



Visualising Alternative History: Memory, Violence, and Resistance in Selected Graphic Novels

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Abstract- Graphic novels are a powerful tool to narrate stories about history through the help of text and images. Graphic narratives highlight human memory, lived experience, and everyday reality, in contrast to traditional historiography which often focuses on official events and institutional perspective. This paper examines *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi, in which she illustrates her own childhood memories, and *Delhi Calm* by Vishwajyoti Ghosh as a graphic text that reinterprets history through personal and visual lens. *Persepolis* highlights the Iranian Revolution through autobiographical memory, emphasizing the emotional and psychological impact of political violence on everyday life. On the other hand, *Delhi Calm* employs satire, allegory, and visual metaphor to critique authoritarian control, censorship, and surveillance. Both texts contest prevailing historical narratives by highlighting marginalized voices and everyday experiences, converting intergenerational memory into visual representation. This study argues that graphic novels serve as alternative historical narratives that transform communal perception of memory, violence, and resistance within various cultural and political frameworks. Their nonlinear structure encourages readers to read and get involved and think critically about history.

Keywords- Graphic novels, memory violence, resistance, visual storytelling alternative history.

I. Introduction

Over the past few decades, graphic novels have been treated a significant literary and cultural form of representing complicated events in history, politics, and society. Graphic novels are not like traditional books because they convey stories by putting text and pictures together in a way that makes them move. This mixed form lets the author move beyond institutional histories, which usually center on dates, events, and political figures, and instead focus on memory, lived experience, and emotional truth. Because of this, graphic novels are now better at showing history and helping readers picture brutality and suffering. This helps readers feel linked to both historical events and other people's lives.

In certain cases, traditional Historiography presents history as straightforward, equitable, and authoritative. But these kinds of images can make it impossible to talk about common things like experiences of violence, terror, and lived experience that everyone has experienced. Graphic narratives challenge this limit by offering a different approach to narrating historical stories that focus on memory and subjectivity. The visual aspect lets individual see and feel abstract ideas like state violence, censorship, and resistance, which makes them think critically about the past.



These two graphic novel analyses, *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi and *Delhi Calm* by VishwaJyoti Ghosh as graphic novels that reinterpret history via personal and visual narratives. *Persepolis* presents as an autobiographical novel about the Iranian Revolution that depicts how large-scale politics may change people's individual identity gender roles, and small acts of disobedience. *Delhi Calm* takes a look at what happened during the Emergency. It uses humour and stories to show how the government-controlled people watched what they did and censored what they said. *Delhi Calm* uses pictures to help tell the story. This way of telling history is not about what the government says happened. It is about what happened to people.

Graphic Novels as Alternative Historical Narratives

Graphic novels are about what people remember and what they experienced. They are about life. This is different from history books. Those books are usually about events and important people. They are written from the point of view of the government or institutions. *Delhi Calm* and other graphic novels show us that there is more to history, than that. It doesn't show history as a single, unchanging story instead, it shows it as a subjective and contested process shaped by both individual and collective memory through the use of images and written text. Graphic novels are different from other historical stories because they employ the link between words and visuals in a unique way. Graphic novels use symbols and the way they put things on the page to make their point. They also employ color and the way they put up each frame to say things that words alone can't.

This method of using both words and pictures lets graphic novels show feelings, like pain and suffering and violence in ways that other kinds of writing have a time doing. Graphic novels can really get across what it's like to feel these things because of the way they combine words and images. Images can show quiet silence, worry, and loss by using visual metaphor and missing parts of a tale. Thereby showing how memory and historical trauma are broken.

Graphic novels also challenge popular historical narratives by providing voices from communities that are often kept out of official records. These stories challenge the objectivity and neutrality of state-sanctioned history by emphasizing ordinary individuals rather than influential figures. When Personal recollection is turned, into visual evidence, they become important to history and serve as counter-histories that can't be erased. Graphic novels don't just illustrate history; they also affect how we see it by showing us the power structures and ideas that shape how history is told. Scholars argue that graphic narratives provide alternative modes of historical representation by emphasising experiences frequently omitted from official records.

Another important thing about graphic novels as different kinds of historical stories is that they are easy to read, the visual format allows readers from different backgrounds to connect with complicated events immediately and deeply. Readers are encouraged to interact with both the visual and written elements by putting the pictures in an order that encourages them think about what they mean. *Persepolis* is a fascinating look at history from the point of view of personal experience. It shows the Iranian Revolution not as an official political account but as a real and emotional event. The visual memory



uses an autobiographical style to turn personal recollections into historical evidence. This shows how political violence affects ordinary life on a large scale.

II. Persepolis: Memory, Trauma, and Resistance

This strategy institutionalises narrative by centring the perspective of ordinary individual, especially children raised between ideological training conflict, and societal turmoil. Scenes of executions, bombings, and state surveillance are seen through the eyes of a child. Which makes them more powerful. The severe black-and-white visual enhances this sense by taking away decorative elements and emphasising dread, uncertainty, and loss. The words directly express pain and accessibly by visual minimalism and symbolic imagery, highlighting facets of suffering often neglected in traditional historical narratives.

The concept of post memory, a phrase introduced by Marianne Hirsch to describe the connection between subsequent generations and traumatic experiences. That they did not directly observe but nonetheless acquire through stories, images, and cultural transmission. In *Persepolis*, Satrapi relates the tale of her own childhood, but she also tells the memories of her parents, relatives, and a larger group of people who were affected by revolution and war.

In *Persepolis*, memory is fragmented and non-linear, reflecting the fracture nature of trauma and postmemory. There are political events mixed along with scenes of home life, humour, and childhood innocence. These show how social violence affects people's private lives and it passes down through generations.

Persepolis also illustrates resistance as a normal aspect of life. It teaches that confronting authority is important to respond to oppression. *Persepolis* combine storytelling and autobiographical memory. It examines the effects of violence. It critiques historical framework and keeping cultural identity.

III. Delhi Calm: State Power, Censorship, and Satire

Delhi Calm takes place during the Indian Emergency (1975–77) and contains a story that is both visually interesting and politically charged. It shows the theme of government authority, censorship, and authoritarian control. The graphic novel does not show the emergency as administrative or constitutional crisis. Instead, it shows how fear, surveillance, and repression affect ordinary living and social and public life. The text uses humor and stories to make a point. It also uses pictures to represent ideas during this period. Visual patterns like watchful eyes, shadowy figures, and small spaces make it seem like someone is always watching, which adds to the feeling that personal freedom is in danger. The graphic novel uses symbols instead of direct realism; to show how authoritarian rule affects people's minds and how terror spreads through society.

Delhi Calm, satire plays are quite important for showing how silly contradictory state power can be. The narrative can have authority without being preachy by using animal figures, caricatured politicians, and over the top images. This technique not only avoids



the problems of traditional storytelling but also portray another form of resistance that emerged up when censorship was in place. Visual irony and allegory serve as political tool to critique, allowing the narrative to reveal truths that were neglected in official discourse. The graphic novel is really good at showing how people can resist in ways. By looking at these forms of resistance, it changes the way we think about defiance. It shows that people can disobey when they are not saying anything and are being held back. This criticism of the government and people in power is a lot about how things appear.

Delhi Calm is a way of looking at history. It examines what happened during the Emergency by looking at what people experienced, symbols and how people resisted in ways. The graphic novel brings back memories that people have kept hidden by questioning the governments version of history. It makes readers think carefully about how histories told and how everything is connected. Delhi Calm and the way it tells history make people think about the past, in a way.

IV. Comparative Analysis: Memory, Violence, and Resistance

Both the graphic novels offer as an alternative historical narrative that challenge dominant view of political history by focusing personal experience, memory, and visual storytelling. The Iranian Revolution and the Indian Emergency are two very different ways of looking state brutality and authoritarian rule that go against what the government says happened.

A significant connection between the two graphic novels is their of portrayal resistance as inherent of daily life rather than limited to structured political activities. Amid Persepolis, resistance is shown through personal and intimate activities, such as questioning authority, opposing enforced dress norms, and asserting one's identity amid an oppressive ideological setting. People often consider of this event as little and personal, yet their visual framing and emotional resonance indicate how crucial it is politically. Delhi Calm also shows resistance as broken and concealed, which is how it was during the Emergency when censorship and surveillance were common. People show they don't agree with satire, coded communication, and visual irony. These show how opposition transform when it is limited under an authoritarian regime. Still both graphic novels employ picture to question how historical knowledge is made.

The way that words and pictures work together in each piece shows how power affects what happens in history and how some voices are not heard or are completely left out of the stories that are officially told. The empty spaces, moments and broken up layouts in these pieces remind us of things that are hidden painful memories and parts of history that are missing which makes the person reading it think carefully about what it means.

Trauma, Memory, and Visual Form Persepolis and Delhi calm show us that graphic novels can resist what is normally said about the past and tell stories. These books make us think about history in a way by combining pictures with personal memories, funny moments, satire and symbols which helps readers think critically about violent events, power and resistance in different cultures and governments.



When we look at history combining pictures with memories, funny moments, satire and symbols help us think carefully about violent events. Power and resistance are seen differently in cultures and governments. The way we tell stories with pictures has an effect on how we see things remember them and pass on painful memories to each other. Painful memories often disrupt our ability to remember things clearly leading to spaces, quiet moments and strong feelings rather, than complete stories. Graphic novels are a way to show painful memories because they use symbols, empty spaces and picture comparisons instead of just explaining things directly.

Visual storytelling is work like *Persepolis* and *Delhi Calm*, turns personal and collective trauma into historical memory that everyone can understand. Images convey dread, fear, loss, and suppression in ways that textual language sometimes cannot, facilitating an emotionally connect with past cruelty. strong contrasts, repeated symbols, and broken layouts is like how trauma affects the mind and how violence and authoritarian control and memory change.

Graphic novels play an important role in forming our shared memories by keeping experiences that aren't include in official historical records or are left out. These texts put personal tales, everyday sorrow, and little actions of resistance, at the center. This goes against conventional account that try to make state brutality seem normal or disguise it. The visual component make ensure that these experiences are not only merely documented but also emotionally resonated so reinforcing their significance in cultural memory. This shows how graphic novels bring together personal memories and public history.

People are also more likely to get interested in history since graphic novels are interactive. People are also more likely to be interested in history when they can read graphic novels. This method encourages critical awareness about how history is made and remembered, making people think about whose stories are kept and whose are pushed to the side.

V. Conclusion

Ultimately, graphic novels redefine the connection between trauma and collective memory. By combining emotional images with narrative reflection, graphic novel offers an alternative mode of remembering history that doesn't lead to a solution and acknowledge the long-term impacts of violence. The visual connection not only brings up painful memories, but it also keeps changing how they are remembered by everyone.

Graphic novels are examples of showing a different version of history. They do this by using stories and pictures to remember the past. The people who made these novels want to show that history is not just one story it is many stories that people can interpret in different ways. They use a mix of images and words to tell these stories than just telling one story that is supposed to be true.

Persepolis and *Delhi Calm* use pictures to talk about things like violence, power and censorship. *Persepolis* is a story that shows how violence and resistance can affect people's feelings. It takes memories that have been passed down and turns them into pictures that people can see and understand. *Delhi Calm* is different it uses humor and



symbols to make fun of the government during a time when they were being very controlling. This proves that the government can stop people from saying what they think.

These graphic novels prove that this kind of story can help individuals get through hard times. They employ visuals and text in a way that isn't always clear, with gaps and symbols that make you ponder. This is crucial because it helps individuals remember things and figure out what happened. It also shows that using pictures to convey tales is a means to talk about the past and the present and to learn about topics like memory, violence, and resistance. Graphic novels, like *Persepolis* and *Delhi Calm* are a way to do this.

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