each project a protagonist's journey as he or she learns about themselves, learns to fit in with the community, interacts with others belonging to that community, and then moves forward to classify the social order of the society according to their frequent personal experiences. According to them, the steady flow of external influences on any particular society will lead them to develop complex ideologies. Following that, some choose to abandon the world they live in and openly embrace modern foreign ideals, while others stick with their native values. Both these situations prove harmful in the context of a country's development. The only saving grace, according to them, is in the hands of select individuals within that particular community who acknowledge both the foreign culture and the native philosophies. Eventually, this gave rise to the concept of transnationalism within native works such as Dawson's "Indianness." According to Vishwajyothi Ghosh, the common denotation or ideology being followed by the Indian graphic novelists is that they tend to "shop for characters" as they take frequent strolls around the various streets of India. Hence, in between the pages of the mostly fictional plotlines, there is always the presence of the real world.

II. SARNATH BANERJEE- *CORRIDOR*

Inside Sarnath Banerjee's *Corridor* (2004), the varied characters wander through the streets of New Delhi, Old Delhi, Bangalore, and Calcutta, and the plot concentrates on showcasing a few scatterbrain individuals busy battling issues pertaining to contemporary society. Banerjee builds a storyline where a range of characters keep seizing control of the narrative with the idea of voicing out their viewpoints within the plot. There is a significant reference made to the old and new western styles of architecture, traditional and western attire, and mixed ideologies of the postmodern world. The typical Dawson 'Indianness' is visible in the way Brighu Sen's post-millennial ideology makes him lose sight of the one woman he ever falls in love with and in the way Shintu Sen battles with the issue of mental insecurity and impotency. It is also reflected in the way Jehangir Rangoonwalla decides to leave the everyday flock of office goers in order to become a second-hand book shop owner in Connaught Place and in the way Angrez Babu (a British foreigner) wanders through the streets of India searching for spiritual enlightenment. Even Prof. D.V. Murthy, the head of medical jurisprudence and forensic scientist, displays the characteristics of Dawson's 'Indianness' and so does Digital Dutta, who prefers to lead a life within his own head rather than acknowledge his girlfriend's demands for him to acquire the H1B Visa. Each of these characters represents the different strata that make up contemporary Indian society.

The Corridor exemplifies the ongoing clash of foreign influences and indigenous philosophies found in transnational hybrid cosmopolitan societies. Brighu Sen, the novel's protagonist, relocates to the cosmopolitan grounds of Delhi in the hopes of experiencing the full range of a transnational society that boasts of its rich western architecture, literary references, and culinary pursuits. There is a frequent reference to western literary giants such as J. Keats, James Hadley Chase, Asimov, Perry Mason, Karl Marx, Che Guevara, and Jean Baudrillard, alongside the recurring references to Ibn Batutta, a Muslim Moroccan scholar well known for travelling across Afro-Eurasia in the early 14th century. In trying to give reason to the complex nature of his character traits, Brighu Sen tries to make the readers comprehend the kinds of situations that led him to develop such a wandering personality. He leads the readers into his childhood home with its western posters, books, and music records. Brighu is a perfect example of the after-effects of western transnationalism. Brighu lets the reader know that the habit of learning about the west began not with him, but with a practice that the family has been following for centuries. It was his elders who began gifting Brighu with books, starting from a lone English copy of Ibn Batutta's *Adventures* to Lee Falk's *Phantom Series*.

The western scene is pretty common in the household of Calcutta-born Sarnath Banerjee, hence his works seem to carry it along for the readers to see. In the context of culinary pursuits, there is a frequent mention of the aromatic and flavorful biryani, which is a staple food for Indians. Biryani is also a perfect example of transnationalism. It originates from the houses of Muslims who share a rich history with the Middle East. Aromatic flavours can also be found on the grounds of many western countries in the modern era. In the present era, Banerjee conveys that during most customary high-class parties, the Biryani is consumed with a side of Jack Daniels. On another occasion, Brighu walks into a pub in Calcutta carrying the name Olympia, which happens to be a frequent joint for the locals to drink a few glasses of Old Monk and beer. The names of places in Calcutta have mostly been anglicized, such as the Olympia pub and the Victoria Memorial Hall, which Banerjee mentions in the novel. Often, Banerjee keeps stressing that the west has introduced the present cosmopolitan society of India to the act of drinking alcohol, which is done with the frequent accompaniment of clubbing, dope, and sex. He wants the readers to realize that, along with the good influences of culinary, economic, cultural, and literary pursuits, the transnational exchange of culture also brings with it the bad vices of infidelity, sexual relationships devoid of marriage, alcoholism, and drugs.

In the graphic novel, Banerjee's characters tend to possess mostly indigenous names, such as Brighu Sen, Jehangir Rangoonwalla, Dutta, Kali, and Maya the maid, in order to better resonate with the Indian native readers. Yet there is a notable act of differentiation being followed in Banerjee's novel regarding gender roles. Banerjee seems to be

specifically concentrating more on the male characters than on the females. The graphic novelist is even able to provide specific names for the meaningless Hakims who make brief appearances within the plot, yet Shintu's mother is completely nameless, and there are two different female characters who are given the same name, Dolly. Similarly, there is a frequent thirst for migration visible in Banerjee's graphic novel. Brighu Sen, born into an orthodox family in Calcutta, moves to Delhi to enjoy the remnants of western society that are found abundantly in most cosmopolitan cities, including his own. His migration symbolises the act of his choosing to break away from his native roots. One could even say that his inability to settle down is also an example of Dawson's "Indianness" syndrome. It is the same Indianness that makes Brighu wander off to other women while in a relationship with the love of his life. Unfortunately, his actions slowly lead him to experience a state of immense confusion. This confusion marks his return to native grounds. Through Sen, Banerjee conveys to the readers that when an individual forswears all their inborn native philosophies and voluntarily embraces transnational influences, they will not be able to handle the abject overload of unfamiliar emotions that accompany it.

Brighu's return to his native roots symbolises the author's answer to complex predicaments. He projects the ideology that it is better to burrow into safe and native grounds instead of facing the problem. Pertaining to Sen's return, the author shows the duality of native values. Sen knows that his relatives will not condemn his actions of infidelity because, according to them, live-in relationships are an act of adolescent fantasy and not genuine. Brighu's complex inability to enjoy the feeling of satisfaction in anything he does makes it easier for him to dabble in acts of infidelity during moments of his temporary break away from his relationship with Kali. On one occasion, as Brighu sits in the train journeying towards Calcutta, he comes across a Mr. Murthy, who preaches to him on the importance of preserving one's roots. Brighu reminisces about this instance as he sits in a lounge chair listening to the Rolling Stones by Elmore James while reading *The Cigar of the Pharaohs*. This symbolic scene lets the readers understand that the traditional values and customs of India have long been overtaken by western cultural exploits. Banerjee here highlights the fact that traditional values and customs within Brighu Sen's family already contain traces of both western and eastern influences, but they never fully adapt to any particular value. Digital Dutta's character in *Corridor* also symbolises the clash of ideologies. He sees himself as the next Che Guevara and wants to follow the principles of Marxism and Leninism. He dreams of converting India into a country that is as powerful as any other western nation. However, his hope of settling down with the love of his life is dependent on his ability to gain an H1B1 visa to satisfy the demands set by his to-be-in-laws. Digital Dutta and his in-laws both share a common fascination with the West. The only difference is that Dutta never wants to leave his native grounds, while his would-be in-laws always dream of a non-residential bridegroom for their daughter. Banerjee here showcases two different individuals who depend on the influences of western society. Following that, there is Shintu, who frequents Rangoonwalla's book shop to read the cosmopolitan in search of tips on how to better satisfy his wife. Shintu suffers from issues of erectile dysfunction stemming from his insecurities. He is a firm example of how the west has the power to even influence the sanctimonious grounds of a married couple's sex life. One must understand that his insecurity with sex begins when he chooses to get a porn film from the rental shop to entice his wife. Banerjee within the graphic novel illustrates the secretive process that goes into getting a sex tape in India. Ironically, an adult tape is being disguised as a copy of the children's classic *Mary Poppins* in order to avoid any negative commentary from the public.

Another interesting character in Banerjee's *Corridor* is Jehangir Rangoonwalla. While other characters spend time worrying about their specific identity crisis, Rangoonwalla spends his time reading varied topics, interacting with his customers, and playing chess. Rangoonwalla's bookshop is also significant because it contains books of both Indian and Western origins. Maybe because of his unique nature, Brighu Sen, Digital Dutta, and Shintu Sree frequently visit him for his conversation and his books. He is one of those select few individuals who do not demean society for its hybrid values and philosophies. He represents those selective souls that both acknowledge transnational influences and also cherish the traditional teachings. In terms of architecture, Banerjee concentrates on showcasing the intricate nature of Connaught Hall, probably built during the times of post-colonialism, the streets of old Delhi with their Muslim undertones, the metro underground railways of the modern era, and the vastly beautiful Victoria Memorial of the olden days. He lets the readers understand that society is a fusion of the old and the new. A finite mixture of Christianity is found alongside traditional Hindus and Muslims. It is difficult to separate the presence of Christianity from India. It plays as much of a role in Dawson's "Indianness" as does Hinduism, Islamism or any other religion found prevalent in India.

III. AMRUTA PATIL-KARI

Unlike Banerjee's *Corridor*, Patil's *Kari* is a single-person narrative graphic novel. In an interview for the Loft Forum, Patil conveys that she chose to embark on the journey to produce *Kari* as an answer to the absence of any fictional pieces of writing that resonated with her 20-year-old self. The *Kari* within the graphic novel is a lesbian who faces the different stages of grief post-breakup with her one-time love. It is as if the breakup unleashes a gate of darkness within the protagonist, making her visually and mentally feel the plights of all those who live around her. Instead of being a passive outsider, she transforms into this 'Ferryman of the Dead' kind of person who readily shoulders the harsh, heartbreaking incidents that capsize the lives of those with whom she regularly interacts on a daily basis. Starting from the cancer patient Angel to her roommate who dabbles with the idea of an abortion, *Kari* is the one they confide in. The

ironic thing about Patil's Kari is that the protagonist is herself caught in a broken limbo, not being able to break away from the past and unwilling to lead a normal life in the real world. She is now leading a life of isolation and seeking stability within her own mind. These characteristics of hers are similar to those of Banerjee's Digital Dutta, who appears within the pages of *Corridor*. The graphic novel begins with the scene of Kari standing on top of a building, about to take a deep plunge right onto the pavement of the Mumbai streets post her breakup with Ruth. Patil first showcases it as if both Ruth and Kari are about to jump. When Kari does it, she falls into the Mumbai sewers while Ruth plunges into a seat on a plane to some unknown country. While one person falls symbolically in love with the one who leaves, the other is on a plane flying away, ridding herself of the burdens that come with past love interests. This showcases the fact that in the cosmopolitan world of truly fragile modern relationships, the protagonist is still able to hold on to the age-old concept of "one life, one relationship." Her attitude of firmly holding on to the feelings of despair is very different from that of Banerjee's Brighu Sen, who keeps struggling with the concept of commitment.

The graphic novel keeps on moving forth from the present to the past and back to the future on a whimsical basis. In the context of being introduced to western society, Patil lets the readers understand that Kari's fascination with the West began in her childhood days as she witnessed an openly lesbian singer, K.D. Lang, collecting an award on national television. That particular incident is permanently tattooed on her soul because it was the moment at which she realized that she would always be a lesbian. Like Brighu Sen in the *Corridor*, Kari finds the traditional native culture to be restrictive. Being a lesbian, Kari understands that native culture will never accept her for what she is. In a move to not meet the demands of her traditional roots, she migrates to the cosmopolitan city of Mumbai. Kari's cosmopolitan Mumbai neither condemns nor accepts her personal life choices. According to her, the city lets its pupils live as per their personal choices. Her place of residence in Mumbai also carries with it a tinge of western influence. Kari calls her two-bedroom pad, which she shares with two other roommates, the "crystal palace." Kari's roommates are each in a live-in relationship with their boyfriends. This highlights the fact that most post-millennial youths in cosmopolitan India do not believe in marriage. Patil also conveys those familial feelings are also being carried out with the idea of fulfilling a customary duty. Furthermore, there is an innate absence of all positivity vibes regarding familial feelings. Kari's parents find it hard to digest Kari's lesbianism. Hence, there is a barrier separating them from fully experiencing a familial bond. There is also the fact that most of the characters in Patil's graphic novel choose migration to get away from the adverse effects of traditional society and familial bonds. Kari's roommates, Billo and Delna, both come from similar alcoholic homes with abusive parents. They denote the problematic post-millennial broken families where the traditional value of love is very rare and hard to come by. Their subsequent move to Mumbai symbolises their motivation to erase the past and ultimately embrace the hybrid culture prevalent in cosmopolitan cities. Patil here points out the hypocrisy of the native culture, which accepts people engaging in violence and alcohol but refuses to acknowledge or aid same-sex relationships. Another notable feature found in Kari is the use of anglicized names. Other than Kari's parents and Kasumtai (the regular maid who takes care of Kari and her roommates), the rest of the characters possess names that have English and Greek origins, which is another example of the western influence found prevalent in India.

Patil's graphic novel showcases death as a permanent fixture from the opening scene till its conclusion, and there is a minor undertone of western influence visible within it. In the graphic novel, Angel calls Kari the Ferryman of the Dead, which is an exact reference to Charon from Greek Mythology. In Greek mythology, Charon is the ferryman of the dead, who is given the job of transporting the dead souls to the land of the dead from the bowels of the living world. By referring to Kari as "Charon," Patil conveys that the dead or dying souls present in Mumbai have now become Kari's responsibility. On different occasions, after Kari adorns the robes of the ferryman, people begin to flock towards her. They keep confiding in her about their internal woes, like when Billo confesses regarding her pregnancy crisis and her consequential decision to abort, or when Angel calls on Kari as she waits for death to finally conquer her dying soul. Patil also points out the gender bias that is prevalent within the grounds of the cosmopolitan city of Mumbai. For example, Billo and Delna refuse to show their closeness to Kari in front of their male roommates, fearing that the men would label them as lesbians. The men, on the other hand, namely Orzo and Zap, believe that Kari's lesbianism is just a temporary phase that will soon end because, according to them, a woman can never hope to survive without the male community. The opinions put forth by Billo, Delna, Orzo, and Zap echo the philosophies and values present within a traditional native society while they are ready to collectively take part in the western practices of clubbing and live-in relationships. At face value, Patil tries to accurately highlight the fact that their level of assimilation to western foreign culture is only at face value. Kari, too, is not free from these so-called native philosophies. For instance, during her roommate's act of mutual coitus with different partners, Kari chooses to remain idle. Unlike her roommates, who frequently change their love interests, Kari remains faithful to Ruth from the beginning to the end, even after her breakup. From start to finish, Patil tries to demonstrate to her lesbian protagonist, Kari, that she is a faithful older soul who has only eyes for her love interest.

IV. MALIK SAJAD- MUNNU: A BOY FROM KASHMIR

Malik Sajad's *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* (2015) also boasts of a protagonist who has led a life of isolation since his younger years. Being born into a conflict zone, Munnu faces the influence of multiple ideologies. Sajad's graphic novel follows the footsteps of Munnu as he evolves into a graphic novelist, dreaming of finally penning a graphic novel

in the hopes of following in the footsteps of Joe Sacco. This graphic novel introduces the readers to different individuals that the protagonist comes across in his day-to-day life, starting with his struggling father, frequently harassing military personnel, demanding bosses, threatening terrorists, and inquisitive pundits. Unlike *Kari and Corridor*, the graphic novel *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* uses the description of the Kashmiri Muslims as the rapidly dwindling Hangul Deer population. Sajad's use of anthropomorphism stems from being influenced by western graphic novels, specifically Art Spiegelman's *Maus*.

Born in the conflict zones of Kashmir, Malik Sajad grew up being sheltered under the umbrella of his artist father, who is known for drawing traditional embroidery motifs on papers. In his graphic novel, he depicts the life of a young boy as he grows into adulthood in Kashmir's rich ethnic terrain, which is similar to his own personal history. In the graphic novel, *Munnu* narrates four types of migration taking place in Kashmir. The first is the migration of Pandits from Kashmir due to the violence wrought by the Muslim militants. Second is the entry of the Indian Army and their subsequent control of Kashmir. The third is the migration of Kashmiri Muslims to Pakistan to become militants. Fourth is the steady in-flow of tourists who enter Kashmir with the hope of witnessing its positive and negative aspects. The positive aspect, according to *Munnu*, refers to the beauty and traditional ethnicity of Kashmiri locals, while the negative aspect refers to the frequent acts of violence taking place between the Indian Army and Muslim militants. *Munnu* highlights that most locals, like his father, depend on the income they make from tourists. *Munnu* emphasises that the locals mostly prefer Western tourists instead of local visitors because of their monetary wealth. As *Munnu* grows, he notices that, other than pitying the locals, the westerners never take an active role in saving the Kashmir residents. For example, Paisley enters the country with the hope of filming a documentary series on the plights of Kashmir, yet she spends her time hanging out with *Munnu*, introducing him to the world of premarital sex and drugs. Another instance that showcases the disparity found between a westerner and a Kashmiri is when Paisley loses *Munnu's* cell phone. Her following actions and subsequent reactions show the level of understanding that westerners possess regarding the plight of locals who live within conflict zones. In the end, Sajad utilises the western tourists and awareness creators to showcase that most of the western influences on the native culture tend to cause more problems than solutions.

Unlike the conservative nature of Indian graphic novels, Sajad's *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* illustrates a blonde woman kissing an anthropomorphic Hangul deer which in turn represents the act of bestiality. This peculiar represent the kind of reception that awaits a couple when one is a Kashmiri man and the other is a blonde western woman. This scene appears grotesque and shocking to Indian readers and garners an adverse reaction from them. Yet, western readers do not exhibit any adverse reaction because Sajad's blunt illustrations mirror most western graphic novels. Within the graphic novel, Sajad frequently mentions the famous graphic novelist Joe Sacco, who is popularly known for producing non-fiction graphic novels as he travels to and experiences the violent turmoils that are most often found in the conflict zones around the world. Following the same theme within the book, *Munnu's* career choice also stands out. The concept of comic artistry stems from the comic strips found in western newspapers. The growing popularity of comic strips makes Kashmir newspapers feature separate comic columns pertaining to the contemporary issues pertaining to Kashmir and the various states of India. Hence, *Munnu's* calling towards becoming a graphic novelist is also because of the transnational exchange of culture, as one gets to read up on the various incidents taking place around the world. On more than one occasion, Sajad in the graphic novel leaves certain conversations open for interpretation in order to give the readers an opportunity to interpret the storyline as per their own individual preferences. Likewise, *Munnu* looks at the Indian government and the Indian army as forceful intruders, yet he is not showcasing any open condemnation of those acquaintances of his who have openly become terrorists. Conclusively, he falls into the category of individuals who battle with identity crisis as they reside in the world of contemporary "Indianness."

V. VISHWAJYOTHI GHOSH- DELHI CALM

Ghosh's *Delhi Calm* (2010) is in no way synonymous with a calm and steady atmosphere of peace. *Delhi Calm* addresses the 21-month period of emergency that began in 1975 and ended in 1975 under the rule of the then Prime Minister of India, Ms. Indira Gandhi. Following in the footsteps of Banerjee and Orijit Sen, Ghosh took to showcasing the plot from a multi-narrative perspective. Starting with the experiences of Vibhuti Prasad, who moves to the cosmopolitan grounds of Delhi post his breakup with his girlfriend, the next minute it converges to a lengthy recounting of the past being narrated under the voice of Prasad's old comrade Parvez Alam, following which a varied number of individuals come forth to seize ownership of the narrative. The plot showcases different situations that go into making the political climate of the Emergency period. The graphic novel tends to jump between the past and the present, similar to what has been done in Amruta Patil's *Kari* and Sarnath Banerjee's *Corridor*. Unlike the other three, *Delhi Calm* is known for its sequential representation of the various events that make up the storyline. During an interview with the culture lab at the Indian art fair, the great Indian graphic novelist, Vishwajyoti Ghosh, explains that in his graphic novel, *Delhi Calm*, he utilises the illustrations as an integral part of the storyline, unlike those who view them as a decorative piece. He stresses the fact that he writes with pictures rather than simply gazing at them. Never forget that Ghosh's stories always revolve around the intricate grounds of Delhi, which also happens to be his birthplace. He grew up reading and listening to his parents as they reminisced about their collective experience of the 21-month emergency period. Ghosh's fascination with history stems from being obsessed with the ACK during his school days. During his childhood days, society collectively held the misconception that comic books are bad and that they curb the reading

habits of students. *Delhi Calm* is a graphic novel that deals with the notions of one-sided love, identity crisis, and much more.

Like all other graphic novelists before him, Ghosh addresses India's social, political, and cultural period of distress. According to Pramod K. Nayar's paper "Post-colonial Demographics and Traumatic Realism in Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Delhi Calm*," Ghosh's graphic novel follows in the footsteps of *Maus*, *Persepolis*, and *V for Vendetta*. *Maus*, *Persepolis*, and *V for Vendetta* are three well-known western graphic novels. The common elements found in these three graphic novels are violence, loss of democracy, dictatorship, and oppression. Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1980-91) deals with the Nazi regime during World War II. Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (2000) provides a finite description of Satrapi and her upper-class leftist parents' protest against the Shah's Islāmic regime. The novel *V for Vendetta* by Alan Moore deals with a fictional fascist government in a futuristic society battling a rebellion force bent on destroying the government administration. The plot of *Delhi Calm* revolves around three protagonists, namely Vibhuti Prasad (VP), Parvez Alam, and Vivek Kumar (Masterji), as they act as pawns in the political battle between Mother Moon's Caucus administration and the Prophet's Total Revolution. Mother Moon's Caucus party conveys that they believe in democratic administrative policies, yet they choose to enact a tyrannical form of governance mirroring the Nazi's reign over Germany. The Smiling Saviours Army, belonging to Mother Moon's Caucus administration, is similar to the Nazi soldiers of Germany. Both army groups contribute to their respective causes by conducting impromptu raids, restricting press freedom, performing forced sterilisation, and temporarily eradicating the concept of democracy. The only solace is that Mother Moon does not try to massacre her fellow countrymen like what Hitler did to the Jews. On the other hand, the Prophet keeps preaching that India should embrace its indigenous administrative principles, such as the Gram Panchayat, rather than imitate the negative aspects of western administration. His ideology of embracing native roots and stepping away from the western form of administration contradicts the western philosophical knowledge that he had been reading during his stay in the US. Ironically, Ghosh points out that most civilians are against Mother Moon because she temporarily took away their right to democracy, yet they blindly follow the Prophet, a person who wishes to eradicate the very existence of democracy. The only saving grace of the Prophet is that he absolutely abhors the stratification of Indian society and that he always campaigns for a casteless and classless society.

Ghosh then presents a series of side characters portraying the adaptive nature of the Indian populace towards western influences. While Hari Kishen is a silent supporter and friend of Masterji, he does not hesitate to profit as an underground member of the Smiling Saviour Army. HK works in the underground segment of the government, managing to get legal documentation of sterilisation without going through with it. HK represents the populace who adapt to changing situations in order to prosper in life. Likewise, in the graphic novel, Chintu Shree is a communist who dreams of going to Moscow and becoming a part of western society. Yet, when he truly reaches his dream destination, Chintu decides to return home to his native roots with the hope of investing in the Indian roadways and constructing a series of motels. He represents those frequent dreamers who realise the actual value of their native roots only after leaving the country.

VI. CONCLUSION

Following social representative norms, Indian graphic novels depict how various individuals react when confronted with various nuances of western ideologies and values. These graphic novels concentrate more on the subsequent interactions of characters and their conclusive thought processes as they near their respective endings. The graphic novelists project various instances where western values and ideologies significantly contribute to the structuring of the present Indian society. The graphic novels, *Corridor* and *Kari*, showcase the stories of ordinary, everyday civilians. In the graphic novels, Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil both build their plots around the cosmopolitan grounds of Delhi and Mumbai, where western values have permanently become a part of the native society. These modern cosmopolitan societies do not place importance on caste or class. Even though the cosmopolitan grounds of Delhi and Mumbai play a massive role in the lives of the protagonists, they are not responsible for Kari's and Brighu's western influences. At the same time, Sajad's graphic novel showcases the plight of Kashmir, which is suffering from the never-ending tug of war taking place between Pakistan and India. Sajad's opinions and visualisations appear modern, and his graphic novel projects his accumulative knowledge sphere. The graphic novels by Joe Sacco play a significant role in helping Sajad constructively project the journey of a young boy born into the controversial conflict zones of Kashmir. On the other hand, Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Delhi Calm* focuses on the plight of Indian society during the reign of Mother Moon's emergency period. While *Kari*, *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* and *Corridor* concentrate on various aspects of western influence on Indian society, *Delhi Calm* mainly showcases how the political world of the Indian administration uses western transnational cultural experiences to their advantage. Hence, the graphic novels by Patil, Ghosh, Sajad, and Banerjee end up conveying that societies will never completely embrace transnational philosophies or entirely eradicate native culture. They will always experience the contemporary "Indianness" where any particular individual is freely able to experience the kind of culture they wish to, devoid of any chain of control. Post-millennial individuals have the ability to lead the life they wish to, devoid of most rules and regulations in comparison to the societal life of the past.

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Abinaya Sivakumar is a Research Scholar in the fields of English language and literature, belonging to the School of Social Science and Languages at Vellore Institute of Technology, Chennai Campus. Her research area of interest is literature, specifically in the genre of graphic novels and comics.

Patchainayagi Sasikumar is working as an Assistant Professor in the School of Social Science and Languages at Vellore Institute of Technology, Chennai Campus. Her research area of interest is literature and ELT.