

**EXPLORING THE GRAPHIC NOVELS OF SARNATH
BANERJEE AND AMRUTA PATIL: A DERRIDEAN
STUDY**

Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

**in
English**

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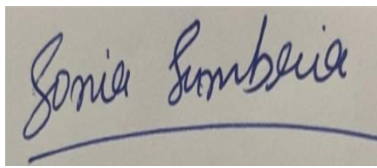


LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY, PUNJAB

2026

DECLARATION

I, hereby declare that the present work in the thesis entitled “**Exploring the Graphic Novels of Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil: A Derridean Study**” is submitted in fulfilment of requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** is the outcome of the research work carried out by me under the supervision of **Dr. Meenakshi Rana, Assistant Professor**, in the **Department of English, School of Liberal and Creative Arts (Social Sciences and Languages)** of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with the general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever the work described here has been based on the findings of other investigators. This work has not been submitted either in part or in full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sonia Sumbria". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

(Signature of Scholar)

Name of the scholar: Sonia Sumbria

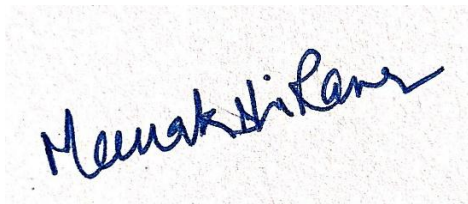
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled “**Exploring the Graphic Novels of Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil: A Derridean Study**” submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in the **Department of English, School of Liberal and Creative Arts (Social Sciences and Languages)**, is a research work carried out by **Sonia Sumbria, 41900268**, is bonafide record of his/her original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.



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Abstract

Jacques Derrida, an Algerian-born French philosopher, has influenced many works all over the world with his thoughts and ideas. His works capture both the human and intellectual histories. Derrida's works have been translated into numerous languages and have sparked passionate discussions about language, sign, and signifier. Derrida revolutionised literary criticism in a way similar to Kafka. His theories about literary theory imply that reading is necessary for a piece of literature to be deemed a text. Derrida is intricately connected to the leading personalities associated with post-structuralism and postmodern philosophy. The philosophical theories of Roland Barthes, Bakhtin, Bergson, and Saussure had a great influence on him. With over forty volumes and hundreds of essays under his belt, Derrida is a prolific writer who had a significant impact on the social sciences, philosophy, law, language, literature, and linguistics. This study provides insight into the core ideas of Jacques Derrida's postmodernist philosophy and thoughts, which revolutionised thought through his deconstruction theory. The thesis adopts the English translation of Jacques Derrida's writings, which will be useful in deconstructing the graphic novels of Sarnath Banerjee and Amrut Patil.

For this doctoral thesis, Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil have been selected as authors. These two authors have become well-known as inventive, gifted modern graphic novelists over time. Their novels are graphic in nature. The inclusion of brutality, historical and interpersonal themes, the injustice committed by religious fanatics, and the pursuit of human rights in their graphic novels has expanded their viewership and creative scope. This study uses the Derridean technique to show a significant thematic consistency across all of the graphic novels of both of these writers. Out of the many Derridean techniques, three are selected for this study, namely, binary opposition, phonocentrism, and hospitality. It is evident from a close examination of their writings that Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil are accomplished satirists. In their works, they have employed certain deconstructive techniques that lend credence to a deconstructive analysis. Three facets of Derrida's deconstructive techniques are the subject of this thesis. First, an attempt is made to expose and refute the latent metaphysical assumptions of Western thought – the binary oppositions – through a

reading of the texts of both graphic novelists. Second, the phonocentric ideology of society – a crucial component of the logocentric language structure – is reflected and contested, and the varied outcomes of adopting this ideology are illustrated. Third, the impossibility of true hospitality is demonstrated. In order to critically analyse binary oppositions, phonocentrism, and hospitality, this research employs Derridean deconstructive reading, analysis, and interpretation techniques, which also implies that Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil have employed a variety of deconstructive elements in their graphic novels.

Using the Derridean theory of deconstruction as a theoretical framework is a key methodological strategy for this study. This research emphasises academic brilliance and critical analysis by thoroughly examining and comparing subjects. It carefully breaks down and analyses literary texts using accepted theoretical frameworks and approaches. It aims to significantly advance the scholarly discourse within structuralist and post-structuralist studies by undertaking a thorough and analytical analysis of these major concepts. The chosen theoretical framework for the analysis of the selected writers' works in this research is Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction. Within this framework, the study interprets how characters confront and navigate various situations by drawing on Derrida's concepts of binary opposition, phonocentrism, and hospitality.

This research utilises a comprehensive toolset to efficiently handle all stated study objectives while also incorporating a thorough and meticulous analysis within the context of deconstruction theory. This analytical method reveals the writers' unique storytelling techniques and common themes within deconstructive contexts. There are five separate chapters in the thesis, along with an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction acts as a beacon, shedding light on the main ideas and objectives of the study. It highlights how crucial it is to go deeper into the complex problems pertaining to binary oppositions, phonocentrism, and hospitality. The foundation for a detailed analysis of these important topics as they emerge in the graphic narratives of Banerjee and Patil is skilfully laid out in this introduction.

The first chapter, "Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil: Making of the Graphic Novelists," provides background information on the historical evolution of graphic

novels as well as a synopsis of the works of both authors and their international appeal. It delves into the genesis and progression of the graphic fiction genre over the centuries, encompassing its historical background and scholarly discussions. The objective of this chapter is to throw light on the seriousness of graphic novels, which are portraying real-life scenarios in the present time. By delving deep into the themes and issues discussed in these novels, this chapter provides a genuine reason for these novels to be taken seriously. It shows how these graphic novels are subject to being a part of literary canon. The key concern of this chapter is to demonstrate the growth of graphic novels in the Indian literary canon. Hence, it also discusses famous Indian graphic novelists and their major works in order to show the growth and development of this genre in India.

In second Chapter, “Jacques Derrida and Theory of Deconstruction,” the notions of deconstruction are introduced, along with their expansion and authority in the field of literary studies. The architect of deconstruction, Jacques Derrida, is also briefly described along with his biography and contributions. The aim is to have a thorough understanding of the topics and viewpoints that guide the analysis that follows. The present chapter offers an examination of the main ideas, theories, and discussions that influence its discourse. The theoretical stances, historical context, and key discussions around deconstruction are all critically examined in this chapter. With a focus on the fundamental ideas and theories that influence this discourse, the desire is to attain a thorough knowledge of the intricacies involved in deconstructive studies. A close examination of critical discussions provides a detailed understanding of the divergent viewpoints and interpretations that add to the complexity of Derridean discourse. By analysing the problems associated with deconstruction theory, this chapter lays the groundwork for the study and guarantees a full comprehension of the topic. By means of this fundamental investigation, the study presents a strong framework for analysing deconstruction themes and their significance for the purpose of gaining a more prominent comprehension of the complex dynamics that are present in deconstruction studies.

The chapter third, entitled “Binary Oppositions and Graphic Subjects,” deconstructs binary oppositions that are present in the texts of Banerjee and Patil. It

discusses three pairs of binaries – high-class and low-class binary in the works of Sarnath Banerjee, man and woman binary, along with heterosexual and homosexual binary in the works of Amruta Patil. The chapter deconstructs these binaries by expounding on the important role of the inferior terms present in these binaries. This chapter finds the various binary pairs present in these texts, decodes them, and then finally shows how both the terms in these binaries rely on each other for their meaningful existence.

The chapter fourth, entitled “Speech versus Writing: Challenging Phonocentrism,” focuses on Derrida’s critique of phonocentrism. In this chapter, the focus shifts to an in-depth analysis of the works of Banerjee and Patil from the point of view of phonocentric ideology. Phonocentrism is an invalid limitation of language to speech. This chapter shows the grave consequences of following phonocentric ideology on the lives of the people who follow it. It examines the experiences of the characters in extensive detail, as well as the social contexts and historical settings that the novels convey. It also delves into the recurrent themes that run across the texts, encapsulating the essence of deconstructive narratives in the literary domain.

Chapter fifth, “Hospitality: Depiction of Host-Guest Relationship,” makes use of the concept of hospitality to explain the significance of cultural interaction and the human environment in the works selected for the research. It investigates the distribution of power in the host-guest relationship using the Derridean concept of hospitality. The chapter also demonstrates how conflicts between guests and hosts contribute to the development of each character’s personality and the creation of stereotypes that endure to this day. The chapter frequently shows intricate and nuanced exchanges between guests and hosts. As a result, the chapter looks at how Banerjee and Patil illustrate the fear of unfamiliarity and the sense of home and belonging in their graphic novels.

In the conclusion, the key points and learnings from the study are summarized. It enumerates the main points covered in every chapter. The research’s wider implications for comprehending Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil’s graphic novels in the light of the Derridean approach are also discussed in the conclusion. All of the

thesis' chapters conclude with a conclusion drawn from the analysis of the chosen texts. It offers conclusions, outlines the key points of the earlier chapters, and offers suggestions for further research.

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Introduction

The history of graphic literature is lengthy and tumultuous. The drawings of early Palaeolithic cave dwellers, found in almost every region of the planet, show signs of graphic storytelling. However, the graphic method of narrative has long been disregarded in serious academic discourse. Renowned writers such as Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil have opted to depict serious societal situations in the graphic novel form. They made the decision to do this despite having access to a number of established literary styles and receiving praise from critics despite defying convention. They most likely believed that this narrative form would be more successful in conveying a variety of meanings. Words in prose narratives frequently have more than one meaning. However, things get much more complicated when we remember that graphic novels have text as well as images—content that needs to be further broken down.

In recent times, critics in European nations have begun to take graphic literature seriously. But it has not received the thoughtful scholarly attention it merits in India yet. Many authors, like Orijit Sen, Sarnath Banerjee, Amruta Patil, Vishwajyoti Ghosh, Parismita Singh, and many more, have adopted this graphic fiction genre as a means of sociocultural expression that transcends the strictly literal bounds of continuity and acceptance. Taking up this technique might provide challenges because it requires the writer to be able to play with words as well as visuals. However, because of the vast range it affords, Indian writers have adopted the form and continue to do so. Nevertheless, despite the graphic novel's many ways to analyse a work, it has not yet received the same kind of in-depth consideration as mainstream novels. The variety of styles they use has not yet been thoroughly and critically examined. This research focuses on the reasons for the advancement of graphic narrative in India as well as the variety of meanings and writing styles that Indian authors manage to convey within the condensed framework of graphic narrative through the medium of Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction.

The pictures or visuals in a graphic book do more than just represent or reiterate the written text. The pictures tell a story since they frequently depict things

that have not been written yet. In fact, there could be no words or prose storylines at all in a graphic novel. It is expected of the reader to simultaneously read the prose narrative and the visual in order to understand the many meanings concealed within the graphics. Reading a graphic novel requires the use of several different genres. While the photos necessitate the reader to decipher facial expressions and body language in addition to studying the method in which they are presented, the text calls for more conventional decoding abilities. A graphic novel can be thought of as both a sequential art narrative and a typical reading book.

The widespread misperception that graphic novels are mainly intended for teenagers has kept them from being taken seriously as literary works. Graphic novels employ a format of sequential images, much like comic strips and books. However, comic books and graphic novels differ from novels, travelogues, biographies, and magazine pieces despite employing the prose format. The comic book medium or the order of the images may not necessarily be humorous or contain visuals that make its readers laugh. It is possible they do not even have superheroes. Perhaps they are not as easy to interpret as is commonly believed. The last few years have witnessed an upsurge in the popularity of graphic novels worldwide, prompting research into this kind of literature. Nonetheless, scholars who attempt to understand the politics underlying these graphic novels have shown interest in this emerging field of Indian graphic novels. This study will look, with the help of deconstruction, at ways that the chosen graphic novelists' graphic novels use sequential art to represent social themes.

The present thesis entitled "Exploring the Graphic Novels of Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil: A Derridean Study" explores the graphic novels of Banerjee and Patil from the perspective of Derrida's theory of deconstruction. It uses Derridean concepts of binary opposition, phonocentrism and hospitality to find a new meaning in the texts of both authors. The aim of this study is to analyse the works written by Banerjee and Patil from a deconstructive critical standpoint. The research attempts to get as close as it can to the texts in an effort to deconstruct them and discover a different meaning in them by employing the principles of Derrida's theory of deconstruction. The research looks into a variety of themes and motifs, including

consciousness, individuality, freedom, reality of life, anxiety, distress, psychological security, tradition, knowledge, and mythology, which largely constitute their writings, to show how their elucidation of them provides remarkable scope for deconstructive reading. To both question and unsettle their description of the above themes, this research work examines the works with the goal of opening up the works for new interpretive fields. The research also aims to place graphic novels in the context of contemporary English literature, as the genre has been largely ignored by schools of literature globally. This doctoral work proposes to study significant patterns of structures in the fictional works of Banerjee and Patil and aims to investigate the topic within the context of deconstructionist methodologies and concepts. It demonstrates that the structures of logocentric principles, along with their part in constructing and authorising social values, cultural systems, political history, truth, rationality, totalising meaning, authenticity in fiction, and other discourses, are of primary concern to Banerjee and Patil.

A graphic novel, an emerging genre, is an amalgamation of words and texts. This thesis aims to consistently consider graphic novels as a text-and-image interaction in which each component works in harmony with the others. It has received a lot of recognition in the literature. This new genre of literature has emerged from comics. The comics medium is now a recognised vehicle for both literature and art in the form of graphic novels. A creative urge can find its fulfilment through the union of text and image, which combines drawing and story aspects into something unique—a tale told through pictures and text, separated into single images constrained by panels. The distinction between graphic novels and other comics is not clearly established. A graphic novel is typically thought of as a self-contained tale that has a proper start, transition, and climax that deals with more serious subjects than regular comics. In comparison to commercially produced comics, graphic novels typically have superior production values. A graphic novel is often bound like a conventional prose novel, as opposed to comic books' magazine format, and occasionally comes in both softcover and hardback versions. Both general bookstores and especially comic book stores sell them. They also remain in print for a lot longer and have a much longer shelf life. The graphic novels provide a wide variety of experimental and

frequently complicated graphics that are not always clear to understand. By no means are they just images, they add additional—and sometimes even alternative—narratives to the main narrative in the text, allowing for commentary on mankind that is extremely nuanced and complex in comparison to those occurring in traditional textual art forms such as the short story or the novel.

The two words first emerged in 1978 on the cover of Will Eisner's ground-breaking *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories*, which marked the official introduction of the term graphic novel. Soon after, the phrase started to be used often. The introduction of the graphic novel is often credited with salvaging the comics industry and elevating the form to a new, respectable level. Graphic novels are receiving increased attention from book sellers, publishers, and mainstream cultural institutions. The sky is not the limit when it comes to graphic novels; the bounds reach all eras, all locations, and even the reaches of the cosmos itself. The emergence of Indian graphic novels started a little late than in every other part of the world. With the introduction of the brand-new genre of fiction, the graphic novel, Indian literature's very identity and experience underwent a profound transformation. However, up until the beginning of the previous decade, Indian graphic novels were regrettably only available as kid-friendly cartoons, caricatures, and comic strips. Only in the past twenty years have discussions with enormous sociopolitical and cultural significance started to permeate into the discourse of the graphic novels. Only when Orijit Sen heralded a revolution with his graphic novel *River of Stories* (1994) did the enormous potential of graphic fiction start to be explored and embraced within the Indian literary framework.

Graphic fiction, which addressed conflicts in the political, social, communal, and feminist spheres, came into being and became enormously popular at the beginning of the twenty-first century. For example, writers like Sarnath Bannerjee and Vishwajyoti Ghosh rearranged the pre-existing literary visual storytelling traditions to include awareness and resistance components. These writings enabled fresh perspectives on Indianness and identity. A new style of graphic novels emerged from children's comics like the *Amar Chitra Katha* and *Chacha Chaudhury*. A more

realistic genre that depicted existence in all its gloom and sadness overcame the idealised, vibrant depictions of life and society. Indian graphic novels make it possible to hear unheard voices. In fact, the Indian graphic novel is a form that has embraced conveying the fresh tales of contemporary India that is evolving quickly, giving us an unrestrained and frequently unusual look at traditional topics. Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Delhi Calm* (2010), Sarnath Banerjee's *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* (2016), *Hotel at the End of the World* (2009) by Parismita Singh, *Draupadi: The Fire- Born Princess* (2012) by Saraswati Nagpal, *Sita's Ramayana* (2012) by Samhita Arni, *Simian* (2014) by Vikram Balagopal, and Amruta Patil's *Kari* (2008) present massive boom of expressions through the graphic novels.

Sarnath Banerjee is among the extremely popular graphic novelists in India. He is an emerging personality in this field with the publication of five graphic novels. In his works, Banerjee discusses breaking free from the confines of confined structures. His main characters are curators of daily life. The modernising Indian towns that are experiencing extensive spatial and economic transformation are a recurring theme in Banerjee's graphic novels. His art often portrays huge Indian towns as exemplars of crisis and recovery, intricately woven into a complex tapestry of imperial representation, postcolonial fantasy, and regional narratives. The large Indian cities are frequently depicted in his works as examples of both crisis and rehabilitation, intertwined in a complicated tapestry of imperial representation, postcolonial fantasy, and regional stories. Apart from being satirical depictions of the Indian middle class, his graphic novels *Corridor* (2004), *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* (2007), *The Harappa Files* (2011), *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* (2015), and *Doab Dil* (2019) are all regional stories of urban areas entwined in denoting the evolution of India, with the imagery bringing attention to a growing social culture and metropolitan living usually contrasting to the early times.

In order to undermine the current patriarchal social institutions and promote women's emancipation, the more recent works adopted a tone of ferocious and ear-piercing protest. Amruta Patil's graphic novels sit in the heart of two unique and well-known literary cults: the powerful feminist interventions and the Visual Renaissance

brought on by new-wave graphic novels. Patil is considered the first Indian woman graphic novelist with a successful career in this genre. She is renowned for her contribution to the revitalisation of the storytelling genre. Her works include graphic novels *Kari* (2008), *Adi Parva* (2012), *Sauptik* (2016), and *Aranyaka* (2019). Her works focus on historical, philosophical, and cultural issues related to minorities, feminism, immigration, subcultures, and cosmopolitanism.

Review of Literature

Before we conduct a research study, reviewing the existing literature is necessary. Up till now, very limited empirical research has been printed on graphic novels, and even very limited on the graphic novels in the Indian English literature. This being the case, graphic novels, comics, and sequential art are still in their babyhood with respect to Indian English literature. Graphic fiction has awakened the interest of scholars and intellectuals throughout the globe. An extensive range of frames of references has been embraced to study it. I reached to the following opinions communicated by the well-known scholars while in the process of writing this dissertation. A quick review of a few graphic narratives by global along with Indian authors will be useful to highlight the case into consideration. Out of this review, a remarkable gap in the literature encapsulating the use of and attainable advantages from graphic novels in Indian English literature becomes visible, indicating a demand for this study – and countless others. Graphic novels keep going to flourish and blossom vigorously with time, from elementary school media centers to grown-ups' collections.

In her 2015 research paper titled “Striving to Survive: Comic Strips in Iran,” Sarah Tarhandeh throws light on the past of Iranian comics. She talks about the factors that become functional as comic strips in Iran defend their existence. The intention of this study is to examine certain traditional schools and demonstrate how they are related to contemporary comics. These historical paintings and contemporary comics have one thing in common: time is an important theme in both, and similar approaches have been used to depict the passage of time. She examines Iranian modern comics published prior to the Islamic Revolution. The many types of comics and their brief history in children's periodicals are also taken into consideration. She

emphasised the role that comics played in post-revolution Iran. Although comics have been outlawed for a while, experts continue to have reservations about them. Despite these obstacles, comics have made a lasting presence in Iran and have the potential to grow much more with the emergence of new creators.

Dipavali Debroy in her article “The graphic novel in India: East transforms west,” (2011) figures out the important facts that are responsible for the beginning of graphic novels and comics in India and cites a number of significant examples comprising the most contemporary game-like versions manufactured for iPads. During the procedure, we observe how the Indianisation of graphic novels connects the world from the east to the west. She also contemplates this fact that when the production houses in other countries produce graphic novels infused with Indian subjects, these novels may have a deficiency of legitimacy and error-free details. She imposes for graphic novels blended with Indian essence and sophisticated Indian art manners.

Linnet Hunter digs deep into the prominent works of Shaun Tan in her well acclaimed article, “The artist as narrator: Shaun Tan’s wondrous worlds” (2011) and provides the readers with a complete understanding of his works with special reference to his depiction of self-identification, marking that “his artwork renders imaginary worlds that are both specific and, at the same time, universal and surreal representations of wordless longings and fears.”

Yeo-Joo Lim in “Educational graphic novels: Korean children’s favorite now” (2011) mainly focuses on Korea’s growing educational graphic novels. The early graphic novels or comics, known as manhwa in Korea, gained much popularity due to their dual nature of being educational and entertaining at the same time.

Hillary Chute, in her most renowned book *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics* (2010), studies five women writers under the light of feminism and focuses on their innovative genre of life writing. Chute also analyses that the most riveting comics texts coming out right now – from men and women alike – are not novels at all, the reason she provides is that a substantial amount of these writings is quite historical in nature. These works also include self-portrait fiction and nonfiction

in which the writer serves as a first-person narrator, predominantly depicted on the page. She discovers the advent of the female writers, precisely those who put their own stories in writing, in the vast world of comics. Chute points out the achievements of graphic narrative. It builds an enhanced idiom of witness, a method of testimony that activates a visual language in conjunction with and in opposition to the verbal, aiming to encapsulate both individual and collective experiences and to manifest contingent identities and histories. This definition given by Chute perfectly fits the autobiographical works of retrospection and repressing when brought into comparison with the diverse proposed definitions.

Michael Cook reviews the usage of graphic narratives in education in his thesis, “Reading Graphically: Examining the Effects of Graphic Novels on the Reading Comprehension of High School Students” (2014). The researcher proposed to find the result of opting for graphic novels in English classrooms for high school students on their reading comprehension. The researcher, for this purpose, used the graphic adaptation of “*The Cask of Amontillado*” a short story written by a very famous nineteenth century poet, Edgar Allan Poe.

Jason DeHart, in his article “Discovering the Depth in Graphic Novels” (2018), talks about the level of depth in graphic novels and the scope of their usage in classroom discussion. Despite their apparent simplicity, graphic novels can have surprisingly deep levels of meaning. Numerous elements, such as the language used, the way words and images interact, and the issues that can be explored in visual texts, can all contribute to this sense of depth. Graphic novels are also a great topic for discussion in the classroom since, like novels, they make use of a variety of literary devices.

Katherine F. Rycroft, in her research article “Graphic Novels: Preparing for a Multitmodal and Multiliterate World” (2014), claims that graphic novels have been successful in reaching students all around the world from cultures and societies that are manifold in character that too, in ways that traditional literature cannot. The article addresses the methods that can be adopted by graphic novels to encourage ELL

students to construct meaning by taking into account their own experience and engage in ‘critical literacy experiences.’

Ira Sarma, in her paper “Negotiations of Home and Belonging in the Indian Graphic Novels Corridor by Sarnath Banerjee and Kari by Amruta Patil.” (2017), comes up with a literary analysis of two famous graphic novels, which are the perfect depiction of typical twenty-first-century people longing for home in a new city. Sharma investigates the protagonists’ ideas of what home means: two young urban intellectuals who have relocated to Delhi and Mumbai, respectively. She looks at the various ways that Brighu and Kari, the literary protagonists, behave in weird ways, feel strange in strange places, or are made strange by strange things in the modern metropolis.

In her 2018 thesis titled “Contemporary Indian Graphic Fiction and Counter Culture of the New Narrative: Reading the Works of Sarnath Banerjee, Parismita Singh and Samhita Arni,” Sonali Rajkhowa asserts that the all-new genre of graphic fiction was linked with the free-thinking counterculture to old traditional narratives. Her work propounds the emergence of graphic novels as a sort of intervention that makes proper use of artistry along with analytical study in an extremely serious form of social as well as political commentary. This study uses a variety of theoretical vantage points, including feminist studies, cultural studies, and narrative theory, to critically analyse these Indian graphic novels. It also aims to place the still-evolving genre between text novels and movies, since, like a movie script, the graphics offer a parallel story and occasionally a break from the action.

Scott Bradley Allen in his thesis, explored the way in which graphic novels contribute in the field of academics. She looks at all the possible ways in which teachers use this genre to increase learner engagement in learning. In the findings of her research, she concludes that ELA classrooms can be very efficiently benefitted by the use of graphic novels. The study also yielded some intriguing results, indicating that graphic novels should be the focus of pre-service and in-service professional development programs for teachers to ensure they are ready to work with an increasingly multimodal and multiliterate student body. In addition, and this was

surprising, every participant who had never read graphic novels before suddenly became passionate about them. They all still use them in the classroom and read them for enjoyment.

Surangama Datta in her paper, ““Can You See Her the Way I Do?": (Feminist) Ways of Seeing in Amruta Patil's *Kari*" (2008) describes the way in which the text creates an unconventional way of examining and perceiving the personality of women in the frame of curiosity of their oddity and love. The article also investigates the emergence of new feminist methods and techniques that are used nowadays to look at women from the point of view of love, devotion, and curiosity that emerged because of this experimental text, which is also analysed by the researcher in a fine manner.

G. Jerusha Angelene Christabel, in his paper “Negotiating Identities: A Representation of Contemporary India in the Novels of Sarnath Banerjee” (2018), contemplates the fragmented narration in Banerjee's graphic novel *Corridor*. He analyses Banerjee's novel in the frame of history, quest for identity, and search for happiness. Special light is thrown on the images that are used in the novel to reflect identity negotiation in the novel. Christabel underlined that in order to fully enjoy Banerjee's graphic novels, one must read them twice. They showcase the richness of a work. We criticise the characters, the numerous witty puns, and most importantly, the epitome of Indian urbanity in the divests, at the first reading. However, a second reading is required to put the puzzle pieces of the characters' lives in order because of the non-linear storytelling. Sarnath's descriptions in the *Corridor* leave the reader speechless. In contrast to *The Harappa Files*, which contains more spoken descriptions than visual representation, his work *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* is replete with photographs. The three graphic narratives have some structural traits that together form Banerjee's representational negotiating identities, even if they are each uniquely crafted and employ diverse approaches. Through the use of meaningful drawings and a sophisticated intertextual style, he portrays a postmodern identity with a particular psychological maelstrom.

Achim Hescher, in his book *Reading Graphic Novels: Genre and Narration* (2016), shifts our focus towards the boom in the development of graphic novels in

contemporary times. He looks at graphic novels as experimental in nature, probing deep into literary forms and subject matters. The book brings out a detailed analytical framework for the emerging genre of graphic novels beyond the bounds of traditional narratives. Also, a detailed discussion is done on the facets of individuality, a prime focus in the contemporary research.

In his 2002 thesis, “Binary Structure in the Novels of R. K. Narayan,” Sandeep Verma explores the binaries of myth and reality, tradition and modernity, rebellion and conformity, childhood and adulthood, and man-woman relationships. His thesis explores around ten novels by R. K. Narayan, which are grouped into three phases: the early phase, the middle phase, and the final phase. The study attempts to demonstrate how the legitimacy of tradition more than equals the force of modernity. All the novels involved in this study are analysed minutely by the research scholar to look into the binaries that exist in them.

Objectives of the Proposed Work

1. To trace the historical roots of graphic novel
2. To locate the contribution of Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil in the graphic novels
3. To apply the Derridean theory of Deconstruction on the select graphic novels
4. To investigate the dynamic interrelationship of human existence through the lens of the selected authors

Research Methodology

The proposed research will be centred around critical analysis to explore the multifaceted concepts of deconstruction in the graphic novels of Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil. This in-depth analysis will look into narrative strategies, character growth, and the subtle application of language, all within the larger context of the study's deconstruction of the graphic novels of both the authors. A multitude of secondary materials will be included to enhance the analysis and offer a more comprehensive framework for interpretation. These resources will include academic

papers, critical essays, and interviews that shed light on the writers' approaches to these difficult subjects and their creative output. With a focus on the contributions of Jacques Derrida, the theoretical framework supporting this study will be derived from deconstruction theory. This theoretical framework provides valuable insights into how Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil negotiate the complex terrain of these ideas in their creative graphic novels.

Ethical considerations will be the first priority at all stages of the research process. To maintain academic integrity and adherence to intellectual property rights, strict citation guidelines will be observed along with diligent efforts to secure the required permits for the use of copyrighted materials. This study is dedicated to providing a thorough and comprehensive examination of the graphic novels, even in the face of intrinsic limitations like resource and time constraints. The results will be presented in a methodical manner, supporting the study's claims with quotes, textual excerpts, and critical analysis. Using Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory as a lens, this research methodology ultimately aims to significantly advance our understanding of how Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil negotiate the tricky terrain of binary oppositions, phonocentrism, and hospitality in the context of contemporary literature. This study will strictly adhere to the most recent 9th edition of the MLA style sheet guidelines.

Research Gap

In the existing body of literature, there is a noticeable gap in research in the area of graphic fiction from the lens of deconstruction theory. Although a great number of academic research has been done on the works of these well-known writers, there are not many thorough deconstructive analyses that look at how these authors handle and depict themes like binary oppositions, phonocentrism, and hospitality in their respective graphic novels. The proposed study will be new in the sense that it will strive to examine how the natural is depicted through the pictorial. In order to fill this scholarly gap, this thesis undertakes a thorough deconstructive analysis of the graphic novels written by Banerjee and Patil. Through this analysis, the thesis aims to clarify

the nuanced approaches taken by the authors in addressing and challenging the traditional concepts of binary oppositions, phonocentrism, and hospitality.

Outline of the Study

The present thesis attempts a close analysis of all the graphic novels of Banerjee and Patil. These graphic novels have been analysed from Derrida's perspective. The ensuing chapters of this research thesis are set up to examine the topic thoroughly. With an introduction and a conclusion at either end, the research thesis is organised into five separate chapters in this study.

Introduction: The thesis begins with the introduction chapter. This chapter summarises the goals of the research, emphasises the importance of the study, and establishes the rationale behind selecting the graphic novelists Banerjee and Patil as the subject of the critical analysis. This introduction establishes the framework for the next chapters by summarising the critical acclaim, subject depth, and relevance of the chosen graphic novelists to the overall research goals.

Chapter first "Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil: Making of the Graphic Novelists" traces the development of graphic novels from Indian comics to their current state in Indian literature. This chapter examines the history of the genre, from its humble beginnings as a collection of newspaper strips to the complex graphic novels of the present, and finally, a brief introduction of both the graphic novelists and their works. Sarnath Banerjee is a great Indian graphic novelist of contemporary times. His extensive study and immersion in India's diverse society have given his works fresh depth. His fictional graphic novels have addressed multicultural, political, colonial, post-colonial, and religious problems. The artist's strength rests in the way he depicts socio-political and intercultural concerns in his works using language, graphics, and clever dialogue. Through his works, Sarnath Banerjee has defended humanism and cultural diversity. He now serves as a voice for those who are traumatised, oppressed, and marginalised. His writings are loaded with philosophical ideas, profound knowledge, and multicultural themes.

Similarly, Amruta Patil has greatly revolutionised Indian graphic novels through her works. She has highlighted cultural, political, and social issues of ancient and modern Indian societies. Her status has shifted globally due to her pragmatic attitude toward life. In her writing, she has constructed a variety of societies. Her storytelling technique, which she has employed to control her plot and characters, is the primary source of her fame. Through her stunning graphics, Amruta Patil has portrayed sociopolitical themes, female marginalisation, and oppression in her works. She has used historical truths to construct a variety of societies and people in her novels. As a result, her creations now have a new depth. Amruta Patil's unparalleled use of graphics has garnered her greater significance and attention from academics, scholars, and critics.

Chapter second "Jacques Derrida and Theory of Deconstruction" discusses theories of Jacques Derrida. This chapter narrates in brief the life history of Jacques Derrida. French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who was born in Algeria, is regarded as the originator or father of deconstruction. His copious writings on numerous topics have had a significant influence on continental philosophy and literary theory. Popularity spread for Jacques Derrida on both sides of the Atlantic. He had a significant impact on modern ideas. This chapter addresses Derrida's suggested methodology, in which the concepts of binary opposition, phonocentrism, and hospitality are thoroughly examined, developed, and explored in order to be applied as a close textual analysis. In this chapter, the use of a deconstructionist, Derridean, approach is justified along with an explanation of the methodology and ideas involved. Additionally, the functioning of Indian graphic novels with respect to deconstructionist theory is explicitly examined in this chapter.

The late 1960s saw the development of deconstruction, a critical method of philosophical and literary study, most notably by the French thinker Jacques Derrida. By highlighting the discrepancies and contradictions found in texts and ideas, it questions established conceptions about language, meaning, and truth. Deconstruction holds that a text or concept can have several, constantly evolving meanings rather than a single, definitive interpretation. Deconstruction also highlights how the reader

or interpreter shapes a text's meaning, contending that the reader's preconceptions and biases are important factors in how a text is received. Deconstruction challenges binary oppositions, hierarchical systems, and fixed meanings by offering a radical reconsidering of linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Chapter third "Binary Oppositions and Graphic Subjects" applies methodology through a close textual analysis of the works of both authors. It does this by using deconstruction as a literary criticism technique, making explicit references to the graphic novels, and providing real-world examples to analyse the binary oppositions that are structuring the text. A binary relationship among people in a society produces a power correlation that, over time, becomes a widespread social norm in that society. This chapter examines social behaviour and institutional arrangements that lead to power disparities and gender and caste-based binary interactions amongst individuals. Binary opposition has been interpreted in relation to this thesis as mutual opposition, which has been examined at the storyline, character, setting, and ensuing philosophical levels. This thesis refers to the mutually opposite in a more general sense when it uses the phrase binary opposition. It has been determined that the structure of the novels under discussion reflects this notion of mutual opposition. This chapter analyses the binary structure exhibited by these works. It examines the binaries of high class and low class, man and woman, and homosexuality and heterosexuality. Each of them is looked at from the perspectives of the story, characters, setting, and ensuing philosophy in the graphic novels of Banerjee and Patil.

Chapter fourth "Speech versus Writing: Challenging Phonocentrism" focuses the logocentric views related to the relationship between speech and writing.

Phonocentrism is the concept that gives more importance to speech than writing. Thus, the text is essentially a derivate form of language that derives its meaning from speech. Philosophers ranging from Aristotle and Plato to Rousseau, Saussure, and Jakobson believed that oral communication surpassed written communication. They saw speech as being closer to the source of idea; speaking has an immediacy associated with it that is perceived to be lost in writing. According to Western

phonocentric thought, speech is a system that both the speaker and the listener can instantaneously understand. As a result, writing functions as speech's otherness. This chapter presents the consequences of following phonocentric views by various characters in the texts of Banerjee and Patil.

Chapter fifth "Hospitality: Depiction of Host-Guest Relationship" analyses the works of Banerjee and Patil by using Jacques Derrida's concept of Hospitality. Hospitality is an idea of Derrida that involves the meeting of two or more individuals. Derrida's notion of hospitality has two types of hospitality: conditional hospitality and unconditional hospitality. Therefore, two distinct perspectives on welcoming a guest are constantly present in Derrida's idea and appear to be intricately linked. The first is conditional hospitality, which is a methodical approach to greeting guests in accordance with established guidelines. The guest is aware of the terms and circumstances of the visit, including the maximum length of time and the requirement to make some sort of payment to the host. The second type of hospitality is unconditional hospitality. The unconditional hospitality rejects the rules and regulations that are strictly followed while welcoming the guests under conditional hospitality. This chapter exposes the artificiality of hospitality portrayed in the works of Banerjee and Patil. In light of Derrida, this chapter examines both conditional and unconditional hospitality in these graphic novels and shows how individual purpose and desire violate a moral deed, such as generosity, when it comes to hospitality.

Conclusion is the last section of the research thesis. It summarises the main conclusions, revelations, and contributions of the study and considers the goals and accomplishments of the research. In addition to reviewing the study results, the conclusion aims to establish graphic novels as a strong literary genre. This avant-garde style of writing dismantles traditional narrative structures by contrasting text and visual. The goal of this work is to present the graphic novel as a serious form of socio-cultural criticism that blends creativity and critical understanding. The study's spirit is essentially captured in this final chapter, which highlights the important discoveries, summarises the main points, and makes suggestions for more research. The final component of the survey is followed by bibliographies of the study. This

chapter will also make recommendations for potential new lines of inquiry that have been made available by examining Derridean ideas and graphic novels.

Above all, the research objectives were thoughtfully crafted to provide new insights and new knowledge about the subject matter being studied. It has worked to achieve these goals along this voyage by attempting to examine the nuances, patterns, and relationships within our subject matter. The utilisation of the deconstructive approach has facilitated the process of making well-informed comparisons, resulting in major contributions to the current body of knowledge through insightful observations and insights. Furthermore, the importance of this study needs to be taken into account. The results have wider ramifications in addition to improving our grasp of the topic. These ramifications go beyond the purview of this thesis and may have an impact on upcoming studies and real-world applications. Our research has the potential to influence industrial practices, policy creation, and decision-making processes.

This final chapter summarises the significance of a research journey. It has meticulously condensed the key concepts and themes from our in-depth investigation. Although these results have been discussed in more detail in previous chapters, this one unifies them into a coherent story. One of the main goals of research is to stimulate further questions in addition to providing new information. In keeping with this idea, it makes suggestions for additional study. These recommendations are predicated on the opportunities and gaps our study has revealed. For academics and researchers who want to expand on this work and explore the subject matter further, this research offers a path forward. The study's final portion contains bibliographies that attest to the extensive corpus of literature that has influenced knowledge and directed research.

Chapter 1

Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil: Making of the Graphic Novelists

Indian English prose, poetry, fiction, and drama have emerged as established literary genres and have fortified their lasting quality and popularity with the sands of time and given birth to prominent writers with their outstanding works. However, Indian graphic fiction is constrained to a smaller audience, and its recognition is still wanting. Indian graphic novelists have not been able to transport the depth and sanctity of their much-admired works to a larger audience. The graphic novel as a genre has evolved over history. Its history is as lucrative as the genre itself today. The earliest origins of graphic art can be found in diversified historical, artistic, and cultural guides. A plethora of graphic designs of ancient animals can be found in epic narratives, sculpted out of stone centuries ago. Also, similar art was done in various parts of the world in ancient times. Some are found in Chauvet cave, in the south of France, about 30,000 BC, and some in the rocks of Bhimbetka in India, about 7000 BC. It is in this history escorted by writing, which came into existence in 3000-4000 BC, that the foundation of this unique art lies down.

The novel, written in graphic form, tells stories in a fascinating way. It uses words and pictures to make wonderful images that help in generating valuable lessons for the readers. In other words, graphic fiction uses the amalgamation of the aspects of “graphic” and “novel” to form a meaningful text. We continually find ourselves fenced by visual stimuli along with movies and various broadcasts over television and have learnt a habit to correlate pictures with storytelling, to track and comprehend a story more visually and not textually, with ocular inklings delivering the framework for a better and smoother interpretation. Thus, there is no denying the growing popularity of graphic novels in recent times. In an essay published in the November 1964 issue of the comics fanzine *Capa-Alpha*, Richard Kyle created the term graphic novel. However, Will Eisner is the person who first popularised the term to discriminate his book *A Contract with God* (1974) from his very famous comic strip *The Spirit*. He gave his own definition of graphic novels, in which he defined them as composed of sequential art – an array of ocular demonstrations that, when perceived

in a proper sequence, tell a meaningful story. From that moment on, the definition of graphic novel has been transformed into almost a very sober topic of discussion.

Eisner cites Tom Wolf in the beginning section of his book *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985), who had encapsulated the following in the Harvard Educational Review (August 1977):

For the last hundred years, the subject of reading has been connected quite directly to the concept of literacy; . . . learning to read . . . has meant learning to read words. . . . But . . . reading has gradually come under closer scrutiny. Recent research has shown that the reading of words is but a subset of a much more general human activity which includes symbol decoding, information integration and organization. . . . Indeed, reading – in the most general sense – can be thought of as a form of perceptual activity. The reading of words is one manifestation of this activity; but there are many others – the reading of pictures, maps, circuit diagrams, musical notes . . . (8).

Assertedly, graphic narratives attain impetus through several readings of ocular demonstrations along with text, which stresses the role of the reader in the art of storytelling. Graphic novels are defined by Hillary Chute in her article “Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative” as “hybrid word and image form in which two narrative tracks, one verbal one visual, register temporality spatially” (452). These types of novels “move forward in time through the space of the page, through its progressive play of presence and absence: the packed panels (also called frames) alternating with the gutters or empty space” (452), building solidity in the narrative.

Chute reiterates that a graphic novel possesses a “highly textured narrative scaffolding” (452) and does not merely amalgamate the visual and verbal elements, nor does it utilise one to merely illustrate the other; instead, it frequently presents these components asynchronously. Consequently, a reader must not only bridge the gaps between the panels but also engage with the often-disjointed interplay of reading and viewing to derive meaning. When one meticulously ponders whether a comic book features all in all or a graphic novel, one discerns how “the deployment of its unique elements takes on the characteristics of a language” (Eisner 7). They generally

convey the story in a language that counts on an optical experience familiar to its composer and audience. Present-day readers have become completely habituated to apprehend the meaning of this image-word wizardry in an extremely similar way to the traditional interpretation of a text. The artists have been attempting to develop the interaction of images and words in the narratives of this genre. They sought to validate the importance of graphic novels and comics by delving deep into the creative lessons they provide to readers across the world. They have, in so doing, enjoyed a notable successful blending of ocular demonstration and prose.

Graphic novels are an end result of the highly acclaimed comic book world. Despite the fact that comics are an interesting read, they never succeeded in earning the status of principle literature. Earlier, comics were regarded as trash, but as the genre became popular, that vantage point lost power. Graphic novelists' efforts were producing successful returns. Will Eisner's graphic novel *A Contract with God* (1978) was the first-ever novel that was published under the category of graphic novels, and thenceforth, graphic novels are recognised as a prominent part of literature and even started to be awarded literary prizes. Furthermore, in *Understanding Comics*, we find Scott McCloud differentiating comics as a mode, having the potential to chart surplus stories and disentangle them from their repression by the celebrated superhero genre. While doing this, McCloud enlarged the magnificent past and cultural aspects for understanding comics and graphic novels, giving examples from the old traditions and comparing them with tapestries from the Middle Ages. Scott's main concern in this book is the terminology connected with the art of the graphic novel – the usage of the gutter and the lines and colour, the concept of time and space, etc. McCloud put his theory into practice by creating the very first graphic novel in the history of this genre. In *Understanding Comics* (1993), Scott McCloud traces the graphics in earlier centuries: "Here's the complete scene painted over thirty-two centuries ago for the tomb of 'Menna,' an ancient Egyptian scribe. As would be done 2700 years later in Mexico, the Egyptians read their comics zig-zag. Going up this time!" (14).

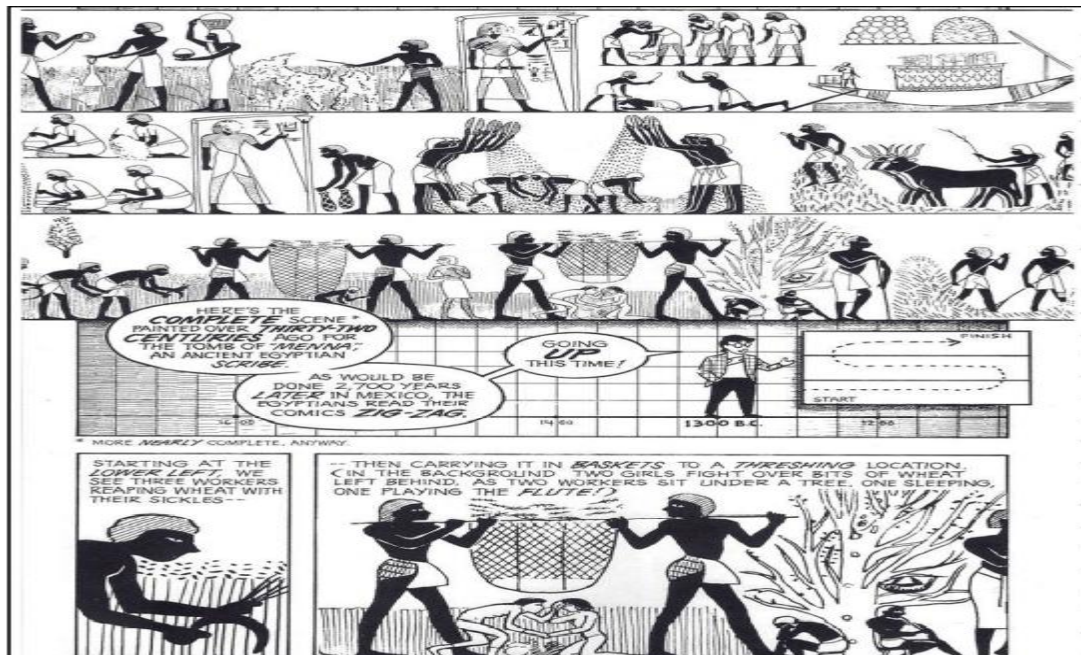


Figure 1.1: Scott McCloud. *Understanding Comics*, 14

There may be plenty of stories coupled with hieroglyphics that cave paintings have expressed. In the medieval era, the artists created tapestries and illustrated manuscripts that aided in unfolding narratives:

France produced the strikingly similar work we call the Bayeux Tapestry. This 230 foot long tapestry details the Norman Conquest of England, beginning in 1066, . . . As with the Mexican Codex, there are no Panel Borders per se, but there are clear divisions of scene by subject matter (McCloud12-13).

After the world was facilitated by the development of the printing press, this creative and brand-new form of art, which happened to be the diversion red herring of the prosperous and influential, could be retrieved by the masses. McCloud mentions William Hogarth's role in developing the genre of the graphic novel and his immense contribution to take it to the heights of popularity with his famous book *A Harlot's Progress* (1731), in which he has highlighted the social issues of the day.



Figure 1.2: Scott McCloud. *Understanding Comics*, 17

William Blake is another western artist who profoundly used ocular demonstrations in works such as his prophetic book *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790). This book was published as printed sheets from engraved plates accommodating text. The panels below demonstrate how William Blake's remarkable work can be considered a forerunner to modern-day graphic novels.



Figure 1.3: William Blake. *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, The Voice of the Devil

Graphic novels have a different history in the late twentieth century. Hillary Chute in her article “Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative” notes that a major “part of the impetus came from a vital underground publishing community that wanted works with greater impact in the medium of comics: the first public use of the phrase, by Richard Kyle, was in a 1964 newsletter circulated to members of Amateur Press Association, and the term was subsequently borrowed by Bill Spicer in his fanzine *Graphic Story World*. Many think Will Eisner invented the term because he used it in a more commercial context ... *A Contract with God* (1978) was the first book marketed as a ‘graphic novel’” (453). With the passage of time, we find a huge shift in the focus of comics regarding their subject matter; the trauma of the modern era in American culture is commonly portrayed in comics of the mid-twentieth century. As Chute explains, “[C]omics bridged the experimentalism of literary and visual modernisms and mass-produced American popular culture” (456). It can be

stated that the much talked about graphic novels of contemporary times are the product of these roots. The graphic novelists of the modern era refuse to be contained in some kind of traditional structure and are increasingly venturing into themes that are structurally political in their tone. By nature, these novelists are trying to be innovative with respect to non-fictional works that “explored social and political realities by stretching the boundaries of a historically mass medium” (456).

The present-day graphic novelists have gone up to the point where they have proved beyond doubt that their novels can afford not to be vague and complex; instead, they can be plain and sophisticated simultaneously. The quality of the matter of their novels can be on par with the conventional novels. The characters and themes of these novels are particularly noteworthy. They have tried to bring a diverse set of subjects that regularly knock on the door of the modern era. The authors have tried their best to deal with the societal themes in their pure forms within their works, such as violence, nuclear threats, biodiversity, ecology, revolutions, child abuse, science and technology, globalisation, and diplomacy. The present thesis tries to capture the themes mentioned above and lay bare their effect on society.

Underground Comics: The Roots of Graphic Fiction

Before graphic novels, we had comics, a genre that was regarded as a non-serious literary genre. Comics never succeeded in gaining the proper impetus in the field of literature. They were always called and comprehended as trivial texts that could only provide entertainment to young readers. There was no investigation into them. They were not subject to serious discussion. Length is the main factor that can be implied as to the distinction between graphic novels and comics. The book-length comics are called graphic novels. Comics used to come out in instalments or serialisation form. It is in the comics that the graphic novel genre has its roots, more specifically, underground comics. Underground comics were extremely sexual and violent. In short, they were dealing with things that were obscene in nature. Some of the best examples of older comics were *Action Comics* (containing Superman), *Detective Comics* (including Batman), *The Amazing Spiderman*, *Captain America*, *The Fantastic Four*, *The Hulk*, *X-Men*, and so on. Earlier comics’ most prominent

artist was, undoubtedly, Robert Crumb, but there were innovative writers who played a part in Crumb's work, *Zap*, including Bill Griffith, Gilbert Shelton, Rick Griffin, and S. Clay Wilson. A judicial decision around 1973 brought the underground comic market to a halt. Any police officer would be able to arrest business holders for trading in vulgar stock as a result of this judgment. As a result, many small publishers were compelled to close their doors, and the underground market shrank dramatically.

The major underground publishers adopted a different distribution strategy known as the direct market system, which dominated the entire comic book market until the early 1990s. Another comics heavyweight arrived on the scene, excessively instigated by Crumb and Eisner. Art Spiegelman, the future writer of the apogee of the graphic novel, *Maus*. Spiegelman began his career in the 1970s with the publication of *Arcade, the Comics Revue*, a comics magazine issued between 1975 and 1976. To undertake more exploratory work, Spiegelman and his future wife, Francoise Mouly, founded *Raw* (1981), a new comics magazine that featured artist-writers such as Bill Griffith, illustrator Gary Panter, and Charles Burns, who would go on to achieve success for his work *Black Hole* (2005). They were the predecessors of graphic novels, paving the way to the themes, style, and narrative structure. A notable thought must be drawn to the transformations that occurred in both the comic books and the comic book markets so that it is possible to understand the progress of graphic novels. In earlier times, comic books were used to be sold to news vendors, or temporary news stalls, where newspapers and comic books were used to be displayed. The news vendors used to order more copies of comic books than could be sold, and there was the tradition of giving the unsold copies back to the publishing houses. This tradition was unfriendly to the publishers since the burden of unsold copies was put on them. But later, a fine solution was found by the publishers. They started selling their comic books to comic book shops that were mainly set up for the selling of comic books.

Now the burden of unsold copies shifted on the shoulders of the shopkeepers, which gave a sense of relief to the publishing houses. Now a time arrived in the comic book market when a large number of independent publishers started to emerge and

tried their hands in this field. In order to compete with the big publishing houses, they had to be distinguished in their art style. In an attempt to succeed in this field, they started reflecting contemporary societal issues into their comic books. Their subject matters were completely new and experimental in the comic book market. Introducing new themes in comic books led this genre to new heights, and now the comic books started to come with good length. These book-length comics came to known as graphic novels. Will Eisner was the first person to call his book-length comic *A Contract with God* a graphic novel. Since then, graphic novels have gained the status of serious literature. The concept of the graphic novel expanded outside comic stores and into the book sector with the release of such works. Since 2000, there has been another wave of graphic works that are distinguished from those of the 1980s and 1990s by their length and lack of authority from underground comics. *Jimmy Corrigan: the Smartest Kid on Earth* (2000) by Chris Ware, *Persepolis* (2000) by Marjane Satrapi, *Blankets* (2003) by Craig Thompson, and more are examples.

Situating Indian Graphic Novels within Global Graphic Narratives

The rise of graphic novels as a prominent literary and visual genre has prompted academics to study the medium in various national and cultural contexts. In this sense, comparing Indian graphic novels to those from other countries reveal both similar storytelling techniques and unique viewpoints. While graphic novels all across the world combine textual narrative with visual art, Indian graphic novels frequently modify this format to represent the nation's varied cultural traditions, socioeconomic complexity, and historical experiences. By showing how these narratives interact with and reinterpret a globally recognised medium, this comparative paradigm aids in placing Indian works within a larger global discourse.

Global graphic novel traditions have a long history of experimenting with theme inquiry, narrative organisation, and visual aesthetics, specifically those originating from Western contexts. These narratives often use creative visual storytelling approaches to explore topics like social justice, remembrance, political strife, and personal identity. While the themes of Indian graphic novels are similar, they are frequently approached via culturally particular lenses, referencing local

history, mythology, and indigenous storytelling traditions. Indian graphic storytelling thus offers distinctive viewpoints that broaden the thematic and artistic parameters of the worldwide graphic book form. The connection between representation and history is another crucial aspect of this comparison. Using the medium's capacity to contrast images and words to produce potent emotional and interpretative effects, many international graphic novels use visual narration to address historical trauma and political events. In a similar vein, subjects including imperial past, postcolonial identity, ethnic conflicts, and social discrimination are often explored in Indian graphic novels. These narratives offer alternate forms of historical representation that go against traditional textual history by fusing narrative commentary with visual symbolism.

Additionally, while retaining a strong sense of local distinctiveness, the artistic diversity of Indian graphic novels indicates a dialogue with international inspirations. Inspired by contemporary culture, folk motifs, and classic Indian art forms, graphic novelists frequently combine these visual aspects with methods related to global graphic storytelling. This synthesis shows how Indian authors assert unique narrative voices based on local realities while also actively participating in the growing worldwide traditions. The creation and reception of graphic novels demonstrate significant distinctions between Indian and International traditions in addition to thematic and creative similarities. This genre is now frequently researched in academic institutions and has steadily earned acceptance as a valid literary form in many Western nations. The development of a robust market and readership for graphic narratives has been aided by publishers, literary festivals, and academic discourses. The Indian tradition of graphic novels, on the other hand, is quite new and is still developing. The medium still maintains a developing niche within the larger Indian literary landscape, despite the fact that it has become more visible because of independent publishers and cultural efforts. This distinction draws attention to the difficulties and possibilities Indian graphic authors encounter while trying to attract a larger readership.

Globally, graphic novels use a variety of artistic approaches, ranging from abstract or experiments illustration to extremely realistic realism. Indian graphic novels frequently use visual elements from traditional Indian forms while also drawing influence from similar international techniques. The unique style that results from this amalgamation shows the hybrid character of modern Indian culture, where regional customs integrate with worldwide cultural flows. The combination of visual imagery and verbal narration is one of the most important commonalities between Indian graphic novels and other graphic novel traditions around the world. In these situations, narrative captions, conversation, and visuals work together to create a multimodal form of expression that is distinct from traditional prose literature. Compared to language alone, this combination enables creators to convey complex emotions, and symbolic meanings more successfully. Consequently, both Indian and International graphic novels show how visual storytelling may enhance narrative engagement and offer readers a multifaceted interpretive experience. This common interest in current issues emphasizes graphic genre's function as a medium that addresses universal human experiences beyond regional boundaries.

Similarities can also be found in narrative experimentation. In many cultures, graphic novelists often experiment with numerous perspectives, fragmented storylines, and non-linear storytelling. These cutting-edge narrative strategies are also used by Indian graphic novelists to improve storytelling and delve into difficult subjects. Because of the graphic novel format's adaptable structure, authors can create narratives that seamlessly transition between the past and present or between reality and fantasy by manipulating time, memory, and place inside the visual frame. The creative potential that the graphic medium provides to storytellers worldwide is demonstrated by this experimentation. Additionally, the significance of visual symbolism and metaphor is emphasised in both Indian and international graphic narrative traditions. To convey deeper meaning within the story, artists frequently employ symbolic imagery, colour patterns, and recurrent visual motifs. These visual techniques aid in communicating thematic concepts, cultural allusions, and emotional states that could otherwise go unnoticed. Similar symbolic tactics are used in Indian graphic novels, which frequently include culturally significant imagery and motifs

that appeal to readers. While enabeling diverse traditions to convey their distinct cultural viewpoints, this common use of symbolism upholds the universality of visual narrative.

Lastly, another resemblance between Indian and international traditions is the growing acceptance of graphic novels as a significant literary and artistic genre. Graphic tales are becoming a significant topic of scholarly research and literary discourse, transcending their previous relationship with popular amusement. Like their international counterparts, Indian graphic novels are currently being studied in literary studies for their cultural significance, inventive visuals, and intricate storylines. The ability of graphic novels to tackle difficult social, historical, and cultural subjects through an integrated visual and textual medium is highlighted by this growing recognition, which also reflects the growing role of graphic novels in contemporary literature. When considered collectively, the contrast between Indian and international graphic novel traditions highlights the genre's flexibility and adaptability. The evolution of visual storytelling in India has been influenced by the world, but Indian novelists have also added fresh viewpoints and creative techniques that enhance the global graphic genre. Indian graphic novels continue to broaden the scope of graphic literature and validate the genre's potential as a formidable form of artistic and cultural expression through its engagement with regional histories, cultural customs, and current social challenges.

Graphic fiction in India

The stone architecture of India, highly visible in Mamallapuram in Tamil Nadu, depicts the ancient epics very vividly. The Arjun's penance and the Shore Temple are perfect examples in this regard. The five raths, symbolising the five Pandavas, are the epitome of graphic art. They showcase the history of the Pandavas visually. The rock-cut Bhimbetka Caves of Madhya Pradesh portray the earliest known graphic art in India. They may be minuscule in their artistic merit, but they portray the day-to-day activities of the people of that time. People hunting in groups, mothers rearing children, and animals escaping the hunters can be safely said to be the start of graphic fiction. These people painted their own lives and passed them on to

their future generations as history. The illustrations on these caves show humans hunting, dancing, etc. The world-famous Indus Valley civilisation cannot be missed here. The seals of the Indus Valley civilisation and the philosophy behind them show the evolution of graphic fiction in India. The majestic mural paintings at Ajanta and Ellora in Maharashtra, painted with great technology, eloquently represent Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu mythology. The richest source of art and craft, arguably, can be said to be the Jataka Stories embedded on the Toranas of the mysterious Stupas found all around the country.



Figure 1.4: Evrard, Alain. "Artwork From Ajanta Caves, India." 2018, fineartamerica, <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/artwork-from-ajanta-caves-india-alain-evrard.html>

Talking about medieval India, the Mughals were the epitome of art and craft. The miniature paintings, especially during the reign of Jahangir, are of immense importance when it comes to the inspiration behind modern graphic art. The

architecture of the monuments of the Sultanate era (minars, tombs, mosques, etc.) that borrowed heavily from Persia influences the artists of all avenues to date. The splendour of Mughal architecture, most notable during the rule of Shah Jahan, finds its reflection in the art and craft of modern-day graphic narratives. One also cannot overlook the significance of the regional schools of painting, for instance, Rajput School, and Pahari School, in developing visual art. These regional and folk paintings have a rich history behind them. The colours used, the painters, and the themes of these paintings reflect the folklore and local traditions across the country. The colonial legacy in the form of buildings, most notably seen in New Delhi, is the latest edition that led to the wide range of graphic art in India.

One thing that people of India do right from their ancient history till today with utmost perfection and zeal is the art of telling stories. Indians have absorbed this trait into their culture. So much so that the south Indian temples narrate the glorious epics on their walls. As seen in the interesting seals of the Indus Valley civilisation, Indians had a tradition much before the introduction of epics and mythologies of narrating and expressing things in the form of stories. The Pashupati seal found at Mohenjo-Daro is no less vivid in its posture. It (depiction of proto-Shiva and few animals around him) proves that the society of the Indus Valley civilisation was agro-pastoral in nature. Thus, we can rightfully conclude that storytelling has been a part of our culture right from the Indus Valley civilization. However, epics and mythologies may be regarded as the next level of storytelling. There is hardly any exception to the fact that all of us as Indians have been hearing about the mesmerising beauty of heaven and the deadly punishment of hell. We have therefore picturised religion, spirituality, morality, and what not based on these stories. The graphic art form, therefore, is embedded in our minds.

Considering the above-mentioned facts, it was imperative for India to be ahead of others in graphic art. Anant Pai's *Amar Chitra Katha*'s coming before *Maus* (1980) is the manifestation of this long-held tradition. Anant Pai began the *Amar Chitra Katha* Comics series in 1967. He is rightfully referred to as the father of Indian comics since he started a comic revolution in India. By demonstrating various stories

and characters from Indian mythology, religion, history, and politics, he revealed to Indians the path to their roots. Despite the fact that these are the origins of graphic fiction in India, graphic novels did not evolve out of these origins but from comic strips.

History of Comic Strips in India

A graphic novel is another form of the comic strip, an amalgamation of pictures and words. Comic strips are of short length and mostly published in magazines and newspapers in the form of series. A book-length comic strip is regarded as a graphic novel. Comic strips first arrived in India by the mid of 1950s, shaped by Western literature. Indian comic artists were heavily influenced by Western comic artists, and they started translating western comic strips such as *Tarzan*, *Phantom*, and *Mandrake*. These translated versions of western comic strips gained much success in India. However, the progress of Indian comic strips took an interesting turn in the 1960s. Anant Pai, a provident figure with a good publishing record, produced a comic version of Indian mythology in his highly successful newspaper series *Amar Chitra Katha*. E. Dawson Varughese, in his book, *Visuality and Identity in Post-Millennial Indian Graphic Narratives* (2018), writes, “*The Amar Chitra Katha* series was introduced in 1967, and the publications concerned themselves with Indian epics as well as the Puranas (stories of Hanuman, Lord Krishna) and Tales from the *Upanishads*” (6).

Anant Pai was aware of the fact that Indian children, particularly in the metropolis, had no knowledge and interest in Indian mythology. He found Indian urban parents failed to teach their children the important lessons of Indian mythology. He got the urge to rectify that scenario. Consequently, in 1967, he created the comic strip series *Amar Chitra Katha*. This initiative of Anant Pai was much admired in India, and its scope expanded to fables and folklore, Sanskrit literature, and biographies of famous personalities. The series was translated into a number of regional languages and traded from one end to the other of India. They are easily available online, and their electronic versions can also be found in the market. Indian parents and teachers always rejected the comics for the reason that they killed the

language skills of their children and were lacking seriousness and are light in tone. But with the commencement of *Amar Chitra Katha*, they recognised their academic importance. Instead of scholarly research and totally established on a highly accepted historical approach, comics make children aware and increase their interest in India's prosperous historical legacy. Events related to bloodshed and fights were showcased in a light manner. They were Indianised comics with more local themes. As stated by illustrator Subir Roy, Anant Pai normally used "flat" colours in *Amar Chitra Katha*, that is, in the absence of tonal changes (248). Yet, the other details, like mythological, historical, or contemporary, were present there. All these features of this work forced parents and teachers to admire and appreciate it.

Modern Graphic Novels

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines the term modern as "of or relating to recent times or the present." Hence, graphic novels are modern in the sense that they are dealing with present concerns. Graphic novelists are nowadays more interested in raising current sociological issues and looking for solutions to contemporary problems. Varughese writes, "In the context of India, the growing number of independent comic and graphic novel presses, the diverse and challenging array of narratives as well as the quality of production and print have meant that Indian graphic novels are unrecognizable when compared to the *Amar Chitra Katha* works of the 1970s and 80s, not least in their content and the narrating of ideas of Indianness" (*Visuality and Identity* 7). They can be seen highlighting environmental problems, issues related to terrorism, etc. The vanguard of modern graphic novels in India is Orijit Sen. Orijit Sen is a much renowned graphic artist of Indian origin. He is often said to have written the first graphic novel of Indian literature, *River of Stories*, produced in 1994: "Orijit Sen's *River of Stories* (1994) is often hailed as the first Indian graphic novel. It engaged with the environmental, social and political issues around the controversial Narmada Dam Project" (7). The 62-page long story focuses on the traditions of the indigenous people who have settled on the banks of the Narmada River for several centuries. The work sheds light on the Narmada River project and how it has impacted the environment and displaced the people inhabiting its banks.

The graphic novels of the present age, however, go beyond the conventional themes of history. These novels now focus more on social issues, terrorism, environment and ecology, science and technology, etc.: “From level 10 Comics’ *Odayan* selling at rupees 180 to Banerjee’s weighty *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* at rupees 500, the graphic narratives market is a layered one, inviting readers to engage with a range of ideas, critiques and notions of Indian identity” (9). The wide field of graphic fiction has emerged as a colour palette that provides us with a great variety of colours and amalgamations of all types. Like all other areas of writing, this genre of fiction has too experienced novelisation. The reputation of graphic novels has revived the passing of comic culture. Aniruddha Sen Gupta, within the presentation area of the magazine *Marg* Dec 2014 issue, asserts:

In India, particularly, comics are particularly poised. We’re a country with a rich, strong tradition of storytelling through images. Visual narrative forms are perhaps more diverse (like everything else) here than anywhere else in the world. In the friezes of temples, the rock faces of caves, the borders of saris, the mud wall of homes, the bark of trees, the plates of copper, the crackling surfaces of dried palm leaves – in such diverse media have our traditional artists and storytellers found the vessels for their offerings. In a country where the written word is not within the grasp of many, pictures and spoken words have formed the channels through which stories have flowed from era to era. (14)

Graphic novelists across many countries realise what is broadly seen to be an accepted group of circumstances. These circumstances incorporate the development of social ponders and intrigue works, which have given a strong setting and a want of researchers dispersed over disciplines to perceive and connect with one another. In expansion to this seen circumstance, most researchers of graphic novels would likely go so distant as to concur that they assume joint goals, among them the authorisation of graphic fiction as an area of study, the improvement of assets for advance enquiries about, and the trade of thoughts significant to particular regions or ventures. At long last, these seen circumstances and goals have driven explanatory reactions that can be epitomised as endeavours to place graphic novels and their study vis-à-vis an unused,

uncertain, or different audience and/or bewildered recognition of the area's modern and immediate respectability.

The graphic novelists would not have located a reasonable stage to grandstand their gifts without popular publishers like Harper Collins, and Campfire Novels to title some who have opened doors to them and helped to unchain themselves from traditions and allow a mouthpiece to their eagerness and also creative impulses. Producing something latest and diverse is just like a puzzle, particularly in a nation as big as India, where nearly each person possesses a totally specific sort of belief system. A few of the Indian graphic novels have, moreover, made outstanding use of cultural and folk traditions. As an example, Gond art, which is an ancient art form of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha, has been utilised by the artists in Srividya Natarajan's *Bhimayana* to delineate Ambedkar's involvement and battle as a Dalit in the Indian social community. Meghan Maier in her article, "*Bhimayana*: Thirst for Khulla" finds that graphic novelists "combine text and images to discuss social and political issues and deliver this information to the reader in the quickest, most descriptive way possible. Graphic novels allow authors to provide their readers with a multi-sensory slap in the face. The combination of picture and text forces the reader to come face to face with the social issues these authors are portraying" (2).

Addressing such themes through the medium of graphic novels motivates graphic novelists to talk about strange subjects also, and that too without the fear of harsh criticism. This can do a lot in bringing such subjects in reference to the readers who have not got the opportunity to be exposed to such subjects because of traditional narratives. Indian literature has a plethora of other great artists who have worked in this field and have gained much popularity with their ground-breaking works that can be classified as graphic novels. One such writer is Varud Gupta, who in his award-winning graphic novel *Chhotu* has beautifully portrayed the trauma of partition and the several different aspects of pain and suffering during the partition days. It unveils the enmity between the two religious' sects – Muslims and Hindus. The novel not

only focuses on a traditional Hindu boy but also how the partition affects his relationship and how the two lovers are separated in their way of life.

Delhi Calm by Vishwajyoti Ghosh centres around three Marxist friends who are staunch followers of The Prophet and aspire to reform the nature of the country's political scenario, fraud, and duplicity. The novel depicts 1975 Delhi, when the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had put emergency all over India, with the help of an amalgamation of fact and fiction. *Hush* by Prateek Thomas perfectly summarises the evils of child abuse and barbarity. The novel chronicles the life of a little school-going girl, Maya, and illustrates a gun battle in her school. It showcases the anger of the teenage generation in times of social chaos in India. *Kashmir Pending* by two outstanding artists, Saurabh Singh and Naseer Ahmed, is the portrayal of the struggling life of Kashmiris. The novel uses the technique of multiple narrators, but most of the incidents are seen from the perspective of a militant who is locked up in jail. *Ramayan 3392 A.D.* written by Shamik Dasgupta and illustrated by Jeevan Kang is a series that features a dystopian future. It showcases the time when only a few human beings are left on earth fighting with demons for their survival. Rama is a prince and the protagonist of this series. He is leading the war against the demons who have usurped the earth.

Devi is a graphic series that is based on the myth of Durga. Devi is the protagonist of this novel. She is a fighter sent on earth by the supreme creator to kill the Bala in the second century. Bala, in present times, rose again, and Devi had to come back to kill him. She was reincarnated as Tara Mehta. This series is written by a number of writers, principally Siddharth Kotian, Samit Basu, and Saurav Mohapatra. It is written by Shekhar Kapur and Virgin Comics and illustrated by Mukesh Singh, Aditya Chari, and Saumin Patel. *Ravanayan* is a long series that retells the tale of Ravana from the Holy Tale of Ramayana. The series features Ravana as the main protagonist. This series completely deviates from the original story of the Ramayana as it portrays Ravana as a good looking and physically strong man. This series is written by Vijayendra Mohanty and illustrated by Vivek Goel. *Bhimayana* is a graphic biography of Bhimrao Ambedkar. It focuses on Ambedkar's fight against

class discrimination. Untouchability is an ancient practice of rejecting people of a specific social caste and prohibiting them various rights of basic lifestyle by isolating them from the majority. The book discusses the themes of the social caste system in India, particularly untouchability. A sharp ray of light is also thrown on its negative and unfavourable consequences.

Among this universe of writers, Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil have demonstrated to be critical and productive writers who have carved out a specialty for themselves as their works are sincere exertion to move from the outside world into the inward world of people: “Following the entry of early work by Orijit Sen and Banerjee’s *Corridor* (2004) and *The Barn Owl’s Wondrous Capers* (2007) into the Indian graphic novel market, momentum around the ‘Indian’ graphic novel began to build” (Varughese, *Visuality and Identity* 9). Graphic novels in India have an unstable and short history. The genre acquired broad acknowledgement only after the coming of Banerjee’s 2004 graphic work *Corridor*. In an interview, “Sarnath Banerjee: The Full Texture of a City,” with Sarnath Banerjee, Ratik Asokan states that *Corridor*’s “cosmopolitan sensibility” straight away addresses the learnt young generation of the nation and a city full of “roadside hustlers and garish billboards, of liberated college students and their conservative landlords, of trendy parties and shady markets” (Banerjee)

Sarnath Banerjee

Sarnath Banerjee, a renowned Indian artist who has published numerous works, acknowledges illustrated albums for his growth and development as a successful storyteller. He is a forty-six-year-old Berlin-based writer-illustrator who came to recognition in 2004 with the release of his debut work in the field of graphic art, *Corridor*. Sarnath Banerjee is a fun-loving individual who thrives on spontaneity. He lives in his brain; therefore, he plays with the minds of his readers. He records minds rather than facts and displays them in a blend of dry humour, subliminal satire, and a mostly grey-scale cosmos. He is known around the world for his unusual comic novels about the rapid changes in Indian society. Banerjee had the influence of European, Japanese, and American literature and art during the initial phase of his

career. However, when he acquired knowledge of pictorial manuscripts, he sensed that the comprehensibility of pictures, which was the soul and spirit of Indo-Persian manuscripts, was the perfect model he was looking for. Banerjee is a revolutionary and highly admired graphic novelist in India who acquired this position after publishing his first graphic novel, *Corridor*, in 2004.

The artist was born in Calcutta in 1972 and studied natural sciences. He graduated from Goldsmiths College in London with a master's degree in Image and Communication after studying biochemistry and is well known for his graphic novels. In conversation, he bounces actively from one subject to the next, much as he does in his works. Banerjee and his wife, Pakistani artist Bani Abidi, relocated to Berlin. They had previously lived in New Delhi, but the political tensions between India and Pakistan had a direct impact on Abidi's artistic career, as evidenced by the Indian authorities' travel restrictions. When the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) welcomed Abidi to Berlin for a one-year fellowship, it arrived at the perfect time. The couple planned to fly to Berlin together and remain in the city for a while. In his drawings, Banerjee portrays the world in a basic, straightforward, and accurate manner. His art focuses on breaking free from the confines of closed structures. His protagonists are regular life curators. Analysing Banerjee's *Corridor* (2004) and *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* (2007), Sandten finds how these graphic narratives portray "new urban lifestyles" and "rediscover and even reinvent the city's historicity through diverse forms of urban culture" (512).

Banerjee studied visual communications at Goldsmiths College and exercised the work of a documentary filmmaker before becoming unsatisfied with the mode because he was fascinated in the harmonious intricacies of day-to-day life, while television administrative wanted him to produce films about big themes. He mentions in the interview, "Sarnath Banerjee: The Full Texture of a City," that after becoming engrossed in graphic fiction as a genre that would encourage him to "create the full texture of a city, an encyclopaedia of characters" (Banerjee), Banerjee trained himself to draw with the support of Orijit Sen. Banerjee's books explore transient and spatial regions, luxuriously decorated with detailing of the political, historical, societal,

traditional, and cultural background of the era. Recollections of his boyhood went through in thickly inhabited places of Kolkata; his training time spent in academic organisations, research, and residency abroad are carefully reflected by him in his handwritten folios. Banerjee's sketches are certainly, established in his neighbourhood encounters. Still, his experiences in the world help him in weaving a rich film of divided thoughts into a pastiche of interlinked pictures and dialogues. Banerjee has authored five works released by Penguin and Harper Collins. While he uses different styles in different books, Asokan states that Banerjee's subjects of discussion have never changed: "Time and again, he delves into the psyche of middle-class India -- that fraught zone of consumerist aspiration, post-colonial angst, and conservative leaning -- and emerges with reports on its citizens' yearnings and fears" (Banerjee).

Banerjee's debut graphic novel, *Corridor*, was hailed as the country's first graphic novel when it came out in 2004. It is about the clients of a second-hand bookstall in the colonial corridors of Connaught Place in Delhi. In actuality, Orijit Sen's 1994 book *The River of Stories*, which chronicles the contentious establishment of dams on the Narmada River, deserves that honour. Sen's book, on the other hand, came out with the support of an environmental organisation and had a restricted distribution and audience, whereas Banerjee's works had a far broader audience and so gave life and energy to a rising lot of Indian graphic novelists. *Corridor* focuses on the fractured truth of life in Indian metropolitan cities. Banerjee encapsulates the attributes of lethargy, estrangement, and sexual impulses strolling through the passages of Connaught Place, Delhi and the populated places of contemporary Kolkata, his birthplace. It is largely a glimpse inside the complicated inner lives of a few people. Jahangir Rangoonwalla owns a second-hand bookshop there, in the dingy by-lanes of Connaught Place. He considers himself an anecdote, knowledge, and tea distributor. Jahangir Rangoonwalla thinks of his second-hand bookshop as the center of the universe. The novel portrays different interlinked stories whose most remarkable characters are Digital Dutta and Brighu. Banerjee depicts the anxiety of living in congruence with notions of an evolving world by showing the male characters.

In his second novel, *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* (2007), Banerjee introduces the audience to an indecent sketchy past of Kolkata, from its establishment by Charnock to the contemporary day roads and passages, still crowded with occultists and idiosyncratic people. The novel depicts the susceptibility of the evolving city of Kolkata regarding the sexual tales and peculiarities of the elites, the coloniser masters, and the colonised zamindars alike. The author uses panels, viewing angles, speech bubbles, and a constantly changing point of view to generate a juxtaposition of old and modern urbanity and perversity. In the first initial pages of the second narrative in Banerjee's novel, "The Dark Armpits of History," Banerjee chose to give attention to the common English soldier in a major number of the panels. One panel displays a highborn character, and the Reverend Long is depicted in another. The story begins with two enormous panels showing demise in eighteenth century Calcutta: one depicts vultures in the periphery of European palaces, while the other depicts Christian tombstones in a cemetery.

With stops at Walter Benjamin's library, the burial of the Bengali poet Michael Madhusudan Dutt, and a London bar, it jumps over the years from Lubeck, 1601, through St. Albans Abbey, 1228, to modern Kolkata. The narrative also explains how Jobus Charnock established the city of Calcutta in the eighteenth century. J. Talboys Wheeler, notes in his 1878 book *Early Records of British India: A History of the English Settlements in India* that Mr. Charnock ruled with more power than a Raja: "only he wanted much of their humanity, for when any poor ignorant native transgressed his laws, they were sure to undergo a severe whipping for a penalty, and the execution was generally done when he was at dinner, so near his dining-room that the groans and cries of the poor delinquent served him for music" (189). However, Banerjee's writing is also replete with allusions to modern Indian culture. While talking about his interest in history, in the interview "Sarnath Banerjee: The Full Texture of a City" Banerjee said:

I'm interested in history because it's a discipline that requires a lot of effort from the imagination. You need to put in a lot of imaginative effort to figure out how people lived in an era that is not yours. And in that understanding of

people from a different era, I feel, is an important gateway into humanity. Because you understand human behavior. In order to understand humanity, history is important.

Banerjee's third graphic work, *The Harappa Files* (2011), records the description of the most dominating Harappa Rehabilitation, Reclamation & Redevelopment (GHRRR) Commission. Banerjee's novel significantly addresses problems of Indian urban life "through its reminiscence of past Indias" (Varughese, *Visuality and Identity* 51). The novel is composed of interconnected illustrations, strips, and pictures. The work is factually displayed as the concluding account of the fictitious institution known as the Greater Harappa Rehabilitation. Varughese writes, "The word *Harappa* makes reference to the Harappan Civilisation or the Indus Valley Civilisation, known for its industrious spirit, organized settlements and innovative 'urban' planning and therefore standing not only as a symbol of an older India (a pre-India located in Indus valley) but also as a symbol of a 'great' civilization" (51). In the interview, "Sarnath Banerjee: The Full Texture of a City," he claims, "I don't like direct comment. I'm not an activist-artist" (Banerjee). His novels centre on the issue of alters in climate, but they do not mainly talk about life after the destruction of the planet or the future on other planets. Rather, he satirises the contemporary world. While talking about this book in an interview, "Synthesis of Text and Image: Sarnath Banerjee's Graphic Fiction," with Dipanwita Donde, Banerjee said:

I wrote a book called Harappa Files, which was like a comprehensive encyclopaedia of people, things and places, which existed, because I knew there was a great change that was going to happen. This was written before the big neo-liberal leap that India made. I suddenly had this instinctive feeling then, that I should record everything. That, such 'types' of people also existed – a distributor of industrial solvents, emerging out of the subject of Chemistry, and hither-thither, somehow having passed his Chemical Engineering, started his own business, and then subsequently, either the business succeeded or failed; or a train allergy, Caluminex, which affected people only on particular trains, with the antidote being sold only on these trains, as the clientele was

already present; or, basically, tracing the indigenous modernity with which we grew up – and to write small, small forms comprising these memories and encounters. This was my first journey.

The various files that comprise the volume are organised into chapters. These things were purchased by the wealthy rather than the common man. Lifebuoy and Liril soaps were the prominent cleansers used by nobles and privileged-class communities, and entertainment such as sports were all emerging, and it was a spectacular finding to the common mass.

Banerjee's fourth graphic novel, *All Quiet in Vikaspuri*, was published in 2015 by Harper Collins India and depicts an anti-utopian future/present in which fresh water depletion in Delhi gives rise to brutal water warfare. In this graphic novel, he portrays the inhabitants of one of the most contaminated metro cities of India, Delhi, struggling with one another because of major water deficiencies activated by the unreliable behaviour of companies. Consequently, "the water table fell drastically, slimy ponds emerged everywhere" (11). Banerjee conveys that the water emergency is driven by India's social and political neglect of the environment. The novel shows the harmony that exists between Hindu culture and nature and brings out ridiculous public behaviour. The story concludes with the administration's commitment of the "equitable distribution of water" (141). Despite that, considering the set of elements, the coming times appear to be dark. Because India has been classified as a drought-prone country with an acute shortage of water, the graphic narrative is both an annotation of the current and a prognosis for the future. Fables, fantasy, epics, visual essays, and burlesque are among the narrative styles and motifs used. The comic can be interpreted as an anti-utopian account, an epic account, or a documentary graphic book; however, it is better viewed as a blend of these genres. This novel, like Banerjee's earlier novels, contains various mentions of Indian popular culture, regional episodes, and Delhi localities (such as Vikaspuri); therefore, certain allusions may be difficult to comprehend for overseas viewers. It is a conscious decision to stay close to home. Banerjee remarked in the interview, "Sarnath Banerjee: The Full Texture of a City," that he asked himself, "Do I want to become a bridge maker, do I

want my culture to be understood by the west? I have no intentions of doing such things. I'm fine being a little strange to a non-western audience.”

Doab Dil is Banerjee's fifth graphic novel. Gardening, wandering, night, history, libraries, and even a truly affecting piece on sleeplessness are all explored in the book. A brief appearance by Digital Dutta, who is battling with insomnia, for devoted admirers of the book, and there are many. Banerjee incorporates excerpts from books he has read, enhancing them with his unique interpretation and analysis through artwork. The author flickers between topics and connections with a deliberate, though sloppy, step, in eleven chapters. Gardens and their advantages, shifting landscapes, historical contexts, nighttime pursuits, libraries, and verities all receive a lot of attention. The tension between history and reality, as well as the necessity of maintaining objective equilibrium while expressing pride in one's identity, is thoroughly examined. In this latest novel, Banerjee brings a varied array of actual individuals from across the globe together to give us glimpses into their lives. *Doab Dil* walks the tight line between fiction and non-fiction by highlighting their oddities and imagining the reasons behind their peculiarities.

The graphic novel genre made its first appearance in Indian writing in English with the printing of Orijit Sen's famous novel *River of Stories* (1994). In contrast to its western counterpart, Indian graphic novels have, from the beginning, concentrated on problems of society and diplomacy. According to Pramod K. Nayar, Indian graphic novels also serve “primarily to an urban audience” (*The Indian Graphic Novel* 10). Describing the major contribution given by Indian graphic novel in Indian writing in English, Nayar in his book, *The Indian Graphic Novel*, writes, “The graphic narrative, with its verbal-visual and critical literacy, is the medium India needs to address contemporary concerns and provide a politically edged cultural critique. ‘Critical literacy’ embodied in the graphic narrative enables us to see texts as situated within unequal social fields of caste, patriarchy, and capitalism and demands that the reader becomes alert to the position he or she takes vis-à-vis not just the text but the social domains represented in it” (8). He again asserts, “The critical literacy that the graphic narrative forces us to acquire goes a considerable way in offering new social

and cultural imaginaries within which we rethink the present and the future, especially in terms of aspirations, social injustices, human rights, cultural identity and national belonging. Opening up history, cultural identity, modernity, Indian political systems and processes and consumer capitalism to examination, satire and critique, the graphic narrative, if we are attentive to the form, makes us ask the questions traditional Literature and Literary Studies have always provoked us into asking. In this sense the graphic narrative continues to generate critiques of, say, the nation or labour, but in an entirely new format where we are to pay attention to the *visible* expression of suffering on the face of an 'untouchable' (*GW*) or shame in the absurd (*Hush*). In this mode, the documentary film is merged with literary fiction so that our immersion in the medium into the world depicted, is far deeper than if we were to be consuming just one of the two" (9). However, in consideration of the fact that Indian graphic novel is "a high-end consumer product with high pricing" (10), one can demand the reason from Banerjee for opting for this medium of writing.

Nevertheless, his preference for graphic novels is entirely reasonable, not merely because he is a graphic novelist by profession but also because the channel poses a challenge to the audience who is not able to connect with the text. Will Eisner, in his popular book, *Comics and Sequential Art*, states, "The format of the comic book presents a montage of both word and image, and the reader is thus required to exercise both visual and verbal interpretive skills. The regimens of art (e.g., perspective, symmetry, brush stroke) and the regimens of literature (e.g., grammar, plot, syntax) become superimposed upon each other. The reading of the comic book is an act of both aesthetic perception and intellectual pursuit" (10). The inattentive Indian audience will need to sincerely connect with the words as well as the images for the purpose of understanding the novel.

The fictional works of Sarnath Banerjee have received significant praise from academics and authors. He has illustrated issues with nationalism, religion, cultural diversity, cultural hegemony, imperialism, and immigration issues in his works. Scholars and critics have shown him great respect and admiration. By fusing history with fiction, he has brought the facts of the modern world to light. He has

demonstrated the cultural and civilisational disputes betwixt the people of the West and the people of the East through this. Additionally, he has demonstrated in his graphic novels that individuals battle with one another for political, dominance, and power reasons because they have different ideologies, cultures, politics, languages, and religions. This has sparked conflicts and rifts between people. As a result, Banerjee's standing in the literary community has increased to a larger extent. His unique approach to delivering stories has given them a fresh perspective. Culture disputes and identity crisis in contemporary society have been expertly handled by him using this strategy. His painstaking research into the social, political, historical, and cultural facets of Indian society and his use of storytelling to express them in his graphic novels have caught the eye of literary geniuses. For his accomplishments in the realm of graphic literature, Sarnath Banerjee is revered on a global scale. The critics have given his works high praise and a favourable reception.

Amruta Patil

In addition to male authors, Indian graphic fiction has seen a rich crop of Indian women graphic novelists who enlisted their presence on the inventive scene by restructuring and moulding their encounters and affairs with their interesting insights. It is recognised that women have magnificently championed the political, financial, and societal issues during the time of male hegemony and have included magnificence in plenty of Indian writings. Generally, Indian male writers of English fiction never succeeded in acknowledging and portraying the pains and sufferings of a woman. They, for the most part, displayed her as the quiet sufferer, a personification of tolerance and endurance and the principal source of nourishment in Indian families, while many others presented gloomy stereotypes and depicted her as merely a sex object. As a result, the responsibility of unveiling a woman's brain eventually fell to female writers, who questioned and argued over feminist issues, unravelled the deep recesses of a woman's mind, and depicted her place in society. Patil claims in an interview with Paul Gravett, "There are few women comic artists the world over – the paucity is not restricted to India. I guess that may have something to do with the kind of culture and storyline preoccupations that have traditionally existed. Now with

newer kinds of stories being accepted, there is resurgence of women in the domain, particularly women who both write and draw their work.”

Amruta Patil is generally considered India’s first female graphic novelist. She has penned down four graphic novels. She was born in 1979 and spent her youth in Cochin and Vasco da Gama, Goa, where her father worked as an aeronautical engineer in the Indian Navy. She completed her graduation from the Goa College of Craftsmanship and her master degree from Tufts University. Patil is presently a writer-in-residence at Angouleme’s La Maison des Auteurs. She has been honoured with Nari Shakti Puraskar and TED fellowship in 2009. Patil does not consider herself a comic artist but rather a writer who, for the time being, prefers to utilise graphics in addition to her thoughts. Her use of language is both vivid and enthralling. Patil plays a significant role in an undeniable trend of female cartoonists, including Posy Simmonds, Marjane Satrapi, Lynda Barry, and Alison Bechdel, who have used language and writing to improve the words in their comics. As a creator, Patil quickly gets involved with ostracised characters, as is clear by her ensuing Parva duology – *Adi Parva* (2012) and *Sauptik* (2016). This duo retells various anecdotes from the epic of Mahabharata from the perspective of underestimated voices, Ganga and Ashwatthama. Almost all of her novels reside at the crossroads of mythology, ecology, and feminism. She talks about her influences in the interview with Paul Gravett, “My visual influences include: Indian temple art, Mughal Miniatures, Japanese Silkscreen prints, Egyptian funerary art, Mahayana Buddhist imagery, Iconic art from Medieval Europe. The artwork of Dave McKean, Gustav Klimt, Frida Kahlo, Paul Gauguin” (2012). With their strong, multifaceted plots, her works enslave the reader. Patil writes stories in order to tell progressive, socially relevant, and epic-scale stories. Patil’s visual style is free-form, incorporating acrylic painting, collage, watercolour, and charcoal. Sexuality, myth, eco-friendly lifestyle, and the continuous stories transmitted from one storyteller to other storytellers over the course of years are all constant themes in her work.

Amruta Patil has efficiently and adeptly expressed the Indian spirit through her innovative writings. She has depicted the clash between her female characters and

society in her writings. Her protagonists, particularly the female protagonists, are often shown fighting for independence from society. She is more concerned with exposing women's own concerns from global perspectives than she is with presenting social or moral issues relating to women's sympathetic attention or the battle in a male-dominated culture. She believes that women are capable of bringing change into their own lives. Her novels address a broad spectrum of subjects, including the conflict between tradition and modernity, the crisis of individuality, women's pursuit of freedom, etc. She portrays the anguish, the joys, and the inner spirit of the characters and the writing, which until recently was male chauvinist, began emulating the sparks that emerged from the struggle of a woman to be herself. She highlights the adverse effects of industrialisation, urbanisation, and modernisation in agrarian India. She has a plan: to infuse stories with current events and study them via the political, social, and cultural lenses that shape our perceptions.

Her first graphic novel, *Kari*, takes place in contemporary Mumbai. It features insane heights, unexpected roads, lanes, darker streets, and ominous locations. Raju, while talking about the queer protagonist of the novel in her article "A Butlerian Reading of *Kari* by Amruta Patil," says, "Patil's powerful debut *Kari* features a queer and eponymous heroine to depict the lived realities of a queer woman in a highly heteronormative society" (89). The tale of *Kari* transitions from voice-over narration to pictures and returns to voice-over, unlike previous comic and graphic novels that have so far been published. Through flashbacks to earlier episodes in the protagonist's world and her quest for self-discovery, the narrative follows Kari as she navigates life after attempting suicide. In an interview with Paul Gravett, she claims that her central character, "Kari is a young, deeply introverted, asocial and queer woman, a counterpoint to the hyper feminine prototypes you keep coming across." Through her story, Patil creates a unique protagonist whose sexuality is incidental rather than crucial to her path. Because of the things that happened after she came out as queer; she attempted two attempts at suicide by jumping off a building, choosing to jump the first time but not the second.

Her second graphic novel, *Adi Parva* (2012), attempts to consciously restore the oldest tales and characters marginalised by most of the normative re-telling of the age-old epic Mahabharata in popular culture. It's more appropriate to say that it is made up of the tangles of numerous storylines braided into one cohesive storyline that tugs the reader in different ways even after the book is finished. To regard the novel solely as derivative would significantly undervalue its creator's contribution. Similar to the Mahabharata, Patil's *Adi Parva* is a narrative concerning the art of storytelling. The novel concludes with a statement from the author emphasising the importance of recounting narratives, especially those of a cosmic nature. The story effectively attains this objective through the establishment of a frame narrative, with Akashganga acting as a sutradhaar. The narrative transitions from the stories recounted by Akashganga to her engagements with her audience in the city of Hastinapur. Akashganga is essentially a sutradhaar enclosed within Patil. Although the meta-narratives of the work may occasionally be challenging to comprehend, the reader need only adhere to the narrative thread, as continually emphasised within the text. Benefits and detriments that appear inconsequential on one page often resurface with significance on another.

While *Adi Parva* is clearly a graphic novel adaptation of the epic, Patil prefers to refer to herself as a reteller, as she asserts to be only facilitating a story that has been transmitted orally and in writing for generations. Patil sets out to retell the initial part of the *Mahabharata*: the Adi Parvam, rather than the full saga. In traditional interpretations, the seed tale is reduced to a tremendous fight between two fractions of paternal relatives, the Kauravas and the Pandavas, for control of the enormous Bharata realm. In her graphic representation of the prologue novel of the epic, Patil brings this up, though. She changes the beginning and ending while keeping the overall plotline because she wants to be faithful to what she thinks is the epic's spirit in her retelling. Patil reduces these narrative issues that underlie the epic's basic structure by choosing graphic novels as her artistic medium. This allows her to imagine the plot through brief but powerful visual metaphors. Using images from classical, mythical, and popular culture, Patil weaves a tale that transports the reader to the epic's core. From the book's cover page, which depicts Lord Vishnu resting

with a blooming lotus sprouting from his navel, to the river metaphor, every illustration has a different purpose, conveying echoes of old knowledge within every wave, audible even in today's cacophony.

Her third novel *Sauptik* (2016) is narrated by a wounded Ashwatthama, a character usually regarded as non-heroic in the epic, "I smell of stale blood and unwashed rags. Ganga was cool, silvery. People were struck by her. She storied their lives but spoke in abstractions few understood the urgency of. When she left, she named me sutradhaar" (9). The sepia pages that serve as a direct window into Ashwatthama's head are defined by unusual stand-alone visual metaphors that interject the story with what sound like private monologues. *Sauptik* is one of the Mahabharat's most sparse and sombre portions. The title alludes to the sleeping ones, or Draupadi's sleeping sons and kin, whom Ashwatthama slaughtered after the conflict ended. It is a contemporary story with roots in the Mahabharata, Puranas, and the oral storytelling tradition. The narrative, with its gorgeous images, repeatedly underlines our long-forgotten connection to the earth, rivers, forests, and fire. *Sauptik*, through the use of visual pictures that are more intricate metaphors than words, appears to provide the most metaphorical retelling of the epic. Patil employs a variety of metaphors in her work to create a higher level of poetry while remaining faithful to the epic's original grandeur. The element of fire is the book's symbol. Draupadi's fire; divine armaments' fire; human turmoil's fire; and the apocalypse as we understand it. The basic premise of *Sauptik* is to link oneself with natural elements; the decision is between making one's life a ranabhoomi or a rangabhoomi. In *Sauptik*, Ashwatthama notices that while the forests around him begin to thin, they become denser in his story. There is Yamuna, the novel's steadfast backdrop, whose waters begin to darken and oilier as time passes. The Pandavas and Draupadi are five-element children.

Her latest graphic novel *Aranyaka* (2019) is painted with water colours and pencils, and contains simple text with topics that ring true today – our relationship with the environment, the relentless encroachment of humanity into woods, the gender battle, and additional issues. Patil resurrects the Vedic rishikas in this strong feminist narrative set during the Vedic period. Patil's talent to convey complex ideas

through seemingly straightforward storytelling and her rustic graphic novel aesthetic come together magnificently in this work. Lines in the novel are both plain and dense with meaning, leaving room for multiple interpretations. The illustrations are detailed, colourful, and purposeful: the protagonist's alluring figure on the other side of a purna kumbh; a weaver seeing a spider in action in a contemplative state; or the stark distinction between a man-made circular grove, a rectangular field, and the formless, savage wilderness surrounding them. The basic story is based on the legend of two rishikas, Katyayini and Maitreyi, who were married to Rishi Yajnavalkya from ancient India. At King Janaka's court, Yajnavalkya was renowned for his intellectual contest with thinker Gargi. This retelling, on the other hand, is Katyayini's tale, and via her footsteps and sight – Aranya's story: "I am Katyayani the Large. The wrap of my story has always been hunger" (2).

The sphere of English literature has undergone a revolution thanks to Amruta Patil, a notable cultural and social writer of contemporary days. In particular, she used cultural, social, political, and religious components in her graphic novels. Her language and clever dialogues are her strong points. She has risen to prominence as a young modern writer and a voice for many younger generations. She has portrayed the issues related to immigrant pain, cultural disputes, identity crisis, racism, ethnicity, fundamentalism, religious intolerance, assimilation issues, and rootlessness in her works. The multicultural civilisation of both ancient and modern times has harmed her characters. In multicultural society, they have had to deal with issues including segregation, marginalisation, cultural alienation, cruelty, and inhumane treatment. Her writings are replete with profound knowledge and wisdom. She has cultivated a cosmopolitan ambiance in her creative works. She has provided a new depth to her works and gained recognition among the general public by taking a multicultural approach. She takes the stance that cultural differences among various communities, nationalities, and societies have a negative impact on people's lives. In other words, by portraying many cultural perspectives in her writing, she has managed to keep her uniqueness and integrity in the literary world.

Indian English graphic literature has benefitted significantly from Amruta Patil. She has eloquently emphasised the cultural, social, and political facets of both ancient and contemporary Indian communities through the use of her narrative technique. Since she has portrayed a variety of civilisations in her writings, her realistic outlook on life has altered her position in the literary world. Her storytelling technique, which she uses to handle the plot and characters in her novels, is largely responsible for her great reputation. In her works, she has addressed subjects including gender inequality, the dehumanisation of women, patriarchy, imperialism, immigration issues, political hegemony, and female subordination. Trauma and identity crisis have so become commonplace in people's lives. Her use of historical truths and diverse cultures has given her stories a unique dimension. As a result, she has drawn increased attention from academics and scholars due to the relevance of her writings to current challenges in Indian society.

In the world of modern literature, Banerjee and Patil are highly respected figures who are well-known for their remarkable writing skills as well as for their shrewd role in the rise in popularity of Indian graphic novels. With their diverse and nuanced perspectives, portrayals of difficult societal concerns, and their profound influence on individuals as well as society, these novelists have greatly advanced the field of Indian graphic novels. This chapter offers an in-depth analysis of the works of Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil, shedding light on their contributions to the Indian graphic novels and Indian literary canon. It provides a complete understanding of their literary career and their contribution in giving a rightful place to graphic novels in the Indian literary canon. With the rise of their graphic novels, which expressed outrage against various social and political injustices, the Indian literary world experienced a profound upheaval. Every rebellious tale and protest voice from India's everyday life is represented in their graphic novels.

Patil's works depict the politicised element of a personal narrative, like in *Kari* (2008). Her works also voiced different viewpoints through the revisioning of Indian mythology, stories, and folklore, like in *Adi Parva*, *Sauptik*, and *Aranyaka*. Additionally, their graphic novels investigate different approaches to expressing one's identity and culture within the framework of silenced voices. By rewriting legends,

their graphic novels convey countless voices that have been silenced. They evolved into altered incarnations of the voices that represented the lesser-known figures in popular mythology. Amruta Patil's *Adi Parva* (2012) and *Sauptik* (2018) serve as testaments to the enormous explosion of expressions.

This chapter's examination of the graphic novel genre's development and history offers a broader understanding of the medium. As a result, this chapter charts the thematic and chronological development of Indian graphic novels. It covers the genre's history from antiquity to the current publications in the market. The rise of consumer culture and the influence of western graphic novels on the world resulted in the founding of publishing houses in India. The genre became an extremely politicised discourse platform with the introduction of many expressions of individual and societal voices into Banerjee and Patil's visual representations. Graphic novel depictions are multifaceted, reflecting both the character of the country and the urgency of resolving its various issues. In order to create an identity that is sovereign like its motherland, the historical overview aids in understanding the cultural space experienced within its themes and structures.

An influential player in the development of Indian graphic writings, Sarnath Banerjee helps to bridge the gap between traditional storytelling and modern graphic narratives. His writings provide a complex view of contemporary India. The contributions of Banerjee are examined in this chapter, with particular attention paid to his narrative strategies, thematic investigations, and overall influence on the Indian graphic literature. Despite being a relatively new medium, Indian graphic novels have grown significantly in the last several decades. Although the groundwork was established by early works such as Orijit Sens's *River of Stories* (1994), Banerjee's *Corridor* (2004) was the work that popularized the genre and attracted a devoted fanbase. His later creations, which combine profound storytelling with visual elegance, have significantly enhanced the genre. Banerjee's contributions to Indian graphic literature are numerous. He became a key character in the development of visual storytelling in India because of his works, which still inspire and have an impact on the field's changing terrain. In addition to creating his own works, Banerjee is a co-founder of Phantomville, a publishing business for graphic novels that aims to

give Indian authors and artists a platform to create sophisticated graphic novels. In India, his work has been crucial in establishing the graphic novel as legitimate literary genre. He has fostered a new generation of graphic novelists through his partnerships, which has helped the medium expand and diversify in the Indian literary scene.

As the first female graphic novelist in India, Amruta Patil is regarded as a pioneer in the field of graphic writing. Her works, which use a unique visual style that combines traditional Indian art forms with modern graphic narrative, explore issues of identity, sexuality, mythology, and ecological conscience. This chapter highlights her inventive narrative strategies and thematic explorations while analysing her contributions to the Indian graphic literature. Patil's debut in this field was revolutionary since it addressed issues that are frequently overlooked in popular Indian literature and offered a female viewpoint. Her writings have contributed significantly to the growth of Indian graphic novels by introducing feminist ideas, personal stories, and cultural reflection. Patil has made a revolutionary contribution to Indian graphic novels by bringing in a variety of stories that subvert social conventions and push the genre's limits. Patil has made a name for herself in Indian literature with her inventive narratives and distinctive graphical style, encouraging readers and graphic novelists of the future. Her writings are still praised for their richness, uniqueness, and cultural relevance.

Chapter-2

Jacques Derrida and Theory of Deconstruction

Jacques Derrida was a well-known, but divisive, and widely criticised figure in recent French intellectual life. In his essay “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” Derrida coined the term “deconstruction” to describe a method of practicing philosophy that significantly impacted our understanding of several academic subjects, particularly literary studies (*Writing and Difference* 282). On July 15, 1930, Jacques Derrida was born into a multilingual and culturally complicated world of French-speaking Algerian Jewish household. His Jewishness, as well as his sense of belonging to a marginalised, oppressed culture and the rabbinic tradition, has all shaped his philosophy. His ambition during teenage was to be a writer and literature educator. In 1948, he finished his bachelor. While studying for admittance to one of France’s elite Grandes Ecoles, he became awed by philosophers, particularly Soren Kirkegaard and Martin Heidegger, and was accepted into the famous Ecole Normale Superieure in 1952. In 1956, he passed the exceedingly competitive aggregation to become a lifetime teacher. He was strongly marked by the experience of being in an inferior position in the string of three different religions, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, all of which claim to speak the truth, when he was a boy because of the antisemitism of Algiers’ predominantly Muslim population. Derrida wrote in a completely different era from his time. In the 1960s, the United States Army, the world’s second largest body, was fighting an unfair and illicit war in Vietnam against the Soviet Union. This battle resulted in one of the most organised and terrifying power abuses in the history of humanity. Marxism was another institution, not to specify Mao’s enormous drive, that came out with play against royal powers, colonialism, and neocolonial abuses of power in the name of neo-liberalism. Derrida’s ideas were heavily affected by the French practice of opposing intellectual doctrines, with rebellion being a natural part of French culture, and this intellectual practice must mock the order, State, and power. Derrida found an interesting kind of inflexibility and conservatism in French universities where different scholarly approaches and indeed Saussure’s theory of language were acknowledged without

second thoughts. They were content with a single authoritative belief in literature and philosophy. The 1968 Paris student uprising highlighted the unrest at French campuses. This movement happened to coincide with the release of Jacques Derrida's one of the renowned works *Of Grammatology* in 1967. This is why Derrida's deconstructionist philosophy is hard to grasp outside of the framework of these debates over structuralism, Heideggerianism, etc. Derrida himself stated his idea behind deconstruction in his critical essay of 1967:

The idea behind deconstruction is to deconstruct the workings of strong nation-states with powerful immigration policies, to deconstruct the rhetoric of nationalism, the politics of place, the metaphysics of native land and native tongue . . . The idea is to disarm the bombs . . . of identity that nation-states build to defend themselves against the stranger, against Jews and Arabs and immigrants . . . (Caputo 231)

The list continues with the political system, political parties, hierarchies, administrations, institutions, or the institutions comprised of buildings, websites, phone numbers, papers, and networks. The manner in which things are done creates a habit of doing things in that specific manner. Theory and language held all of the 'isms', ideas, and institutions together. The world's truth was disclosed to their proponents by the concepts formed in this way utilising persuasion language. These kinds of philosophical schools highly inspired many books, essays, articles, university lectures, and supporters. Derrida's philosophical writing began in the mid-1950s with a deep reading of German philosopher Edmund Husserl. He then went on to thoroughly investigate the works of other classic philosophers, beginning with Plato and continuing forward. Derrida began writing philosophically in the mid-1950s after delving deeply into the work of German philosopher Edmund Husserl. He then went on to thoroughly investigate the works of other classic philosophers, beginning with Plato and continuing forward.

Following a presentation titled "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" presented at Johns Hopkins University in 1966, Derrida gained prominence in the English-speaking academic community. He wrote forty-five books

all in all, as well as hundreds of essays and public speeches. In 1967, Jacques Derrida established himself as a major philosopher by publishing three seminal works: *Of Grammatology*, *Writing and Difference*, and *Speech and Phenomena*. Subsequently, three additional works in French were published in 1972, titled *Dissemination*, *Margins of Philosophy*, and *Positions*. His prestige has since risen above the realms of literature and literary theory, having an impact on film and cultural studies, legal theory, the theory of architecture, and the social sciences and humanities in general. Derrida's written output, both in French and in translation, is so vast that summarising his writings is difficult. Nonetheless, in 1992, an annotated primary and secondary bibliography of Derrida came out that talks about more than 40 books that Derrida has penned down in French only between the years 1967 and 1991. There were nearly 180 articles published throughout the same time span, excluding book chapters and interviews. Furthermore, because Derrida has not stated or advocated a single theory or philosophical position, a summation of his ideas and theories is hard to provide. As a result, elevating the explicitness of his study to the level of general rules is a laborious task. Hence, Derrida's writing is compelled to change in response to the current interest. Deconstruction is Derrida's most influential postmodernist or poststructuralist theory. In some areas, his name has become nearly synonymous with the concept of 'deconstruction'. The following is how Derrida intends to demonstrate this term, Kearney explains:

[D]econstruction not only teaches us to read literature more thoroughly by attending to it *as language*, as the production of meaning through *difference* and dissemination, through a complex play of signifying traces; it also enables us to interrogate the covert philosophical and political presuppositions of institutionalized critical methods which generally govern our reading of a text. There is in deconstruction something which challenges every teaching institution. (*Debates* 155)

Deconstruction simply challenges any habits of thought in any discipline by illustrating the difficulties in delineating reality from representation; consequently, this demands a thorough and meticulous analysis of the assumptions surrounding

specific concepts of language or text. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the translator of Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* into English, believes that a particular perspective on the world, consciousness, and language has been widely regarded as accurate; however, a meticulous analysis of the intricacies of that perspective reveals a significantly different narrative for thorough evaluation. It was a term Derrida coined to characterise the way he thought. Though he often believed that other people misunderstood what he meant when they started using this term. Deconstruction essentially entails removing our blind allegiance to any concept and learning to perceive the portions of the truth that lie buried in its polar opposite. The history of philosophy, according to Derrida, is logocentric because it assumes the existence of an absolute truth that can be discovered through language. He claimed that this viewpoint was essentially flawed because of language's indecisiveness. The words are difficult to nail down to a single meaning.

Derrida's deconstructive outlook fundamentally contrasts with Saussure's structuralism theory. Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, claimed that signs produce meaning in language in his *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, a compilation of notes recorded by his students during a series of lectures he presented at the University of Geneva from 1906 to 1911 and published after his demise in 1915. The signifier and the signified are the two signs that make up a sign. The signifier can be a word, an image, a written phrase, or a photograph. The idea, the notion, is the signified. Similar to the dual facets of a piece of paper, the signifier and the signified are joined in the brain. He argues that the differences are what give the signs their meaning. Because it is not a rat, bat, or mat, a cat is a cat.

Derrida took Saussure's idea and expanded on it. He claimed that no sign is self-contained in terms of its meaning, as the significance of one sign is influenced by the presence of other signs within its context. He means 'trace' when he says that. Jacques Derrida writes, "The trace is not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself. The trace has, properly speaking, no place for effacement belongs to the very structure of the trace" (*Speech and Phenomena* 156). Deconstructing a notion demonstrates that it is muddled and

riddled with logical flaws and that we should always keep its enormity in mind. Moving on to Derrida's other term, Differance, which denotes the impossibility of meaning existing in the interstice between signs. He explains: "Différance is the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the *spacing* by means of which elements are related to each other. This spacing is the simultaneously active and passive . . . production of the intervals without which the 'full' terms would not signify, would not function" (*Positions* 27). Derrida criticises our predisposition to believe that there is a decent and tidy solution lurking beneath every difficulty. He proposes that we have a destiny of living without a clear explanation and that our need for a definitive answer is the source of our problems. Being perplexed and doubtful, according to Derrida, is neither a sign of weakness nor of greatness. It is the basic criterion of adulthood for Derrida. His strategy was to romanticise the situation and give it a positive spin, which is why he revived the wonderful Greek word *Aporia*, which means deadlock or perplexity. *Aporia*, he defined, is a state of ambiguity and doubt that does not lead to a conclusion. The evidence of the mind's adulthood in the Derridean worldview is simple. The majority of deconstruction's prominent ideas were introduced in Jacques Derrida's 1967 book *Of Grammatology*. Many more famous texts followed, establishing Deconstruction as a prominent force in European and Anglo-American philosophy. Deconstruction's textual analysis method was widely embraced in cultural studies and literary criticism, resulting in a significant shift in people's perspective of the cognitive environment. During his tenure, he was also subjected to an unusual amount of criticism.

More than any other philosopher, Jacques Derrida has attempted to reject the idea that his writings demonstrate. Deconstruction is Derrida's technique of reading a text; it is a process, a way of reading that is not reducible to a notion or method. He doesn't provide us a definition of deconstruction; instead, he explains what it isn't. Christopher Norris quotes Derrida: "Deconstruction is *not*, he says, 'primarily a matter of philosophical contents, themes or theses, philosophemes, poems, theologemes or ideologemes, but especially and inseparably (of) meaningful frames, institutional structures, pedagogical or rhetorical norms, the possibilities of law, of authority, of representation in terms of its very market'" (*Derrida* 14). Due to the

ongoing play of language, he introduced the term *différance* to describe how meaning is perpetually at once ‘deferred’ and ‘differential’, and that it cannot be set for a definition. In his book *Speech and Phenomena* (1967), in which he criticises Husserlian phenomenology, he uses this term often. Not only in literature and language, but also in the ontology of being itself, difference is the consequence of a long and meticulous process of reasoning. “*There is nothing outside of the text,*” according to Derrida, who recommends reading and rereading (*Of Grammatology* 158). This is his primary argument: with each re-reading, a new meaning emerges. Deconstruction entails the demolition of intangible oppositions and the disintegration of hierarchical frameworks of thinking so that they might be reassembled in a different order in the text. When a text diminishes the tension between logic and rhetoric, between its intended meaning and its actual expression, it is the deliberate search for aporias, blind spots, or instances of self-contradiction. Deconstruction is based on reversal, capturing inadvertent analogies, footnotes, and argument flips that were previously overlooked by typical critical readers. All of these methods of explaining Derrida’s deconstruction are rejected by him; his primary premise is that meaning cannot be comprehended as a valid, self-identical concept. Any of the aforementioned tactics will resist it.

He preferred writing to speech, which threw the whole ‘logocentric’ order of Western metaphysics into disarray. For Derrida, writing is *a priori* in the Kantian sense. Culture, history, and knowledge are all impossible to imagine without the written word. It’s what he refers to as *arche* –writing, and it’s the prerequisite for all imaginable knowledge. It’s a medium for advancing ideas and preserving them in an ever-growing archive. He asserts in his book *Of Grammatology* that all contemplation of language, philosophy, and culture may be visualised within the framework of a ‘massively extended writing’ through his deconstructive logic of reversal. This prompted philosophers to conclude that deconstruction is anti-philosophy, and innocent literary critics got an opportunity to attack famous philosophers from Plato to the current day for their superior truth claims.

As per Derrida, a text has multiple meanings. There is a meaning of the writer and different meanings for different readers. This philosophy is inspired by postmodernism, which opposes foundationalism and universalism. In other words, this postmodern tool of piercing through and decoding emerged as a reaction to structuralism and formalism, and today it has completely become a new way for the interpretation of literary texts. It is used to tear apart the positions on the centre and margin in order to discover a new meaning. Martin McQuillan in his book *Deconstruction: A Reader* (2001) writes that deconstruction “is most commonly associated with post-structuralism but has its contextual roots in the historical conjunction surrounding structuralism. Like structuralism it is concerned with a certain idea of structure but it also wishes to undo or desediment structures of all kinds, including the structure of structuralism as well as structures older than structuralism” (2). Deconstruction is useful in this research because there are some sociological norms presiding in our society that demand to be understood in a better way. This work is an attempt to examine the social problems depicted through the graphic narratives elected as primary texts, as the authors of these narratives strive to call into question the rooted socio-cultural norms, thus making their narratives revolutionary in one or another way. In order to critically evaluate the graphic novels in India, the present research attempts to make use of theoretical insights of deconstruction. An attempt has been made to break down, question, and unravel the complex themes ranging from migration to mythology, from class conflicts to devastated modern urban life, and others. The research endeavours to find Indian graphic novels’ rightful place in the comity of genres dominating the discourse of Indian literature.

Deconstruction and its Grains

In this research, the concept of Deconstruction has not been applied in its conventional form. M.A.R. Habib in his book *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present* (2005) writes, “While Derrida himself has insisted that deconstruction is not a theory unified by any set of consistent rules or procedures, it has been variously regarded as a way of reading, a mode of writing, and above all, a

way of challenging interpretations of the texts based upon conventional notions of stability of human self, the external world, and of language and meaning” (649).

Derrida, a post-modernist scholar, has proposed the concept of deconstruction.

Deconstruction, as per him, means destroying all knowledge or information and culling out meanings that can add more to the existing platter. In other words, we must deconstruct all our information and knowledge because whatever knowledge we have gained so far is a fallacy of sorts. Derrida further explains this fallacy is due to the primitive nature of human languages. Human languages are not developed enough to enable us to express exactly what we want to. It cannot be assured that anybody who is listening to us understands us the way we want him to. Hence, it can be said that every understanding is a misunderstanding. Therefore, Deconstruction as a conceptual postmodern tool asks one and all to deconstruct knowledge and reconstruct it.

Deconstruction, as a philosophical concept, started in the 1960s with the writings of Jacques Derrida, one of the leading philosophers and literary theorists globally. *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* finds the foundations of the term deconstruction in Martin Heidegger’s concept of *Destruktion*. The expression that is given by Heidegger indicates a method of investigating the history of the notions and categories imposed on a word by tradition, which leads to a unique explanation that provides a more genuine interpretation of human life. Like *Destruktion*, deconstruction is a “historicizing movement that opens texts to the conditions of their production, their context in a very broad sense, including not only the historical circumstances and tradition from which they arose, but also the conventions and nuances of the language in which they were written and the details of their authors’ lives.” Because Derrida chose “deconstruction” to Heidegger’s phrase in its literal translation, that is, “destruction” “to deconstruct is not to destroy” and “deconstruction is always a double movement of simultaneous affirmation [preserving] and undoing.” Deconstructive reading, on the other hand, differs from *Destruktion* in that “it has no fixed or expected endpoint or map, but is rather a potentially infinite process” (Holland).

Derrida was influenced by Heideggerean philosophy as well as structuralist intellectuals. Derrida is associated with the second generation of French phenomenology, and claims that his ideas and thoughts were shaped by the philosophies of Husserl, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Sartre, Levinas, and Saussure in linguistics. He cites Nietzsche and Heidegger in particular to develop his critique of Western metaphysics inside the Western philosophical practice and in quotidian idea and language. Western philosophy, posits Derrida, has always been constructed around dichotomies such as good and evil, existence and nonexistence, truth and error, mind and matter, man and woman, speech and writing. In Western philosophy, the second phrase in every duo is regarded as the negative, amoral. However, Derrida considers both the initial and subsequent phrases to be similarly relevant. The current chapter aims to elucidate these particular elements.

In his “Letter to a Japanese Friend” Derrida writes, “[D]econstruction is neither an *analysis* nor a *critique*. . . . Deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transformed into one. . . . deconstruction is not even an *act* or an *operation*” (273). Derrida asserts “There is no deconstruction, deconstruction has no specific object . . .” (Derrida, *As If I Were Dead* 218), because a “deconstructive reading attends to the deconstructive processes always occurring in the texts and already there waiting to be read” (Payne 121). This deconstructive process takes place not on the side of the reader/critic but on the side of the text itself, in response to the discomfort “between what it manifestly *means to say* and what it is nonetheless *constrained to mean*” (Norris, *Derrida* 19). To affirm the futility of deconstruction is to admit “the impossible desire of language . . . to make present the permanently elusive” (Payne 121).

The practice of deconstruction has no means as a text deconstructs itself while attempting the impractical task of taking up language as a transcendental signifier, that is, as a means of establishing one or more everlasting truths. According to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “All texts . . . are rehearsing their grammatological structure, self-deconstructing as they constitute themselves” (*Of Grammatology* lxxviii). Subsequently, all that is required by a deconstructionist is to compose with no end

objective. To clarify, Deconstruction occurs within the writing process rather than as a result of writing deprived of waiting for “the deliberation, consciousness, or organization of a subject” (Derrida, “Letter” 274). Gary Rolfe states that this exercise of “deconstructive writing produces a second text as a supplement to that which it seeks to deconstruct,” and “there is no single authoritative and ‘correct’ deconstructive reading/writing of any particular text” (274). Hence, “each text contains within itself the possibility of a vast number of supplementary deconstructive texts, and each of those is likewise open to further deconstruction *ad infinitum* in an infinite regress” (274). Spivak advocates it: “The fall into the abyss of deconstruction inspires us with as much pleasure as fear. We are intoxicated with the prospect of never hitting bottom” (*Of Grammatology* lxxvii). He uses terminology like ‘logocentrism,’ ‘phallogocentrism,’ and ‘the metaphysics of presence’ to show the traditional philosophy’s deep-seated ways of thinking:

Logocentrism emphasizes the privileged role that logos, or speech, has been accorded in the Western tradition. Phallogocentrism points towards the patriarchal significance of this privileging. Derrida’s enduring references to the metaphysics of presence borrows heavily from the work of Heidegger. Heidegger insists that Western philosophy has consistently privileged that which is, or that which appears, and has forgotten to pay any attention to the condition for that appearance. In other words, presence itself is privileged, rather than that which allows presence to be possible at all – and also impossible, for Derrida. (Reynolds, “Jacques Derrida” 2015)

According to Derrida, metaphysics (a collective substitute for all three terms above) has shaped philosophy since the Greek era by creating binary oppositions and establishing a hierarchy that unfortunately prioritised only one term of each pair (speech over writing, man over woman, Occident over Orient, and so on). According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, deconstructing dualism “is to explore the tensions and contradictions between the hierarchical ordering assumed (and sometimes explicitly asserted) in the text and other aspects of the text’s meaning, especially those that are indirect or implicit or that rely on figurative or performative uses of language”

("Deconstruction"). Derrida, in his essay, *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*, points how the structure is neutralised through the "process of giving it a centre, or of referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin" (278). The coordinating function of this core constraints "the play of structure" (278). He criticises the structure's centre for obstructing the play

which it opens up and makes possible. As center, it is the point at which the substitution of contents, elements, or terms is no longer possible. At the center, the permutation or the transformation of elements (which may of course be structures enclosed within a structure) is forbidden. . . . The concept of a centered structure is in fact the concept of play based on a fundamental ground, a play constituted on the basis of a fundamental immobility and reassuring certitude, which itself is beyond the reach of play. . . . And again on the basis of . . . the centre (and which, because it can be either inside or outside, can also indifferently be called the origin or end, *archē*, or *telos*), repetitions, substitutions, transformations, and permutations are always *taken* from a history of meanings [*sens*] – that is, in a word, a history – whose origin may always be reawakened or whose end may always be anticipated in the form of presence. (279)

The deconstructive analysis reveals that the antagonism is a product of the text rather than something that exists independently of it. In practice, the deconstructive reading tries to reveal the undecidables or aporias that remain unresolved by either side of the opposition, in addition to its two key stages of reversing polarities and attempting to distort the opposition itself. Aporia is an irreconcilable disagreement or logical dead end in a textual or theoretical argument that is contemplated inevitable in the process of deconstruction. Derrida, for example, describes the aporetic essence of the political state as "at once remedy and poison" – an entity we cannot survive with or without, due to its inherent violence or its ability to shield us against the violence it causes (Borradori 124). Derrida argues that a book can be interpreted in an unlimited number of ways. Derrida introduces a new term, "differance," in his essay "Difference" to emphasise his argument and provide solutions to the logocentric and

aporetic dilemmas (3). In a nutshell, differance seeks to fabricate a connection betwixt the “differing and deferring aspects” (Reynolds) of meaning entangled in text or arche-writing—a concept of writing that “includes both speech and writing” (Searle) or an original or primordial form of language immune to the distinction between speech and writing.

Deconstruction began as a method for reading Heidegger and Derrida’s annals of metaphysics, but it quickly expanded to include literary, liturgical, and legal works as well. In the 1970s and 1980s, literary departments were more receptive to deconstruction than philosophy departments, for “the ambiguity and contextuality, the interplay of the spoken and written word, that deconstruction emphasises in philosophical texts are both more obvious and more acknowledged in literary ones” (Holland). Notwithstanding the fact that apparatuses that deconstruction uses and the reach of truths they reveal are similar in both fields, deconstruction plays a completely distinct role in philosophy than in literature. As states Jack Reynolds, “The literary aspect [of deconstruction] concerns the textual interpretation, where invention is essential to finding hidden alternative meanings in the text,” and the philosophical aspect is concerned with the, “‘metaphysics of presence’ or simply metaphysics.” Thus, a deconstructed literary piece always retains a distinct personality from its criticism; in contrast, a deconstructive reading of a philosophical text has large impacts on another philosophical text. It is essential to keep in mind that this research prefers to employ the literary side of deconstruction to interpret Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil’s works without decreasing the dialogue between interdisciplines in any way. Deconstruction as a technique of elucidation has been criticised for its inability to establish a conclusive thesis about a work’s direction and accused of lacking “philosophical sensibility, precision and accuracy” (Gasche 1016), and being “an apocalyptic manner of a conspiracy against all literary values” (1015). It’s also been chastised for being unconcerned with history and for self-obsessed intellectual subculture that dismisses logical outside appraisal. Nonetheless, it is difficult to deny that deconstruction allows for the discovery of inherent instabilities, uncertainties, ambiguities and multiplicities of meaning, and contradictions in texts. Leitch, in his book *Deconstructive Criticism: An Advanced Introduction* (1983), asserts that

deconstruction “aims to decipher the stable truths of a work, employing conventional ‘passive’ tactics of reading; and it seeks to question and subvert such truths in an active production of enigmatic undecidables” (175-76).

Furthermore, it provides its expounders with an endless number of ways to understand and re-examine works of literature and philosophy by encouraging them to be sceptical of fixed interpretations and realise the “powerlessness of ready-made concepts to explain or delimit the activity of writing” (Norris, *Deconstruction* xiii). Deconstruction has also influenced disciplines like linguistics, psychology, cultural studies, sociology, and anthropology, and has maintained its critical rigidity in modern times, owing to its interstitial hovering between philosophy and literature. Says Peter Salmon, “While the project of deconstruction, in its radical critique of unspoken cultural assumptions, is not wholly responsible for extending the field of questions to be asked of a given event, it has made it impossible— unless by choice— to not be aware of the contingency and power relations built into any description.” The principles of textual deconstruction can be described as follows with the intention of condensing the above debate on deconstructionism and aid the deconstructive reading of Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil’s works: (a) Careful perusal, meticulous scrutiny to detail, and pellucidity of stance are used in deconstructive criticism to focus on continuous and different conflicts in a literary or philosophical work. (b) It attempts to comprehend a text by emphasising the text’s suppressed / soundless meaning(s). As a result, it not only forbids semantic inactivity by revitalising the text by removing any permanence linked with its meanings but also allows for the cohabitation or Derridean “freeplay” (Lodge 89) of the text’s conflicting, paradoxical, or opposing meanings. (c) Deconstructive appraisal’s main move is to home in on binary oppositions inside a text and break down and dismiss them. Since then, what was once definite, well-established, and significant becomes cloudy, unorganised, and vague. (d) To cope with dualities, deconstructive study, which is a re-reading that interprets new meaning in the midst of all previous readings, uses a threefold method. It begins by revealing how the oppositions are arranged in a hierarchical order. Second, it temporarily flips the order to have the text signify the contradictory of what it initially looked to indicate. Finally, within a non-hierarchical interrelationship of

difference, it reemphasises the binary opposites. Deconstruction observes numerous unique understandings of meaning without advocating any actual reality or truth, demonstrating that these theoretical differences are unstable, changeable, and reciprocally reliant. (e) Furthermore, by dissecting a text, deconstruction reveals how it constructs its own language system to produce meaning, how it clings to its own central idea or concept to hold the text together, and how it contradicts itself and what happens to the rigid structure when this centre is removed. Consequently, deconstruction is a reading strategy that seeks out places where the framework is broken and greater room for freeplay is created. Deconstruction does not destroy a text's structure. Rather, it makes every effort to show that the text has already destroyed itself. (f) Deconstructionism must look beyond binarism to disclose the contradictions and fabrications immanent in key concept(s) / theme(s) / idea(s) that make a text possible. A deconstructionist must read between the lines to trace aporias, shifts in argument, and other orthodoxly ignored traits such as footnotes / endnotes, casual metaphors, etymologies, use of slashes / brackets / commas, disturbances in the order of words, repetition of words, and grammatical mistakes while looking into the practicality and rhetoricity of a text. (g) Deconstructive criticism is a method of interpretation that focuses on meaning rather than true meaning. It contemplates several readings rather than the most/least correct interpretation. As a result, in a deconstructive study, the same concept can be investigated from a variety of perspectives. (h) A deconstructive reading (writing) that is entirely based on the reader's (writer's) subjective judgement is a counter-writing that keeps deferring its ultimate version. (i) By adopting innovative ways of interpreting texts / language, deconstruction also fosters imagination, originality, creativity, and criticality. It underlines that any book, especially one that is aware of its own deconstructive nature and has been deconstructed (at least once), can receive a deconstructive reading, as long as each reading is introductory and incomplete. (j) Deconstruction is a self-referential investigative instrument that does not, by itself, resolve an immanent issue of interpretation. To do its justice, its methodologies may and should be adapted for both deconstructive reading and deconstructionist applications. (k) The distinction between what is inside the text and what is on the other side of the text can likewise

be dismantled in the spirit of deconstruction. It will allow the deconstructor to relate the text's inconsistencies with external elements such as the cultural and linguistic contexts that influenced its creation, the author's private life, and so on. It will also help deconstruction increase its horizons with every fresh reading by deconstructing such traditional restrictions of the discipline. (1) It is critical to understand that deconstructing a text does not involve destroying it completely or rendering it useless. Rather, the goal is to scan and broaden the scope of its conceivable logical and rhetorical implications in order to better grasp it and so give it democratic ranges.

One of the intriguing themes in present-day fiction is the relationship between two independent disciplines, fiction and theory, and Banerjee and Amruta have knitted these two together in terms of history and narrative. Their fiction has some resonances that create a form of proximity with the concepts and ideas of the adopted approach, and it appears to inherit the intellectual lineage of deconstruction and poststructuralism. Their fiction addresses a broad spectrum of issues, which aligns with Derrida's deconstruction, which offers not just a method of reading but modifies "the ways of thinking and doing that coincides with wide-ranging changes going on in Western societies today. Deconstruction therefore has many dimensions – institutional and pedagogical, familial and sexual, political and juridical, even theological and scientific" (Miller 293). As a result, their fiction readily corresponds to the issues raised by deconstruction.

A deconstruction approach is the most suitable method to critically understand Banerjee and Patil's graphic novels. Their fiction can be elucidated in a variety of ways and has an unlimited number of meanings. Deconstruction is the process of extracting many meanings from a single text. Banerjee and Patil's works are full of literary innovation and an absence of presence that pushes readers to engage intimately with their text. Their fiction is specifically concerned with the ways in which literature and theory collide. It demonstrates how literature, like philosophy, may offer a perceptive and enlightening method of thinking about the world. Anthony Uhlmann is of the opinion that "[L]iterature and philosophy intersect and overlap because . . . they are touched not only by other texts, but by contexts; not only by the

discursive formations Foucault describes, but by non-discursive milieu which enter correspondence with these texts” (*Becket and Poststructuralism* 188). In retaliation to those challenges, both the literary authors and philosophers come across a comparable ground of problems - literature grasps the problems through “the creation of sensations,” while philosophy understands them through “the construction of conceptions.”

Literature and theory originated from separate traditions, but they are by no means entirely locked zones. Theorists and philosophers have impacted literary writers, and vice versa. In the case of Banerjee and Patil and Derrida, this is the case. Other deconstructionists and postmodernist thinkers, on the other hand, have come across aspects of the same tradition – such as 9/11 and the Iraq war – to which both have contributed their opinions and thoughts. Literature and philosophy have a symbiotic relationship in which each illuminates the other. Above all, literature is a vigorous platform for reasoning, and it varies from philosophical comprehension. In this sense, Banerjee and Patil’s fiction exposes, like an artist, the attempts to reflect through the issues that arose in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Banerjee and Patil’s views in their novels are not the concluding word or the optimum solution, but rather a point of view that has to be explored further from other perspectives.

Regardless of the extensive research that has emerged out of a deconstructive stance, it is believed that this method still has room for innovative ideas. And, in the case of Banerjee and Patil’s fiction, it would provide a concise and rather thorough interpretation because the texts under consideration constitute the non-teleological unravelling of a promised end: disruption, differences, heterogeneity, incoherence, contradiction, and disintegration. Banerjee and Patil’s fiction and deconstruction both question the old notions, beliefs, and authority that have governed the social, cultural, and political system to this point. Deconstruction aims to reveal the system’s main driving force as ideologically and discursively constructed, rooted in specific situations and operating in tandem with a certain social formation. Catherine Belsey writes, “[W]hat seems obvious and natural is not necessarily so but that, on the contrary, the ‘obvious’ and the ‘natural’ are not *given* but produced in specific society

by the ways in which that society talks and thinks about itself and its experience” (2-3). As a result, Banerjee and Patil’s description of several structures resonates strongly with specific characteristics of deconstruction.

The term binary opposition first emerged in the late twentieth century in the theories of structuralism but later evolved into post-structuralism. Binary opposites are pairs of terms that are incompatible with one another. A deconstructive approach to binary opposites yields new insights into the opposing pairs’ long-term viability. It aids in the exploitation of those features of a set of socio-cultural and political norms that are constrained and not emphasised in regular thought. During this process, the critic either affirms western thinking or casts doubt on the preference assigned to one term over another. To work on the opposites, the analyst mulls through a series of inquiries. Any attempted reversal is always susceptible to change in light of new facts and thoughts. Nonetheless, such word reversals aid in becoming aware of the undervalued and striving to cherish them.

One of the basic tactics of deconstructive reading and interpretation is binary opposition. In “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” the “opposition and its system,” according to Derrida, determine “all the concepts and all the sentences of metaphysics” (281). It can be found in the text. All that is required for it is to be identified. There is a good chance that readers will have divergent views and interpretations of the opposites. Deconstruction aims to understand and deconstruct the different conflicting pairs that characterise dominant modes of thought. The binary opposite is highlighted as a deconstructive feature in this project. The name ‘binary’ comes from the Latin word *binarius*, which means “consisting of two.” According to Greg Smith, the concept of binary opposition – derived mostly from Levi-Strauss’ myth studies: “the system by which, in language and thought, two theoretical opposites [such as good / evil, author / reader, and light / dark] are strictly defined and set off against one another” (383) – has played a crucial role in structuralist theory and practice. According to Peter Barry, a poststructuralist/deconstructive reading is defined by reading the text against itself where meanings “directly contrary to the surface meaning” (70) are uncovered,

moreover looking for disunity rather than unity and considering single passages. One of the most important reading tactics for a conventional structuralist interpretation of a literary or philosophical book is the detection of these binarisms within the text. Structuralism holds that certain binaries are “pertinent to larger thematic structures which encompass other antitheses presented in the text” and therefore capable of producing thematic implications or master truths for the entire book (Culler 264).

For a deconstructive reading, the structuralist concept of binary opposition, which favours one opposite over the other and includes a “centering or imposition of order” (Cuddon 89), is insufficient. Derrida proposed freeplay as “the alternative to our previous ways of structuring the world” (Hans 809-10) in his seminal 1966 speech, “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences.” In Derrida’s opinion, according to David Lodge, all structuralist analyses suggest that “they are based on some secure ground, a ‘centre’ or ‘transcendental signified,’ that is outside the system under investigation and guarantees its intelligibility” (87). Believing that “discourse is a field not of finite meanings but of infinite play,” Derrida advocated ““a world of signs without fault, without truth and without origin, which is offered to our active interpretation”” (87). In effect, freeplay, according to Hans, is “the endless play of the signs of writing” (815); it is “the continual working out of the relationship between various ‘non-centers’ and complete randomness” (823).

In terms of the relationship between binaries and freeplay, deconstructive critique begins by identifying dominating binarisms in the chosen text, autonomously swapping places of opposite terms in all pairs, and exploring the interplay between both sides of each pair. To elaborate further, deconstruction, as the first step in analysing a text, critically examines the text’s received implications by following the text’s main binary system, in line with the structuralist view that the human mind derives meanings primarily in terms of language binaries. Second, deconstructive reading overturns the pecking order and offers certain alternate interpretations of the text that have previously been ignored, dormant, classified as secondary, tertiary, and so on, and thought to be even impracticable. The second phase is critical for any hope of fair play between the opposites, i.e., between the core and marginal interpretations

of the text, because it is only when fringe becomes the centre that the fringe can do its best to make sure that it redefines the centre forever. According to Derrida in “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” maintaining or seeming to retain the centre, even if by role reversal, is essential for deconstructionism since “one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure” (278) and “the notion of a structure lacking any centre represents the unthinkable itself” (279). Finally, when both the text’s centre and margin have been redesigned and evened out, deconstructive reading seeks its mainstay, i.e., the semantic by a detailed examination of, say, self-critique, and inherent in the text is a rhetorical-cum-logical incommensurability that facilitates coexistence, complementarity, impurity, relativity, uniqueness, self-expression, instability, unpredictability, provisionality, postponement, multivocality, dynamism, complexity, and impossibility of its significations.

Deconstruction, first, detects and then dismantles the paradoxical situations in the text in a very systematic manner. Deconstruction gives prominence to double reading. It reverses the binary oppositions and then rewrites them in a bigger field, accounting for non-presence as something other than lack of presence. In this technique, binary polarities are first detected and then reversed to reveal how a text is restricted to prioritising of particular concepts over others, and then both the concepts are placed under erasure. The next step involved in the process of double reading is “the intervention of an outside or excluded term within the very constitution of wholeness” (Nealon 33). Derrida writes, “Deconstruction cannot limit itself or proceed immediately to neutralization: it must by means of a double gesture, a double science, a double writing, practice an *overturning* of the classical opposition *and* a general *displacement* of the system. It is only on this condition that deconstruction will provide itself the means with which to *intervene* in the fields of opposition that it criticizes, which is also a field of nondiscursive forces” (*Margins of Philosophy* 329). The term ‘nondiscursive’ is used in the previous quote to imply that the reversing of hierarchies in texts is also a political and social reversing of societal hierarchies. He defines deconstruction as a ‘double gesture,’ ‘double science,’ ‘double writing’ and illustrates it by flipping hierarchical binary oppositions on their heads. He rearranges

the oppositions and introduces a new theory by showing the oppositions in a completely different manner. He employs this method of binary oppositions in deconstructing Rousseau's texts in *Of Grammatology*. Derrida's works harshly criticise phenomenology (Husserl), linguistics (Saussurean), lacanian psychoanalysis, and structuralism (Levi-Straus). Structuralists always focus on the centre, but deconstructionists reject the centre on the basis of the fact that we should think differently too to discover new ideas despite the fact that they originate from the margins, which are considered irrelevant. According to Saussure, signifier and signified are one and the same; there is no distinction between them. On the other hand, Derrida claims that signified and signifier continue to split yet reunite in new combination words as long as the meaning is never entirely achieved.

The concept of logocentrism is crucial to deconstruction. This technique claims that there is a tenacious but pathological centering of logos in Western philosophy. The idea that speech is at the heart of language is known as phonocentrism. According to the phonocentrism theory, a statement is the primary signifier of meaning, and the written word—which is their representation – is derived from the spoken word. According to phonocentrism, mental processes that result in speech are the source of language, and that expression leads to writing. The argument that a linguistic sign is made up of a signifier that receives meaning from an idea or concept promotes phonocentrism. Speech is thought of as outside of thought, while writing is thought of as outside of speech. Writing is merely a “signifier of a signifier” (*Of Grammatology* 7); nevertheless, handwriting is only a representation of an address. In light of this, logocentric theory proposes that the text is essentially a linguistic derivative that derives its meaning from speech. The conflict between speech and writing, according to Jacques Derrida, is a manifestation of the logocentrism of Western society. Logocentrism is a term coined by the German philosopher Ludwig Klages in the 1920s. In Greek, the term logos refers to word, reason, truth, logic, and law. A self-sufficient standard by which all truth can be judged can be seen in the logos. It acts as the barometer for all meaning. In terms of language, logos refers to the “meaning, presence, idea, intention” that underlies written material, whereas the spoken word serves as a sufficient means of

communication (Childers and Joseph 154). A logocentrist is someone who believes that the fundamental idea of language and philosophy is speech. Derrida, however, asserts that a specific hierarchical dichotomy—namely, the superiority of speech over writing—forms the root of phonocentrism. This “phonocentrism” (*Of Grammatology* 11), as Derrida describes it, has always valued the spoken word over and above the written word because, as Barbara Johnson observes in her introduction to Derrida’s *Dissemination*:

The spoken word is given a higher value because the speaker and listener are both present to the utterance simultaneously. There is no temporal or spatial distance between speaker, speech, and listener, since the speaker hears himself speak at the same moment the listener does. This immediacy seems to guarantee the notion that in the spoken word we know what we mean, mean what we say, say what we mean, and know what we have said. Whether or not perfect understanding always occur *in fact*, this image of perfectly self-present meaning is, according to Derrida, the underlying ideal of Western Culture.
(viii – ix)

Derrida’s 1976 book *Of Grammatology* interprets western philosophy in terms of the illusion of logocentrism. The voice has historically served as the focal point of Western philosophy, which is highly dubious of written word. It has been logocentric in the broadest sense and devoted to the conviction of some fundamental or axiomatic truths. According to Derrida, the West is responsible for creating this interpretive interest in meaning and representation. Obsession with the word or the comprehensive explanation of everything is known as phonocentrism. It is the privileging of speech over writing. In the opening of *Of Grammatology*, Derrida claims that deconstruction is the critique of logocentrism, which is nothing more than “the most original and powerful ethnocentrism” that governs and enforces itself onto the world order (3). Phonocentrism refers to the dominance of the phone as a means of self-representation through phonic substance; the phone itself is not an external, empirical, or contingent signifier. The notion of a whole speech that is fully present, an original speech that is insulated from interpretation, is at its core. Speech is preferred over writing in our

phonocentric world since it brings the listener closer to the speaker. When a person speaks, his physical presence maintains the barrier between his words and the meaning he tries to convey. To put it briefly, phonocentrism can be said to refer to “the bias in Western meta-physical thinking in favor of the linguistic ‘presence’ of speech (‘logos’) over the linguistic ‘absence’ of writing: a bias carried over into the social structures grounded by metaphysics (for example, Judeo-Christianity, morality, political structure, patriarchy)” (Brunk 155). M.A.R. Habib writes in his book *A History of Literary Criticism*, “Etymologically and historically, this term refers to any system of thought which is founded on the stability and authority of the Logos, the divine Word. The various meanings accumulated by this word in the Hebrew, ancient pagan, and early Christian worlds are complex” (650).

Derrida believes that the origin of the entire Western tradition of metaphysics is the logos as uttered word: “the history of (the only) metaphysics, which has, in spite of all differences, not only from Plato to Hegel (even including Leibniz) but also, beyond these apparent limits, from the pre-Socratics to Heidegger, always assigned the origin of truth in general to the logos: the history of truth, of the truth of truth, has always been-except for a metaphysical diversion that we shall have to explain-the debasement of writing, and its repression outside ‘full’ speech” (*Of Grammatology* 3). This prompted Derrida to wage an independent deconstructionist assault against the whole Western canon of logical reasoning in literature and philosophy. Reason, he says, seems to be governed by a metaphysics of presence or the everlasting logos, and this is the fundamental assumption of Western philosophy and religion. Throughout the history of Western philosophy, theology, and literature – beginning with its creator, Plato, and continuing through Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Saussure – a logocentric quest has been a driving force. The Western philosophical tradition has been enriched by their writings. Derrida criticised the Western tradition for using the logocentric approach to absolutise meaning and constructing reality in an untruthful manner. Derrida has found many instances of phonocentrism throughout the development of Western philosophy. *The Phaedrus* by Plato is one of the first and most significant examples. Derrida demonstrates how Plato favours speech over writing in *The Phaedrus* and how this

causes people to believe that truth originates in the immediate self-presence of the Forms in his article, *Plato's Pharmacy*. Socrates discusses the position of writing after first addressing the art of discourse. He tells the story of how writing was invented by the Egyptian demi-god Theuth and how the King of the Gods declared writing to be poison since it causes people to become entirely forgetful of reality. A certain form of soul separation from its own inwardness, that is, from its own origin in speech and self-presence, occurs when the soul falls into the materiality of script:

From this position, without rejecting the homage, the god-king will depreciate it, pointing out not only its uselessness but its menace and its mischief.

Another way of not receiving the offering of writing. In so doing, god-the-king-that-speaks is acting like a father. The Pharmakon is here presented to the father and is by him rejected, belittled, abandoned disparaged. The father is always suspicious and watchful toward writing. (*Dissemination* 76)

According to Derrida, the preference for speaking over writing is a recurrence of the preference for Forms that is reality over Phenomena that is appearances. Since Plato, every significant philosophical system has replicated this endeavour to show the internal voice as the model for self-present meaning, according to Derrida, and it is at the core of all logocentric thinking: “We already have a foreboding that phonocentrism merges with the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as *presence*, with all the subdeterminations which depend on this general form and which organize within it their system and their historical sequence . . . (*Of Grammatology* 12). The root of logocentrism, according to Derrida, is the linguistic and religious notion of sign. Derrida contends that the foundation of Western thought has always been binary oppositions, such as transcendent/immanent, spirit/flesh, primary/secondary, speech/writing, and presence/absence: “External/internal, image/reality, representation/presence, such is the old grid to which is given the task of outlining the domain of a science. And of what science? Of a science that can no longer answer to the classical concept of the *episteme* because the originality of its field – an originality that it inaugurates – is that the opening of the ‘image’ within it appears as the condition of ‘reality;’ a relationship that can no longer be thought

within the simple difference and the uncompromising exteriority of ‘image’ and ‘reality,’ of ‘outside’ and ‘inside,’ of ‘appearance’ and ‘essence,’ with the entire system of oppositions which necessarily follows from it” (*Of Grammatology* 33).

Speech versus Writing is one of these logocentric binary oppositions to which Derrida gives particular attention. According to Saussure’s binary model, oral communication is viewed as a transcendental signifier, whereas written communication has been devalued. Saussure, in his book *Course in General Linguistics*, states, “Language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first” (23). Written words are the symbols of spoken words in Aristotle’s theory of meaning, whereas spoken words are the symbols of mental experience: “Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words” (*Of Grammatology* 30). This is due to the voice, the creator “of the *first symbols*, has a relationship of essential and immediate proximity with the mind” (11). He creates an essential duality out of the three phenomena of thought, speech, and writing. Spoken words represent thought, which in turn is represented by written words. Speech might be thought of as being innocent, but writing has lost its innocence. Writing compromises the sheer originality of linguistic expression that occurs orally. Writing appears to impose itself on the Logos’ natural state, even raping and violating it. When a person speaks, his words appear to be synchronised with his thoughts. Both the speaker and the hearer can understand the meaning: “Husserl found evidence for self-presence in the voice (*phone*) – not the ‘real’ voice, but the principle of the voice in our interior soliloquy: ‘When I speak I hear myself. I hear and understand at the same time that I speak’” (Sarup 36).

It is evident that speaking not only produces presence but also an accurate portrayal of meaning. Derrida in *Speech and Phenomena*, writes, “My words are ‘alive’ because they seem not to leave me: not to fall outside me, outside my breath, at a visible distance; not to cease to belong to me . . .” (76). The Western conception of orality served as a template for Derrida, not just for all manifestations of presence but also for all manifestations of truth. As the centre and guarantor of presence, this can

be perceived as complicated. Derrida refers to this yearning for centre or presence as logocentrism in his work *Of Grammatology*: “This notion remains therefore within the heritage of that logocentrism which is also a phonocentrism: absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of meaning” (11-12). Truth continues to be threatened by writing, which also distorts presence. Speaking and writing are in antagonism to one another, which is oppressive since speaking is superior and belongs to the Logos and a greater presence.

Derrida argues that the oppressive hierarchy between writing and speech must be dismantled or at least brought to a halt if meaning is to be freed from these repressive hierarchical systems. The metaphysics of presence provides the basis for a false identity that acts as meaning. Derrida rejects the idea that a structure has a centre or a Logos. Phonocentrism, which prioritises speech above writing, suppresses writing’s desire for self-presence. As a result, the logocentric Western approach is rejected. Consequently, the Western approach that is focused on logos is dismissed. Derrida argues that logocentrism in all its forms is problematic because it fails to acknowledge that human mind is social, historical, finite, and contingent. Logocentrism misses the connection between meaning and people, which is a dynamic web of relationships. Derrida’s critique targets the ongoing risk of assigning presence and meaning to the Logos. He does not dismiss the desire of seeking the truth or the possibility of finding it; his main point against logocentrism is that the metaphysics of presence or logocentrism cannot contain truth as they are not truth. In this research work, these concepts of Derrida are applied by analysing the phonocentric ideology in the graphic narratives of Banerjee and Patil.

In his critique of western epistemological practice, Jacques Derrida, the most widely read French philosopher of the late twentieth century, deconstructs the colonial legacies in the knowledge systems and addresses the questions of power, ethics, and the politics embedded in them. In order to highlight the political and ethical ramifications of the act of friendship or relationship and to highlight how the west has othered the rest of the globe, Derrida suggests a radical notion of “hospitality” in his book *Of Hospitality* (5). Derrida proposes an expansive philosophy of hospitality that

draws from Emmanuel Levinas' writings and argues for a new form of friendship in the hostile and estranged society of today. In one of his well-known writings, *Of Hospitality* (2000), Derrida goes into great detail about his philosophy of hospitality. The word 'hospitality' comes from the Latin word 'hospes', which is derived from the noun 'hostis', which originally denoted an adversary or hostile outsider. From an etymological perspective, hostility and hospitality can occur simultaneously. A gesture of hospitality is an offer to another person to use one's space.

By definition, hospitality is a system that controls interactions between the internal and external, encompassing both private and public. A person or people who are considered to be outside are momentarily brought within, although lacking any inherent or contractual entitlement to be part of the internal group. Thus, it is absurd to argue that a spouse entertains his or her partner in their shared residence, or that they entertain their children, or that they entertain a worker who is being paid to reside there. Also, it is absurd to claim that the State extends hospitality to its people. Thus, depending totally on the relationship between the one making the offer and the person accepting or declining it, giving a person a drink of water or a place to sleep qualifies as hospitality or not. Invading the ethics of the self or the realm of the self, hospitality entails letting others into oneself and one's own space. It can be considered basic and risky because of this. Economically speaking, it is seen as potentially risky because it means sharing limited resources, even though visitors may be productive and contribute to the economy in other ways. In other words, hospitality entails the temporary sharing of space and occasionally also of time, bodies, edibles, and other commodities. *Oxford American Large Print Dictionary* defines hospitality as a "friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests or strangers" (599).

On defining hospitality in her book *Derrida and Hospitality Theory and Practice* (2010), Judith Still asserts, "Hospitality in theory and practice relates to crossing boundaries ('Come in, come in') or thresholds (even *seuils de tolérance* sometimes), including those between self and other, private and public, inside and outside, individual and collective, personal and political, emotional and rational, generous and economic – these couples that overlap each other's territory without any

one exactly mapping another” (4). Hospitality, historically a component of many religious beliefs such as Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam, first appeared in philosophical discussions in Plato’s works around 399 BCE. Plato’s interest in hospitality focused on the issues of the stranger and the political; this aspect of hospitality, along with ethics, continues to be given priority in the writings of well-known authors like Immanuel Kant, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida. The host-guest relationship can take many different forms, including that between a statesman and a foreigner, a citizen and an immigrant, or a coloniser and the colonised. Hospitality theory explores these relationships, examining the role of power within them and usually conflicting forces. Many critical schools include theoretical discourse on hospitality as a subtopic, with Post-structuralism, Phenomenology, and Postcolonialism standing out as the most notable examples. Immanuel Kant in *Toward Perpetual Peace* (2006) refers to a “universal hospitality” (82), that is consistent with his views of a “categorical imperative” (117), an unalterable moral rule that derives morality from reason. In Kant’s words, “hospitality (a host’s conduct to his guest) means the right of a stranger not to be treated in a hostile manner by another upon the arrival on another’s territory” (82). According to him, everyone has the right to travel to any place on earth, regardless of its location, “by virtue of the right of common possession of the surface of the earth” (82).

In keeping with his belief that one should never lie, under any circumstances, Kant rejects all justifications for hostility, arguing that “the *inhospitable* behavior of the civilized states in our part of the world, and especially of the commercial ones,” is unacceptable (82). He goes on to condemn in particular “the Sugar Islands,” which he refers to as “that seat of the cruelest and most premeditated form of slavery” (84). Kant’s emphasis on ethics serves as a framework for the conversation about hospitality, which cannot be addressed without consideration of moral conduct, especially in the Caribbean. In *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (1999), Jacques Derrida addresses and develops ideas on “welcoming,” a term he borrows from Levinas and uses interchangeably with hospitality (15). Although the word hospitality only sometimes appears in the book, Derrida refers to Levinas’ *Totality and Infinity* as “an immense treatise of *hospitality*,” observing that it “becomes the very name of what

opens itself to the face, or, more precisely, of what ‘welcomes’ it” (21). Derrida makes a distinction between an “*ethics* of hospitality” and a “*politics* of hospitality,” both of which are influenced by Kant (19). The politics of hospitality are finite, or have limits, whereas the ethics of hospitality are infinite, or without limits. Derrida observes the presence of power and control in the interaction between the guest and the host in his book *Of Hospitality* (2000). It is crucial to use a guest as a benchmark for the host. Derrida asserts his position by drawing on Plato’s *The Apology of Socrates* to support his claim that the host engages in the exchange to forge an identity. There is no hospitality, according to him, “without sovereignty of oneself over one’s home” (*Of Hospitality* 55). Being hospitable enables the host to keep the guest under control. In order to provide “unconditional” (25) hospitality, the host would have to relinquish control or power, but this would be impossible because it would eliminate the condition of power that makes hospitality possible. Derrida contends that the act of hospitality, despite the supposed good will it suggests, widens the gap between host and guest or subject and stranger. He implies that there is some element of risk involved in the interaction between the host and the visitor; even just opening the door to the “other” (135) is a risky move that could put the host and the host’s family in danger.

In his book *Of Hospitality*, the late French philosopher Jacques Derrida addresses the concept of hospitality as well as the host-guest relationship and the act of welcoming the other. This other may be a stranger or unrelated individual. He gives the concepts of “conditional” hospitality and “unconditional” hospitality (*Of Hospitality* 25). When extending hospitality and extending a warm welcome, the host places some restrictions on the visitor. The host first of all inquires about the guest and then only allows him inside his house. In addition, the host places various limitations on the guest. As a result, there is an exchange between the guest and the host. Derrida persuades that reciprocity and the economy of exchange have always characterised hospitality. The pact of obligation between the guest and host governs this situation. Derrida asserts that hospitality becomes conditional when the stranger or outsider must satisfy the standards of the other. Conditional hospitality considers things like rights, obligations, and duties. Conditional hospitality primarily “reaffirms the roles of

the participants” (Dausner 54). In conditional hospitality, the host insists on having the upper hand over the visitor and expects them to follow the rules the host imposes. Therefore, in the context of conditional hospitality, host dominance is a prerequisite. With conditional hospitality comes the host’s perception of control. In other words, conditional hospitality only extends as far as a guest complies with the conditions laid forth by the host. Derrida claims that the traditional definition of hospitality, known as conditional hospitality, entails both the host’s control and openness as well as the requirement that the guest be grateful to the host.

Derrida suggests an unconditional hospitality in contrast to this conditional hospitality that is unrelated to right, law, debt, or responsibility. It stands outside of what is legal and above what is judicial. Unconditional hospitality is when a host or nation embraces a visitor with complete openness. Derrida, however, records a violent demeanour from a visitor in the framework of unconditional hospitality. It alludes to a moderate form of hospitality. This is the genuine form of hospitality that is extended to a visitor without placing any requirements or limitations on them. Additionally, a guest is under no obligation to return the favour and is not expected to express gratitude. A host also extends a warm welcome to a visitor without ever feeling superior to them in the spirit of unconditional hospitality. According to Derrida, unconditional hospitality is the antithesis of conditional hospitality, in which a host extends hospitality without anticipating anything in return from an “absolute, unknown, anonymous other” (*Of Hospitality* 25). Unconditional hospitality, in Derrida’s view, is the unrestricted welcoming of the other; it is a categorical imperative that says, “Yes to *who or what turns up*, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any *identification*, whether or not it has to do with a foreigner, an immigrant, an invited guest, or an unexpected visitor, whether or not the new arrival is the citizen of another country, a human, animal, or divine creature, a living or dead thing, male or female” (77).

Hospitality is a contradictory imperative that can be either conditional or unconditional. Because it is simply extended in exchange for something in return or out of politeness, and hence without obligation, conditional hospitality is not

considered to be true hospitality. The truest hospitality is unconditional hospitality, but it is also unattainable because in reality one may always be more kind, more welcome, and offer more of themselves and their homes until there is total self-effacement. The existence of hospitality lies between a few limited requirements and the totally unconditional. Although unconditional and conditional hospitality work in opposition to one another, this does not imply that hospitality is self-defeating or leads ineffectively down a dead end. Instead, this tension is what makes hospitality a legitimately political concept: “It is a question of knowing how to transform and improve the law, and of knowing if this improvement is possible within an historical space which takes place *between* the Law of an unconditional hospitality, offered *a priori* to every other, to all newcomers, *whoever they may be*, and the conditional laws of a right to hospitality, without which *The* unconditional Law of hospitality would be in danger of remaining a pious and irresponsible desire, without form and without potency, and of even being perverted at any moment” (*On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* 22–23).

In one of Derrida’s unpublished seminars, John Caputo writes that this tension is also made clear etymologically, “The word ‘hospitality’ derives from the Latin *hospes*, which is formed from *hostis*, which originally meant a ‘stranger’ and came to take on the meaning of the enemy or ‘hostile’ stranger (*hostilis*), + *pets* (*potis*, *pores*, *potentia*), to have power” (*Deconstruction in a Nutshell* 110). Any gesture of hospitality carries a touch of hostility because, according to Caputo, “the welcome extended to the guest, is a function of the power of the host to remain master of the premises” (110). In addition, the concept of the host encompasses the concept of the hostage. By maintaining the only authority to establish the terms of hospitality, the host effectively holds the guest captive to his demands and a prisoner of their interaction. There is still a trace of the hostage even in unconditional hospitality. If someone gives over control of their house and offers the guest to “‘come inside,’ ‘come within me,’ not only toward me, but within me: occupy me, take place in me, which means, by the same token, also take my place, don’t content yourself with coming to meet me or ‘into my home’”, then host and guest are paradoxically substituted (*Of Hospitality* 123). It would appear as though the host who is standing

by the door to greet his guest is actually a prisoner of his own realm, a captive of his own authority, and a victim of his own subjectivity. As a result, the substitution takes place, and the hostage turns into the host. However, if the host turns into the hostage and the previous hostage turns into the host, an unending cycle occurs in which both the host and hostage roles are simultaneously assumed. In his conclusion, Derrida writes, “these substitutions make everyone into everyone else’s hostage” (125).

In conclusion, the current chapter sets down a comprehensive foundation for understanding the complex dynamics of Derridean theory of deconstruction, mainly through the deep analysis of binary oppositions, phonocentrism, and hospitality in the graphic novels of the emerging graphic novelists – Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil. It helps in understanding Derrida’s complex theory in a better way by briefly defining the terms used in this thesis. By analysing these different terms in different chapters of this thesis, a new and different meaning is provided to these graphic novels.

With his idea of deconstruction, Derrida transformed literary theory and challenged conventional views on language, meaning, and interpretation. Derrida’s contributions to literary studies are examined in this chapter, along with how deconstruction questions the metaphysics of presence, binary oppositions, and the function of language in meaning production. Derrida’s writings have had a lasting impact on literary criticism, leading academics to reevaluate the fundamentals of textual interpretation. The introduction of structuralism and post-structuralism in the middle of the 20th century brought about a paradigm change in literary theory. Jacques Derrida, whose theory of deconstruction challenged the fundamental tenets of Western philosophy and literary criticism, was one of the most significant contributors to this change. The way that texts are perceived and comprehended has been reevaluated as a result of Derrida’s work, which emphasises the inherent instability of language. By promoting a more sophisticated and critical approach to texts, Derrida’s theory has had a significant impact on literary criticism. These days, academics study how texts challenge their own presumptions and use language to create meaning. In order to examine how texts uphold or subvert power structures,

deconstruction has also converged with other critical theories like feminism and postcolonialism. By questioning conventional ideas of language, meaning, and interpretation, Derrida's deconstruction theory has had a profound impact on literary studies. Scholars are still motivated by his work to investigate the intricacies of meaning-making and to challenge the tenets of textual analysis. Derrida has created new perspectives on literature and its connection to philosophy and culture by means of deconstruction.

Chapter-3

Binary Oppositions and Graphic Subjects

In this chapter, the binary opposition is highlighted as a deconstructive aspect in the works of Banerjee and Patil. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the social practices and structures that result in power imbalances and binary relationships between people based on caste and gender. Social identities are intellectually driven by power relationships, and it is through ideological construction that a certain group of individuals establishes hegemony, and the dominated group consents to the dominant group. This is how these cultures maintain a power system based on the establishment of marginalised people's identities as people who accept their inferior status as is.

Banerjee has portrayed the issue of class conflict in most of his novels. This section analyses the binary opposition of high class and low class in the graphic novels of Sarnath Banerjee. Typically, there are numerous ethnic groups and social classes in each nation. Each ethnic group's representative community has its own set of laws. One of the numerous ethnic groups that continues to use the social class structure is the Asian community. In social life, social class typically refers to hierarchical divisions between individuals or groups. The examination in this case focuses on the social behaviours and social structures based on binary ties between people. The social structures as well as the processes of power paradigms operate on the same wavelength all across the world, in one form or another. This is how society's poorer portions are led to feel that this is their social rank and that this is their true place in society. The study examines how these social systems, which are based on the idea of binarism, function. Binarism establishes a power imbalance in society, with one group dominating the other in a binary connection. The research focuses on binary concepts such as high class/low class, man/woman, and heterosexuality/homosexuality. The investigation reveals that binarism establishes hegemony, with the dominant entity exerting control over the dominated entity, who in most cases cannot fight due to the pervasive social ideology. Banerjee destabilises the narrative of national economic success by illustrating the cost of development

projects to underprivileged areas and highlighting India's persistent class divides. Banerjee brilliantly smashes the fiction of national economic growth by bringing to light those communities that have been left out of the new India discourse.

The position of a person in this social class is what makes the researcher interested in examining the works of Banerjee, which also discuss social class. Banerjee's *Corridor* (2004) is the first Indian graphic novel to be recognised internationally. Brighu, the central character, embodies a Baudelairean archetype, passionately observing, extremely eager collector, and passionate wanderer who explores the diverse alcoves of Connaught Place, remarking on and observing others. He accumulates second-hand books, and trivial items like old ink pens, film posters, ham radios, boxing gloves, rare LP's that he refrains from playing to avoid damaging them, and reprographic equipment that have lost all commercial value. The novel is largely situated in Delhi and centered on some intriguing urban Indian individuals depicting the daily lives of selected residents in the city. The plot begins in the middle of nowhere and concludes in the middle of nowhere. Brighu is the narrator of the novel, and he perceives himself as a postmodern "Ibn Battuta" (25). He is searching for a book authored by James Watson. He tries everywhere in Delhi but finds it nowhere. He arrives at Rangoonwalla's bookshop, where he finds him contemplating chess moves and reflecting on the peculiarities of his patrons.

Banerjee has given undivided attention to the low-class workers of society in the novel. The novel also depicts the class conflict in the depiction of shopkeepers, the vendors, the tongawallas, and the street stall holders. In the very beginning of the novel, Brighu can be seen searching for the book everywhere in Delhi. He is very clearly differentiated, with the help of his dressing style, from the low-class people in the following picture. The very first panel of the novel shows different workers in the city going to their work. They are shown in filthy clothes, sweated faces, and droopy eyes. Whereas the high-class citizens of Delhi are shown chilling out like Brighu in the third panel of the same page. It can be seen in the below picture that the workers are given no importance.

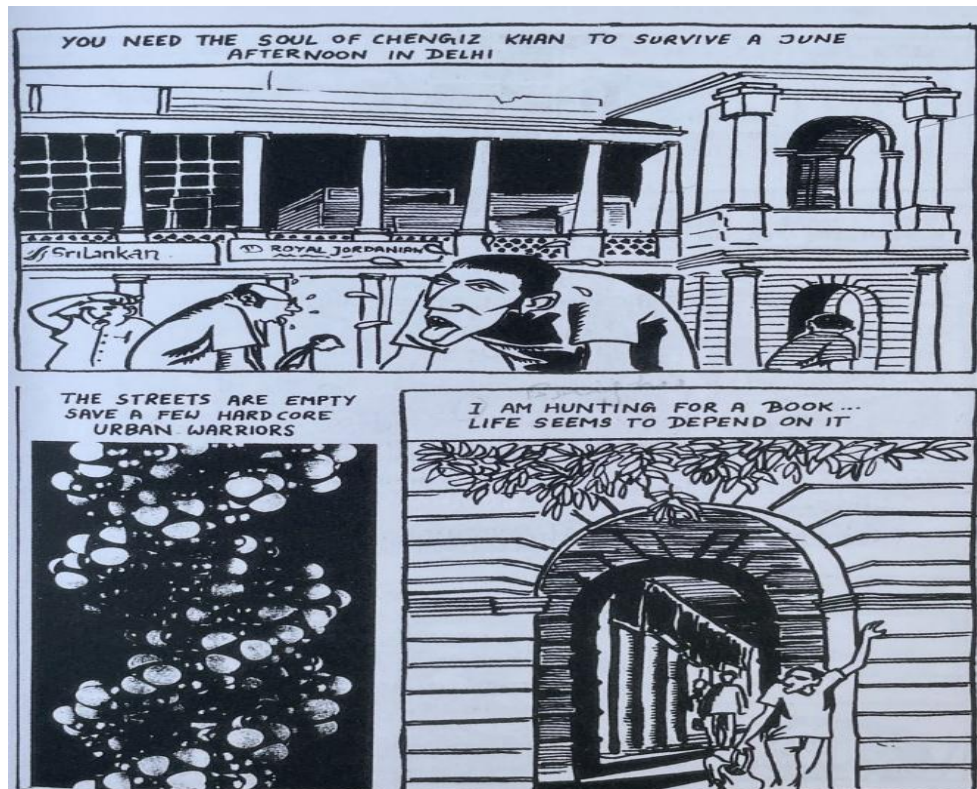


Fig. 3.1 Sarnath Banerjee. *Corridor*, 3

The other depiction of this binary is in the first panel in the following image, where a rickshaw driver is sleeping before the day starts and “the mad rush of office-goers floods the streets of old Delhi” (45). The low-class people are presented in the novel as a working class. They do not work in offices but on the streets. Roadside halwai, shopkeepers outside the masjids and temples, and tonga riders are the kinds of works that are assigned to the section of people who belong to the sect of low class in the society. In the image given below, Banerjee has depicted a tongawalla who does not have a proper place to eat his breakfast: “Nearby, at Turkman gate, a retired tongawalla eats breakfast with his horse” (46). Even he is shown eating his breakfast in the company of his horse. It shows how the lower-class people are associated with animals, and even sometimes they are treated like them. The horse and the tongawalla are both homeless and in the same condition, living their lives on the roads of Delhi.

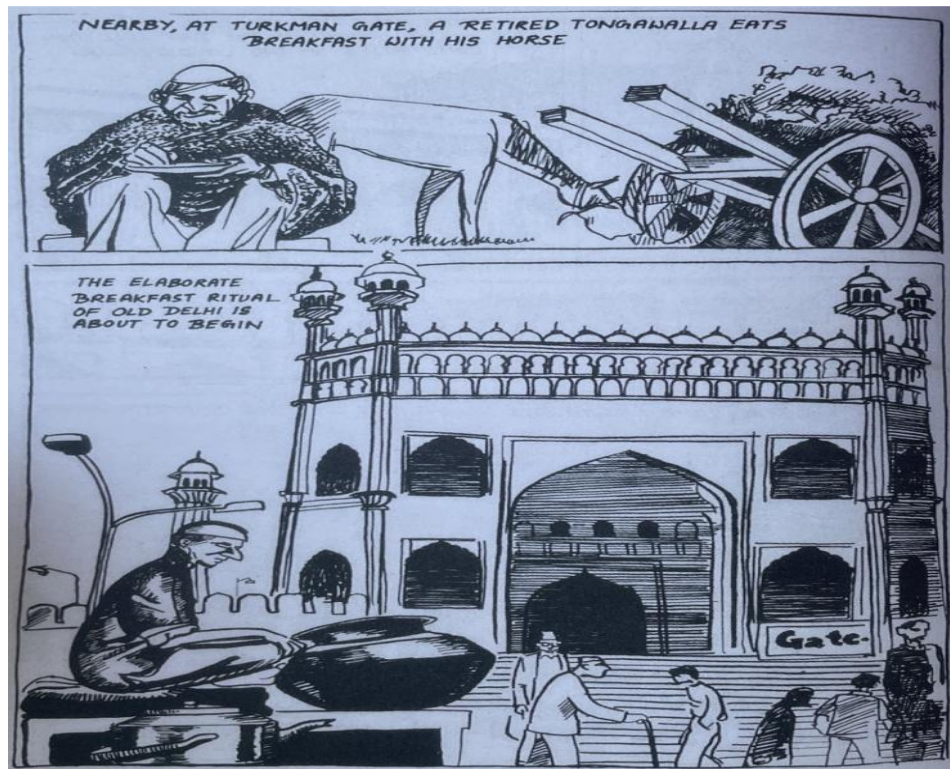


Fig. 3.2 Sarnath Banerjee. *Corridor*, 46

The class hierarchy is evident through the visuals in the following image. It is a single panel covering the whole space on the page. It talks about the worries that are going inside Shintu's brain and completely ignores the sellers. In "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" Derrida writes, "Both belong to one and the same era" (282). The sellers in the panel are looking at buyers in the hope that they will buy something from their stalls, so that their business can be started for the day. Shintu looks at the items on the stalls and ignores them, on the contrary, leaving their hopes in their eyes.



Fig. 3.3 Sarnath Banerjee. *Corridor*, 53

Most of the parts of the novel are strategically located in the middle of what is commonly referred to as political Delhi, Connaught Place, and at Jehangir Rangoonwala's bookstore, whose customers include Digital Dutta and Brighu, all of whom are connoisseurs of knowledge, antiques, and microphilosophies. Jehangir, similar to many characters, lives in what Chris Jenks refers to as "minatorial" geographies that the flâneur encounters, as a recognition of the "ontology of the occupancy" as an act of 'respect' that honours the "integrity of social sentiment that binds a community" (158), and is privy to the inner workings of the subjects, as well as the inner. Rangoonwala, a low-class shopkeeper, is the person who helps Brighu stabilise his life. He proves to be a hero in his life by helping him find the main goal of his life. Despite being a low-class man, Rangoonwala gives directions to a high-class, well-educated person. He is the only person who helps various high-class characters in finding their goal of life. This graphic narrative shows how vendors are treated, while at the same time Banerjee has shown how these vendors help in the awakening of many characters, like Shintu. Shintu gets enlightenment of sexuality only after he gets treatment from a local street vendor.

Banerjee's second novel, *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* (2007), has also hidden various binaries in the deep ocean of the text. The zamindars' and bābu-dom's embarrassed peevishness forms the corpus of Banerjee's story. The novel takes the reader on a malicious anecdotal tour of Kolkata, from Charnock's founding to today's by-lanes and alleyways, which are still teeming with occultists and eccentrics. The book is an abstract, at times disorienting, and intellectually nauseating portrayal of the underbelly of Kolkata's burgeoning city in terms of the sexual gossips and eccentricities of the elites, coloniser lords, and colonised zamindars equally. Subsequently, prior to presenting the major issue – Phillip Francis' battle with Warren Hastings – Banerjee emphasises everyday life in 1780s Calcutta, including a horse-drawn coach with a silhouetted driver and a man watering the grounds. The scene features the Punkahwallah, the valet, and the man serving tea as the panels progress to portray the English duellers before combat – Phillip Francis preparing for the occasion in a single panel filling the entire page. Following Madame Grand's dinner scene, we see a sequence of panels about household staff of a British family.

Throughout Banerjee's effervescent account of colonial Calcutta, the quiet, overlooked characters of the hypothetical dominant narrative are arguably given as much attention as the English protagonists. Examining the historical agency of characters as depicted in graphic novels, taking up as much space within the visual narrative of the graphic medium, Spencer Clark in his article contends that the positioning of actors in relation to historical events within graphic novels significantly influences the readers' understanding of the limitations imposed on an actor's agency: "these actors influenced, shaped, and affected these historical events, despite the constraints of complex societal and structural forces" (502). When discussing about history in comics, Ben Lander states, "Comic histories tend to revel in the minute personal details of everyday life, which receive their due respect because of their personal or symbolic weight within the lives of the characters and the narrative that is being constructed" (117). Take, for example, the third panel in the picture given below. The panel depicts an Englishman seated on a toilet, smoking a hookah while gazing out the window at the tip of a church. An Indian servant grovels at his feet, manipulating the hookah's mechanical device. The text reads: "All the company

officers, known as the white nawabs, had their personal huccaburdars. According to Reverend Long, ‘Smoking was one of the grandest whilers away of time in society, the greatest compliment an officer can pay another is by offering to smoke from his hucca’” (Banerjee, *The Barn Owl’s Wondrous Capers* 9).



Fig. 3.4 Sarnath Banerjee. *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers*, 9

The Englishman is sitting on his toilet, and his Indian staff is managing the pipe next to him. The window lies in the precise centre of the panel, dividing the area evenly between the superior and the subordinate. Additionally, it is organised around the exposed predicament of the Englishman, whose eyes are set firmly on the outside world as he is doing his business, and the Indian servant's on the pipe. Exposure refers to what is visible to us. The term exposure refers to making private moments public, and, as Daniel Solove explains, "[W]e are vulnerable and weak, such as when we are nude or going to the bathroom" (534). However, the local attendant does not look at the Englishman in a condition of exposure in the panel: the Englishman's exposure is, in a sense, obscured in a brilliant planning of detail. In this state of vulnerability, the native has no right to look at the Englishman; he must concentrate

his gaze firmly on the hookah. Furthermore, because his sight is fixated on a faraway item, the Englishman does not notice the crouched native servant's highly awkward state, near to the chamber pot. In whatever situation he may be in, the Englishman alone possesses the prerogative to gaze or avert his gaze. The brutality of racist spatial configurations, and the power of gazing, is both highlighted by Banerjee. Swapna Banerjee states, "Recorded evidence of the kind of behaviour meted out on the Indian servants and the 'negative' qualities attributed to them indiscriminately point to the unequal and racialised [*sic*] character of the relationship" (781). There are other examples of such treatment with the servants in the novel. In the following panel, Banerjee tells us about Jobus Charnock, who founded the city of Calcutta in the eighteenth century. The grief of the native as well as the melancholy of the coloniser is very efficiently depicted in the second panel of the following image.

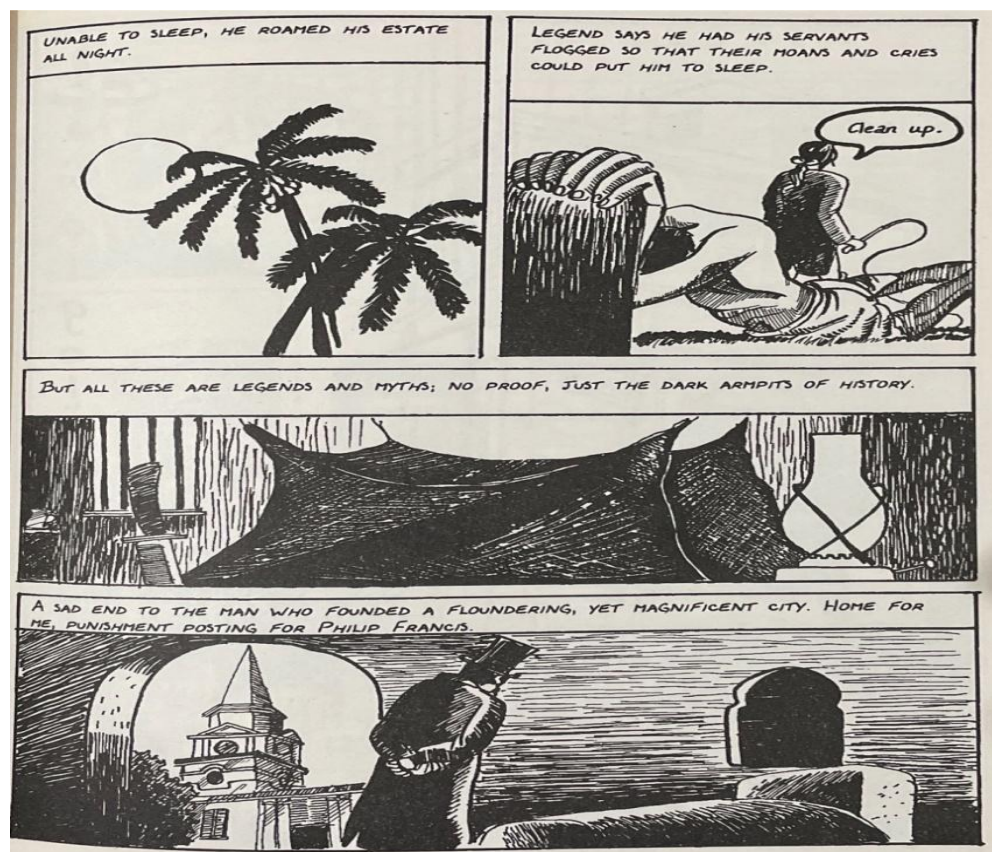


Fig. 3.5 Sarnath Banerjee. *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers*, 47

Banerjee concentrates on the everyday life of servants in a British family in eighteenth-century Calcutta: the carriage driver, the servant watering the grounds, the punkahwallah, the valet, and other staff. The silent characters receive just as much attention as the prominent characters throughout the story. Banerjee chose to depict the underprivileged in this way in this other version of Indian history. Pramod K. Nayar, in his 2016 book *The Indian Graphic Novel*, writes, “What Banerjee’s narrative makes clear is that the history of British India, metonymically represented here in the form of colonial Calcutta, involved both British and native actors at every stage. Lurking in the corners of panels are Indian soldiers, servants, valets, stable boys, barbers, tailors and cooks. These are the minor characters in history, with no agency and who bow to the inevitability of history, but the graphic novel takes them and by forcing us to pay attention to them causes us to take a fresh look at history” (15). The first panel in the following demonstration shows the Indian servants holding punkhas. They are depicted in thin bodies and dull faces. It shows that they are getting improper treatment in the British Raj. They are required to fan their masters all day even if they are tired. They are not allowed to rest at all. This results in the deterioration of their mind and health.



Fig. 3.6 Sarnath Banerjee. *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers*, 15

It is recognised that the Indian people's humanity is overlooked, as are the feelings of the colonized. The people of the area have been deprived of their humanity and dignity. The British conquerors appear to have broken the borders of humanity to the point that they might be labelled uncivilised, for example, by lying about the natives, injuring them physically and psychologically, and viewing them as second-class citizens. Above all, colonisers disrespect a person's ideals and passions. Tarachand, "a man of great taste and means, once wanted to buy a bottle of Thetis, the most expensive perfume of the time" (Banerjee, *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* 141). He is a rich Indian man who regularly buys expensive items just to amaze himself. When he goes to the perfume store to buy Thetis, to his dismay, he is not allowed to enter the store.

A note on the entry door of the store shows that it is open for Europeans only and no Indian can enter the store. In colonial India, Indians were not allowed to enter various places, and the doors were shut for them. The panel below shows "Europeans Only" written on the door of a perfume shop (142). The written document is meant for keeping the Indian away from the luxurious life. Indians are treated as servants and outsiders on their own land. Tarachand manages to buy that perfume and uses it on his horse. His act shows his anger against the foreigners. The perfume that is used by elite members of the ruling community is used on his horse by Tarachand. This demonstrates his rebellion for his freedom. He is not ready to accept the rules made by the dominant class.



Fig. 3.7 Sarnath Banerjee. *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers*, 142

The novel highlights the negative aspects of coloniser-colonised interactions. The image given below is a superb illustration of a colonised-coloniser social interaction that is problematic. The high-class Britishers used to call Indian workers Babu. The term that was “originally used as a suffix of respectability, Lord Macaulay, the Governor General of Bengal and the most prominent gardener of the Empire, gave a new definition to the word Babu: ‘Babu is a native who is Indian in flesh and blood and English in taste and opinion’” (194). A Babu was an Indian clerk with a rudimentary command of the English language. Babu, a respected term of address in Indian languages, became a pejorative epithet with the arrival of English: “Babu has various meanings: to the poor babu means a richer person, to the servant babu means the master and to the English rulers the word babu means a clerk” (195).

Furthermore, the higher class frequently uses the lower born as a source of fun and mockery. Contempt and mistreatment do not appear to be enough. If members of the lower class do not follow the upper class’ norms and boundaries, no matter how unjust they may be, the upper class’ reaction is swift, decisive, and contemptuous. It includes anything from illegal detention to legal action. As a result, the upper-class abuses, disrespects, and punishes the lower class in order to increase their money and satisfy their own desires at the expense of the weak. The interracial conflict between

the Indian and English communities is the result of the Englishman's misguided ideas of intolerance, hostility, and mistreatment of the indigenous Indians. They treated Indians as low-class people and deprived them of their rights, resulting in the creation of the binary high class/low class. But this binary can be questioned, as Derrida says in his essay "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," while talking about the binary opposition of nature and culture: "Once the limit of the nature/culture opposition makes itself felt, one might want to question systematically and rigorously the history of these concepts" (284).

Banerjee released another book in 2011, *The Harappa Files*, which is a collection of illustrated short individual stories highlighting middle-class Indian characters. E. Dawson Varughese, in his 2018 book, *Visuality and Identity in Post-Millennial Indian Graphic Narratives*, asserts, "Throughout *The Harappa Files*, Banerjee presents artefacts from 1970s and 1980s India, and his observations on these artefacts are riddled with now-adult understandings of these items' affiliations to class, caste and religion" (52). In this book, Sudarshan Mittal, an IAS officer, establishes the Vast Harappa Rehabilitation, Reclamation, and Redevelopment Commission as a supervisory and evaluative body to review the "current ethnography and urban mythologies of a country on the brink of great hormonal changes" (Banerjee, *The Harappa Files* 11). The members of the committee refer to the results as the Harappa findings, which are going to be disclosed after a decade of research. Citizens will be required to sign the stringent 28b, a document that determines everyone's future based on the findings. In the book, Banerjee identifies himself as a little publisher and a comic book designer contracted to print the results. During their meeting, Banerjee and Mittal discuss the format's mechanics, and the bureaucrat makes sure to "create a bridge between art and the everyday, between the alternate and the mainstream" (15).

The Harappa Files begins with the details of the "Greater Harappa Rehabilitation, Reclamation, and Redevelopment Commission" (11), which is the most powerful. Sri Sudarshan Mittal established this group, which is made up of the society's elite, including retired bureaucrats. The book is fabricated as the final report

of a hypothetical institution called the Greater Harappa Rehabilitation and is constructed as a sequence of interconnected sketches, cartoons, advertisements, and images. Banerjee repeatedly explores the mind of middle-class India – that tumultuous realm of consumerist ambition, post-colonial anxiety, and traditional education – and comes up with details on the country’s residents’ desires and anxieties. Of *The Harappa Files*, Varughese writes, “Sarnath Banerjee’s *The Harappa Files* (2011) engages significantly and at times controversially with issues of urban New India through its reminiscence of past Indias” (*Visuality and Identity* 51). Gargoyles are fictional monsters that have the ability to transform into stone and are known for being stubborn, unyielding, and set in their ways. In this text, Indian bureaucrats are compared to gargoyles, and the important instruments of the Indian bureaucracy are highlighted, such as the Mystic Stone Paperweight, Hermes Supersonic Pen, Triangular Bermuda file, Kumar Bros. Tiffin Carrier, and so on. In the image given below, Banerjee presents the physicist J.C. Bose, who displayed a wireless telegraphy experiment in Kolkata long before Marconi but was denied a Nobel Prize due to the delayed international recognition of his work caused by bureaucratic gargoyles: “In 1909, along with Karl Ferdinand Braun, G. Marconi received the Nobel Prize in recognition of their contributions to the development of wireless telegraphy. There was no mention of the Indian physicist” (*The Harappa Files* 60). He is looking, Banerjee adds, “[A]t two fornicating ants, wondering whether to cremate the pair with his magnifying glass or let his good upbringing come in the way” (60).

The tea-stained sepia image of Gandhi and the careless absurdity of Banerjee’s writing have a poignancy that no middle-class revolutionary can truly communicate. Without a doubt, colonial subjects suffered more from the agony of colonialism than colonisers. They endured poverty, famine, illness, cultural turmoil, economic exploitation, political marginalisation, and systematic programs designed to create a sense of social and racial inferiority. They were treated like low class and kept away from most of the basic rights of living. Just like JC Bose, who gave all his day and night to the invention of magnifying glass but got no appreciation in response. He got no Nobel Prize for his contribution. In the time of the British Empire, as asserted by

Kenneth Ballhatchet, “preservation of social distance seemed essential to the maintenance of structures of power and authority” (*Race, Sex and Class*, vii).



Fig. 3.8 Sarnath Banerjee. *The Harappa Files*, 60 – 61

Based on the Commission’s findings, the Committee will issue the dreaded Harappa Recommendations, requiring all citizens to sign the draconian Form 28b, which would determine everyone’s fate, granting the government the authority to decide the future of all the citizens. The middle-class citizens have to follow the instructions given by the government. It is the government or bureaucrats, it can be said, who can take decisions on their behalf, as shown in the panel given below. The head of the Ministry of Hope, RP. Gupta, is shown occupying the whole space in one section of the frame, and the workers are shown adjusting in the other. The novel meticulously explains this metaphor through a visual representation. The visual presents before us the head of the Ministry of Hope. Ironically, instead of listening to the grievances of his subordinates and giving them hope, he is unconcerned about any of them. He is completely oblivious to the day-to-day problems of his workers. This, as per the novel, is deeply rooted in the class divide that our society has been cleaved into. Being a member of high class, R. P. Gupta is riding fast and loose on his horse, unaware of the precarious condition of his employees. Those sitting in the citadels of

power are seldom seen working for the welfare of those who dwell in the dungeons. R. P. Gupta and his big hand attest to this. Another aspect that the visual is trying to convey is how small and unimportant people belonging to the lower class are. Their faces are hurriedly drawn without any effort. On the other hand, there is the head of the ministry – a larger-than-life figure – holding sway and power, having the discretion of saying yes or no, right or wrong, true or false. He reigns, and the workers are merely living at his mercy.

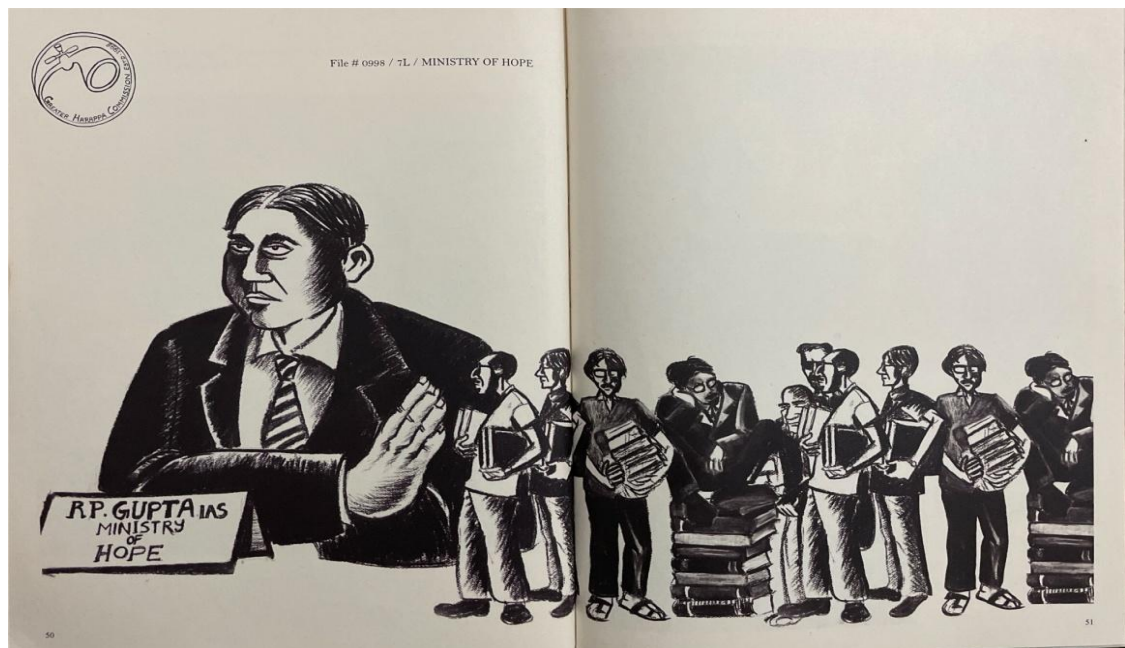


Fig. 3.9 Sarnath Banerjee. *The Harappa Files*, 50 – 51

In his graphic novel *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* (2016), Sarnath Banerjee destabilises the myth of national economic progress by highlighting ecological concerns and community damage. The graphic narrative depicts the neoliberal – induced “slow violence” of ecological damage and mass relocation (Nixon 2). Furthermore, it reveals that the upper and middle classes’ resource imperialism and the privatisation of a public asset are the main reasons for the Delhi water issue. It demonstrates that the severe disparities in water availability in Delhi result in the denial of “hydraulic citizenship” (Anand 7) to refugees and the destitute. The book claims that water democracy and fighting back against neoliberal monopolies are the only solutions to this dilemma. The working-class hero’s cross-ethnic and cross-class

collaboration with former water criminals exemplifies how social justice can be attained. The author highlights the “disposable casualties” (Nixon 13) of neoliberalism’s gradual violence. Furthermore, the novel exposes the middle class’ resource imperialism and challenges its blindness. It demonstrates that the severely unequal allocation of water in city results in denying refugees and the destitute hydraulic citizenship.

The narrative also highlights the country’s casteist and religious inequality. Subversively, the novel features a working-class character who acts as a catalyst for change in the face of neoliberalism and corruption. Banerjee imagines a utopian picture of water democracy built by a coalition of individuals from many socioeconomic backgrounds and races towards the end of the work. The story depicts the gradual onset of an environmental disaster brought on by the privatisation of Bharat Copper Limited. Readers are exposed to the “practically pastoral” (Banerjee, *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* 4) existence in Tambapur, an industrial town, through a succession of sharply defined grey-scale naturalistic panels. Readers learn there “was job security. Employees were taken care of. The environment was clean” (4). The state-owned enterprise looked after its workers in many ways: the offered health insurance, paid for their education, maintained and cleaned up the workplace, and even gave possibilities for sports and other forms of leisure. One day, the people of the town are told, “the company was hit by fluctuations in global copper prices” and “back in Delhi, the newly appointed minister of disinvestment was waiting for just such an opportunity” (7).

In Tambapur, neoliberalism’s systemic violence manifests itself in environmental deterioration, and “the disintegration of the township” initiates (10). Industrial accidents are increasingly prevalent, hospitals become unsanitary and water becomes contaminated, “leading to terrible diseases” (11). The residents of the town are impacted by the deportation, which Nixon describes as “the loss of the land and resources beneath them, a loss that leaves communities stranded in a place stripped of the very characteristics that made it inhabitable” (19). The juxtaposition of images depicting infected water filtration plant, murky ponds, an overloaded hospital, and an

abandoned school contrast sharply with the trouble-free, cheerful existence presented earlier. Under a neoliberal society, working-class people are disposable, as depicted in the comic. Workers who raise their hands in protest are dismissed. The novel visually illuminates this via a panel depicting the CEO in an exaggerated fashion, while the staff is drawn in a smaller manner, their bodies blended in a cluster, and their faces unrecognizable. Initially, the town's residents occupied the panels at the start of this part, the CEO and security guards now dominate the majority of the frames, while the residents no longer fill the panels. The final panel of this segment illustrates Girish, a "highly trained industrial plumber" who has been sacked, as he strides out "into an uncertain future," appearing minuscule against a sparse wilderness (Banerjee, *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* 12), emphasising the victims of binaries created by society. The "death of a skilled worker, the death of a township, the death of a community" (12) generates enormous gains for the business.

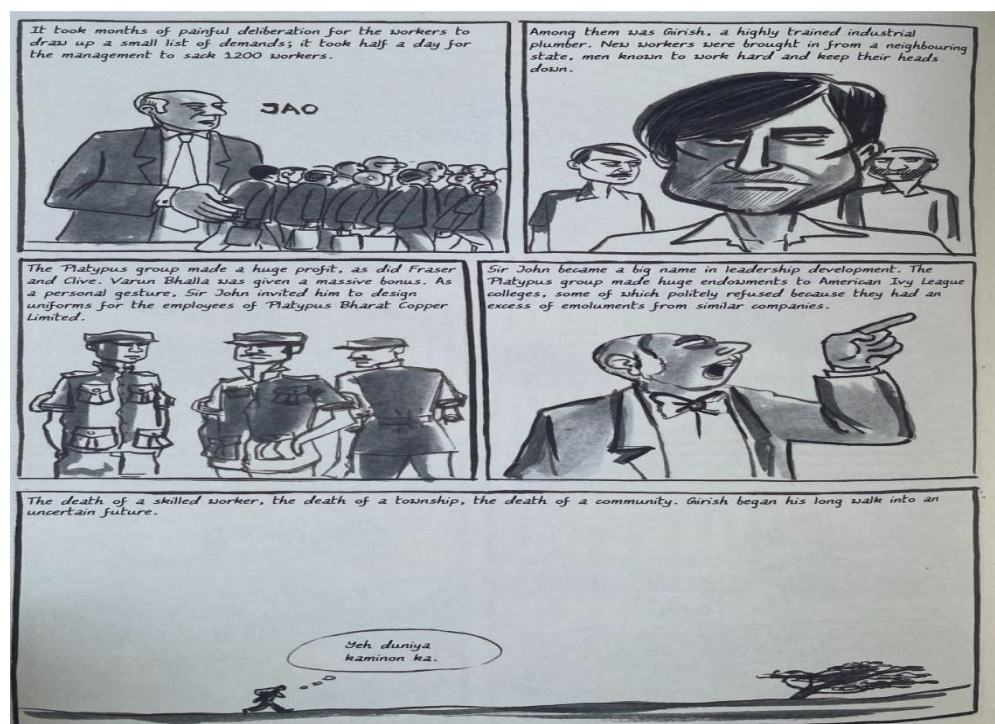


Fig. 3.10 Sarnath Banerjee. *All Quiet in Vikaspuri*, 12

While the segment highlighted above illustrates the environmental damage resulted from privatisation, other parts of the narrative demonstrate that privatisation is strongly rooted in the Indian middle-class mindset in spite of its adverse effects on

the general public. The city's wealthy and middle classes, possessing the financial means to afford privatised water, are portrayed as culpable in the city's unequal supply of water. We witness a variety of people "from all walks of life" (1) standing in a queue at the Regional Passport Office in the initial illustrations of the plot. There is "a general cross-class bonhomie in the air" (2), which is broken up by an affluent middle-class guy who demands the privatisation of the passport office to avoid waiting. Banerjee sarcastically states: "A percentage of the Indian middle class thinks that corporates are benevolent philanthropic organisations who, in their hearts, desire the betterment of their fellow humans" (3). Author discussed the power of the "new middle class," which has benefitted the most from neoliberalism, in an interview (Fernandes xxi). He admits the following in an interview, "Sarnath Banerjee: The Full Texture of a City":

[T]he *Vikaspuri* book grows out of my obsession with our country's obsession with development ... I find it very difficult to relate to India's new middle class. This [is] a very patriotic and neoliberal group that mixes religion and economics together. I find them very irksome... They are privileged, but they don't want to talk about their privilege... I tried with this book to mock the South Delhi people. (Banerjee)

Banerjee, on the other hand, does more than insult the luxury of the urban elite and middle classes; he holds them responsible for city's water distribution issues. Girish, the dismissed plumber from Bharat Copper, is portrayed as the text's ethical core, who accidentally reveals the fundamental roots of the water issue. He is employed by a Delhi entrepreneur, Rastogi, to dig the core of the earth in the hopes of finding "the mother of all rivers, the mythical Saraswati," which will help to address water shortage (Banerjee, *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* 17). Girish meets a variety of people on his trek beneath the earth's surface who have been condemned to Pataalpurī for the offense of water wastage. Nikhil Anand argues in *Hydraulic City: Water and the Infrastructures of Mumbai* (2017) that water supply is inextricably linked to citizenship: "the city and its citizens are made and unmade by the everyday practices around water provisioning – practices that are as much about slaking thirst as they are

about making durable forms of belonging in the city” (vii). Anand demonstrates that the state in Mumbai does not give water as a fundamental entitlement for all Indian citizens, but just for those who have achieved “state-sanctioned” urban citizenship (57). Mumbai’s water infrastructure, like Delhi’s, is marked by inequity: “Mumbai’s field engineers design the city’s water network to deliver only 90 liters per capita per day to those living in settlements, and nearly twice that quantity to those living in the city’s high-rises” (43). Thus, “even as water is drawn from beyond the city’s borders, it is mobilized to deny hydraulic citizenship to urban populations deemed to be ‘from outside’” (58). According to Anand, migratory bodies are stigmatised as “dangerous outsiders, who, by drawing on the city’s resources, are seen as a threat to urban life” (56). Mehta et al., in the same way, state that in Delhi, “most of the treated water is supplied to the largely elite and middle-class housing colonies leaving poor residents in the villages and informal colonies completely ignored and bypassed” (164).

The narrative insightfully connects the matter of water inequality to citizenship. Professor Satyavadi remarks that the “amount of water delivered per person per day in Delhi Cantonment is 569 litres, in Lutyens Delhi it’s 462 litres, and in Mehrauli it’s 29 litres” (Banerjee, *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* 115). The first two are obviously luxury places populated by affluent Delhiites, whereas the third is a comparatively impoverished neighbourhood. Rastogi, the novel’s antagonist, is a businessman who “grew up in a refugee colony in south-west Delhi where there was a chronic shortage of water and electricity” (115). In a biting critique of the systematic inequality that characterises “the environmentalism of the poor” (Nixon xii) in India. Banerjee states, “Rastogi grew up on the wrong side of this water racism” (*All Quiet in Vikaspuri* 115). Rastogi is mocked by others for his filthy outfits and having dirty looks. The phrase “water racism,” (115) coined by Banerjee, alluded to the xenophobic basis of Delhi’s unequal water allocation. Banerjee highlights the refusal of hydraulic citizenship to the impoverished and immigrants with the plot line concerning Rastogi.

The comic makes an interesting observation about how water is linked to social power in the city. Rastogi’s “aim is to control the distribution of water in the

city and thereby rule it” (130). Banerjee makes a similar argument, claiming that privatising water leads to monopoly and inequality. Nixon writes, “[C]ommunities whose vigorously unimagined condition becomes indispensable to maintaining a highly selective discourse of national development. Narratives of national development are partial narratives that depend on energetically inculcated habits of imaginative limit, habits that hide from view communities that inconvenience or disturb the implied trajectory of unitary national ascent” (150). Banerjee brilliantly smashes the fiction of national economic growth by bringing to light those communities that have been left out of the new nation discourse. Professor Satyavadi discusses a project that Bhalla’s company had funded with Varun Bhalla, the investor responsible for the disaster in Tambapur, in a panel of the text.

The projected steel plant would have clogged the river, resulted in extensive coastal erosion, and devastated the habitat of numerous endangered species. When the locals opposed the seizure of their land, state police beat them and then detained them. Banerjee demonstrates that the national growth narrative is based on environmental damage and governmental violence against the marginalised. The preceding visuals from the novel depict the landscape and community’s devastation. One picture, for example, depicts a swarm of individuals crowded on a limited area of land enriched by floodwaters, awaiting resettlement. Varun Bhalla experiences a harrowing dream about encountering all the guys who have lost their property and means of subsistence as a result of his enterprise, as depicted in a stunning image. The graphic depicts a queue of men, each indicating the place where he was born and has been displaced from. The illustration is designed to depict the men in the background merging into the gutter, creating the illusion of an infinite queue. Banerjee emphasises the voicelessness of the communities that suffer as a result of India’s fixation with development. The men only say one word each in the panel discussed above, and they do not say anything at all in other images, indicating how they have been suppressed by the nation-state.

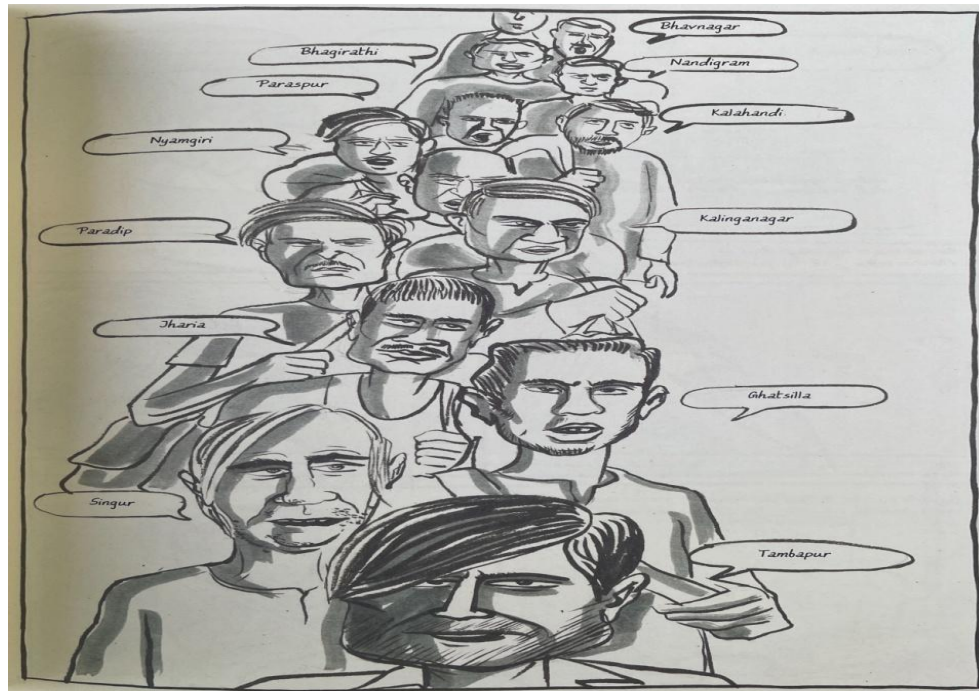


Fig. 3.11 Sarnath Banerjee. *All Quiet in Vikaspuri*, 67

Banerjee does, however, incorporate caste and religion as variables in his depiction of populations that have been marginalised by India's growth obsession. Prof. Satyavadi responded to Varun Bhalla's use of the trickle-down effect to justify his company's choice to finance in the dam project: "My friend, incomes haven't risen in years. 88 per cent Dalits, 88 per cent Adivasis, and 85 per cent Muslims earn below 20 rupees a day" (Banerjee, *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* 81). Satyavadi's remark not only debunks the widely held hypothesis of the trickle-down effect, but it also demonstrates the uneven effects of neoliberal changes. The novel also highlights the problems of indigenous communities, also known as adivasis, whose way of life has been impacted by development projects. When talking about the effects of development projects, Satyavadi indicates that "dozens of communities resettled; some of them were endangered tribes. Resettling is a polite term for breaking centuries-old ways of living" (80). According to Arundhati Roy, the majority of individuals displaced/evicted in the context of dams have been tribals and Dalits, which is particularly troubling given that they make up a fraction of India's population. Adivasis, or tribals, according to Nixon, "have been treated as expendable because they are widely viewed as culturally contemptible and marginal to the core

Hindu nationalist parameters of Indian civilization, although the Adivasis' presence in India long predates Hinduism's advent" (163). Despite the fact that Banerjee does not go into detail on how India became a neoliberal Hindu society, he demonstrates how the benefits of liberalisation are reaped by Indians who are already marginalised. When Girish returns to Pataalpuri after discovering the Saraswati River, he discovers that the Delhi water battle has begun: prepared individuals from several Delhi neighbourhoods have banded together and are battling for water.

Girish is a plumber by profession but also a humanist at heart. Despite his limitations, he starts a crusade against the water mafia, highlighting the greed of the rich and the vulnerability of the poor. Since he has a pure and pious motive, he wins this war and brings joy and happiness among the poor of Delhi. The process was tiresome and difficult, for it was against that stratum of society that controls every aspect of social and political life. Despite this, he manages to pierce through the power structure, shatters it in favour of the needy. This episode helps Girish to build a reputation for himself – as someone much more than just a plumber. People now see him as an agent of social change. He is now a superhuman, as he made a promise and delivered it. Now people from humble backgrounds have the courage to mark their place in society.

The binary of high class and low class is evident in some sections of the fifth novel of Banerjee, *Doab Dil* (2019). One of them is as shown in the panel of Chapter 2, "Dark Arcadias," where class division is clearly seen. The following image is evocative of the class difference in the history. The illustration is an attempt to represent something that cannot be represented. It represents the hierarchy between the high class and the low class that was prominent in nineteenth-century European society, where the royal garden walls are cut short to make the parks visible to the "agricultural workers" (Ch. 2). The social class in nineteenth-century England is shaped by the industrial revolution. The working-class people are not allowed to interact with high-class lords and ladies. This section looks at how the upper class exploits the lower to increase their wealth and fulfil their goals at the expense of others. The bourgeoisie is continually looking for methods to exploit the working

class. They essentially enslave the weak in order to attain their purpose. Discrimination, hypocrisy, avoidance, suspicion, ill-treatment, scorn, cruelty, and abuse are all examples of upper-class unfavourable sentiments toward the lower-class. The lower-class people are distinguished by their filthy clothes. The upper class makes every effort to avoid mixing with the lower class. The royal couple in the image below is shown wearing expensive clothes and standing comfortably. They are looking at the low-class people working in the garden. Banerjee, through this image, wishes to convey that members of the upper class live in opulent estates. A lovely park in front of the house completes it as a representation of their social standing.

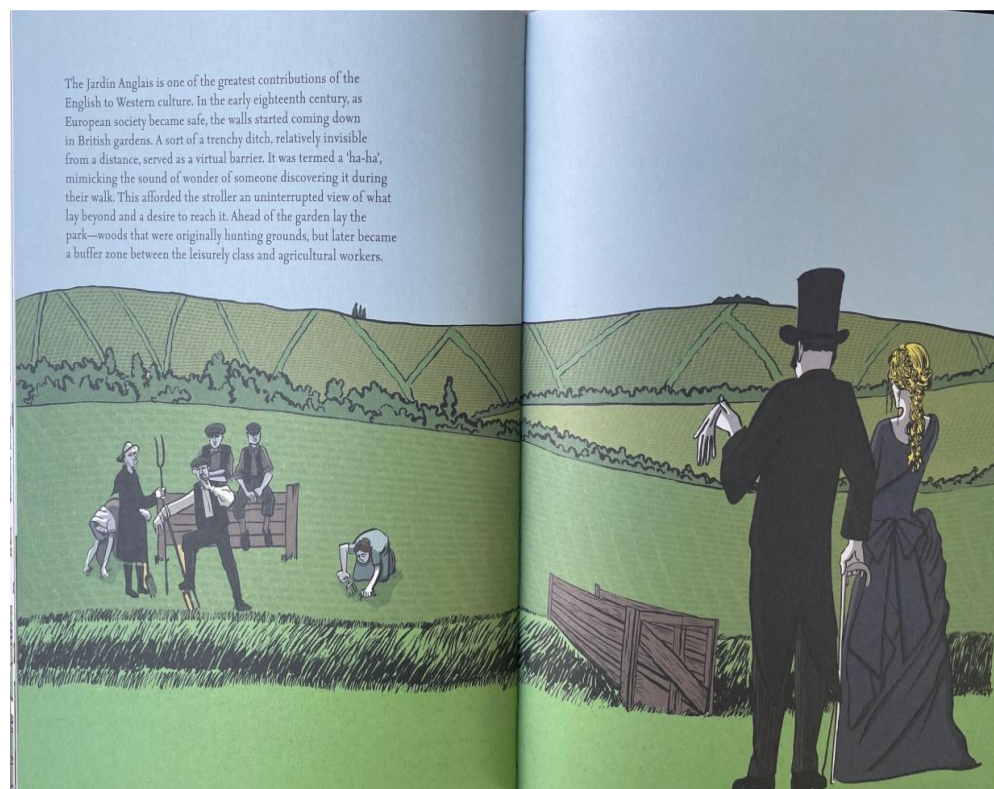


Fig. 3.12 Sarnath Banerjee. *Doab Dil*, Ch. 2, Arcadias

Chapter 7, “Library,” shows the condition of Indian soldiers: “While the First World War is commemorated with great ceremony in Britain and Australia, the story of the Indian soldiers who fought in it remains largely untold. Except for Kip, the Sikh sapper in Michael Ondaatje’s book *The English Patient*, there are hardly any Indian soldiers in Western literature and movies. Because they fought for the

colonialists, back home too, their contributions were never fully appreciated” (Ch. 7). Adrija Roychowdhury, in her article “‘Discriminated even in death’: How Indian soldiers battled racism overseas during World War 1” discusses that mostly all British officials saw India as “an English barrack in the Oriental seas” from which they could extract “any number of troops” without incurring costs in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Britishers treated Indian soldiers as low-class born, even on the battlefield. As Swapna M. Banerjee so eloquently noted, “The relationship between British officials and native Indians was hierarchical and charged with racial arrogance” (781). They were not provided better sleeping places and were kept away from the good food. The salary of Indian soldiers was significantly lower than that of European soldiers. Even the highest-ranking Indian soldier was considered inferior to the most junior English soldier. As for the second form of discrimination, white nurses are instructed not to treat injured Indian soldiers when they arrive at the hospital. While the whole world ignored the contribution of Indian soldiers in the First World War, Banerjee took this matter in his hands and illustrated a complete scenario of the soldiers serving for the Britishers.

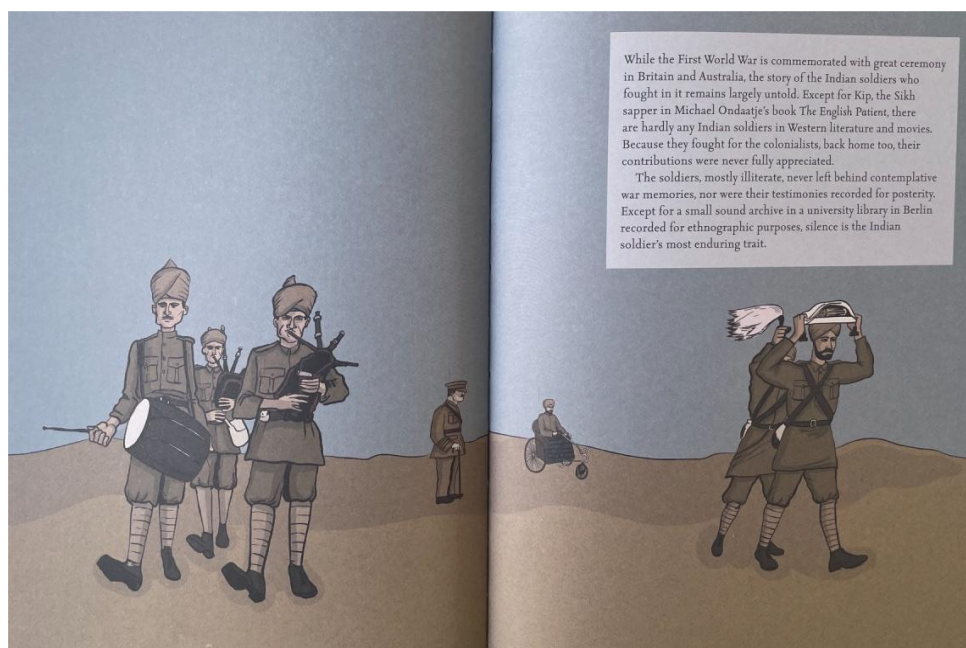


Fig. 3.13 Sarnath Banerjee. *Doab Dil*, Ch. 7, Library

In contemporary Indian literature, subalternity overtook all other concepts, which prompted authors to focus their writing on the silenced voices of society. Indian authors started rewriting various fictional and non-fictional works to express the suppressed voices. Amruta Patil also portrays various binaries in her novels. In this section, the researcher analyses the binary opposition of man and woman in the graphic novels of Patil. Therefore, the researcher attempts to identify the binary oppositions and takes a deconstructionist stance by looking for gender stereotypes. In her graphic novels, men and women are apparently portrayed as a binary pair of superior versus inferior.

Furthermore, when these binaries are linked to gender stereotypes, it is discovered that men are the source of superiority since they are perceived as dominant and powerful. Women, are solely perceived as those who are subjected to supremacy because they lack authority and strength. When Derrida's theory is used in this example, however, a fresh conclusion emerges that refutes the truth in the novels. The fresh discovery dismantles the graphic novels, and women are viewed as the cause of supremacy. Human beings are sexually separated as male and female, and again divided into two categories: man and woman. Above and beyond biological distinctions, society constructs a social construct based on a set of appropriate thinking, beliefs, behaviour, and actions for a specific type of sex, which is a person's individuality. This fact contributes to the perception that men and women are of divergent quality. Unfairness against women is caused by the distinction between male and female due to the social construction or cultural conditions. Furthermore, this type of situation, in which society placed males' positions in a higher rank than females in a normative fashion, still exists now. The reader is told in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* that women are frequently found in positions of servitude: "There is no other way out for her than to lose herself, body and soul, in him who is represented to her as the absolute, as the essential" (609). Women are also described as servants by Beauvoir, who sees them as products of the patriarchal society: "At evening he restores his soul in the home, where his wife looks after his children and guards the things of the past that she has amassed. But she has no other job than to maintain and provide for everyday life in an orderly way; she perpetuates the species

without change, she ensures the even rhythm of the days and the continuity of the home, seeing to it that the doors are locked” (419). The fact that males are considered the dominant portion of the household and women are seen as responsible for conventional domestic activities demonstrates how women’s status in comparison to men is more akin to that of a servant than a master.

It is vital to emphasize the fact that the earlier female writers followed in the footsteps of male authors. Every writer has taken a restricted view of the narrative of Mahabharata. Earlier versions of the Mahabharata depicted female characters as weak or, more accurately, as weak women who never spoke out against patriarchy. In other words, the women in this epic are portrayed as ideal Indian women. However, in the contemporary period, women have begun to oppose men’s domination in society and have begun to seek their human rights. Parva Duology contains two novels. The first one is *Adi Parva* and the second one is *Sauptik*. It is written by Amruta Patil, who is regarded as the first woman graphic novelist of India. She is a renowned name, as are many other Indian graphic novelists, such as Orijit Sen, Anant Pai and Sarnath Banerjee. She has refined Indian graphic fiction with her wonderful works. Her works have a touch of realism and a sensitive appeal to the situation in which they were created. Both the novels in this duology are based on the Mahabharata, a renowned Indian epic. As we all know, myths have pervaded practically every element of life, and the literary world is no exception. Myths transport us from today’s world to a time that appears distant but speaks directly to our current quest for truth and comprehension of life. Women were not particularly interested in participating in the field of literature until the nineteenth century. They were unconcerned about its inevitability as a part of the literary world. However, during the twentieth century, they began to awaken from their profound slumber, regardless of their disguise. Before the twentieth century, women were seen to be inferior to men and were solely appropriate for domestic responsibilities, such as decorating the house, family, spouse, and children. They lacked the ability to participate in any literary or other pursuits. The same thing happened to Draupadi, Kunti, Sita, Savitri, and other mythical ladies. They were only renowned for their unwavering commitment to their

husbands and the dharma. Above it, Amruta Patil has shown this mythological figure of her heroines.

Amruta Patil's retelling of the Mahabharata in her second novel, *Adi Parva: Churning of the Ocean* (2012), is truly remarkable. The title and stories of the book are based on the Mahabharata, an Indian epic poem. Deepak Rana points out, "Mahabharata develops thoughts of a nation and an individual and provides matter for one and all for conception of something anew. The material remains the same for the old, the adult, the teenager, and the child – but the method of translation alters for everyone" (11). Patil mentions *Adi Parva* when speaking to Paul Gravett in an interview, "Parva is a mammoth of a project that I am trying to steer by its tail. It is based on the Mahabharat – the great old Indian mythohistorical epic about pretty much every human preoccupation under the sun." The graphic novel, published by HarperCollins India, aims to reclaim marginal narratives from the Mahabharata's dominant narrative. Patil plays with building story-worlds in re-tellings of the Mahabharata as an autonomous writer working with a huge multinational publishing business, with rich inter-textual, palimpsestic graphics that break with the common iconography of gods prominent in commercial literature.

Since the novel's author is a woman, it's hardly surprising that she addresses gender issues and gives voice to her readers' complaints about sexism in narrative. *Adi Parva*, a sensual and colourful masterpiece, is a vital reminder of the importance of showcasing the creations of female artists. In order to provide a satisfactory response to the question of where the story starts and where it finishes, the novel only offers a captivating glimpse into a multitude of interconnected stories. The way Patil retold *Adi Parva*, highlights the continued significance of an old collection of tales in this present yuga. This narrative, even though there is a sequel, would still be read multiple times. The narrative is narrated by a female sutradhaar, who is actually the river Ganga manifested as a human, bearing witness to the passage of time. She breaks her silence, as she tells the tale to the curious onlookers gathered to know more:

I am Ganga, queen of celestial and earthly rivers. I feed your land, I raise the fish. I cleanse you of soil and sin, I carry the remains of the dead. I plant stories, I carry stories. If you are too far away from my shore, call any river by my name and I will be she. I am your mother. Until the end of your world, I will stand by you. (40)

This gives the story an unusually feminist tone. Sauti, the sutradhaar, tells Janmejaya, ruler of Hastinapur and Arjun's great-grandson, the history of his predecessors in Vyas' Mahabharat. It is a story in which the female characters are frequently eclipsed by the male characters' long list of triumphs. That has always been the way history has been written. His realisation was that these binary oppositions or, as he preferred to use the phrase, binary pairs, are not equal; instead, a society favours one side of each binary pair and views them favourably or advantageously. It is exactly as it is stated in *Literary Theory: The Basics*, "One of these terms always functions as the centre – it is *privileged*, in poststructuralist terms, and accorded a *natural* status. Some terms have always been privileged – good, truth, masculinity, purity, whiteness – others may be found either in the centre or in the margin" (Bertens 100). The narrative puts the *Mahabharat*'s women to the foreground, giving them a human dimension that is typically overlooked. Despite having unique identities such as queen, warrior, saint, poetess, etc., it is clear that every female in the epic has the role of a mother, wife, daughter, or sister of someone. When we examine educational institutions, it is evident that, in contrast to princes and monarchs, females in the epic were excluded from education. As Dhan Singh pointed out, "Most women were married off at a young age, often before they had reached puberty. Marriage was considered the most important event in a woman's life, and it was seen as the duty of her family to find a suitable husband for her. Arranged marriages were the norm, and the bride's consent was not always considered necessary" (236). Instead of official instruction in politics or warfare, they received an informal education in the arts, particularly dance and music. The freedom for men and women to engage in sexual intercourse with whomever they chose existed for a very long period before the Mahabharata, but in later stages this practice was discontinued and marriages were solemnized. Women's agency in choosing their own spouses, to

divorce, or to remain single was lost in later periods. The tradition of picking her marriage partner as the privilege of Kshatriya women was started to be exercised by fathers through many logics. However, the onus for arranging a suitable marriage for his daughter rested completely on the shoulders of the father. The epic illustrates how men predominate, just as in every patriarchal culture. The author digs under these women's skin and paints a picture of the world as it must have appeared to them – emotionally, politically, and spiritually.

When the beautiful Gandhari is duped into marrying a blind king, we feel the anguish of lost dreams. She was forced to marry a blind man against her will. Despite her status as queen, she was frequently subjected to inequitable treatment. Even though she was of high caste and in a solid economic situation, she was nonetheless subjected to tyranny. Her ideas, thoughts, and suggestions were frequently dismissed. She decided to blindfold herself, believing that by doing so, she was demonstrating respect, faithfulness, and love for her spouse.



Fig. 3.14 Amruta Patil. *Adi Parva*, 213

Kunti was the wife of King Pandu, who met an early demise. Kunti's world had taken an incredible turn since she was born. King Kuntibhoj received Kunti as a gift from her father. She was sent to assist sage Durvasa, a capricious sage, as a young girl. The sage blessed Princess Kunti for her dedication. She wanted to test out the sage's blessing, so she invoked the Sun. She fell victim to God Sun's passion while she experimented with the blessing. As a young, innocent mother, Kunti felt she had no choice but to leave her infant in the care of strangers because she was afraid of society's ostracisation of unwed moms: "Before her heart gave him a name, she placed the baby in a basket. She walked to the river Ashwanadi and set the basket afloat in the water. Then she ran back home, too terrified to look back" (Patil, *Adi Parva* 225).

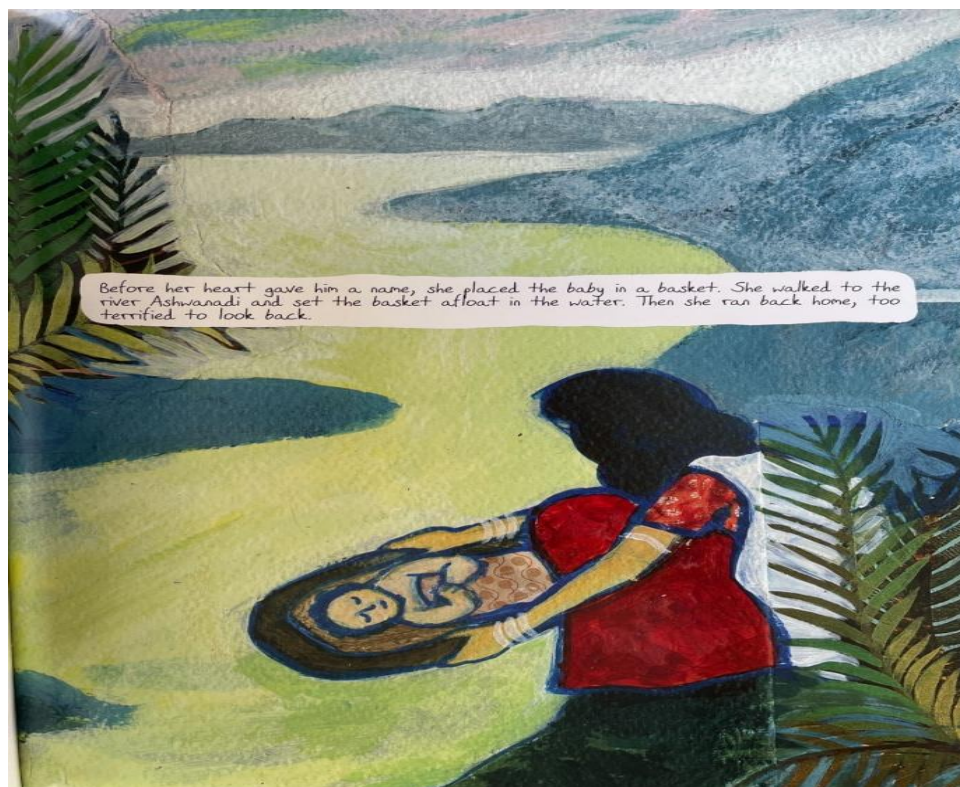


Fig. 3.15 Amruta Patil. *Adi Parva*, 225

The horror of forced sexual interactions on Ambika and Ambalika, who are subjected to the role of mere wombs carrying the future monarch. As stated by Dhan Singh, "Women in the Mahabharata period faced a number of challenges, including poverty, social isolation, and violence. Widows, in particular, were at a disadvantage,

as they were often left destitute and vulnerable to abuse” (236). They are expected by their family to spend a night with Satyawati’s elder son, “the river-born Krshn Dwaipayana Vyas” (202). It is evident from the following image that both these women are not willing to accept Vyas as their visitor for the night: “Ambika was so terror-stricken, she kept her eyes tightly shut the entire while” (204). Ambalika, on the other hand, “managed to keep her eyes open, but she could not keep the blood from draining out of her face” (205). Ambika and Ambalika are both the widows of Vichitravirya. Since Vichitravirya has left no offspring, Vyas was called to Hastinapur. Both the women are meant to follow the instructions of their mother-in-law because giving an heir to the crown is understood as their first duty. Their opinion is neglected in the matter of the heir to the throne, and they are thrown into the game of politics for the sake of the kingdom.

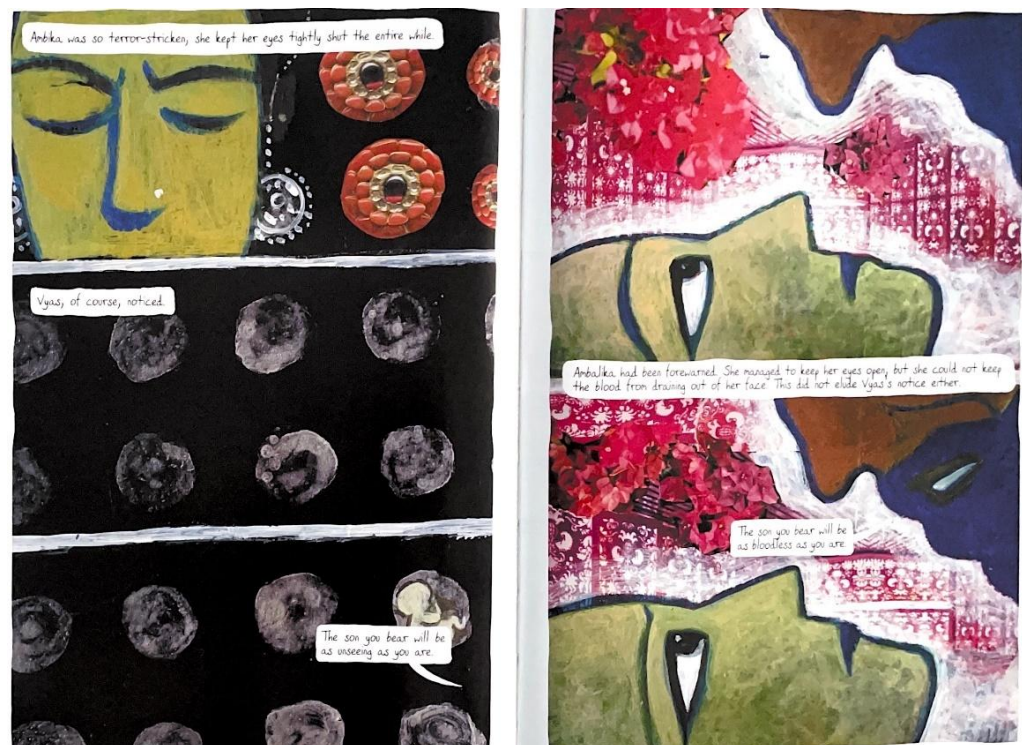


Fig. 3.16 Amruta Patil. *Adi Parva*, 204 – 205

In patriarchal society, sexual distinctions are employed to promote male-female inequity. There is a fundamental distinction between men and women. Simon de Beauvoir asserts, “While sex differences are linked to biological differences between male and female, gender differences are imposed socially or even politically,

by constructing contrasting stereotype of masculinity and femininity” (258). King of Kashi had an eldest daughter named Amba. Bhishma kidnapped her and her sisters Ambika and Ambalika as a punishment for the Kingdom of Kashi’s failure to invite Hastinapur to the event. Bhishma dragged these girls to Hastinapur and delivered them up to Vichitravirya, Hastinapur’s crown prince. Since Amba denied his proposal because of her love for Shalva, Vichitravirya wed only Ambika and Ambalika. Salwa rejected her when she was sent to him with great respect: “Embarrassed at having his lover carried away in full public view, and jealous at the thought of her having spent a night – even a chaste night – in a stranger’s home, Shalva spurned Amba” (Patil, *Adi Parva* 196). She then insisted on Bhishma marrying her in order to uphold Kshatriya Dharma: “The only man worth my while here is you. You’re king to my queen – no one with eyes can deny this. Give up the martyr act and marry me. Play with someone your own size” (197). Bheeshma’s hasty actions caused Amba to lose her life she had longed for, and her sentiments of rejection stem from his rejection of her and her intended Shalva.

Patil also highlights the resilience of her female characters, who are creating their own paths in an overtly patriarchal societal setting. Shakuntala’s candour in her conversations with her life partner Dushyant about the facts and her son’s rights. Kunti’s unwavering support for her spouse despite facing rejection. Amba, who fights for her rights, actually wants revenge for her femininity being insulted. Ganga, of course, is not only the book’s narrator, but also a character characterised by deliberate volatility and fervour. Through the use of stark phrase flips and panels of vivid primary colours interspersed with charcoal drawings, the author’s voice is audible and distinct. Additionally, there is the story’s commentary, which is presented as the narrative with a subtle twist. The Mahabharat is a massive story with diverse views for each reteller and reader. The story has layers to it, each one disclosing new information. As Ganga remarks at the end, “And therein lies the safety device that protects the tale. I could lay bare every secret of the multiverse, but you will only hear what you’re ready to understand” (255) and “you may sit atop gold like a clueless, territorial dragon, but what you do not understand can never be your own” (256). Patil is an artist to keep an eye on. The title of her work, *Adi Parva*, suggests that she will

treat each parva (part) of the story with equal artistry, as does Ganga's transfer of the narrative responsibility to the injured Ashwatthama at the conclusion.

The second novel in the Parva duology, *Sauptik: Blood and Flowers* (2016), is the sequel to *Adi Parva*. It is a retelling of the stories of the childhood of Pandavas when they were in a gurukul for their education. Amruta Patil develops a connection between gender and writing in the novel. She investigates the exclusion of women from educational institutions as well as the links between this exclusion and wealth inequality. Amruta Patil has portrayed Draupadi in proper light and shade. She has worked on displaying the mental disharmony of Draupadi. Draupadi's inner life and rebellious thoughts are depicted in the story. She is portrayed as a rebellious lady who acts against the notion of patriarchy. Women have no choices in their lives, whether it is in the framework of individual or public life. Every facet of her life is shrouded in the shadow of masculine authority. This patriarchal dominance obstructs their advancement, and they must deal with numerous issues in order to overcome the predicament. They are never allowed to be fulfilled or come forth. A woman is obliged to make a decision, and her decision is always a gamble, as she is continually peering into the unknown. As a result, anxiety originates with humans. Draupadi was forced to marry a man who would win her in swayamwar. As stated by Harpreet Kaur, "She was not able to lay down even a single condition at the time of her marriage, no restriction of caste, religion and region was mentioned in the terms and conditions of the savayamvara of Draupadi. She had to present herself to anybody who will fulfil the one and only condition set by her father, there was little scope of freedom of choice" (300). She has no say in this regard. She meekly had to follow the orders of her father. Woman was merely regarded as a commodity that can be won by anyone: "Even those who swore their hungers were well looked after wanted Draupadi. Everyone who was someone tried to win her at the swayamwar" (Patil, *Sauptik* 139).

Disrespect for women is depicted in the Mahabharata as a natural element of the civilization. It demonstrates a desire for land. It has numerous interpretations, but as a woman, what breaks heart the most is envisioning Draupadi suffering due to her

fate rather than her actions. Because Krishna was Draupadi's brother, he could have freed her from her fate, but she was alone. As Mercatante and Dow state:

Draupadi, daughter of King Draupada of Panchala, was of dark complexion and great beauty, "as radiant and graceful as if she had descended from the city of the gods." (In a former existence she had been the daughter of a sage.) She performed a most severe penance in order that she might have a husband. The god Shiva, pleased with her devotion, said: "You shall have five husbands; for five times you said, 'Give me a husband.'" Her father, King Draupada, held a svayamvara, a tournament in which the princess would choose for herself a husband from among the contestants. Arjuna was selected from among the many suitors on account of his skill in archery. When he and his four brothers returned home, they told their mother, Kunti, that they had made a great acquisition. Kunti replied that they should share it among themselves. The command of a mother could not be opposed, so the sage Vyasa settled the matter by having Draupadi "become the wife of all of the brethren." It was arranged that she should stay two days in the house of each brother, and no other brother should enter that house while she was there. Although she was shared by all the brothers, Draupadi loved Arjuna and displayed jealousy when he married Subhadra. (Mercatante and Dow 327)

Draupadi is not a typical woman. Her father, Drupad, performs a sacrificial altar on which she is born. The sacrifice fire was lit because Drupad wanted his son or daughter to get revenge on Dronacharya, Guru, for a previous insult. She was claimed by the elders as the only lady capable of sustaining dharma after her birth. While she was doing her part to protect Dharma in whatever way she could, anguish followed her every step of the way. The novel portrays a false bond between a husband and a wife. Even when she was about to marry someone who stood out from the crowd, she was exploited. That was Arjun, the third Pandava of the five Pandavas. Her father preferred that she marry Arjun or remain single. She was overjoyed and happy in her heart of hearts when Arjun won her in swayamvar, unaware of her sad fortune: "Arjun won Draupadi over at the swayamwar, but his brothers were desperately in love with

her too. And then, because she was no ordinary woman, because her rules were her own, Draupadi chose to embrace them all,” or “she was tricked into being their common wife!” (Patil, *Sauptik* 143). It is stated that she must spend one year with one husband and then go through the fire in order to reclaim her chastity and purity, after which she can only be handed to another spouse. Each of her five husbands gets married to other women, leaving Draupadi on her own terms. All rules were made for Draupadi; only she had to spend only one year with one husband, during which she could not think of any of the other Pandavas. Only she had to follow the norms of society. During his exile, Arjun married Ulupi, Arya of Kalinga, Chitrangada of Manipur, and Subhadra, Krishna’s sister.



Fig. 3.17 Amruta Patil. *Sauptik*, 194-195

Draupadi, who was already in love with Arjun, lived like a Brahmacharini while all of this was going on: “The Pandavas took other wives and lovers in the course of their lives. But the sun of the house, the central yagna fire, was unquestionably Draupadi. Doomed hour in the gaming hall aside, they treated her like a jewel” (145). Justifying a man’s polygamy for political purposes is improper,

especially when he already has a beloved in Draupadi who has accepted his four additional brothers for the benefit of his family. Once again, she was violated by Dushashan and Duryodhan in Kuru's Court. She was the sole lady in front of a large group of men in such a humiliating situation. The prominent woman in the epic poem suffers much due to male tyranny. She was treated as a toy rather than a real person by the society of the time. She has been humiliated throughout her life. Because she was a woman, she had been made to feel inferior at every turn so that the story could move on. This depicts the plight of women throughout history. Males have ruled the roost for the majority of the time. No amount of schooling can persuade them to think positively about women. Draupadi, like many of us in the Kali Yuga, was an unheard voice. She possesses the physical qualities of a strong-willed, dignified lady, but society has not permitted her to be one. Every civilisation has questioned her morals in some way. It was simply because she was a woman in a stereotypically male-dominated world.

Her latest novel *Aranyaka* (2019) is surprisingly simple and straightforward. The work has a philosophical as well as an eco-feminist underpinning. Katyayani, the Large, is the protagonist, who meets and marries Y, a man she joins in the forest during her exile. In *Aranyaka*, Patil rewrites the Vedic story of Yajnavalkya through the perspective of his wife, Katyayani. Katyayani is portrayed as a woman who is strongly connected to the physical world and finds wisdom in the kitchen, the forest, and her own body, whereas Y is depicted as a wise man who is dedicated to intellectual pursuits. A wise man who values learning, Y finds Katyayani's candour unnerving. He often chastises her for her obsession with physical pleasures and lack of interest in cerebral pursuits. Notwithstanding his critiques, Katyayani maintains her position and exemplifies a philosophy that prioritises the immediate and the physical over the impersonal and the intellectual. Patil questions traditional gender norms with the help of the character of Katyayani. Her personality reminds us that wisdom and knowledge can exist in the emotional and physical realms in addition to the intellectual one. By portraying women as active participants in the quest for knowledge and wisdom, Patil reimagines the roles that women played in ancient writings. The graphic narrative's storyline also contributes to Katyayani's thoughts

flowing naturally. In order to reflect the continuity of her consciousness, pages frequently move fluidly between scenes. This fluidity is especially noticeable in scenes where Katyayani blurs the lines between action and cognition by alternating between the physical and spiritual realms. The story is told from Katyayani's perspective, who has been sent to the forest for devouring God's food: "The goddess has eyes. You don't see her, but she sees you. Throw her out!" (14). Her physicality, her hunger, sexual desire, and perceptions about nature and humans are all huge. When she comes across Y, a man who is "watching the world" (34) from a termite mound, she provides him with sustenance and sexual favours, ultimately leading to their marriage.



Fig. 3.18 Amruta Patil. *Aranyaka*, 34

The characters in the novel emerge as the story progresses, and everyone is brilliantly fleshed out. Their facial forms, the clothes they wear, the things they say, and the reactions of the existing poles — Y, who represents intellectual intelligence,

and Katyayani, who derives her wisdom from the kitchen and the forest — are all clever and telling. There are numerous layers within *Aranyaka*, just as there are different layers within a forest — the themes vary from spirituality to the dynamics of heterosexual romantic love, pansexual companionship, and true partnership, as well as the desire for understanding of the self and every single thing outside it. *Aranyaka* is narrated by Katyayani the Large — Aranyani, who is the caretaker of the hearth and who embodies aranya in her being, thoughts, and deeds. The story starts at the beginning of time, with the earth's expansion and hunger: "It was, at first, a world with no life on it. Forms emerged from forces of earth, wind, water, and fire. There was no witness and no one to keep time. And it was a world without appetite" (3). It takes us through the wilderness to Katyayani and her exile from her tribe. She goes on a quest for food and discovers the mysteries of the forest in the depths of Aranya. Soon later, she encounters Y and establishes a colony with him in order to construct a hearth together. Her house serves two purposes at the same time. It is a miniature of the mysteries she has unearthed in the woods. It is a place where her and Y's journeys as a couple and individuals are unfolding. Y is a man who is obsessed with learning. Their relationship begins with mutual cooperation in the fields. Y becomes Guru, and Katyayani becomes the sustainer for those who visit their grove over time. Katyayani's wisdom is most substantially shaped by the coming of the Weaver and the Fig. The Weaver, based on the mythological characters Gargi and Maitreyi, is an intellectual equal for Y. All of them are drawn to the Fig, an asexual garland maker, by the wisdom of her songs and calm observations.

Each person who enters the grove has an impact on Katyayani's sagacity and identity. Life, services, humans, and relationships are all metaphors for Aranya and the ways it manifests in interpersonal connections. As the story progresses leading up to the debate at Janaka's court demonstrate the ways in which the protagonists and muse of philosophical contemplation — Y, who seeks truth; Katyayani, who finds it in the forest and her kitchen; the Weaver, who seeks answers; and the Fig, who makes garland, — find wisdom through quiet observations. Thus, the narrative of the book does not fit the category of folktale or myth. It is a tangle of stories and musings on art and life as viewed through the eyes of Katyayani, the Aranyani. It is, at its heart, a

feminist reinterpretation of pre-Vedic lore notions and narratives. It focuses on Katyayani, Y's domestic wife, who has little to offer in terms of intellectual production. This is another illustration of the tale of the victim, the underrated figure from the ancient narratives. Y is all brain and denial of appetite, whereas Katyayani is all body and appetite. Katyayani's world, notably, is not that of the classroom but rather that of the kitchen and the grove, where she gains the knowledge of science and philosophy.

She is emblematic of the entire female population, particularly in India, who spend a substantial portion of their day in the kitchen. This restriction is frequently readily accepted because a woman's primary responsibility in our culture is to care for her family. The novel's objective is modest, and its approach is understated – for what it questions, with gentle, loving knowledge, is a narrow value system that favours one set of principles over all others, one form of aspiration over all others, and one kind of labour over all others. And there is a plethora of personal and bigger recognitions to be found, even if they do not quite match our claimed sentiments. Katyayani may appear to be a one-dimensional feminine epitome of the obedient wife and mother. The reader may come to the conclusion that she is a simpleton who embodies conventional attributes associated with domestic ladies. Her redefinitions of qualities given to women of the hearth are revealed with careful reading. Within coupledom, she defines ornamentation, settlement, caretaking, parenting, and her own unique soul. These viewpoints challenge patriarchies rooted in myths that govern social and traditional practices. Her relationships with The Weaver and The Fig defy sexual and romantic binary conventions. Their backstories and characters show a range of gender identities in everyday life. The knowledge of Katyayani from the Aranya grove penetrates into Y's knowledge. It shapes him and plays a vital part in the story. In this way, she disproves the idea of one-dimensionality: "Forest stories are mostly about men – their setbacks, triumphs. One never hears of the ill-equipped women, because those stories do not last long or end well. Rarely, one hears of aranyanis like me, women who contain aranya within them." (122)

The book also touches on the subject of love and the various ways in which people express it. Through the tales of these three rishikas, Katyayani, the Fig, and the Weaver, the novel weaves together themes that have a lot of resonance in our daily lives: nature, environment, women's agency and patriarchy's constant demands on them, jealousy and rebellion, and the forests within and outside of us. Women figures are incidental in Vedic literature and epics, which are centered on the heroism of males seeking to fulfil their destinies. Martyrs and sages, catalysts and temptresses – they are rarely in the spotlight. Even in this story, Katyayani's calibre is not recognized by her husband. He is willing to have his scholars apprentice with Katyayani, but he still believes that her teachings in the classroom are inferior to what he can teach them. When Y suggested that some of his acolytes apprentice with Katyayani, his intention was not to make them wiser but “less cocky” (92). This behaviour of Y really put Katyayani in dilemma:

I thought we were equals, bilateral symmetry of leaves. He, fire of enlightenment. And me, fire of the microcosm. Y thought we were halves, not equals. He, above. Me, below. (93)



Fig. 3.19 Amruta Patil. *Aranyaka*, 93

Derrida asserts that there is an inherent privilege to one part in the binary opposition, and a degeneracy of the other. For example, in the binary pair tall/short, tall is privileged but short is not. Derrida argues that there is always a term that has a superior quality that makes it more approachable than the other in a binary opposition. Derrida claims that society constructs these characteristics. Patil portrays such binary in this novel. Y is an intellectual guy, as opposed to his physical wife, who wants knowledge that his human tutors were unable to provide. When they leave the aranya and raise a family, he turns into an engaging educator who draws in pupils like Upakoshala, The Weaver, and The Fig. While talking about women's fight against patriarchy, Afeerakhanam points out, "Though they dare cross one patriarchal threshold, they are caught into another, where their free spirits are curbed and all they do is adjust, compromise and adapt. Women were not supposed to raise voices for their rights, protest against injustice or question the already existing beliefs customs, rituals and superstitions" (92). Y understates the intelligence of Katyayani and does not permit her to teach students in her kitchen. The kitchen is located in the end portion of the home in this story. While Y's classroom has received a lot of care, the kitchen has been overlooked. It has no importance in Y's eyes. He even thinks that the smell of Katyayani's food disturbs the learning of his students: "Possible for us to eat more simply? The students can't keep awake after lunch" (70). They even have a fight over the kitchen and her practice of feeding others.

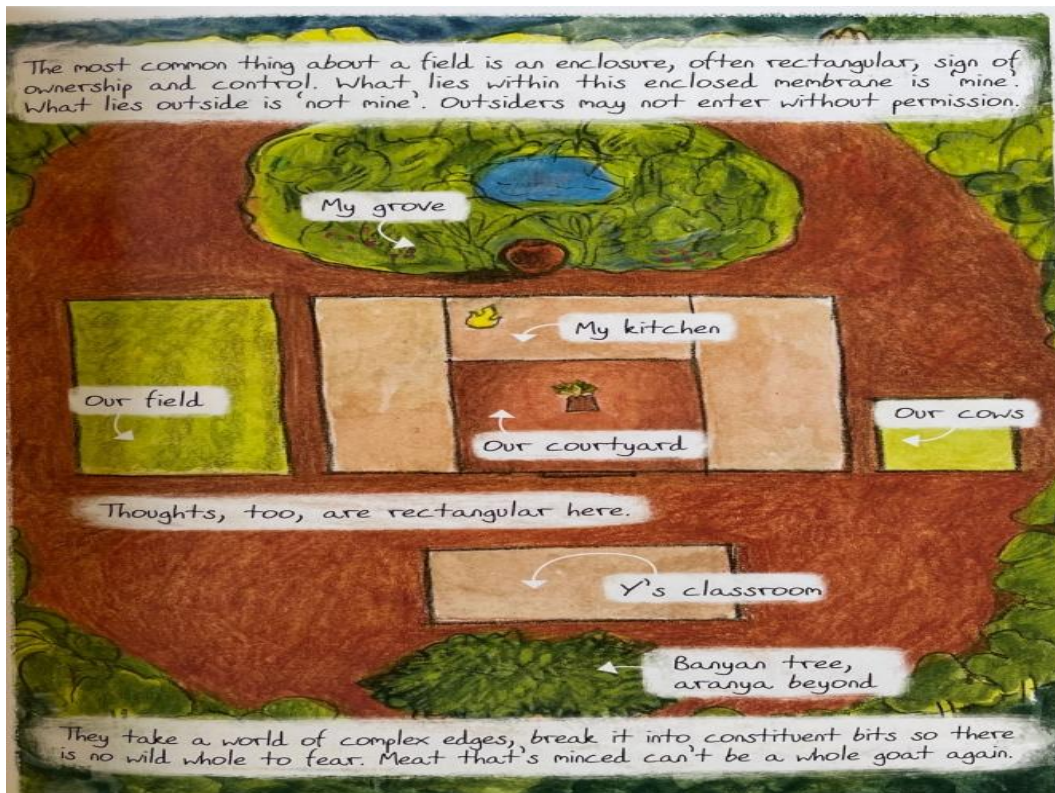


Fig. 3.20 Amruta Patil. *Aranyaka*, 79

The following panel depicts that Katyayani's involvement in the kitchen disturbed Y so much that he left her and moved on for his new journey: "I've failed you. You fed me for years, but I gave you no comforts. I will find a way to repay your debt and set you free" (135). Y left Katyayani to continue his new life with The Fig. Katyayani's silent face in the panel indicates that it is wrong on the part of a woman to stop her husband from taking any decision for both of them. She has never taken a big decision for both of them. She is always kept away from the big matters of the house.



Fig. 3.21 Amruta Patil. *Aranyaka*, 152-153

Uppi, one of the students of Y, is handed over to Katyayani to learn the basics. He also treated his wife mere as a servant whose sole task is to feed him: “I was so ashamed of my wife’s coarse ways and butchering knife. But she did what she could to feed me while I read my books” (99). The novel portrays another binary opposition of civilisation and savagery. The novel begins with the origins of all living things in the forest and how domestication and civilisation have pushed us further away from nature. The manner in which all characters react to nature is explored in the novel. The woods and the grove are rejected by Y, the guy, in favour of the classroom, which he believes is supreme. Even when Katyayani, who is intimately connected to the aranya and the grove, shows him the worth of learning from nature, he prefers to metaphorically bring the teachings to his classroom in place of physically transferring the school to the grove.

Another binary that is prominent in Patil’s work is the binary of heterosexuality and homosexuality in her first graphic novel *Kari*, (2008). Homosexuality pertains less to sexual activity and more to the instinct for survival. It

is the survival of the most fit individual. This is a case of natural selection at work. Sexuality, according to evolutionary theory, is based on selflessness and collaboration. Homosexuality is an expression of genetically encoded generosity; individuals of the same sex are inherently predisposed by nature to promote kindness among humans. Diversity is nature's clandestine asset. Many different elements come together to form a robust human civilisation. To live in harmony with one another and form deep emotional bonds, homosexuality is a necessary element. Through its peculiar female heroine, the book seeks to make sense of the world and throws light on the challenges of isolation and identity crisis caused by the rejection of homosexuals. By delving deep into the novel's various events, we can have a thorough understanding of the need to survive. In response, the researcher delves deep into *Kari*, drawing on Jacques Derrida's concept of binary opposition to comprehend the relationship between written discourse and its literal interpretation. The novel's protagonist's homosocial behaviour is the focal point of attraction. It is an effort by Patil to shed light on the gender-binding themes present in *Kari*. The point that Patil is trying to make with her art is that lesbians and gays are not just helpless victims; they can be strong and independent individuals. They refuse to accept the lower social and cultural status that is imposed on them by heterosexist social norms and traditions. In defiance of heterosexist norms, her central character Kari, rebels. She is fighting for gender parity in all spheres of society, including political, economic and her personal life.

Kari, Patil's queer protagonist, fights patriarchal systems that ensnare bisexuals in their rigid and unmovable frameworks. Kari, the fearless heroine, is a migrant attempting to rebuild her life in the suburbs of Mumbai. At the beginning of the tale, the fearless heroine, Kari and her girlfriend, Ruth try to end their lives in a tragic double suicide. Kari was coerced into breaking their relationship by Ruth, who is painted holding scissors, suggesting that Ruth wanted to conform to societal standards. Ruth desired independence from their connection. She preferred to begin a fresh chapter of life free of any traces of Kari. Unfortunately, the two girls were unable to overcome their problems and ultimately chose to end their lives.



Fig. 3.22 Amruta Patil. *Kari*, 4

Kari, when tried to end her life by jumping from a big building, landed in a sewer and, “was saved by a sewer, by the stinking river” (8). A young, extremely shy, asocial, and gay lady coping with her sexuality and a recent breakup, Kari is an unusual heroine. Because of her friendship with Ruth, she was able to realise her dream of making a beautiful family. However, her dreams of love and family are dashed because of the demands from the heterosexual culture. Indian society does not accept bisexuals as having a normal life. For them, their families represent a microcosm of Indian society that blindly follows the norms present in it, and they believed that their relationship would have been frowned upon. Indian society does not tolerate homosexuality at any cost. In Indian culture, same-sex romantic relationships are seen as a product of Western thinking. A queer critic, Judith Butler (1999) objects to gender categorization and criticizes society’s drive for unambiguous categories. As Butler in her book *Gender Trouble* rejoices for the revolution, she writes, “I also came to understand something of the violence of the foreclosed life, the

one that does not get named as ‘living’, the one whose incarceration implies a suspension of life, or a sustained death sentence. The dogged effort to ‘denaturalize’ gender in this text emerges, I think, from a strong desire both to counter the normative violence implied by ideal morphologies of sex and to uproot the pervasive assumption about natural or presumptive heterosexuality that are informed by ordinary and academic discourses on sexuality” (xx).

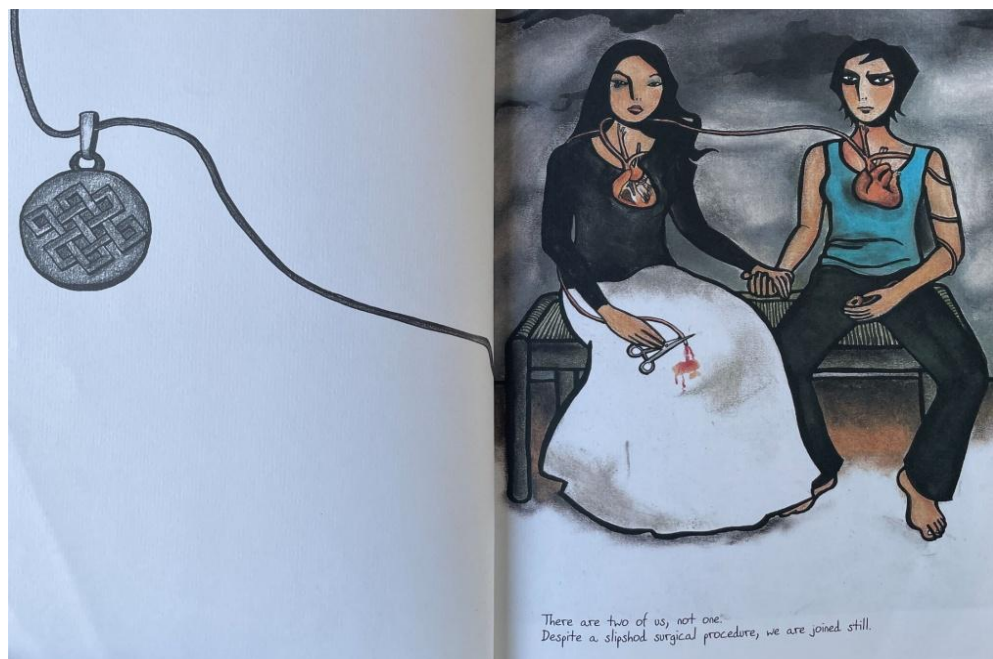


Fig. 3.23 Amruta Patil. *Kari*, 2-3

The story revolves around Kari’s emotional and psychological state after separation from Ruth. Kari’s journey is chronicled via her experiences of coming to terms with her isolation within the heterosexual society and the emotional anguish that accompanies her breakup with Ruth. A conversation between Kari and the two men – the boyfriends of her roommates – stands out among the many passages in the book that make the pervasiveness of heterosexuality apparent: “The well-meaning chorus at Crystal Palace understands nothing but plies me with advice. Jewels from the mouths of the interchangeable gentlemen and Billo;” (Patil, *Kari* 81). They reassure Kari that she will find her soulmate. She just needs to search for him. One of them even states that “eventually a woman needs a man and a man needs a woman” (81). She gets into another similar discussion with Lazarus, a coworker, who becomes

inquisitive and courageously probes her about her sexual orientation: “Are you, like, a proper lesbian?” (79).

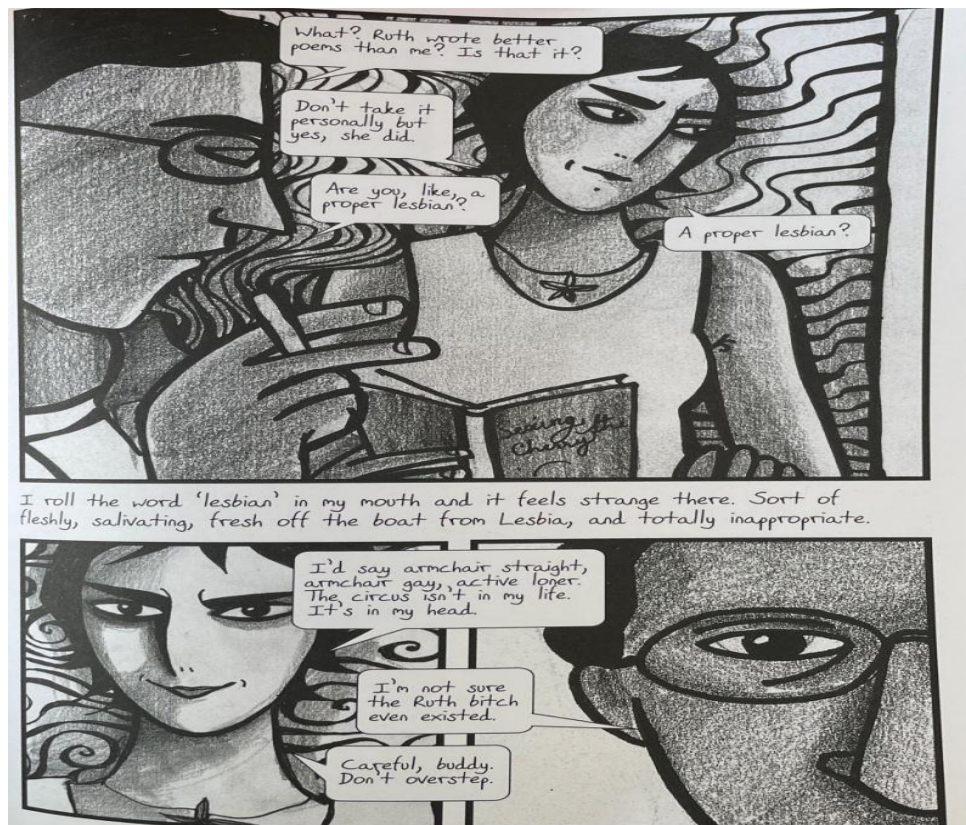


Fig. 3.24 Amruta Patil. *Kari*, 79

This inquiry, which most individuals find acceptable, illustrates the normalisation of heterosexuality in our culture, where individuals with non-heterosexual inclinations and behaviours are thoroughly ostracized and completely eliminated. Society often marginalizes individuals with same-sex attractions. The majority of people think that being homosexual is a terrible, immoral, and freely chosen vice. Kari's sexual orientation has compelled her to withdraw her social life. Because her protagonist can only find acceptance in locations where survival is a struggle, Patil uses the derogatory connotations of the words sewer and stench to make her point. However, Kari, very boldly, endeavours to challenge society that privileges heterosexuality and disparages homosexuality. She persists in her work without concealing her identity, she even received an award for her exemplary efforts in crafting an advertisement: “Thursday, day of Jupiter, at 1 a.m., Lazarus called to

tell me two things, that his ELISA test was negative and that we won Campaign of the Year at the AAA awards . . .” (102).

Patil is trying to draw parallels between her heroine Kari and the city’s sewer because, like the sewer, Kari is a social outcast who finds herself stifled by rigid and conventional norms. Kari lives with two other girls in a rented apartment and is employed by an advertising agency in Mumbai. She made a solemn vow to repay the kindness of sewer for saving her life when she attempted suicide. She fulfilled her promise when she cleans up the darkest water by bringing in a boat and rowing over it one dark night. She forms a bond with the sewer and feels sorry for it. The idea of the sewer keeps popping into her head: “Washing the stench off my body when I get back home is a ritual. I can see the stench, eager as mercury, rush into the drainhole to join the mother bog” (34).

Kari often finds herself alone and by herself. She feels excluded even in her present home. Her roommates, Billo and Delna, share a “2 BHK” (17) apartment with her. Orgo and Zap, who are her roommates’ lovers, are regular visitors. Kari remains alone even if there are many people sharing the same flat with her. She feels sandwiched in the two couples: “Although I am not part of the organism, they like me well enough” (23). Kari is an urban migrant who harboured the misguided notion of embarking on a feminine lifestyle with her roommates at a young age. She was completely oblivious to the stark reality. Reality was staring her in the face, and she had no idea. She anticipated head massages, facial treatments, and fusion, but ultimately, it was merely a matter of expectations. Billo and Delna are satisfied with their regular routines, leaving Kari contend with her issues. She is stuck in the midst of her problems, while her roommates are happily enjoying their lives. Kari’s mother, the sole individual who communicates with her weekly by phone on Fridays, offers recommendations and asks plenty of questions, whereas Kari generally remains silent throughout these conversations.



Fig. 3.25 Amruta Patil. *Kari*, 20-21

Kari desires autonomy to act according to her own wishes. Ultimately, she just wants to be herself. But she has buried her dreams because she is raised in a patriarchal society. Her present circumstances do not satisfy her. Her fear and anxiety cause her to repress her sexual desire in love and sex, which is evident in her character. Because of her predicament, she is unable to express her sexuality. She is symbolically purging her mind of self-doubt by cleaning the sewage. By coming to terms with her bisexuality, she has begun to face reality. She fearlessly responds to every inquiry about her sexuality that society poses: “I’d say armchair straight, armchair gay, active loner. The circus isn’t in my life. It’s in my head” (79). Several days later, she encounters the odour of the sewage once more when returning home, as though it is reminding her of its existence: “Hello, grins the sewer, I am still here” (41). Kari believes that urban expansion has significantly disrupted the city’s ecological balance, resulting in severe contamination of its water supply. Moreover, Kari seems to be the sole individual disturbed by the odour, suggesting that “people who travel this route every day stop smelling the sewer over the years” (41). She contrastingly “can smell the sewer everywhere” (41). The sewer symbolises Kari’s

concealed sexual impulses, which she urgently seeks to eliminate. She must repeatedly confront the fact of her bisexuality. She achieves this by cultivating romantic feelings for Susan Lush, her new boss at the advertising company. She feels elated by the prospect of a romantic relationship with her newly appointed boss:

Her name: Susan Lush. It doesn't affect anyone else much, but my heart is an expanse of green grass at the sight of the name. Susan Lush! It makes me very happy. Can you see her the way I do? Susan, Lush against watermelon walls. Susan, Lush against Grecian blue or white. Susan, Lush and tan on a bone-white beach. Susan, Lush and succulent, all salt, all sun. (64)

Contrarily, she is about to experience something new in life. This opportunity is taken away from her. One night Angel called Kari: "My time is up, boatman. I need you to ferry me over" (102). That night, Angel passed away, leaving Kari to face the crushing reality of death alone: "I did not ever revisit Angel's Street. There was no funeral. Her body was donated to the LMJ Medical College, not far from the ad agency I work in. Angel found it vastly entertaining that young medical school boys would be experimenting with her" (104). On the other hand, she is trying to face reality by getting a boy cut for her award presentation. The barber enquired, "Lady's boy cut?" Kari's powerful voice replied, "2 mm buzz cut" (106). At the end of the book, Kari is seen on top of a tall building, battling the need to jump off from it: "Sitting on the water tank is always an exercise in fighting the desire to jump off the ledge. The longer I fight the feeling, the stronger I become, but the desire to jump will never leave" (112). On this occasion, though, she refrains from jumping off. As a symbol of her desire, she sees a figure calling herself "Pigeon Girl" jumping off this time (115). Kari finds that jumping is no longer something she wants to do. Not only does she resolve to "step back, not step off," but she also affirms her continued affection for Ruth: "I still love Ruthie more than anyone else in the world, but I won't be jumping off ledges for anyone any more" (115). At this point, Kari has reached her peak; she has accepted herself fully, gay or not, and has left Ruth happy in another city. Kari suppresses her emotions and isolates herself, resulting in failures in both her personal and social spheres. The author deeply depicts sexual minorities while

dismantling the queer stereotype. The narrative thus reflects on the constantly shifting and often-paradoxical interpretations of sexuality in a society that is principally led by homophobia, by the fear of differences. Amruta Patil's stories are about people who are almost militant, compelling narratives of resistance to dominant heteronormativity codes. They struggle to establish relationships in a society that is consciously involved in overlooking sexual distinctions, despite their confidence in their sexuality.

The fundamental frameworks of Western philosophy are called into question by Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, especially the use of binary oppositions like upper class/lower class, heterosexuality/homosexuality, and man/woman. By giving one term precedence over the other, these dichotomies generally create hierarchical relationships. In order to show that meaning is not static but rather the product of intricate relationships and distinctions, Derrida's work aims to reveal these hierarchies. This chapter investigates Derrida's criticism of binary oppositions, looking at how they contribute to meaning construction and the ramifications of dismantling them. Binary oppositions, or pairs of notions where one term is seen as primary to the other, have long served as the framework for Western thought. These oppositions are infused with cultural biases. By exposing and undermining these hierarchies, Jacques Derrida's deconstruction questions the legitimacy and stability of binary structures in language and thought. Derrida contends that language and cultural activities create these oppositions rather than existing naturally. In man/woman binary, for instance, the first term is frequently linked to strength and reason, while the second term is linked to sentiment and weakness. This reflects and reinforces cultural biases. Deconstruction is the process of closely examining texts to identify contradictions they contain. In order to show how dependent the dominant term is on the subordinate one, Derrida reverses the hierarchical oppositions inside a text and pushes the favoured term out of the centre. By highlighting the mutual composition and interconnectedness of binary oppositions, this approach calls into question their seeming naturalness. Derrida's criticism of binary oppositions has significant ramifications for gender studies, philosophy, literature, and cultural criticism, among other disciplines. By dismantling these dichotomies, Derrida promotes a more complex and analytical approach to texts.

The works of Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil have frequently been referred to as autobiographical or self-referential due to the fact that graphic novel is a comparatively latest genre in India, but they see themselves as documentarians who capture the tonal rather than the informational aspects of the world. For instance, when Banerjee does recount factual narratives, such as the inaugural segmentation of a human body in India, a short segment in *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers*, he does so with the intention of complicating history rather than confirming it. The two authors also flout the realistic urges that drive the creations of numerous renowned Western graphic novelists. Although the formal structures of their novels differ, the main issues in their graphic narratives never change. They repeatedly probe middle-class India's psyche, that region of consumerist desires, post-colonial anxiety, and traditional education, and emerge with comments on the hopes and anxieties of its people. But they never make a point in their books. Although they discuss troubling moments in colonial history, their approach is light-hearted and occasionally highly thought stimulating. All of their novels deal with binary oppositions in some way. Through these shifting politico-social welfare paradigms, both authors expose the reality of lower-class existence.

By displaying these dichotomies, they imply to their middle-class and upper-class audience that they must accept that they contributed in the development of class differences and take action to make amends. The trend to use satirical caricatures and drawings to increase the impact of sociopolitical issues on the readers can be seen in the novels of several authors, including Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil. The sarcastic potency that distinguishes graphic storytelling is strengthened by highlighting the contrast between opposing accounts of events, circumstances, and characters. Graphic narratives of Banerjee frequently feature comparisons between the rich and the poor in terms of economic disparities. The graphic narratives of Banerjee, such as *Corridor*, *The Harappa Files*, and *All Quiet in Vikaspuri*, provide a complex depiction of modern Indian society, especially the cities of Delhi and Kolkata. Banerjee examines the socioeconomic divisions that define India through his unique narrative style. This chapter uses Derrida's deconstruction theory to examine how Banerjee's writings challenge the upper-class/lower-class binary, exposing the

categories manufactured character and fluidity. In *Corridor* Banerjee presents this binary with the help of street vendors and small business holders. Banerjee uses characters like Brighu, a young boy negotiating the intricacies of city life, and Jehangir Rangoonwalla, a tea vendor in Connaught Place. The complex realities of class system in Delhi are depicted by Banerjee through their encounters and exchanges. In his *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers*, various kinds of household staff employed in homes of the English administrators are described. They include stick holders, sweepers, waiters, Muslim barbers, paymasters, kitchen helpers, nurserymaids, and many more. Most historical accounts rarely give attention to the smaller players in the social system. However, Banerjee's graphic novel *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* presents historical characters who lived on the periphery of society and celebrates their contributions to colonial Calcutta's functioning, which would be impossible without them, by giving them the spotlight in his story. While *The Harappa Files* discusses people like J.C. Bose and the employees of the Ministry of Home who become scapegoats of the ruling communities. Girish in *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* and Indian soldiers in *Doab Dil* are other examples of the binary system presented by Banerjee. Both the visual and verbal forms fiercely interact in Banerjee's graphic novels to highlight the exploitation of the low-class by the upper-class people. The author criticises this binary structure by creating a contrast between the lower and upper classes using a potent combination of words and visuals. Similarly, *The Harappa Files* delves into the bureaucratic and infrastructural challenges of the city, highlighting the disparities between the elite and marginalized communities. *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* further explores themes of urban inequality and the impact of neoliberal policies on the city's residents.

The binary opposition of man and woman in Amruta Patil's writings is examined in this part using Derrida's deconstructive method. It looks at how this binary operates within societal systems and how deconstruction can highlight the intricacies and interdependencies between these terms. The Mahabharata is retold in innovative ways in Patil's Parva duology: *Adi Parva* and *Sauptik*, which challenge gender stereotypes and highlight under-represented perspectives. These narratives retell the Mahabharata from the viewpoints of Ashwathama and Ganga. These

retellings emphasise the complexity of gender and identity, challenging the patriarchal institutions present in the original epic. Ganga plays the role of narrator in *Adi Parva*, a position that is typically held by men. The traditional gendered distribution of narrative authority is challenged by her status as a female storyteller. In selecting Ganga, Patil challenges the impartiality of the narrative voice while simultaneously reclaiming a feminine voice in a man-led narrative. Amruta Patil, with the help of her female character Katyayani in *Aranyaka*, deconstructs the man-woman binary. Another binary of heterosexuality and homosexuality is deconstructed by the character of Kari in her first novel, *Kari*. There is a constant sense of loneliness in Kari's existence. Her interaction with her coworkers and roommates frequently highlights the heteronormative ethos that permeates the city. A coworker's question about her sexuality, for example, demonstrates how society has a propensity to dissect and classify queer identities, frequently reducing them to typecasts. Kari struggles to find acceptance in a society that marginalises her presence, and these events add to her sense of alienation. After experiencing trauma, Kari takes on the role of a boatwoman in order to clean the city's sewers. As a way of catharsis, this act enables Kari to face and deal with her suffering. In addition, her passion for Angel demonstrates her resilience by providing some insight and connection in the middle of her inner turmoil. Kari's experience serves as a reminder of the value of survival skills and the necessity of wide-ranging stories that value and acknowledge a range of sexual identities. The method of deconstruction of Jacques Derrida provides a potent instrument for dissecting and questioning the binary frameworks that support Western philosophy. Derrida's philosophy promotes a more critical and introspective approach to comprehending meaning and representation by uncovering the hierarchies inside binary oppositions. Even though his writings are still difficult and controversial, they have had a significant influence on modern philosophy and continue to spark debates about language, individuality, and authority.

Chapter-4

Speech versus Writing: Challenging Phonocentrism

This chapter applies Derrida's theories by analysing the phonocentric ideology in the graphic narratives of Banerjee and Patil. This chapter will utilise Derrida's dismantling of the entire history of Western discourse, where Derrida shatters the idea of writing denoting otherness. Derrida characterises phonocentrism as "the historico-metaphysical reduction of writing to the rank of an instrument enslaved to a full and originarily spoken language" (*Of Grammatology* 29). This phonocentric favouring of speech over writing operates, in Derrida's view, according to the same logic as that of logocentrism. Sarnath Banerjee's graphic novels oppose writing to speech through the various actions of the characters in the novels.

Examining how this opposition affects narrative pacing, visual style, and reader involvement in graphic tales can enhance the conversation, even if the chapter clearly analyses the binary opposition between speech and writing within the framework of deconstruction. Jacques Derrida's theoretical critique of phonocentrism shows that meaning is always mediated through systems of representation, challenging the conventional preference for voice over writing. This mediation is especially evident in graphic novels since the story is told through a combination of written text and visual graphics. As a result, narrative pace, visual composition, and the reader's interaction with the text are all directly influenced by the contrast between speech and writing.

An essential starting point for comprehending a text's structural dynamics is the examination of the binary opposition between speech and writing. However, by looking at how it affects narrative pacing, this opposition may be investigated further. Speech-dominated panels can give a story the sense of movement and immediacy. By bringing readers into the action and providing them with direct access to the thoughts and interaction of the characters, these sections typically quicken the story's pace. On the other hand, the story usually moves more slowly in panels that focus on writing, like letters, journal entries, or recorded reflections. Written formats promote introspection, detachment, and interpretation, enabling the story to halt and scrutinize

events in greater detail. As a result, the narrative's rhythmic structure is influenced by the interaction between writing and speech, which alternates between haste and reflection.

For example, Sarnath Banerjee conveys the rhythms of Delhi's urban life in *Corridor* with a great deal of conversational discourse between characters. Speech bubbles fly swiftly between panels, creating a fast-paced interaction that resembles normal conversation. The narrative moves more quickly and feels more spontaneous because of the usage of spoken language. At the same time, Banerjee regularly breaks up these conversations with narrative captions or thoughtful textual commentary. These written sections slow down the story's speed and encourage readers to stop and consider the social and cultural subject it explores. Phonocentrism can influence a narrative's visual or stylistic presentation in addition to pacing. Dialogue, conversational tone, or fragmented exchanges that imitate the fluid and instantaneous character of spoken communication are common ways to portray speech. Contrarily, writing frequently takes on more formal or structured forms, such as lengthy descriptions, recorded comments, or sentences that are included into the story. The reader's perception of authenticity, authority, and emotional closeness is influenced by these stylistic differences, which produce textual and visual contrasts on the page. The thematic tension between immediacy and permanence, presence and absence, is thereby intensified by the stylistic transition between spoken and written styles.

Speech balloons, which visually link characters to their spoken words and reinforce the immediacy and presence generally associated with oral communication, are commonly used to express speech. On the other side, writing is often found in captions, narrative boxes, or copied documents, which establish a sense of separation and mediation. These visual differences challenge the conventional hierarchy that favours speech as more genuine or straightforward while also highlighting the materiality of writing. In line with Derrida's deconstructive observations about the fragility of this binary, graphic narratives use such visual techniques depict the complicated relationship between speech and writing. Like Banerjee's *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* illustrates how the narrative's visual style is influenced by the interaction between speech and writing. In numerous panels, narrative

descriptions, handwritten notes, and archive references merge with speech bubbles. The hierarchy between spoken and written language is visually upset by this layering of textual forms. The graphic form puts text and speech side by side, exposing both as manufactured forms of communication rather than portraying speech as more immediate or genuine. Derrida's criticism of phonocentrism is thus reflected in the text's visual arrangement within the panels, which becomes a crucial stylistic device. The story challenges readers to acknowledge the variety of voices present in the text and to challenge the presumptive authority to spoken language through this visual experimentation. This idea is best illustrated by Banerjee's panels, which show how writing and voice are not separate forms of communication but rather coexist within a sophisticated visual system.

Additionally, reader attention is greatly impacted by phonocentrism. Speech-based panels can create a sense of closeness and immediacy by engrossing readers in the story through lively character interaction. Events appear to readers as though they are happening in front of them. On the other hand, written forms frequently encourage readers to take on a larger interpretive role, motivating them to examine the written material's context, objectives, and dependability. Reader's engagement with the book is deepened by this change in narrative mode, which encourages them to transition between critical contemplation and emotional participation. The connection between writing and voice also has a big impact on how readers interact with Amruta Patil's writings. Patil regularly contrasts long first-person narration delivered in handwritten or styled textual blocks with brief dialogue in *Kari*. While the protagonist's thoughts appear as reflecting narrative text, the visual imagery takes up the majority of the panel space in several panels that show Kari strolling through Mumbai's monsoon-soaked streets. These scenes have little conversation, which slows the action and prioritizes reflection over action. The reader's focus switches from the dialogue to the narrator's inner voice, emphasizing the function of writing as a memory and introspection tool. This narrative style shows how written narration may become a primary storytelling tool rather than a supporting element to speech thanks to the visual arrangement of panels.

In *Adi Parva*, a retelling of epic stories from the Mahabharata, Patil further develops this strategy. Rather than having a lot of human conversation, many panels depict mythical scenarios through intricately detailed graphic compositions and lyrical narrative prose. While speech only seldom emerges, the written narration serves as a guiding voice that frames the mythological images. The traditional hierarchy that prioritizes spoken conversation as the main plot driver is reversed by this narrative style. Rather, the reader's perception of the visual scenes is shaped by the written voice, which takes center stage in the story. This kind of organization supports Derrida's claim that writing is an independent system of meaning that arranges interpretation rather than just a reproduction of speech.

Consequently, its wider implications for visual storytelling are revealed by analyzing the binary opposition between speech and writing at the level of graphic narrative form. By incorporating conversation, narration, and imagery into intricate visual compositions, Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil's works show how modern Indian graphic novels subvert the conventional preference for voice. These graphic narratives demonstrate that meaning arises from the interaction of several representational systems rather than the dominance of speech through their inventive panel arrangements and textual techniques. Derrida's critique of phonocentrism can thus be effectively explored and visualized through the medium of the graphic novel.

Banerjee is an Indian graphic novelist, illustrator, and filmmaker who has been very active so far, mainly in the world of graphic fiction all over the world. A well-known Indian artist with numerous publications attributes his development as a storyteller to his exposure to illustrated albums. Banerjee drew influence from literature, art, and cinema from Japan, the United States, and Europe during his early career. When he came across illustrations, however, he realised that the readability of pictures, which formed the core of Indo-Persian manuscripts tightly packed compositions, was the supreme model he was searching for. Banerjee's works travel through time and space, lavishly adorned with allusions to the social, historical, political, and cultural milieu of the moment. His painstakingly crafted, hand-drawn folios represent scenes from his boyhood and teen years spent in heavily inhabited regions of Kolkata, his training at educational institutes in London and Japan, his

research in Brazil, and life in Berlin. His drawings are undoubtedly informed by his personal experiences, but his interactions with people from all over the world enable him to create a complex tapestry of uneven thoughts into a parody of interwoven pictures and conversations. Although the formal structures of his books fluctuate, Banerjee's core issues never change. He repeatedly probes middle-class India's psyche – that volatile mix of consumerist ambition, post-colonial anxiety, and traditional-learning – and appears with information on the hopes and anxieties of its people. He explores troubling incidents in colonial history and has a particular fondness for the super-rich who have been disfigured by their wealth, yet his approach to these issues is witty, amusing, and occasionally even ludicrous.

The graphic novel *Corridor* (2004) is set in Delhi and begins with the narrator scouring the bookselling shops of Connaught Place in the sweltering temperature of summer in search of a certain book. In a sentence, he confesses to being a fanatic collector and cites Jean Baudrillard:

Yes, the collector. He regresses to the anal phase – expressed by accumulation and retention. His passion is not for possessing objects themselves, but stems from his fanaticism for an illusory wholeness, for completing the set. But really, he is trying to recollect himself. And if he gets the last object in the collection, he is effectively signifying his own death. (7)

The protagonist of Banerjee's novel, Brighu, guides the reader through Delhi's shape-shifting, chaotic, and crowded alleys. Brighu compares himself to Ibn Battuta, a Moroccan traveller who went in pursuit of adventures to uncharted countries and returned twenty-four years later to a home that felt like an entirely new world. Then it moves on to discussions and depictions of other individuals' sex lives, love liaisons, and overall attempts to achieve happiness in a challenging environment. Banerjee mixes words and images to depict the nuanced layers of contemporary urban Indian ways of living in *Corridor*, one of the first graphic novels released in India. Banerjee illustrates the urban culture by contrasting two unreal cities, Calcutta and Delhi. It can be inferred that Banerjee's depictions of these cities are more accurately described as

mimetic, synthetic, self-replicating surfaces of desire itself. The unfulfilled facade of urbanity alludes to the adaptable, invented virtual realm of Baudrillard's Disneyland. It goes without saying that these unreal cities represent the spread of the "real fakes" of the Disneyesque simulacra, as is evident from Soja's comment in article "Los Angeles. 1964-1992: From Crisis-Generated Restructuring to Restructured-Generated Crisis":

Over the past thirty years . . . these 'real fakes' have escaped from their formerly circumscribed territories and manufactories to infiltrate more deeply than ever before into the intimate everyday life of postmodern urban society, economy, polity, and culture. In these new secular sites and situations, the hypersimulations of urban reality have been blurring . . . the older distinctions between our images of the real and the reality itself, inserting into the confusion a hyperreality that is increasingly affecting where we choose to live and work, what we wear and eat, how we vote for, how we shape our built environment, how we fill our leisure time—in other words, all the activities that together constitute the social constructions of urban life. (451)

In this graphic novel, Shintu's early prejudice in favour of Hakeem's advice against the written description on the bottle of oil – in favour of speech and anti to writing – is an instance of phonocentrism, as described by Derrida. Shintu, one of the most innocent and protected characters in the book, has unexpected and humorous outcomes as a result of his search for pornography. Shintu, a newlywed, has been coddled by his Bengali mother into blissful ignorance. So, neither he nor his wife have much experience with sex. Hence, they played "scrabble" on their wedding night (Banerjee, *Corridor* 49). Shintu searches for porn in the dirty alleys of Old Delhi and Palika Bazaar to make things right. He finds a Mary Poppins CD and buys it with the assurance that the album's cover is completely false. It comes from one of the stores that sells pirated videos of pornographic movies. One lucky day he brings "Blondie in Bondage" (50), an adult movie, for watching with his wife. Additionally, he brings another adult hardcore movie from Kukreja Video Palace. After watching porn, Shintu takes advantage of the fact that his constantly present mother is not home to

have “twenty minutes of quality sex” (51) with Dolly. But when it’s all said and done, Shintu is left with a new issue and he wonders, “how come the man in the blue film is still at it?” (52).

Shintu begins his hunt for the ideal love potion. His search ends at Hakim Gulabkhus Peshawari who offers him *sande ka tel*: “The oil that will awaken ten tigers that lay sleeping inside Shintu; restore his original role as hunter-gatherer” after paying one thousand rupees (78). Shintu clearly privileges Hakim’s spoken words over the written words on the bottle of oil. Hakim’s speech manipulates him to the extent that Shintu gives no time to read the label that is glued on the bottle of the oil. As Madan Sarup in his book, *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*, asserts “it is because of the assumption of presence that a priority has been given to speech over writing” (35). In this way, he clearly idealises speech over writing. When Shintu later discovers that the oil is just a regular hair oil, he laments the loss of the money he paid to the Hakim. However, he makes the priceless realisation that “sex is in the mind” (101). In the image given below, it can be seen what words Hakim has used to influence Shintu: “I am saying this on the strength of forty years of experience” (57). These words of Hakim are what Shintu needed the most to boost his desire to live a happy married life: “Shintu just needed to hear the word go. His pent-up grief came out in sporadic bursts” (57). He does not care, at this very moment, to look at the official documents of the Hakim that can justify his words regarding his experience and expertise in the field. Shintu is so desperate to find a cure for his disease that he falls prey to Hakim’s words and ends up paying a high amount for a regular hair oil.



Fig. 4.1 Sarnath Banerjee. *Corridor*, 57.

Another phonocentric example in the novel is provided through the opposition of the characters of Brighu, who is associated with writing, and Rangoonwala, who is associated with speech. The book opens with a picture of Connaught Place, where readers are introduced to Brighu Sen, a scholarly Bengali who has moved to Delhi from Calcutta. Brighu is a compulsive gatherer of “seemingly innocent looking object[s]” (4) such as old pens, rare books, “rare LPs of forgotten musicians” (5), and even his grandfather’s “gall-stone that killed him” (6). Currently, Brighu is looking for a book. He looks everywhere, including Galgotia, Bookwarm, and Jain Book Agency, but he cannot locate the book. The novel consistently links Brighu to writing and reading. The narrative repeatedly associates Brighu with writing, and because of this, the relationship has an allegorical effect rather than just a mimetic one. Brighu is presented throughout the novel as both a person who prefers writing and a symbol of writing. Books are like his friends who are waiting for him on shelves, waving their pages at him; thus, he enjoys strolling inside bookstores. He loves to visit second-hand bookstores where he can find antique books with untouched dust and faded covers. He tries to find his book in a second-hand bookshop in Connaught Place. The

bookshop belongs to Jehangir Ranggonwala, which he claims to be “the centre of the world” (14). It is situated in the heart of Cannaught Place. The entire plot of this book is united by just one character and his narration and observations of the other characters, Rangoonwalla. He is a wise second-hand book vendor who is often mingling with people, sipping tea, and offering guidance.

Throughout the book, Rangoonwalla is the one character who refrains from reading or writing. He is presented in the novel giving advice to different customers who come to his shop. Brighu asks for the book he is searching for “*Double Helix* by James Watson” (10). The shopkeeper immediately conducts a search, mentioning the author’s name repeatedly. He searches for forty minutes, but in vain. Brighu expressed his regrettable luck eloquently as his heart melted in silence. Brighu was asked to wait for one minute by Rangoonwalla. When Brighu shouts in frustration, the store owner responds that he does not have Watson but offers another book. Rangoonwalla detects some fatigue in Brighu’s body language and asks him for a cup of tea at the chess table. At this moment, Brighu befriends Rangoonwalla and gets ready for hearing the wisdom lessons from him. According to Rangoonwalla’s view on wisdom: “When it comes it comes with great ease and is simple, like a sip of water” (19). He has worked forty different jobs despite having a degree in chemistry. He claims to have had the idea to open a bookstore while going in a lift to appear in an interview. The physical ascent between the fourteenth and fifteenth floors caused his thoughts to do the same. He believes that this illumination resulted from excellent digestion, stating, “chewing your food well” (18).

Brighu, after listening to him, forgets his search for book and starts spending time with Rangoonwalla. His surrender to the advice of Rangoonwalla demonstrates his inclination towards speech. Brighu never cared to attain knowledge from his books, which are also full of knowledge; instead, he gives importance to the words of the shopkeeper whom he just met: “Logocentrism would thus support the determination of the being of the entity as presence” (*Of Grammatology* 12). He got so influenced by the speech of Rangoonwalla that Brighu starts to see life the way Rangoonwalla tells him. He leaves his girlfriend Kali to see the other magics of the

world, just like Rangoonwalla who has worked in forty jobs. Leaving his girlfriend and searching for the book symbolises his leaving writing, and giving preference to the advice of Rangoonwalla symbolises giving preference to speech. In the below image, all the important characters can be seen surrounding Rangoonwalla in his bookshop, “amidst all this sits Mr. Rangoonwalla, in his ‘centre of the universe’” (Banerjee, *Corridor* 111). All the characters who are surrounding him are well qualified and doing their jobs peacefully. They are shown reading books in the first panel, but it can be seen that the books they are reading do not make a slight change in their attitude because it is not the books in the bookshop that they come for but the words and cheap advice of the bookshop owner.

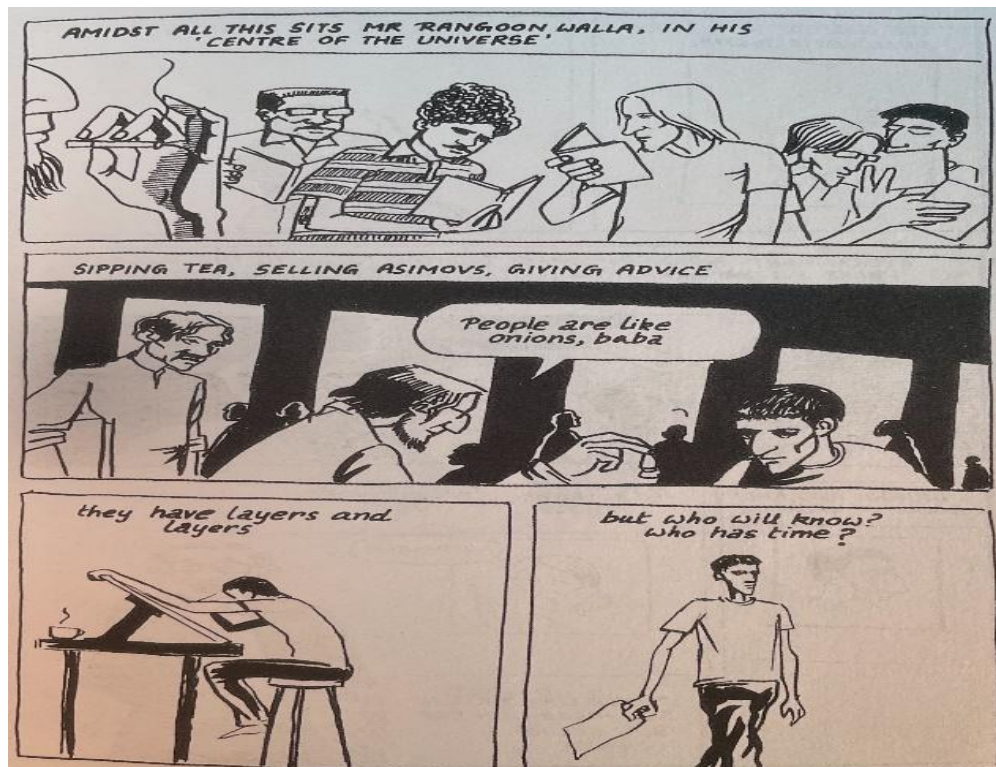


Fig. 4.2 Sarnath Banerjee. *Corridor*, 111.

Like Brighu, another character in the novel, Digital Dutta, represents writing. He is a “C++ professional from APTECH” (36) and primarily “lives in his head” (40). In quest of employment, he also moved from Calcutta to Delhi, much like Brighu Sen. Digital Dutta always keeps himself surrounded by books. He spends his whole-time reading books, and he “knows everything there is to know through printed words”

(42). He is a “faith healer, a quantum physicist, a war reporter, a linguist and a Kalari expert” (40). He fantasises about doing numerous things, including dancing with “Isadora Duncan,” playing the guitar with “Django Reinhart,” solving “equations for Heisenberg,” pulling off escapes with “Harry Houdini,” and blowing up the “midfield alongside Garincha” (41). He was raised in North Calcutta and has scaled Mount Everest multiple times. He found curare and brought Bactrian camels into Bukhara when he was twelve. He was fifteen when he learnt the names of each street in Prague. He resides in a one-bedroom apartment “where Karl Marx visits him every night” (43). Ragoonwalla tells the tale of a night when Digital Dutta was with his love interest Dolly, whose father does not approve of their marriage despite the fact that he is a C++ professional, sitting at a bench at Central Park Connaught Place, in a sort of sulky and awkward stillness. Dolly is curious to learn the status of his H1-B visa because it is the cornerstone of their marriage. It is a biting parody on middle-class urbanites who wish to arrange for their daughters to get married to grooms who would settle overseas in order to project wealth and prestige in society. The societal norms represent speech, and Dolly’s decision to reject Digital Dutta’s love for the sake of society signifies her prioritising speech over writing. Dolly and her father are presented in the novel with a phonocentric view of prioritising speech over writing. Dolly rejects Digital’s love, which signifies the rejection of writing by her. She rejects writing and goes after her father’s words and societal norms, which is speech.



Fig. 4.3 Sarnath Banerjee. *Corridor*, 42.

His second novel, *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* (2007), is an ambitious undertaking that examined lost and possibly fabricated occurrences from Calcutta's colonial past using the symbolic figure of the wandering Jew. In this book, the anonymous narrator searches for a book of scandals from the eighteenth century that was authored by an Indian reincarnation of the Wandering Jew from medieval Christian folklore. The graphic novel explores Calcutta, the birthplace of Banerjee, as a palimpsest of several ages of decadence while also being a postmodern jab at history, providing a scurrilous tale as a priceless relic of the past. The novel is a book about a person's search. The narrative of the wandering Jew – a figure from medieval Christian legend – is compared in the work to the Hindu idea of soul transmigration. The novel's young Bengali protagonist, who now resides in London, travels back to contemporary Kolkata in search of a misplaced inheritance that includes the titular journal, written in nineteenth-century Calcutta by a Sephardic Jewish merchant from Syria who chronicled scandals involving the British and Bengali elite.

The novel has a number of phonocentric examples. It is evident through the visuals in the next panel. It depicts an impossible situation the narrator has fallen into. He has come to India all over from London just for the sake of the eponymous book that his grandfather had bought from Paris. The book has gained much value over time, but his grandmother, oblivious to its current value, gave it to some random person after his grandfather's death. This puts the narrator into a deep dilemma about where he should look for the book now. Finding a single book in such a big city seems a very difficult task to him: "So here I am, caught in an impossible situation: A city of millions, one book to find, one person to not run into" (61). The narrator can be seen ignoring the contents written in the book. He is not concerned about the written quality and the written history in the book. Rather, he is concerned about the people's notions about the cost of the book. He starts his journey of searching "the 18th-century book of scandals. *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers*" (60). His preference to the money that he will get after selling the book is a clear indication of him giving preference to speech, that is, the words of people who tell him that the book costs "a hundred thousand pounds in the international market" in the present time (36). However, his ignorance of the contents written in the book is a clear indication of his underestimating the merit of writing.

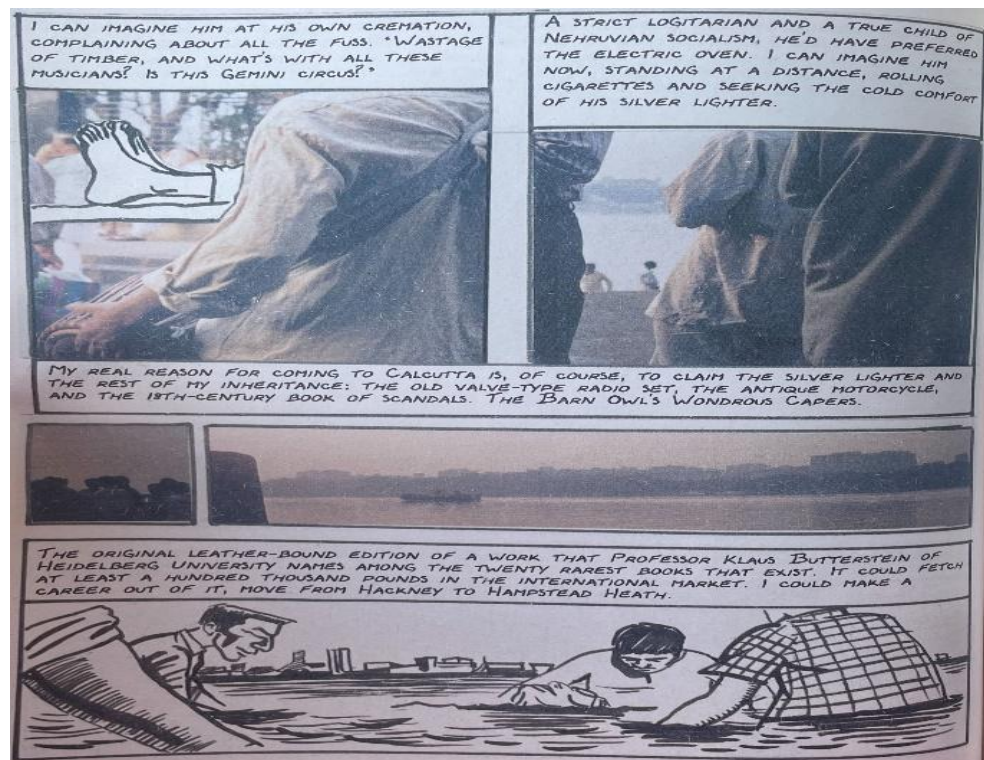


Fig. 4.4 Sarnath Banerjee. *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers*, 60.

The narrator's phonocentric ideology is also demonstrated in the following panel, on one occasion when he goes to seek advice from Digital Dutta regarding the number of people who might possess his book. The narrator in this section of the novel can be seen representing speech, and his new friend Digital can be seen representing writing. The second and third panels in the following image have painted Digital carrying loads of books to do his research on finding the lost book. The narrator met Digital a few days back "in the Maniktallah fish market" (77), when he was losing hope. Digital appears as the narrator's saviour and starts helping him find his book. Dutta compiles a list for the narrator of the individuals who are most likely to be in possession of the scandalous journal of Pablo that Pablo's widow unintentionally gave away. He suggests the narrator to start with one of them: "The next one on the list is Soli Kotwal. I have a feeling you'll be luckier with him" (156). Digital is always shown surrounded by books, reading books in a library, and sometimes holding loads of them. He is the real personification of writing in this graphic novel. However, the narrator is the true personification of what does not belong to writing. He believes in Digital's words blindly and without giving any

second thought: “Derrida calls this phonocentrism. Speech has been regarded as prior because it is closer to the possibility of presence. It is closer because speech implies immediacy” (Sarup 36). The narrator does not care to check written documents on his own in order to find his book. He simply follows what Digital tells him to do. He even does not check Digital’s list of the people, which shows his ignorance towards writing. He chooses Digital’s words, that is speech, over the list, that is writing. He prefers Digital to do the paper work for finding the location of the book while he roams around following the directions given by Digital.



Fig. 4.5 Sarnath Banerjee. *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers*, 156.

The next picture depicts Babu Joy Mitra, who has “made his fortune by trading with the East India Company” (*The Barn Owl's* 97). He is “a banian, a category of brokers who did business with the British” (97). In the following image, he can be seen holding a newspaper upside-down, which he is pretending to read. During the British rule in India, people used to pretend to know reading and writing. It is believed that British control was to blame for the modernisation of Indian civilization. The effects of this process were clearly seen in the modifications that the Indians made to their way of life, way of thinking, clothing, diet, and educational

system. In addition to the improvements in the fields of transportation, postal services, and so on, their rule served as a crucial transitional time from the indigenous type of schooling to western education. The East India Company set the stage for the employment of Indians for administrative work to further their political, economic, and imperial goals. Babu Joy Mitra also works with British administration and thinks of himself as superior to the other people of his town. Furthermore, to prove his superiority, as shown in the following panel, “every morning he went for a short ride through the neighbourhood in his newly acquired open-top phaeton, holding a newspaper which he pretended to read” (97). This shows that he underestimates writing. He does not read the newspaper to acquire knowledge but to impress others. He has no intention to gain knowledge from the written documents available for him; instead, the town gossips are the real source of his knowledge. This shows the phonocentric view that he holds, in which the newspaper represents writing and gossips represent speech. Newspaper is merely used as a prop of fashion by Babu Joy Mitra.



Fig. 4.6 Sarnath Banerjee. *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers*, 98.

This phonocentric ideology is supported by another character in this graphic novel, and that is “Babu Ramkamal Haldar: another rich illiterate zamindar who wore reading glasses and kept himself surrounded by books” (100). He also uses books just for showing off his wealth and for making a good impression on those who visit him. However, he attains his knowledge from the same sources that Joy Mitra prefers. Hence giving in to the phonocentric ideology of the time where people preferred to give attention to spoken words than the written.

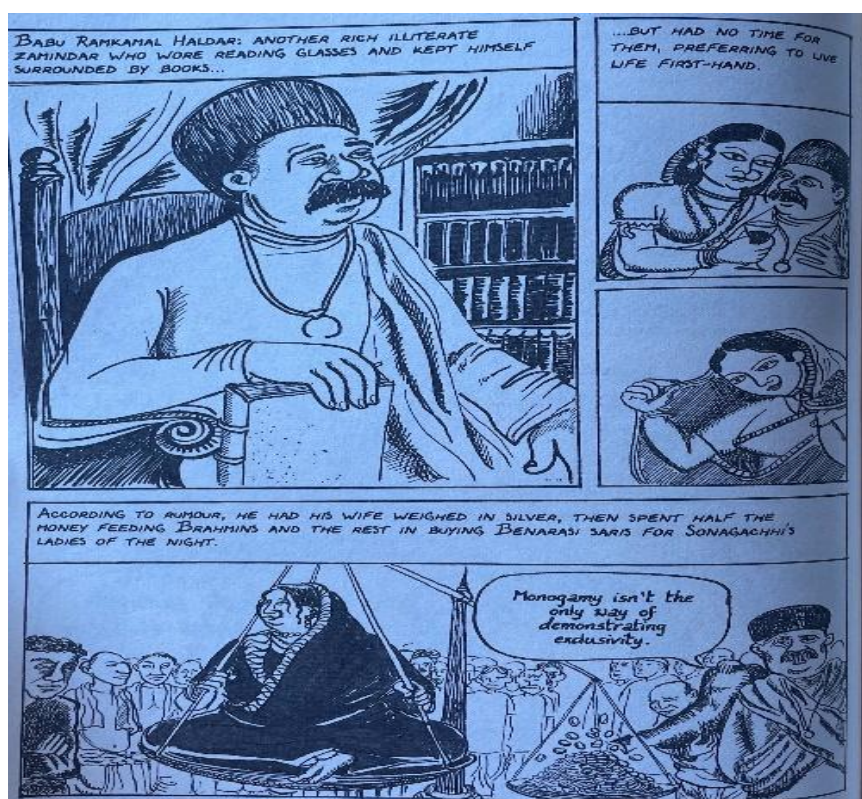


Fig. 4.7 Sarnath Banerjee. *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers*, 100.

Banerjee's third book, *The Harappa Files*, is a brazen compilation of graphic commentary that has been graphically altered by Banerjee from files that were originally recorded by the Greater Harappa Rehabilitation, Reclamation & Redevelopment Commission. Of *The Harappa Files*, Varughese in his 2018 book *Visuality and Identity in Post-Millennial Indian Graphic Narratives* writes, “The word *Harappa* makes reference to the Harappan Civilisation or the Indus Valley Civilisation, known for its industrious spirit, organised settlements and innovative ‘urban’ planning and therefore standing not only as a symbol of an older India (a pre-

India located in the Indus valley) but also as a symbol of a ‘great’ civilisation” (51). Two digits, one of which is a file number and the other likely a section number, are used to identify each ‘file’. Therefore, it is a proper collection. Most of the sections can be read independently because there is a minimal attempt at coherence, although some do tie into each other in a roundabout fashion. The portions cover many topics, with a specific stress on contemporary Indian culture, bureaucracy and the average person, wistful reflection, and many oddball tales. E. Dawson Varughese, in his book *Reading New India: Post-millennial Indian Fiction in English* described the graphic narrative as “a generational and cultural museum for and India that is changing at pace” (141). *The Harappa Files*, written in Banerjee’s distinctive manner, employs images covering entire page, mixture, panelling, and a range of text arrangements as speech balloons and loose text.

The narratives in the files deal with the everyday life of a post-liberalised India: “GHRRR is a secret think-tank of elite bureaucrats, historians, ethnographers, social scientists, law enforcers, retired diplomats and policy makers. In short, the colonels and admirals of society who operate from the nether regions of the government’s subconscious” (Banerjee, *The Harappa Files* 11). Sri Sudarshan Mittal, I.A.S., established the GHRRR Commission in order to perform a “gigantic survey of the current ethnography and urban mythologies of a country on the brink of great hormonal changes. Changes of such enormity, that they are barely comprehensible to its civil society” (11). The resulting conclusions are referred to by the Commission members as the Harappa findings. These results, which are the result of ten years of arduous work, will now be made public. The Commission was searching for the best channel for disseminating the information. They all agreed that “to tell new stories one needs new languages” (12). The communication department of the Committee strongly recommended the use of images and text as the most suitable manner to convey these complex facts after a lengthy and laborious period of investigation and analysis. The most qualified applicant for the job, in the opinion of the Committee, was Sri Sarnath Banerjee: “Further research pointed to one Sri Sarnath Banerjee” (13). This novel presents its readers with various phonocentric views regarding the superiority of speech over writing of people in society. One such phonocentric view is

very well portrayed in the panel given below. Once Sarnath Banerjee gets selected for the work of putting the observations in comics, a committee member gets the instructions to contact the required artist. Banerjee in this image is presented as a representative of writing who is going to put down all the verbal information of the committee in writing. Banerjee is “a creator and small-time publisher of comic books” and he is “a suitable candidate for such a job” (13). However, the committee member pays no heed to the artist and his art. Knowing that he has got a big project from GHRRR he himself calls the committee member but gets no response repeatedly: “Sir, that Banerjee has called for the 13th time” (13). He is in dire need of working on this project as he has “been unemployed since 1998” (13). The committee member that is painted in the panel with an angry expression on his face and continuously working on his computer, gives no importance to his assistant, who is there to remind him of the task that he has to perform. This man’s casual attitude towards Banerjee signifies his rejection of the mode of writing that is chosen to expose the findings of GHRRR. This rejection of writing as a proper mode of communication is what Jacques Derrida calls phonocentrism: “The epoch of the logos thus debases writing considered as mediation of mediation and as a fall into the exteriority of meaning” (*Of Grammatology* 12-13).



Fig. 4.8 Sarnath Banerjee. *The Harappa Files*, 13.

After a lengthy discussion between Sri Mittal and Sri Banerjee, it was concluded that comics would be the most effective way to address current societal concerns and challenges. Sri Mittal reaffirmed his commitment to building a link between art and daily life and between alternative and mainstream perspectives. Similar to other official pronouncements, Mittal had also stated that the entire inventory of the Harappa Files would be made available to the public following the Commonwealth Games. Banerjee also has a phonocentric view at one time in the novel when he believes in someone's words more than his own art. Despite being a graphic artist, Banerjee has never believed in his own art. He thinks of himself as a failed artist: "you are not even as good as your last project" (Banerjee, *The Harappa Files* 13). Though he has managed to publish a few of his books, he has not got the trust that he can be called a good artist, and he starts working "as a salesman of pharmaceutical goods" (15) for many years. He underestimates his artistic skills that have helped him reach where he is at present. He only comes to know his calibre after he listens to "the words of the three-time Delhi state champion Shaheen Merali" (15).

He rejects the art that is writing, in which he excels, and accepts someone's words, which is speech. Some few words of praise from someone else's mouth are what matters for Banerjee the most. The written evidence, his published comics, fails to convince him that he is a good artist who can do better in the future. However, what convinced him is a few words. It is only after this assurance that Banerjee accepts the proposal of the project from GHRRR. His belief in the words of Shaheen Merali represents his belief in phonocentric ideology, which gives more importance to words than writing. Banerjee, too, like other people with phonocentric ideology, believes that someone's words, that is, speech, have more value than written words. He needs someone's words to make himself realise that he is a good artist and can be a successful one. In the interim, Banerjee produced a number of visual commentary pieces that tackled the bipolar disease that plagues fast-capitalising post-liberalised India. The Files, ironically being just loosely connected, reflect on how India arrived

at this point. The Files collectively analyse recent history while attempting to “resurrect, examine and catalogue cultural, human, and material relics” (15).

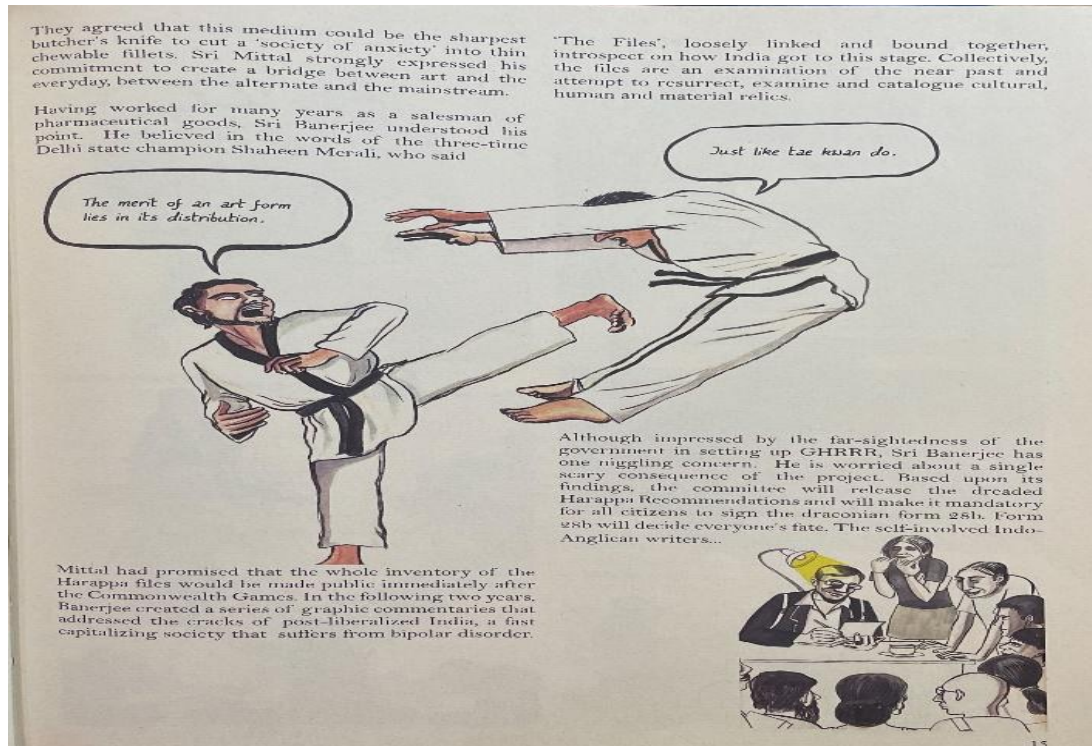


Fig. 4.9 Sarnath Banerjee. *The Harappa Files*, 15

There are some more incidents in the novel where the phonocentric ideology of people is reflected. One such incidence is given in the file “Jaguar Salesman.” This file records the incidences in “the Jaguar showroom in South London” (32). It introduces a university student, Madhav, who goes to do a part-time “job of a junior salesman at the Jaguar showroom” (32). On his very first day at his job, he receives detailed instructions on how to convince customers to buy a car from their showroom: “you know a Jaguar buyer the moment he enters the showroom. He doesn’t spend much time checking the merchandise” (33). The head of the sales team, Gareth Clarke, tells the staff the techniques and words they should choose to influence a buyer. He teaches them a technique of using the words “you and me” (35). These are the words that will be used to make him feel that he belongs to a lower class of society, just like the salesmen, and he cannot buy a Jaguar car. He is not capable of

buying the car. Then the film introduces a buyer who belongs to “the other kind who walks in: a bit too careful... a bit too alert... a bit too weighing-of-options” (35). The moment he entered the showroom, Madhav took his feet on and started his task of convincing the man to buy a car. The following panel depicts the buyer following phonocentric ideology. He finally buys a Jaguar after getting influenced by the words of the salesman in the showroom. This presents the buyer as a person possessing phonocentric ideology who gives more importance to the spoken words than written words. He buys a car after getting influenced by the words, which proves that he has been influenced by speech. People with phonocentric ideology believe that the spoken words are more valuable than written words because they have the presence of the speaker in front of them. The speaker of the words makes a great impression on the listeners with his facial expressions and his tone while speaking. It is quite obvious that a buyer of a car, when going to a showroom, has specific things in mind. He has the budget, the model, the colour and some other things in his mind when he goes to buy a car. The man painted in the below image also has some specific things in his mind, but the moment the salesman impressed him with his words, he lost control of his brain and followed the words of the speaker blindly, ending up buying a car that was out of his reach.

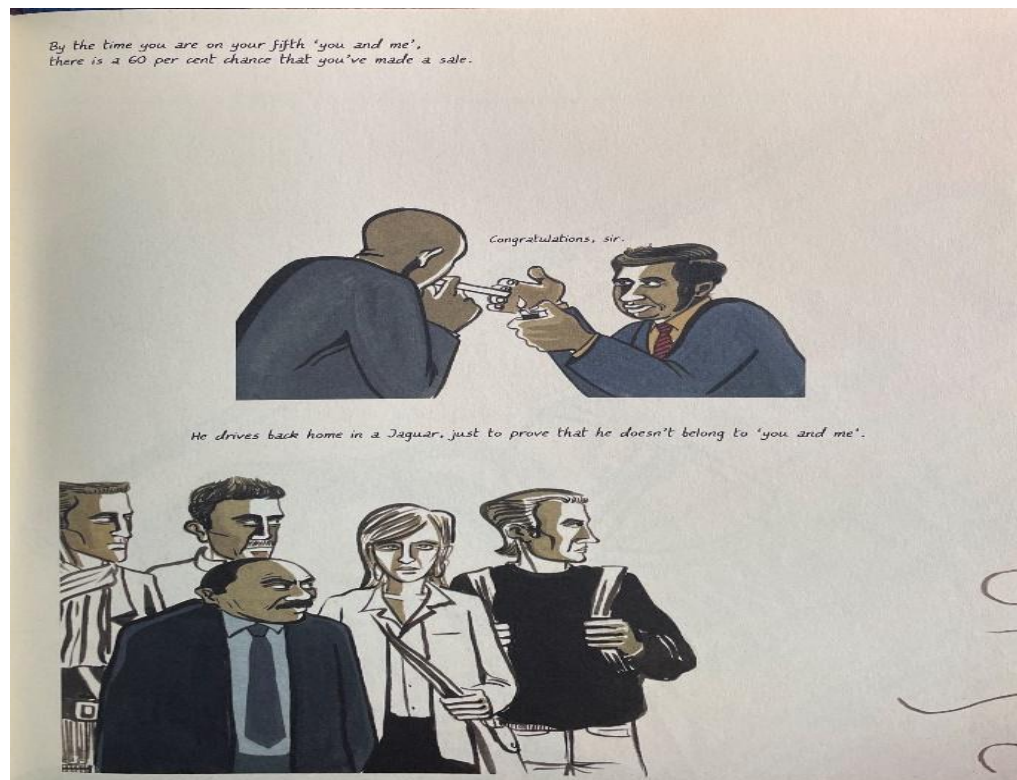


Fig. 4.10 Sarnath Banerjee. *The Harappa Files*, 39.

Banerjee's "Bodhidharma" (152) section of the narrative humorously revisits arguments regarding the beginnings of Asian martial arts. A character in this episode claims that Bodhidharma, the semi-legendary Buddhist monk connected to the Shaolin Monastery, brought combat techniques from Kerala to China. This story claims that techniques like "jiu-jitsu" later developed into martial arts including Kung Fu, Karate, and Judo:

Hear me out. Kung-fu, karate, judo are all derived from jiu-jitsu. And what about jiu-jitsu? Where do you think that came from? Jiu-jitsu itself is derived from an ancient martial art that originated in Kerala and is still practiced there.

Bodhidharma took the knowledge and spread it in China. (154)

The work emphasizes how cultural narratives about beginnings spread and gain credibility, even if it does not necessarily portray this assertion as historical reality. The speaker implies that despite the existence of other recorded stories, the commonly held notion that kung fu originated only in China endures because it has been frequently discussed in public conversation.

Derrida's critique of phonocentrism provides a useful theoretical framework for analysing this occurrence. Derrida refers to the long-standing philosophical inclination to value voice over writing as "phonocentrism." In this hierarchy, writing is seen as secondary, derivative, or purely representational, while speaking is linked to immediacy, presence, and authenticity. According to Derrida, a large portion of Western metaphysics is structured by this preference for speech, which shapes presumptions about authority, truth, and meaning. When seen in this light, the section demonstrates how spoken or widely repeated reports, rather than meticulous interaction with written archives, are frequently used to establish historical narratives. The prevailing narrative, which holds that martial arts like kung fu originated in China, gains credibility via frequent cultural articulation as well as empirical validation. Stated differently, the narrative's authority arises from its ongoing replication in speech.

As a result, it is possible to interpret this portion of *The Harappa Files* as participating in a nuanced kind of deconstructive criticism. Banerjee reveals the processes by which some histories become dominant while others remain peripheral by contrasting widely disseminated spoken narratives with marginalised written records. By doing thus, the book aligns with Derrida's more general contention that the creation and preservation of cultural truths are significantly influenced by the seeming authority of speech and the relative marginalisation of writing.

Banerjee's fourth novel, *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* (2016), set in Delhi, depicts various characters in difficult situations where they find themselves in confusion and dilemmas. The novel is a portrayal of the fictitious yet very real-looking Water Wars of Delhi. Neighbourhoods at war with one another. Defence Colony faces Jangpura, Gautam Nagar faces Gulmohar Park, while Greater Kailash faces Kalkaji. It is also the genesis story of a figure who has previously appeared in Banerjee's writing, the Psychic Plumber, who travels to the centre of the earth in this novel to find the fabled river Saraswati. The book discusses issues including corporate greed, a society preoccupied with progress, and thuggish politics. The book describes an ominous war for water in the city of Delhi, which is suffering from a drought. The privatisation of Bharat Copper Limited, is the book's first major plot point. It was published in India

in 2015. Plumber Girish, who relocates to Delhi in search of employment, is one of the workers affected by the process. Girish is forced to leave his village, Tambapur, due to a shortage of work. Tambapur, once prosperous, is now in decline as a result of out-of-control corporate greed. One of the many migrants who have drifted to the city in quest of a living, Girish, the plumber, is compelled to leave the crumbling township and journey to Delhi. His hometown is destroyed by rapacious miners who are in search of the copper that was Tambapur's main reserve. The ancient Sanskrit Vedas often mentioned the Saraswati River, which does not exist now, and Girish is given the mission of finding it by drilling down to a depth of sufficient depth. He is employed there by a supposedly charitable businessman. Girish is a character that Banerjee finds very close to his personality. In an interview with Anushree Majumdar, he said:

Girish, the water archaeologist, the water shaman, is my spiritual sherpa. Through him, I'm plumbing my spiritual depths. He just appears when you're least expecting him. Girish is highly empathetic; he's critical but not judgmental. And I want to be like that, I want to be aware of the several factors that compel people to act the way they do.

Girish meets many people who have been exiled underground for the crime of wasting water on his journey, including Jagat Ram, Tanker Rajen, B. K. Gambhir, Awasthy, and Philippa Carrey. Banerjee portrays number of people who have phonocentric views. The following panel depicts one Jagat Ram, a Jal Board employee. Working with private tanker company owners is Jagat Ram's primary business; they do this to divert water from the main supply pipes so that "only 37 per cent" of the water poured into Delhi reaches the consumer (Banerjee, *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* 22). The public is kept in the dark about this self-created deficit and subsequently forced to pay high prices for water from privately owned tankers that swarm the city. He is forced to live underground as compensation for wasting water and has received instructions not to come over the surface of the earth until he finds the mythical river Saraswati: "I was repeatedly demoted until I found myself at the doors of Pataalpuri. And I was told not to return till I had found the mythical river

Saraswati” (23). However, he has no idea how or where he can find this river. Jagat tells the whole story of his demotion to Girish:

They demoted me for selling water illegally to private tankers. Three years later they demoted me again. This time for failing to adequately fix the leaking supply lines. A report came out, that of all the water pumped into Delhi, only 37 per cent reaches the consumer. PREPOSTEROUS. Consumers always lie. They told me I was responsible for the remaining 63 per cent. Then on 19 April, I remember the day because it was Chotu’s birthday, came the devastating report from the comptroller’s office. They estimated that there was a loss of one billion dollar during 2009-12 because of a failure to record and bill. (22-23)

The story that is told in the following image reveals that there is no document that has ordered Jagat Ram’s demotion to Pataalpuri. It shows that no importance is given to written documents in his case. There is no written evidence against Jagat Ram. There is even no written case against him. No written work or documents are prepared to prove him guilty, and he also does not ask for any written documents that have ordered him to go and dig Pataalpuri. They simply prove him guilty in words and send him underground to search the river, Saraswati. He simply believes what they tell him to do and starts living underground, pondering the location of Saraswati. He fails because of his phonocentric view. He does not consider the paper work because of his phonocentric ideology and ends up in Pataalpuri.



Fig. 4.11 Sarnath Banerjee. *All Quiet in Vikaspuri*, 23.

Like Jagat Ram, one such owner of a private tanker business, Tanker Rajan, is best at stealing water from the public supply and then diverting it to five-star hotels and luxurious homes that are totally powered by tankers; as he claims, “Dude, we drew water from nearby farmhouses – Mehrauli, Najafgarh, Faridabad. Okay, not entirely legal, but it wasn’t bank robbery either” (25). He gives the cops money so they will not interfere with his ability to benefit from his unlawful business. The narrative also emphasises that not only these people are water thieves. In Delhi, the wealthy are also unafraid and routinely steal water. One such individual is Mrs. Carrey Jones, the spouse of a foreign ambassador, who has her staff empty her swimming pool whenever her child accidentally pees in it. One day she dives into the swimming pool and does not come back to the surface:

She lingered at the bottom, to check whether the chipped floor tiles had been replaced, but where were the tiles? The floor looked rough. Instead of tiles, there were pebbles and dirt. It felt very dark. She swam up. When she reached the surface, it was entirely dark. Night had fallen. She could hardly see anything, but she realized that the pool had shrunk considerably. (39)

A colonel named Gambhir, who steals from a neighbour's water tank on the roof in the middle of the night, is another wealthy burglar. He tells Girish, "Like count Dracula I 'couldn't get no satisfaction' until I had sucked out at least ten litres of Mishra's water. I didn't need the water, but a black adder had taken up lodging in my brain" (29). Aswathy, a third figure, is also revealed to be a thief. Ironically, Aswathy is a senior Municipal Corporation employee who has built water fountains and artificial gardens, which the narrator describes as "the sort South Delhi's affluent class adores but barely visits" (34). The above-described people are all sent to Pataalpuri like Jagat Ram without any paper process. All these people are so well aware of their sins that they do not dare to ask for written documents that have ordered their demotion to the underground world. They also follow the phonocentric ideas of society. They have still not got this notion that this phonocentric ideology has given them nothing good. Instead, it is the main cause of their hard suffering in the underground world.

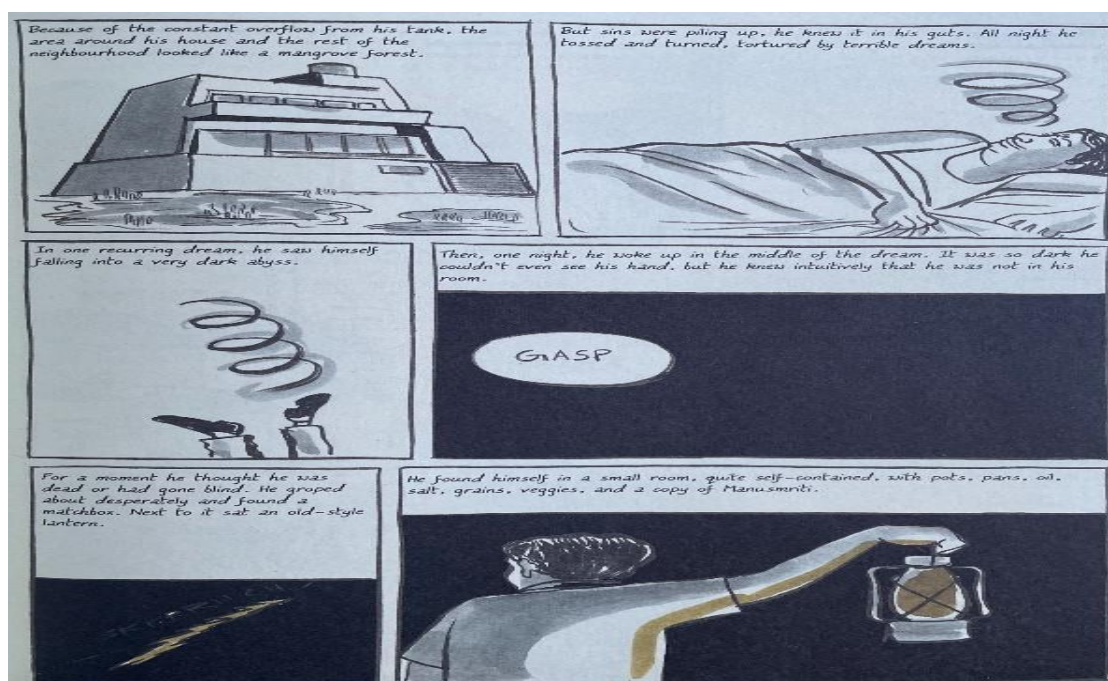


Fig. 4.12 Sarnath Banerjee. *All Quiet in Vikaspuri*, 35.

Persuasive speeches are often used by political leaders in democracies to win over the public and sway votes. These speeches have a strong rhetorical impact on

audiences by frequently appealing to feelings, a sense of shared identity, and pressing issues. However, this focus on spoken rhetoric may cause written records that offer more specific details about a politician's background and behavior to be overlooked. Written records provide a more reliable and verifiable narrative of a political figure's past. Examples of these papers are official reports, election affidavits, legal documents, and educational credentials. However, a lot of people have a tendency to value immediate speech above a critical analysis of these written documents.

Banerjee's narrative exemplifies this conflict between writing and voice. The graphic novel depicts bureaucracy, political culture, and metropolitan Indian life in a humorous manner. In one noteworthy scene, a politician from the fictional "Naya Sawera Party" (58) speaks at a public event with the intention of igniting listeners' passion and trust. The politician's rhetoric draws in the audience, as Banerjee illustrates in the story, demonstrating the persuasive power of spoken language in influencing public opinion. The scene illustrates the larger dynamics of political communication, in which speeches frequently serve as performances that create a specific perception of trustworthiness and leadership. A closer examination of this episode shows how Banerjee's writing subtly criticizes political culture's phonocentric inclination. Although the politician's speech seems persuasive, the narrative setting implies that this kind of language could obscure or divert attention from known facts about political actors. The focus on the speech's spectacle shows how readily listeners can be enthralled by captivating language without looking into the written documents that could offer a more truthful account of the politician's background. Thus, Banerjee's visual story highlights the discrepancy between recorded facts and spoken assurances.

This episode highlights the significance of challenging the hierarchical preference for speech over writing from a Derridean standpoint. Derrida's criticism of phonocentrism shows that writing has a trace and durability that speech does not. Written records are crucial instruments for accountability in democratic institutions because they enable introspection, analysis, and verification. Citizens are susceptible to rhetorical manipulation when they don't interact with written documents and only listen to speeches.

In this way, *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* serves as both a humorous story and a cultural analysis of communication politics. Banerjee illustrates the perils of giving spoken rhetoric precedence over written facts by depicting the seductive spectacle of a political speech. In the end, the incident bolsters Derrida's claim that writing is an essential tool for examining, preserving, and challenging reality rather than being subordinate to speech. As a result, the graphic novel highlights the significance of Derrida's criticism in the context of current political discourse by illustrating how people may accept political narratives without question if written material is neglected.

Doab Dil (2019) is Sarnath Banerjee's fifth graphic novel. However, this novel differs from his earlier works in that it offers a new perspective on the world and daily activities like strolling, gardening, sleeping, and going to work. The book is an experiment in a narrative style. The novel's title *Doab Dil* is meant to represent the centre of the concurrent dual streams of words and images, fiction and non-fiction, etc. This book makes an effort to combine philosophy and fiction and portray it through the juxtaposition of words and images. According to the author's own words in the book's introduction, "Doab Dil brings together drawings and text like two converging rivers. The fertile track of land lying between two confluent rivers is called a doab (Persian do ab, two rivers). It is a rich, draught-free populous tract where civilizations are born."

Through its eleven chapters, this book depicts many historical periods, philosophers, cultures, and lives. Each chapter selects a major issue and assembles various viewpoints, poetry, and philosophical perspectives based on that theme. Since there is no clear theme or plot that would tie them all together, the illustrations are very important in keeping the reader's attention. In the book, Banerjee also incorporates excerpts from works he has read, to which he gives his own unique touch and illuminates them visually. By challenging the tenets of diverse communities and cultural structures, there is a desire to discover one's existence and reason for existing. Particularly in parts like "While Others Sleep," which contains no words at all, the artwork dominates the text. Banerjee gathers a variety of actual people from all over the globe and provides glimpses into their lives. The graphic novel balances

fiction with nonfiction by highlighting their peculiarities and speculating on the causes of their oddities. So, there is Charles Baudelaire, pondering on Samuel Taylor Coleridge's restless nighttime wanderings, a Gurgaon CEO whacking golf balls into the night when he gets an anxiety attack, and an Arab scholar from the ninth century has his library seized.

With barely any textual explanation, the chapter titled "Work" guides us through vivid imagery while introducing us to characters such as the renowned chef Kenichi Noboru, who enjoys fish and chips in his supper, the bibliotherapist Kamran Ali Beg, who understands that reading is essential for writing, and crime serial fanatic Shokoufeh, who begins working at the Department of Criminal Reconstruction. Another moving chapter is titled "The Daily Decathlon" which again has no words and illustrates the obstacles people face on a daily basis at home, working places, bus stops, railway stations, and everywhere else. Numerous observations can be made in the minutiae, such as the span of a woman's step as she travels, the superhero's sturdiness as he guards his city while it sleeps, or the activity of an egg being flipped in a pan. Each page is vibrantly coloured, which engages the readers. The story of Sam, a nighttime Rome wanderer, notices that when he looks at the ruins, the ruins reflect back at him, is incredibly evocative. In one panel, Sam is seen passing the Colosseum, which has a statue in one of its niches. In the next panel, the statue is watching Sam pass by. Banerjee has also used these stories to depict phonocentric ideology that prevails in society.

The following image depicts "Al-Kindi," an Arab philosopher, "the man who introduced philosophy to the Arab world" (Ch. 7). Al-Kindi was born into an affluent and illustrious family in Kufa. While he was young, he moved to Baghdad, which at that time served as both the political and cultural epicentre of the Bani Abbas empire. He studied a variety of subjects with great assiduity and became proficient in astronomy, geometry, natural sciences, astrology, medicine, mathematics, philosophy, and politics. The graphic demonstration given below shows that some of his enemies confiscate his library. His enemies belong to that sect of society that follows phonocentric ideology. This phonocentric ideology does not allow them to accept changes in society. They confiscate Al-Kindi's library to prevent him from making

changes with the help of his philosophical inquiries. People possessing phonocentric views prefer speech over writing. However, Al-Kindi was going to establish some new facts with his writing, which was not acceptable to these people: “Writing will be ‘phonetic,’ it will be the outside, the exterior representation of language and of this ‘thought-sound’” (*Of Grammatology* 31). They want the old societal norms to continue ruling their society. Al-Kindi’s philosophy represents writing, whereas the societal norms represent speech. They want people to believe the old ruling norms, which are nothing but old sayings. Al-Kindi, with his philosophy, was going to write new facts that could affect the old sayings and the ruling sect of society consequently.

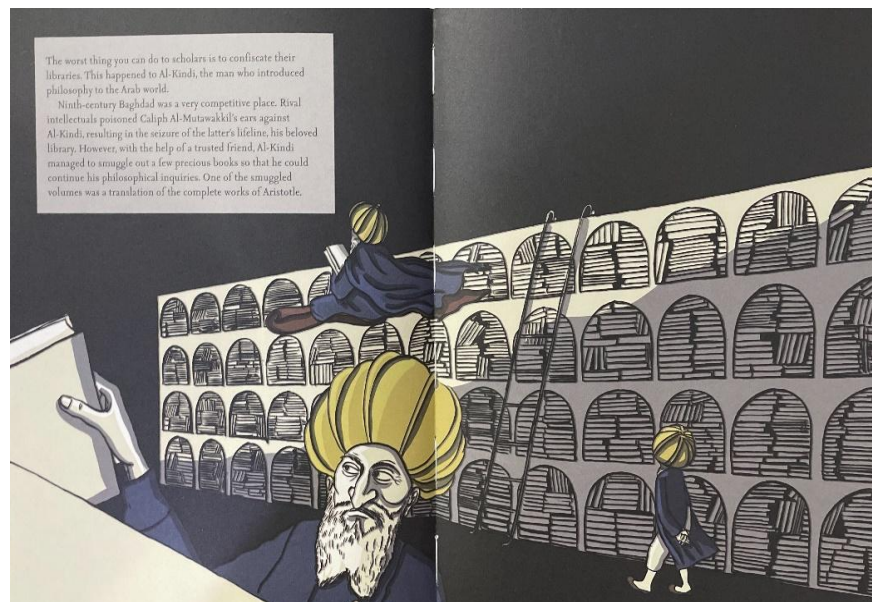


Fig. 4.13 Sarnath Banerjee. *Doab Dil*, Ch. 7, Library.

Next panel also helps in getting the phonocentric view on the surface. The image presents a few Indian soldiers who are coming back from the First World War. It presents the phonocentric view of the soldiers of that time and the people around them. In addition to killing off a generation of gifted poets, artists, cricket players, and others whose brilliance seeped into the trenches, the conflict also engaged warriors from distant nations that had little to do with Europe’s intense historic animosities. Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, and South Africans contributions and sacrifices have long been honoured in literature. But people don’t hear much about the Indian soldiers that participated in the fight: “While the First World War is commemorated with great ceremony in Britain and Australia, the story of the Indian

soldiers who fought in it remains largely untold” (Banerjee, *Doab Dil* Ch. 7). These soldiers, who risked their lives every day for little more than pride, were unquestionably heroes. They fought in foreign nations in harsh and chilly weather conditions they were neither accustomed to nor prepared for. But they were doomed to remain mostly obscure after the war since they were both overlooked by Britain, for whom they served, and by the nation they originally came from. The fact that they were illiterate also contributed to the situation. These soldiers have the view that recording their war experience in written documents is nothing but a vain task. They give preference to folk songs when it comes to sharing their war experiences: “Derrida shows that these assumptions, though consistent and mutually reinforcing at a certain level, lie open to disruption as soon as one substitutes ‘writing’ for ‘speech’ in the conceptual order that governs them” (Norris, *Deconstruction* 29). They have rejected writing in their lives and bear its consequences when their war contributions never get fully appreciated. They have this thinking that writing is not more successful than speech when it comes to recording most of the prominent happenings in their lives: “The soldiers, mostly illiterate, never left behind contemplative war memories, nor were their testimonies recorded for prosperity” (Ch. 7).

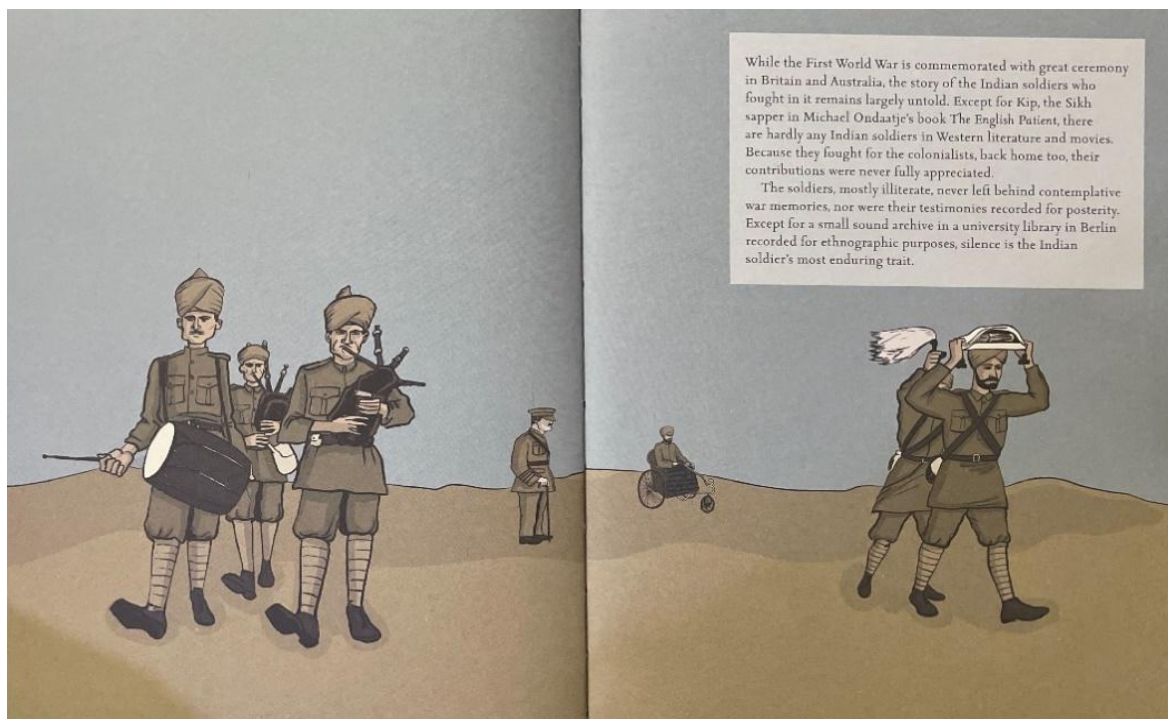


Fig. 4.14 Sarnath Banerjee. *Doab Dil*, Ch. 7, Library.

Different phonocentric views can also be found in the graphic novels of Amruta Patil. Her graphic novels are also filled with such views. Patil is a writer and painter with a free-flowing visual aesthetic. The common topics in Patil's writing and paintings include sexuality, identity, myth, eco-friendly lifestyle choices, and the continuous chain of tales handed down from storyteller to storyteller across the millennia. Since she was a young child, Patil has been influenced by comic books and the visual arts. She has a strong interest in graphic literature and has tried to vividly explore a number of subjects that are pertinent to modern culture. Amruta Patil frequently delves into the collective past of civilisation, incorporating tales from antiquity as well as traditions that serve to provide the readers with constant reminders of the country's rural and agricultural beginnings. Patil's experiments with colouring and comic panels are also influenced by a variety of aesthetic traditions, primarily Western fine art with a small amount of Indian fine art and folk art as well. Patil, in the acknowledgements of her book *Adi Parva*, states, "Dead men taught me to paint (in as much as my limitations allowed me to learn) – Odilon Redon, Paul Gauguin, Paul Cezanne, those anonymous hands at work in Rajasthani miniature painting workshops. Dead women flow in my veins as creative mothers: Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Frida Kahlo, Amrita Sher-Gil" (270).

It is absolutely necessary to investigate the diverse ways in which graphic novels, a specialised form in India, expose issues related to the environment, mythology, and the experience of women, as well as the distinctive ways in which they are depicted in literary and artistic contexts. She shows her audience how the issues raised in Indian mythical narratives are utterly contemporary by gradually illuminating their open frameworks. Thus, her works fascinatingly depict the current tendencies in the humanities. Particularly in Amruta Patil's novels, the locale of metropolitan India, as shown in the graphic text, are frequently realms of spectral figures, painful histories, and ambiguous present. These are places of conflicting temporalities because the past, or ancestry, has many different effects on the present. They are places where trauma, contradictory desires, and violent undercurrents occur. Some of the works of art that had an impact on her include Amar Chitra Katha, Indian myths, Indian temple art, and Mughal miniatures. As one of India's first female

graphic novels, Patil's texts, including *Kari*, *Adi Parva*, *Sauptik: Blood and Flowers*, and *Aranyaka: Book of the Forest*, among others, encouraged many other female writers to learn more about this visual culture.

Amruta Patil presents Kari's society's phonocentric approach towards sexuality. The first scene of *Kari*, as shown in the following panel, is a scene of togetherness. It shows Kari and her beloved Ruth with their hearts joined by common arteries, but Ruth has broken a link, causing the artery to burst with blood. This medical illustration has supporting text that reads, "There are two of us, not one. Despite a slipshod surgical procedure, we are joined still" (3). The biological picture adds to the phonocentric effect because Ruth breaks their relationship on the basis of societal norms. She wants to follow the social norms regarding sexuality. Old societal norms do not accept homosexuality. She represents society that looks at her sexuality with a phonocentric approach. All people on this earth have the same access to human rights, regardless of their caste, race, religion, sex, or place of birth. All people have a responsibility to uphold each other's rights. Everything nature provides for us is organic, which also means internal. Thus, a person's personality should be recognised by society rather than despised. Individual identity is destroyed when a gay partner is not accepted by any society norm or belief. Hence, homosexual people experience discrimination and abuse throughout their lives. They become scapegoats for old sayings. Due to this, Kari occasionally experiences panic episodes and feelings of isolation that are not caused by a worry about vanishing into the strange places of the city but rather a worry about being invisible, even within her little community. Her alienation has increased to such an extent that she regularly peeps into others' houses through their windows and wonders whether these people will allow her to enter their houses and spend some time with them:

Others' lives are beautifully peopled. Storyboard lighting up dark windows.
Children at cluttered study tables. Husbands in lungis. Phone conversations,
food on the table. Wandering pets. If I knocked on the door, would they take
me in? (89)

People believe what they hear in society. What is going on in their society.
They do not hesitate to ignore the laws made for homosexuals. A society where even

a small change raises a thousand voices, where speaking against the status quo is not taken lightly, doing what one loves is an act of courage. The society only accepts what it listens to – all through the generations, the voices, the stories, the narratives, the discourses. A lie, even if in complete disagreement with the holiest of the texts – just because it has been told and heard a thousand times – takes the place of the almighty truth. The literature, the texts, the epics, the inscriptions hardly matter. In a society where Ruth and Kari dwell, they offer, at most, an ornamental value. What matters is the speech, and how loudly it has been spoken. Hence, the truth in such setups is highly contested, sometimes, and most of the time, even eclipsed by lies.

What matters is what is being spoken, and how it is being spoken, and how long it has reigned in the day-to-day conversations: “In speech meaning is apparently immanent, above all when, using the inner voice of consciousness, we speak to ourselves. In the moment of speech we appear to grasp its meaning and are thereby able to capture presence, as if the meaning was decided once and for all. Thus, unlike writing, which is hopelessly mediated, speech is linked to the apparent moment and place of presence and for this reason has had priority over writing” (Sarup 36). The writings are seldom accepted. However, Kari is unsure whether or not to break up with her lover, Ruth. The image shows Kari bewildered at Ruth’s act of cutting the artery that used to connect their hearts and lives. She has no idea why Ruth has decided to break their relationship, which is going so smoothly, and both are happily enjoying it. The panel shows that Kari is holding Ruth’s hand and does not want to let her go. Though she wants to save their relationship, she is unable to do anything. She does not dare to stop Ruth from taking the painful decision. On being influenced by society, Ruth breaks her bond and flies to another city. Ruth, who is quite fragile at heart and rarely stands for her statements, gives up the new-found relationship for the sake of social sanction. Doing otherwise, she would have set an example of social dissent, which people like her were less courageous to avoid doing. She could have thrown a pebble in the settled pond of society, and it could have rippled – maybe near or far. She wants to go with the flow of society. She does not want to come out of the box that society has put her into; she does not want even a slight change in the formula that society has thrown at her.

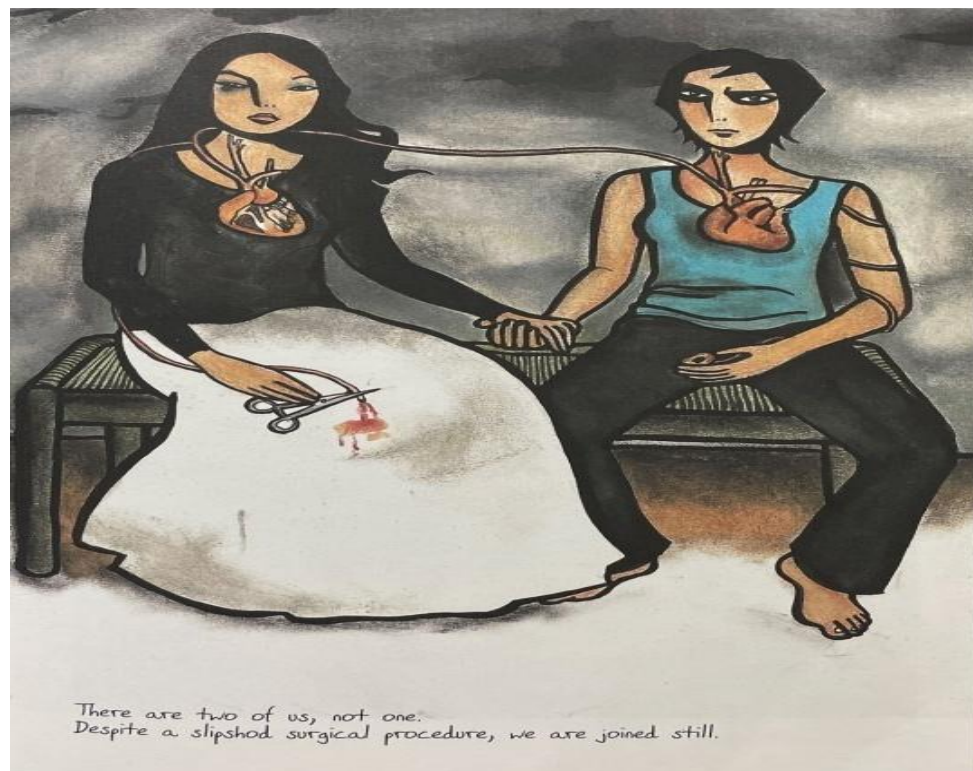


Fig. 4.15 Amruta Patil. *Kari*, 3.

The protagonist Kari, a bisexual woman living in an urban setting, experiences emotional and social estrangement, which Patil depicts in this graphic narrative. Throughout the story, Kari's friends and roommates often react to her sexuality with discomfort, ridicule, or invasive inquiry. They frequently perceive her as an abnormality and ask strange or rude questions about her sexual orientation rather than interacting with her identity in a respectful way. Their questions minimize Kari's experiences and portray her sexuality as weird, abnormal, or unfathomable. These responses are a reflection of the characters' larger cultural context, where heteronormative presumptions predominate in day-to-day social interactions. As a result, Kari experiences both personal marginalisation and symbolic construction as an outsider, inside the social institutions that envelop her.

The stigma associated with Kari's sexual orientation seems to be a major barrier to her social life. Her mother is depicted as the only person in her local vicinity who genuinely wants to talk to her, indicating a small emotional support network: "The only person who always wants to talk to me is Mamma" (Patil, *Kari* 21). In

contrast, Kari's identification as a lesbian appears to be the main reason why the larger community distances itself from her, which is a reflection of social exclusion and heteronormative norms. Feelings of loneliness and the belief that non-heterosexual identities defy social standards might be strengthened by such exclusion. The mother-daughter bond becomes particularly important in this situation, serving as an uncommon place for empathy and communication in an otherwise hostile social environment. The hierarchical structure of speech and writing, which Derrida refers to as phonocentrism, affects how societies create and validate knowledge. Even when they lack a critical or empirical foundation, spoken tales, cultural proverbs, and inherited discourses sometimes acquire credibility through simple repetition.

The sentiments of the protagonist's social circle in *Kari* serve as an example of how these phonocentric institutions operate. Inherited social narratives about homosexuality – concepts that spread through common speech, cultural proverbs, and long-standing moral presumptions – seem to have formed the prejudices aimed at Kari. These oral traditions portray homosexuality as abnormal or socially destructive, and since they are frequently spoken in social settings, they are able to operate as seemingly indisputable realities. Queer people often feel forced to hide their identities because society perceives them as abnormal or morally dubious, as Kari herself notes in the story. Thus, the characters' responses to Kari show how spoken discourses that are ingrained in culture influence how people view sexuality and uphold heteronormative standards. However, established legal and institutional structures that oppose such prejudices conflict with this reliance on socially inherited speech. Diverse sexual identities are increasingly acknowledged and protected by written laws, legal discourses, and human rights frameworks. However, oral traditions and discriminatory proverbs that spread throughout communities frequently have a greater influence on the formation of common social attitudes than written literature. Derrida's critique of phonocentrism offers a helpful lens through which to see this tension: the transformational potential of written discourse is often subordinated to the authority ascribed to inherited speech.

Patil's vivid tale thus reveals the permanence of socially rooted prejudices that are upheld through common language and interaction through Kari's experiences.

Kari's exclusion is not just the product of personal prejudice; rather, it is maintained by a larger discursive system where progressive textual frameworks are subordinated to spoken traditions and cultural presumptions. In this way, *Kari* underscores the necessity of critically examining the discursive frameworks that influence societal perceptions of sexuality and subtly exposes the instability of such systems.

Such phonocentric moments are prevalent throughout her second graphic novel, *Adi Parva* (2012). Amruta Patil's second graphic novel, *Adi Parva*, which is available from HarperCollins India, aims to reclaim marginal narratives from the dominant stories of the Mahabharata. Patil experiments with building story-worlds in retellings of the Mahabharata, using complex intertextual, palimpsestic graphics that diverge from the conventional iconography of gods seen in popular literature. The novel encompasses two narrative layers rather than a linear narrative. The meta-narrative framing the Mahabharata narrative as a woman, ultimately revealed to be the goddess Ganga, recounts the Mahabharata to people from countryside, and there is the narrative reciting of passages from the Mahabharata in non-chronological or teleological sequence. The novel progresses philosophically instead of physically, bouncing between these two levels. Lines and colours are used to visually separate the levels, highlighting the differences in tonality and spatio-temporal aspects of the story and its environment. The books opening chapters are used to build both diegetic levels and spaces — one is an outward, smeared, ordinary, charcoal-grey palimpsest, and the other is alive, interior, and filled with deep colours. At least on two clearly distinguishable levels — retelling and adaptation — the novel is a vocal and photographic interpretation of the Mahabharata. In her 2006 book, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon claims that “the adapter's job is one of subtraction or contraction” (19). *Adi Parva* is clearly a graphic novel version of the Mahabharata, but Patil prefers to refer to herself as a reteller because she says she is only mediating a story transmitted over ages through oral and written narration. In support of Patil's role as a reteller, Deepa Dharmadhikari asserts, “Amruta Patil sets a ruthlessly high bar for her retelling of the Mahabharat in sequential art. The epic itself, of course, has proven 24-carat true over its centuries of re-forging and burnishing, but a reteller retains enough power to warp the wondrous into the banal.”

In this narrative, Pritha falls prey to a society that prefers phonocentric thinking. Being a part of the phonocentric society, Pritha also believes in remembering things and not writing them down. Because, like the society she lives in, she also thinks that writing can poison her skill of memorizing. Kunti, who is raised as Pritha, is the biological daughter of Shurasen, the ruler. She is Lord Krishna's paternal aunt, as she is Vasudev's sister. Her father has given her to the king of Kuntibhoja because he is a childless man. Hence, she gets the name Kunti: "The bride they chose for Pandu was born into the Yadav Shurasen's clan, but raised by his friend, King Kuntibhoj. She was born as Pritha the earth-born" (Patil, *Adi Parva* 221). Once, Maharshi Durvaas spends a month living in Kuntibhoj's kingdom. Princess Kunti assists him throughout this time like a daughter does for her father. Maharshi Durvaas observes her respect, dedication, faith, devotion, and obedience and feels grateful for her assistance and gives her a mantra that will enable her to conjure any deity and have a child by him: "Pritha was legendary for her precocious tact and sagesse. So when the volatile Durvaas rishi arrived, she was chosen to look after him. So diligently did Pritha serve him that Durvaas gave her a boon. A decidedly odd boon, it must be said, for a girl so young" (222).

Kunti, who is young and interested about the mantra's effectiveness, tries it out: "Absently, she invoked Durvaas's mantra to see if she remembered it" (223). She keeps Surya in her mind while enchanting the mantra and invokes him. He gives her a child, Karn, who has golden armour on his chest and earrings. However, Kunti is a teenager at the time, so she leaves the newborn because of her concern about what society will think of her. Her phonocentric thinking ruins Karn's whole life. Karn is the eldest son of Kunti, and still he is not raised by her because he was born with Lord Surya's blessings before Kunti's marriage. He is forced to lead a life of obscurity despite being the eldest and most deserving. The only mistake is the timing of his birth, which is beyond his control. All these substances occurred because of his mother's belief in phonocentrism. Kunti lives in a society that thinks that "writing, like all artificial languages one would wish to fix and remove from the living history of the natural language, participates in the monstrosity. It is a deviation from nature" (*Of Grammatology* 38).

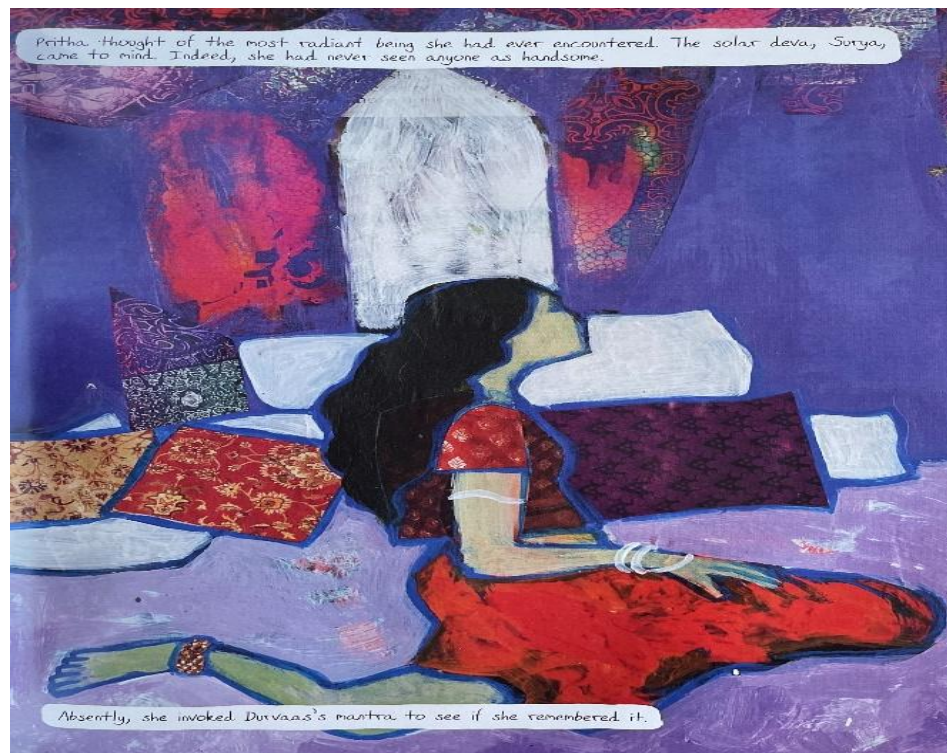


Fig. 4.16 Amruta Patil. *Adi Parva*, 223.

Patil is a graphic novelist and painter who has, in many ways, redefined epics through her technique. She makes an effort to learn the intricacies of the human heart and more in her third graphic narrative, *Sauptik* (2016), which is the second and last book on the Mahabharata. The mythical story travels amid text and pictures as naturally as it goes amid the diverse realms of today and then. In her open declaration of her devotion to mythology, Patil says, “I like myth because it is very clever, it’s very sly, it tells you stories that look very simplistic but they are not. They are like Apple products, basically. They don’t have lots of buttons and toggles and baubles on them. They’re sleek and have a way of passing along similar lessons to history could but in a way that is a lot smarter and a lot less bound by region and time, lot less accusatory” (Narayan).

The narrative has a sutradhaar, just like her previous novel, *Adi Parva*. The sutradhaar in *Adi Parva* was the river Ganga. However, in this book, it is the wounded immortal Ashwatthama, son of Dronacharya, who is often seen as a negative

character. While talking about Ashwatthama in an interview with Navhind Times, Amruta says, “He is seen as this unidimensional villain, this guy who killed sleeping children. But such readings negate context. By the time Ashwatthama did what he did on Kurukshetra, which character around him did not have blood on their hands? I was interested in seeing the trajectory that led to making a demon of an ordinary being” (Desk). Ashwatthama is portrayed as an outlier who feels some pressure to fulfil his job as the new narrator after being stripped of all the imperial opulence. The figure of Ashwatthama resembles that of a maniac, naked and untidy, searching for the shadows to preserve his obscurity as an outlier and a resident of the edges. His boorish demeanour and lack of skill to talk instantly disgusted his audience. They made fun of him and threw stones at him as he tried to speak, forcing him to flee and hide in the bushes. The accusation Patil makes is unmistakably directed at the dishonest group, whose obsession with appearance makes it impossible to distinguish a wise man from a lunatic. The only people who listen to Ashwatthama, as a result, are the Langda and the Bhainga, undertakers who spend day and night disposing dead bodies from the smashan ghat. As readers of the narrative start to comprehend the irony of the circumstances, the story becomes more tragic. As death awaits everything, all tales of bravery, daring, and greatness ultimately amount to nothing and fade into insignificance.

In addition to being the greatest epic, the Mahabharata is also a story that derives its magnanimity from the tragedies and sufferings of the greatest heroes in Indian mythology. The placement of Patil’s narrative in the crematory is only but fitting — a vast tale of human triumphs interwoven with heavenly patterns sufficiently interrupted by scenes of death and loss — as a story that anticipates the Kurukshetra, the great fight that ends in an insane massacre. One of the seven Chiranjeevis and the son of Guru Dronacharya, Ashwatthama, had been granted immortality by Lord Shiva. The blessing, of which he was so proud, quickly became a curse when Lord Krishna cursed him at the combat of Kurukshetra, saying that he would be doomed to a life of grief and misery and would continually yearn to die. In addition to being granted immortality at birth, Ashwatthama also received a gemstone placed in the exact centre of his forehead. The wearer of this gemstone was protected

from weapons, hunger, and disease. Ashwatthama's curse was cast upon him when Dronacharya, his father, was killed by Drishtadyumna, the leader of the Pandava army, at the battle of Kurukshetra.

In Dronacharya's gurukul, the Kauravas and the Pandavas had joined, and Ashwatthama made friends with Duryodhan, the oldest of the Kauravas. Ashwatthama supported the Kauravas during the Kurukshetra battle, which lasted eighteen days and resulted in a sizable number of fatalities. After Bhishma was killed in combat, Dronacharya was appointed the top military leader. Knowing that an armed Drona could not be defeated, Krishna devised a plot to have him killed by telling him that his son Ashwatthama had passed away. The strategy was successful, and Drishtadyumna beheaded the distraught sage. As a result, Ashwatthama became enraged at the dishonest manner in which his father was executed. He decided to kill all the Pandavas in retaliation for his father's murder. Invading the Pandava camp at night, Ashwatthama killed Drishtadyumna and five of Draupadi's children while they were sleeping. The killings grieved the Pandavas and Krishna when they returned to camp, and they hurried to exact revenge on Ashwatthama for their deaths. When the two forces met, Ashwatthama summoned the Brahmastra, a powerful weapon of destruction, to carry out his vow to annihilate the Pandavas. Krishna then instructed Arjuna to defend them by using the pashupatastra, another deadly weapon. They were ordered to return their weapons by the gods since they had the power to end the universe. Arjun was able to recall his weapon, but Ashwatthama was unable to do so. When Krishna advised him to point the weapon to an area that was deserted, Ashwatthama chose to aim it at Uttara's womb in an effort to break the Pandava lineage. The grandson of Arjun, Abhimanyu's son, was growing inside Uttara. Ashwatthama was forced to give up his source of power—the gemstone in the centre of his forehead—after Krishna intervened and revived the stillborn child. He was doomed to live until the end of time with the gaping wound on his forehead because of his immortality.

Now to apply the concept of phonocentrism to the graphic narrative *Sauptik*, it can be analysed how the novel reinforces phonocentrism, that is, the notion that

speech is more valuable than writing. The image given below shows people gathering around Ashwatthama, the Sutradhaar of the narrative, to continue the tales that Ganga has started in the previous part of the duology. The image demonstrates a society that uses a phonocentric approach to life. These are the people who believe in learning through the old ways, that is, tales. These people believe in “the system of ‘hearing (understanding) – oneself-speak’ through the phonic substance – which *presents itself* as the nonexterior, nonmundane, therefore nonempirical or noncontingent signifier – has necessarily dominated the history of the world during an entire epoch and has even produced the idea of the world, the idea of world origin, that arises from the difference between the worldly and the non-worldly, the outside and the inside, ideality and nonideality, universal and nonuniversal, transcendental and empirical,’ etc.” (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 7-8). Culture and storytelling go back a long way. Storytelling is a long-standing tradition in many cultures. In addition to imparting knowledge, the stories and acts serve to entertain. Storytelling is an ancient and pervasive art form. Throughout the beginning of time, people have been telling stories. Storytelling existed before writing did. Every culture, at every age, experiences it. It exists to promote cultural norms and values while both amusing and educating its audience. Using one’s voice and gestures is an integral part of verbal storytelling.

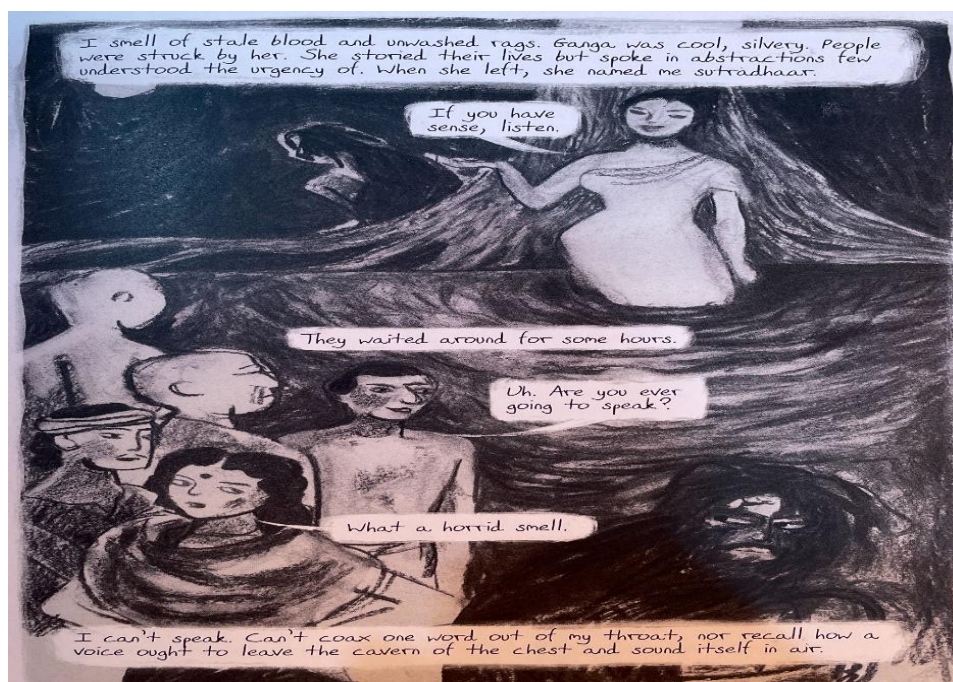


Fig. 4.17 Amruta Patil. *Sauptik*, 9.

The oral heritage can be voiced in many ways, like using epic poetry, chants, rhymes, songs, and a lot more. It is highly unlikely that many of these stories are authentic or even based on reality. Building bridges between cultures is more important than seeking truth. People believe in old stories: “Behind this bias is a particular view of human beings; it is assumed that they can spontaneously express themselves and that they can use language as if it were a transparent medium for an inner truth about their being” (Sarup 36-37). They do not question the tales that are transmitted from one generation to the next. They believe in these tales as they are being told by God Himself. The tales that are used to educate them have made them blind to the reality of life. These people trust these stories and the information they get from them. The image demonstrates the power of speech as a means of expression. It depicts a diverse set of people who use speech in day-to-day life for various purposes, such as learning, entertaining, and communicating.

The graphic novel *Aranyaka* (2019) is an experimental work that resulted due to the alliance between Patil and the Indian mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik. It is about the vast forests that are both within and without us. It is also about food, nourishment,

and love. When talking about her book in the acknowledgements of the novel, Patil states:

I think we have accomplished our goal of creating a complex story that is ‘disarmingly simple’. There is a lot going on if you care to see. Beneath its surface are many narrative undercurrents – the ecological one, the feminist one, the one where food is really a stand-in for many other sorts of human appetites . . . Food fundamentalism, body and sex-positivity are all addressed with a light touch. There is the diversity in body type and skin colour I spoke of earlier; there is, too, a glad-hearted celebration of hairy chests of men; unibrow, frizzy hair and unwaxed armpits in women.

It examines the fears and hunger that lie at the core of all human interactions by weaving together the tales of three vibrant rishikas, Katyayani the Large, Maitreyi the Fig, and Gargi the Weaver. The sage Yajnavalkya and his two wives, Maitreyi and Katyayani, are the main characters of the book. Today, people generally recall Rishi Yajnavalkya for his philosophical argument with Gargi at the court of King Janaka. Instead of focusing on Yajnavalkya, the authors narrate the tales of three powerful women: Katyayani, Maitreyi, and Gargi. However, the story is told through Katyayani, who is frequently disregarded due to her materialism. Patil justifies the decision to use Katyayani as the narrative’s narrator. She says, “I suggested creating a parable – a love story maybe or a story about rivalries or food – something disarmingly simple that you could finish reading without even realising you had just emerged from an immersive swim in Vedic ideas.” In spite of a solid foundation, the authors examine fundamental human characteristics through these characters, including appetite, thirst for learning, distress, and a feeling of debt. This graphic novel incorporates complex metaphors into a seamless narrative. It starts with a history of how all life emerged from the forest and explains how domestication and civilisation have distanced human beings from the natural world. The graphic narrative addresses not only the forest outside of us but also the wilderness inside of us. The narrative follows a group of nomadic hunters and gatherers who eventually become a little more advanced and dwell in towns where animal domestication is practiced and advancements like the use of clay to create purnakumbhas occur.

The novel is packed with allegories and metaphors that apply to the characters' daily actions and choices and how they interact with the natural world. Additionally, the novel masterfully blends mythology and history to the point where it can occasionally be challenging to distinguish between the two. It accomplishes this in both the narrative and the visuals. With Patil residing in France and Pattanaik in India, the two artists have worked together virtually. The charming pictures beautifully convey the ideas. The extensive amount of study put into the book demonstrates Pattanaik's mastery of the mythology genre. With a colourful range of colours and tones, Patil's artwork is just stunning and closely follows the plot. The arresting illustrations on some pages guide readers through the multi-layered narrative without needing words. Patil has presented a phonocentric view in this graphic narrative with the help of the character of Y. Y is introduced in the narrative after Katyayani gets exiled in the forest: "I came across a man in a termite mound one day – immutable, oblivious to insect bites, hunger pangs, scorching sun – but his eyes were not as bright as fireflies yet" (34). Before being thrown into the forest, Y used to live with a herd of teachers. Teachers who possess phonocentric views. Y is a curious person who is in a continuous search for knowledge and wisdom. He has a habit of questioning the answers making it uncomfortable for others at times. His intellectual curiosity has no bounds; his purpose is to gain enlightenment. He is a man who believes nothing until he investigates the reasons behind its existence. However, there is a problem. His human tutors do not agree with his style of learning. These tutors teach the minimal and are not fond of questions; forget counter questions. Hence, Y's teachers are unable to impart the standard of knowledge that Y expects them to. Y's rebellious attitude of questioning the answers, thereby questioning the knowledge base of the teachers, brings him into conflict with his teachers, society, and the system. The status quo, to be precise.

His habit of questioning everything in class, especially when he's taught something new, raises eyebrows. His quest to seek satisfactory answers to his questions finds no place in a conservative classroom where teachers don't dare to cross the line. Thus, in one voice, everyone decides to send Y to the forest, where he could introspect as much as he likes. Y's situation speaks of a society where speech,

not text, is paramount. Here, words and sentences that have travelled ages carried more meaning and weight when compared with the text. This is a phonocentric life where people have become accustomed to speech. They think writing “is a threat to the deeply traditional view that associates truth with self-presence and the ‘natural’ language wherein it finds expression” (Norris, *Deconstruction* 28). They simply believe what they have been told in their lullabies, fairy tales, and folk songs — all spoken and listened to, with no space for scriptures, epics, novels, or any other written knowledge. One day they get tired of his queries and ask him to leave the herd: “You are worse than the crows who squawk over offerings left for the forefathers” (*Aranyaka* 39). His herd asks him to return what he has learned and leave. As a consequence, unlike Y, everyone in this society has lost the capacity to question. They have lost the ability to reason, to find logic in things. They just pushed the writings to a corner and forgotten them. That is exactly why they are not able to understand Y and his quest to cross some lines, to go where no one has ever gone, or where others are scared to go.



Fig. 4.18 Amruta Patil. *Aranyaka*, 39.

From the analysis provided above, it can be inferred that Derrida's concept of phonocentrism—a wholly pragmatic approach—is used to explain Banerjee and Patil's graphic novels. Derrida's attempt to identify and outline the development of western logocentrism is not made in a random manner. The real cause, nevertheless, has little to do with the critical analysis of philosophers' texts. Neither; it comes from a purely scholarly interest in philosophical works. Instead, it comes from a need for freedom. The liberation from all restrictive structures, especially the enormously restrictive logocentric conceptualization. Western philosophy and religion have consistently discounted or rejected the world of change, becoming, and time, in favour of another world of stability and being, as evidenced by people adhering to old traditions and logocentric thinking. Hence, rather than being a true comprehension of the world, logocentrism is more of a wish to end pain and the negativity of life. This chapter has discussed various phonocentric views of different people in all the novels of Banerjee and Patil. Reading literary works with the deconstruction point of view means reading a book with several interpretations in mind, where the version contains a wide range of meaning possibilities. Deconstructive reading techniques aim to topple the status quo, similar to logocentrism, by showing how previously held perceptions and even widespread trust can be undermined by fresh information that may contrast with and refute previously held perceptions. The vivid narratives by Banerjee and Patil depict the complex social and political life of developing nations and offer a wealth of fascinating information. In order to comprehend the meaning of their graphic novels, this chapter analyses them utilising phonocentrism in the deconstructive approach.

This chapter explores how Jacques Derrida's idea of phonocentrism is applied in Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil's graphic narratives, emphasising the negative effects of following this ideology. The preference for voice over writing is contested by Derrida's critique of phonocentrism, which contends that this hierarchy diminishes the depth and complexity of written language. This study illustrates how Banerjee and Patil's narratives challenge the conventional speech-writing dichotomy by providing alternate storytelling techniques that acknowledge the diversity of meaning present in written and visual texts through a close reading of their works. By dismantling

phonocentrism, Jacques Derrida reveals the prejudices present in Western philosophy that prioritise speaking over writing as the main form of communication. The construction and comprehension of narratives are significantly impacted by this hierarchical division. The interaction between speaking and writing becomes a crucial location for examining these ideological conflicts in the world of graphic novels, where text and image come together. Two well-known Indian graphic novelists, Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil, challenge and undermine the phonocentric paradigm through the medium of graphic novels. Their writings highlight the shortcomings of phonocentric ideology and provide substitute storytelling techniques that take into account the intricacies of representation and language.

Banerjee's graphic novels, such as *Corridor*, *The Harappa Files* and *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* demonstrate some instances in which people follow verbal instructions without obtaining official legal documentation, potentially exposing them to a range of negative legal and personal outcomes. Because of things like poor articulation, language limitations, or divergent viewpoints, oral messages can be misunderstood. Without written explanation, people could follow directions that were not meant or understood as perceived, which could have unexpected repercussions. *Doab Dil*, challenges this ideology by showcasing the consequences that the people of India face because of the phonocentric ideology. Although Indian soldiers played essential role in both World Wars, their individual stories and experiences have mostly been left out of popular historical narratives. Since many soldiers did not write down their experiences, this erasure is partially caused by the dearth of written records. A skewed perception of their sacrifices and accomplishments has resulted from the lack of these first-hand recollections. *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* show the people who cling to phonocentrism face significant repercussions. Those who prioritise oral traditions above written texts run the risk of alienating themselves from a wealth of knowledge, which can have a number of negative effects. *Corridor*, *The Harappa Files* and *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* demonstrates some instances in which people follow verbal instructions without obtaining official legal documentation, potentially exposing them to a range of negative legal and personal outcomes. Because of things like poor articulation, language limitations, or divergent viewpoints, oral messages can be

misunderstood. Without written explanation, people could follow directions that were not meant or understood as perceived, which could have unexpected repercussions.

Amruta Patil in *Kari* and *Adi Parva* showcase many societies that ignore written records that present a variety of perspectives, by concentrating on oral traditions and spoken word, which results in traumatic experiences of various people. Her graphic narrative *Sauptik* and *Aranyaka* show number of negative consequences of relying exclusively on conventional narratives or old stories for gaining knowledge, especially if these stories are out of date, biased, or unrelated to contemporary realities. Phonocentrism perpetuates current power relations by prioritising speech over writing. Fluent speakers have traditionally held positions of power, whereas non-speakers have been marginalised. Social inequality is maintained by this hierarchy, which also restricts chances for people who do not follow the prevailing oral traditions. Deeper and more introspective thoughts, which are generally enabled by writing, get suppressed by phonocentrism's preference for instantaneous, spoken interactions. Complex concepts can be preserved and disseminated through written language, allowing for the sharing of various viewpoints across time and space. Ignoring this kind of communication results in a loss of intellectual and cultural diversity. Oral traditions are ephemeral and might change over time. Societies run the risk of losing important historical stories and information if they don't have written records. In order to ensure that experiences and learnings do not get vanished, written language acts as a tool for maintaining both individual and group memories. Even while oral communication is essential to human contact, relying too much on phonocentric ideology can have negative effects. Societies may conserve various viewpoints, encourage inclusivity, and advance fair access to opportunities and information by acknowledging all modes of communication equally.

Chapter 5

Hospitality: Depiction of Host-Guest Relationship

Right hospitality is seen rarely in the modern world. People in contemporary times offer hospitality to others more for their own interests than for the interests of others. The majority of individuals in the world become hospitable while maintaining an aloofness from the visitor and do it out of selfishness, with no consideration for others. Only a few people make an effort to extend genuine hospitality, but they cease doing so when one particular guest behaves improperly. That precise idea has been well-presented by Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil in their graphic novels. This chapter looks into what their texts say about the meeting of the guest and the host and concentrates on the dynamics of power and risk. It also utilises Derrida's hospitality theory to clear the part that host and guest have in forming each other's identities in the texts under study. This chapter evaluates the idea of hospitality implied in the graphic texts of Banerjee and Patil in accordance with the concept of hospitality of Derrida. In light of Derrida, the chapter tries to examine both conditional and unconditional hospitality in these texts and shows how special purpose and requirement violate a moral requirement, such as generosity in the matter of hospitality. It also locates the universal truth — considering Derrida's concept — that great hospitality depends on the delicate balancing act between openness and closedness on the part of the host who accepts an unconnected stranger who is destitute as a guest at home. It also discusses the existence of absolute hospitality inside the texts under study, which appears to be impossible as a host loses the ability to host a guest in the setting of unconditional hospitality. By connecting the subject of hospitality revealed in the texts to the Derridean concept of hospitality, which acts at a personal level, this chapter also aims to locate the host-guest connection in terms of welcoming an unexpected and unknown individual as a guest. The present chapter further clarifies how people demonstrate hospitality in their day-to-day interactions by extending kindness and generosity to a stranger who is unrelated, unexpected, and not one of their own. The artificiality of hospitality as it is portrayed in the texts will be revealed in this chapter's conclusion.

Banerjee's first graphic novel, *Corridor* (2004), with the aid of vivid pictures, presents a hyperbolic illustration of the importance of hospitality and the vulnerability of both guests and hosts. This graphic narrative chronicles a collector's daily life struggles related to his antique collection and his girlfriend, Kali. Brighu has a never-ending passion for antique things. He wants to keep in his collection everything that is unique and antique. To complete his collection, he goes far and wide in the world and searches every nook and cranny. In the very beginning of the novel, he is introduced as wandering in the city of Delhi. He is searching for a book in the beginning of the narrative, and this search takes him to a Delhi bookshop owner, Rangoonwalla. The narrative follows Brighu's path from Delhi corridors to his girlfriend's rented flat and his home in Calcutta. Brighu has a live-in girlfriend, Kali. He met Kali for the first time in Calcutta, where they used to live together in the same apartment. Kali lives in a rented apartment. Her relationship with her landlady, Matahari, signifies one of the host-guest relationships in a conditional hospitality. Her landlady's behaviour towards her reflects all the features of a host in the context of conditional hospitality. She stops being hospitable to maintain her authority when she thinks it so, as "the host exercises his or her sovereignty by selecting, filtering, choosing his or her guests or visitors" (Kakoliris 148-149). Her landlady always keeps an eye on her. Brighu used to go to Kali's flat often. When the landlady notices his arrival almost every other day, she asks Kali not to invite him there. She advises them to marry each other and only then live together under the same roof. The landlady restricts Brighu's entry into Kali's flat, which signifies her authority as a host over her guest, Kali. The following picture demonstrates Matahari's dominant nature over her guest. She has the authority to control her guests' daily activities.

She can interfere in Kali's private life and personal decisions by advising her to marry Brighu: "Please don't mind my asking, you are like my daughter only. Are you going to marry him?" (Banerjee, *Corridor* 73). Kali gets astonished by the rude behaviour of her landlady. She has never expected such behaviour from her. Even Matahari starts "locking the main gate by nine" (73). Such behaviour from the landlady signifies the true nature of a conditional hospitality. In conditional hospitality, a host always expects something from a guest in return. Derrida noted that

all hosting and hospitality always contain a small amount of hostility, which he referred to as *hostipitality*: “If I say ‘Welcome,’ I am not renouncing my mastery, something that becomes transparent in people whose hospitality is a way of showing of how much they own or who make their guests uncomfortable and afraid to touch a thing” (Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell* 111). Kali’s landlady is not ready to offer unconditional hospitality to her because she cannot lose her house and her identity. As a result, Kali has to leave her flat and move in with Brighu.

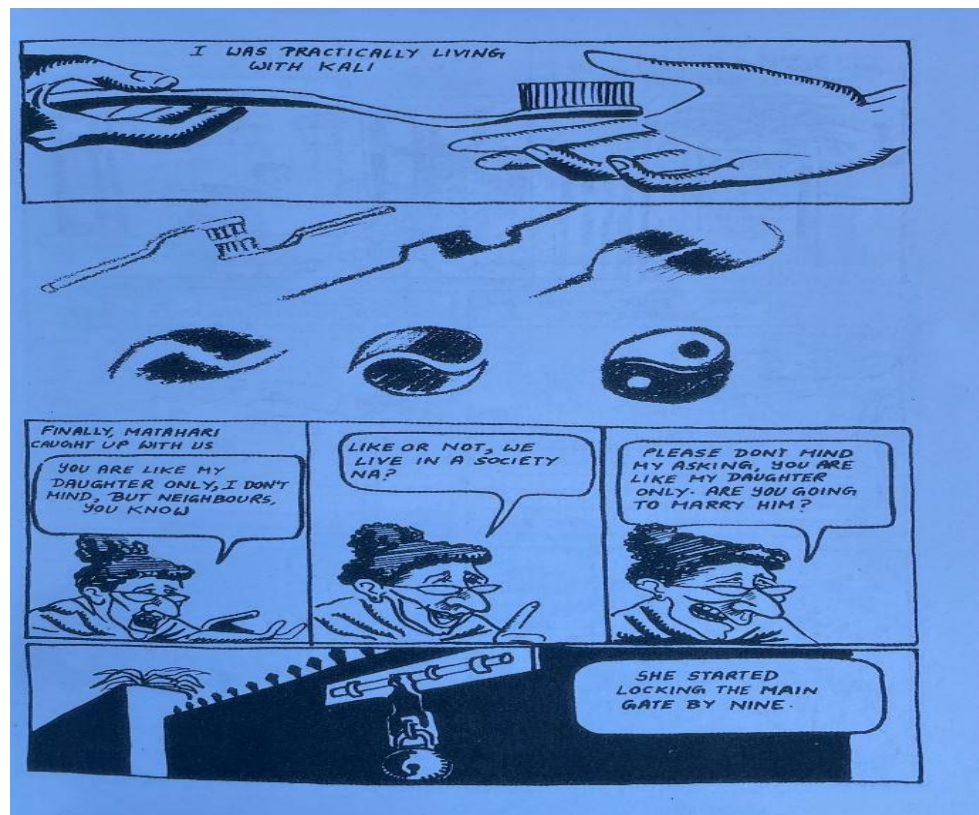


Fig. 5.1 Sarnath Banerjee. *Corridor*, 73.

Rangoonwalla can be seen as the host in this narrative structure, while the different clients who come to his store take on the role of guests. His store serves as a semi-public social area where people congregate for discussion, introspection, and advice in addition to business dealings. Rangoonwalla creates a friendly and thought-provoking environment with his storytelling, philosophical reflections, and careful interaction with guests: “Amidst all this sits Mr Rangoon Walla, in his ‘centre of the universe.’ Sipping tea, selling asimovs, giving advice” (Banerjee, *Corridor* 111). In

this way, he plays the part of a welcoming host who encourages conversation and provides a little haven from the worries and alienation of city life. However, Rangoonwalla's hospitality can be interpreted as functioning within the framework of conditional hospitality when examined using Derrida's theory. According to Derrida, the host always maintains control over the area of hospitality and sets the terms under which the visitor is welcomed in any genuine social environment. The host has the authority to set boundaries for the engagement, control the visitor's presence, and make sure the visitor doesn't upset the host's domain's established order. Rangoonwalla gives hospitality to his patrons in this graphic narrative as long as they do not endanger his authority, comfort, or the smooth operation of his establishment. Therefore, his friendly manner depends on the visitors adhering to the unspoken rules guiding the exchange.

This dynamic emphasizes Derrida's more general claim that issues of power, control, and security are inextricably linked to hospitality. The act of hospitality perpetuates the hierarchical connection between host and guest even though it may seem giving and inclusive. The boundaries of hospitality in structured social settings are revealed by the fact that the guest's presence is always contingent upon the host's consent and acceptance. Thus, rather than operating through the idealistic openness of unconditional hospitality envisioned by Derrida, Rangoonwalla's interactions with his clients serve as an example of how hospitality functions in daily circumstances through negotiated limitations.

Banerjee's second graphic novel, *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* (2007), establishes patterns of how India is portrayed throughout the narrative from ancient times to modern times. It draws attention to the growing duality of hospitality that is a result of increasing colonial dominance. The book narrates the tale of a young Indian man who leaves the City of London and travels to his native India in search of his inheritance. The majority of the story details his struggles as he looks for a book that costs a big amount in the present time. Just as a host's treatment of his or her guest reveals something about that host's character, so too does a nation's treatment of visitors, and this graphic narrative allows the readers to witness moments of

hospitality that help to develop national character through the storyline. The graphic narrative satirically deals with Indian colonial history by providing a fantastic description of a book's voyage across time and space. Derrida's theory of hospitality is totally applicable to the English and Indians relationship. In this host-guest relationship, Indian represents the features of unconditional hosts who are ready to give anything the guests ask for. Britishers represent the features of guests in an unconditional hospitality. Britishers entered India as visitors, and Indians welcomed them wholeheartedly and unconditionally: "absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.), but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names" (*Of Hospitality* 25).

People of India kept in mind their role as hosts and their duty to be hospitable to the guest. They gave Britishers the privacy they required, respect, and authority to travel the nation. It is a common feature of unconditional hospitality that the host has to provide everything to the guest. This type of hospitality requires a host to keep his door open for anyone. Anyone can come and live in his house. The host cannot ask the name of the guest. He/she cannot even put some rules in front of the guest to follow. In addition to this, it creates a risk to the host that the guest can take control over his house, therefore hurting the identity of the host. Indians followed unconditional hospitality while dealing with the Britishers. They did not ask their agenda to visit their nation. Neither they tried to control their ways of living, nor their advancement. As a result, the Britishers tried to take control over their hosts and their nation as well. The following image shows the condition of Indians under British Raj. It is divided into three panels, two of which have painted Indians doing meagre works assigned by Britishers. Panel first has a building structure that is constructed by the Britishers, and an Indian man can be seen cleaning outside the building gate. Meanwhile, the third panel presents an Englishman giving orders to his assistants who are Indians: "Punkha-wallah, lamba haat sey khincho" (Banerjee, *The Barn Owl's*

Wondrous Capers 5). It is evident from these panels that Britishers have taken complete control over Indians.

Indian people welcomed Britishers who came from outside as strangers. They gave them a place to live in their nation without posing any conditions or limitations over them. However, Britishers could not behave like true guests and started controlling their host nation: “A chaetered company of merchants with a minimum of supervision suddenly found itself lord and master of a vast and populous tranche of the subcontinent” (Rudd 1). Banerjee has portrayed this violent host-guest relationship throughout the novel. There are various images where Indians can be seen doing household chores in the mansions of Britishers. Britishers used Indian people as their slaves: “Earlier in the afternoon, Madame Grand had dispensed with most of her servants. Forty-two people worked in this household: Chobdars, Jammadars, Khidmutgars, Hajaam, Buxie, Musselchees, Ayahs, Punkah Coolie, Head Bearer. You must try to understand, Dear reader, that Calcutta was considered a punishment posting for the English. All forms of services were thus provided and taken for granted” (8). All kinds of servants show how the welcoming hosts’ positions are usurped by their own guests.



Fig. 5.2 Sarnath Banerjee. *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers*, 5.

It is very well known that the British did not establish and consolidate their political dominance in India by legal methods; rather, they did so through deceit, force, and a flagrant contempt for morality. They took advantage of the lack of education in their host nation and did many frauds. There was no esteem or admiration shared between India and England under these circumstances. Englishmen frequently presented an extremely negative image of Indian society. People in England believed that the far-off inhabitants of India were nearly barbarians; thus, inferior Englishmen were sent there. The views of the Christian missionaries, the philanthropists who wished to provide the indigenous access to western education, and the newly educated natives demonstrate how the Europeans believed that the Indians, who were mired in superstition and barbarianism, needed to be rescued from it. The English had a benign guardianship attitude towards the superior race of the Indian people, and any reform measures that failed were blamed on the people's natural downward drift. The few Anglicised Indians who had drunk deeply from the fountain of western learning were too confused and befuddled to take charge of their own people. Babu Joy Mitra is one of these people. He has all the wealth and ways to lead his people and work for their betterment, but he is so confiscated with his wealth that he has forgot his roots. He is working for Britishers instead of helping his own people. The following images show such people. People like "Babu Joy Mitra" (97), "Babu Ramkamal Halder" (100), and "Shibchandra Mukherjee" (104) do not use their positions and wealth to help their people.

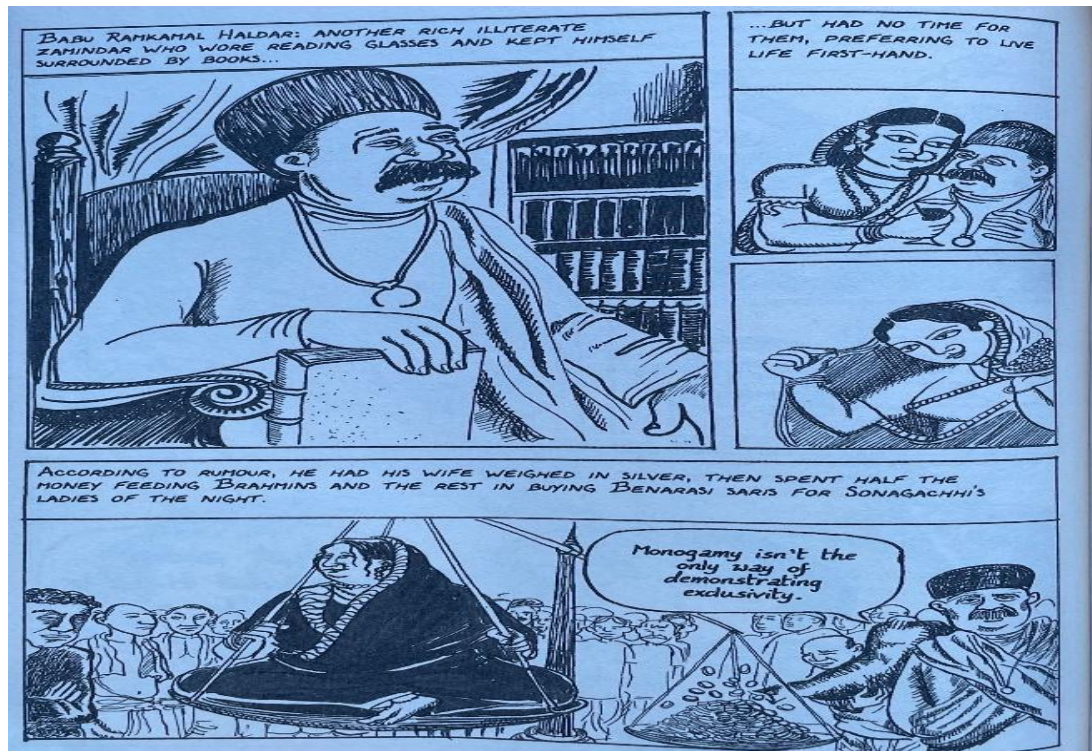


Fig. 5.3 Sarnath Banerjee. *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers*, 100.

In fact, educated locals tended to feel isolated from the general populace and drawn to Europeans. Only the English were perceived as the true natural forerunners of peace, progress, and wealth, even by those who advocated for the social, political, and cultural advancement of India. Confident in their positions and unaffected by the challenge posed by a native middle class, European officers at this time poured their all into their profession. As a result, Britishers shun their roles as guests and take the ruling roles as hosts. Hence, the hosts become captives and guests become hosts.

In Banerjee's third novel, *The Harappa Files* (2011), the complexity of host and guest relationship is presented in the section "Jaguar Salesman." Banerjee bridges the gap between his graphic novels and art practice with this book derived from a 2007 series of pen-and-watercolour drawings, many of which are catalogued with their collectors on the final page. The text is an evolution in Banerjee's career. There seems to be a newfound restraint in his work; for example, he has done away with the grand, popular storyline that weakly connected various literary graphic essays and vignettes that elaborated on obscure or underappreciated everyday occurrences, like a

funeral in Kolkata. It is a gorgeous collection with a succession of outline, the files of the book, varying in length from a single to many pages, with pen-and-watercolour pictures given their own page or two. The book's roughly interconnected scenes depict the struggles of the average person in an obscurely dated setting that lies somewhere amidst postcolonial and the post liberalisation India of the 1990s, when free-market reforms started an unparalleled whipping of its fabric. One of these files is "Jaguar Salesman" that represents the host-guest relationship.

In this relationship, the role of the host is played by the Jaguar company, and the part of the guest is played by the customers. As soon as a customer enters a showroom, he becomes a guest to the concerned showroom salesman. In the beginning of this section, Banerjee introduces Madhav, "a junior salesman at the Jaguar showroom in South London" who has "little interest in cars" (32). The head of the sales team shows how a salesman can convince a customer to buy a car that he is just inquiring about. He gives them techniques to attract the customers. The customers are their guests and expect true hospitality from their hosts. They expect true hosts to welcome them inside the showroom, but in reality, the hosts fail to be true to the nature of a host. They welcome the guests only for their own gain. Customers are becoming more sophisticated and demanding, which increases competition as they look for higher value and shop more carefully and thoughtfully. Retailers must therefore continue to separate themselves from their competitors by providing each consumer with excellent customer service and a distinctive shopping experience in order to forge long-term relationships. To meet this need, salesmen give false respect to the customers:

Make him feel as if all his life he has been misled. Bring in the 'you and me'. 'You and me' who vote for the same politicians. 'You and me' who fly the same budget airlines. 'You and me' who support the same football club. (36-37)

The customer thinks he is getting the true kind of hospitality, but it is not so. The salesman portrays himself as a generous host. His natural charisma and charismatic hosting abilities make him an effective salesperson. The relationship

between the guest and host is one of reciprocity, as the customer's interactions with the salesman demonstrate. The salesman is giving the best treatment to the customer so that he buys a car in return. They enter into an implicit agreement made possible by customary norms of hospitality. In order for this social compact to function, each participant must take part in the designated parts of guest and host. The host entertains and greets the visitor, and the visitor is courteous to the host.

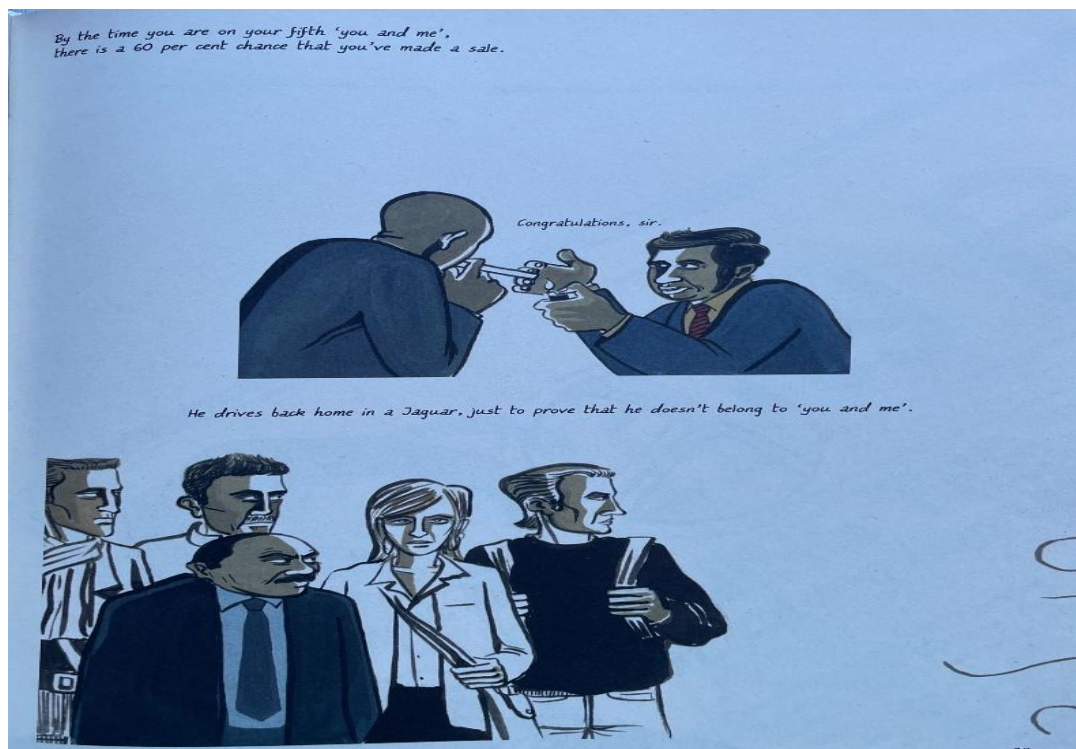


Fig. 5.4 Sarnath Banerjee. *The Harappa Files*, 39.

A helpful foundation for examining the tenant-landlady connection in the story's "Hydra" (102) section is also provided by Derrida's concept of hospitality. In this section, Banerjee compares an intrusive landlady and, more generally, coercive authority figures in urban life to the mythological creature Hydra. The episode blends social critique, mythology, and humor. Greek mythology describes the Hydra as a many-headed serpent that sprouts two heads every time one is severed. Banerjee writes, "The hydra was a famous many-headed snake in ancient Greece. Whenever one of its heads was cut off, two new ones emerged. Hydras are famous for their cruel, sneaky nature, their ability to keep attacking you from various angles, and for

being practically impossible to fight” (103). This myth is modified by Banerjee, who uses Hydra as a metaphor for an intrusive landlady.

The landlady is depicted as someone who constantly meddles in her tenants’ personal affairs. Her actions are characterized by a lingering sense of distrust and a desire to keep control of the home environment she manages. Instead of only serving as a lodging provider, she keeps a careful eye on the routines and relationships of the people living in her apartments. Her behaviours reflect a more nuanced and calculated type of dominance, despite the fact that she initially portrays herself as pleasant and unthreatening. She manipulates the tenants’ daily life through covert monitoring and indirect meddling. Due to this dynamic, the rented apartment becomes a surveillance site where the landlady constantly monitors and controls the tenants’ independence. This character appears to have numerous eyes and ears throughout the structure, much like the legendary Hydra with numerous heads. According to the Hydra metaphor, any attempt to break free from her influence results in additional interference, much like chopping off one Hydra head causes more. This concept of conditional hospitality is exemplified by the landlady in this section. Even while she gives tenants a place to stay and seems to extend a kind of welcome, her hospitality is governed by a number of rules that specify appropriate behavior in her home.

According to Derrida, the host’s authority is found in their capacity to set the conditions of admission and residency. The landlady in the section uses this power over her tenants. She is able to place limitations on guests, daily routines, and personal habits because she has authority over the rented space. As a result, the tenant’s existence in the home is never really guaranteed; it always depends on the tenant meeting the landlady’s requirements. Derrida’s assertion that conditional hospitality always upholds a hierarchy between host and guest is best illustrated by this setup. The host has the final say over whether to extend hospitality, and guests are only accepted if they follow the host’s rules. Additionally, Banerjee’s story uses the metaphor of hydra to emphasize this surveillance and control relationship. Similar to the mythical many-headed creature, the landlady seems to be everywhere, keeping an eye on her tenants’ activities and enforcing new rules in response to apparent

infractions. As a result, her hospitality creates a number of circumstances that increase the host's power in the home. The act of hosting turns into a disciplinary system where the tenants' autonomy is continuously negotiated, rather than creating a place of comfort or belonging.

This section interprets as a critique of the daily politics of urban dwelling through this portrayal. The landlady's conditional hospitality is a reflection of larger social practices where moral judgments and behavioural standards mediate access to space. Banerjee satirically reveals the underlying power dynamics present in seemingly commonplace lodging situations by portraying the landlady as a legendary Hydra. In this sense, the story exemplifies Derrida's claim that hospitality is never entirely altruistic; rather, it is frequently entwined with power, monitoring, and the control of the other.

Derrida's concept of unconditional hospitality can be applied to Banerjee's novel *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* (2016) also. The novel is primarily set in Delhi. Delhi that Banerjee has portrayed in this narrative is the place primarily dominated by businessmen, urban planners, capitalists, and corrupt political parties. India's capital city, Delhi, experienced fast urbanisation, which was followed by disintegration, urban extension, and pre-urbanisation. The novel looks into Delhi's characteristics of irregular progress and urban disparity. Banerjee uses a plethora of allusions to pulp fiction, mythology, and hybrid spaces to chart the subtle changes in urban lifestyle and the liberal trend towards exclusive spatial practices like "short-termism" (51), but he also gives competing histories and local resistance to the city's planned space. He critically examines rising Indian cities and contributes to their conception and discourse. This book describes a war for water in Delhi, which is suffering from a severe drought. Published in 2016, the book's beginning pages detail the privatisation of "BHARAT COPPER LIMITED" in Tambapur (4). The people from the village Tambapur play part of the host in this host-guest relationship, and the company Bharat Copper Limited plays the role of the guest.

Banerjee introduces the "practically pastoral" life of Tambapur, an industrial town, in a series of realistic panels in clean, greyscale, and realistic style (4). "There

was job security [and] the environment was clean” in this village (4). The government-owned company Bharat Copper Limited supplied for the needs of its workers by offering them access to medical care, education, sanitary facilities, and general amusement. One day, “the company was hit by fluctuations in global copper prices” and “back in Delhi, the newly appointed minister of disinvestment was waiting for just such an opportunity” (7). The following image shows when a foreign company acquired the thriving government-owned enterprise Bharat Copper Limited, it transformed Tambapur, a former industrial town, into a capitalist zone of accelerating profit, driving the skilled workers out of the village and into the city, where they will finally only add to urban informality. The people of Tambapur accept the foreign enterprise wholeheartedly and treat it like a true host. But the guest does not prove to be true to its nature. Instead of giving gratitude to its host, the village, the company took every joy away from it. In Derrida’s words: “I want to be master at home (ipse, potis, potens, head of house, we have seen all that), to be able to receive whomever I like there. Anyone who encroaches on my ‘at home,’ on my ipseity, on my power of hospitality, on my sovereignty as host, I start to regard as an undesirable foreigner, and virtually as an enemy. This other becomes a hostile subject, and I risk becoming their hostage” (*Of Hospitality* 53-54). Environmental deterioration results from the new industrial strategies, and “the disintegration of the township” starts (Banerjee, *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* 10). There are more industrial accidents, the hospitals are filthy and unfeasible, and the water is hazardous, “leading to terrible diseases” (11). Villagers become jobless and are forced to leave Tambapur to survive. This shows how the guest drives the host away and takes the role of the host.

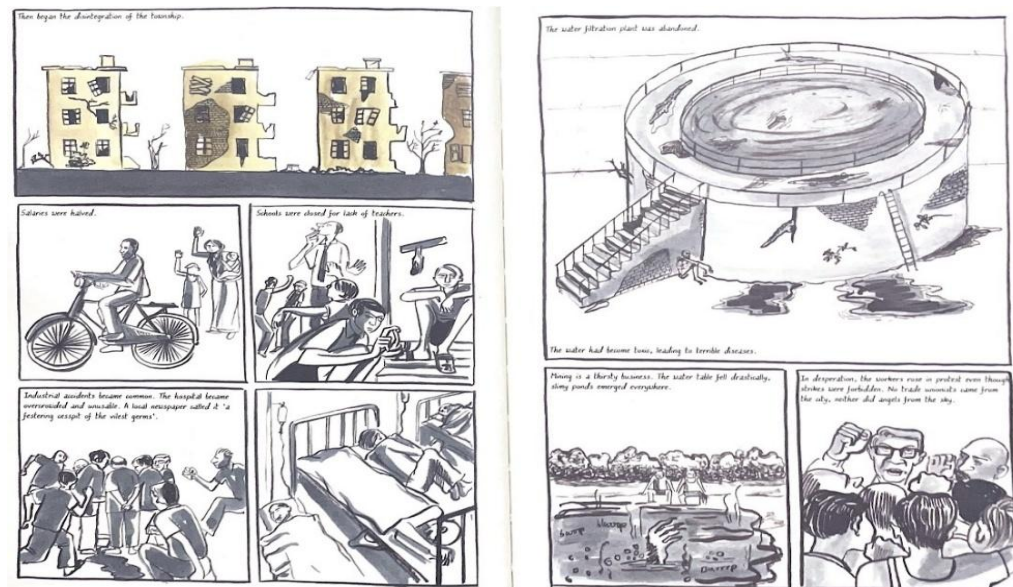


Fig. 5.5 Sarnath Banerjee. *All Quiet in Vikaspuri*, 10, 11.

Another guest and host relationship in the novel, is represented by Girish, the plumber, and Rastogi, an entrepreneur. Plumber Girish, who relocates to Delhi in search of employment, is one of the workers affected by the privatisation of Bharat Copper Limited. He is forced to leave his village, Tambapur, due to a shortage of work. Tambapur, formerly prosperous, is now in decline as a result of out-of-control corporate greed. One of the many migrants who have drifted to the city in quest of a living, Girish, the plumber, is compelled to leave the crumbling township and journey to Delhi. His hometown is destroyed by rapacious miners who are in search of the copper that was Tambapur's main reserve. He has come to this city in search of greater prospects to practice his trade after the water in Tambapur turns into poison. He is tasked with drilling deeply enough underground to find the Saraswati River, a body of water that was frequently described in the old Sanskrit Vedas but have extincted. He is employed there by a supposedly charitable businessman. Upon Girish's return from his quest for the Saraswati, he discovers that Delhi has plunged into an epic "water war" (13) under the leadership of industrialist Rastogi, who is revealed to be a disconnected entrepreneur seeking to inflate real estate values. Status transforms Girish's trajectory from an unidentified plumber to that of the best plumber in the city of Delhi. As a host, Rastogi welcomes Girish in his big home and

offers him grand services of the place: “Abhi aap log jaake mere GK2 wale flat mein AC chalaake araam karo. Kal baat karenge” (113). The story of this scenario can be used to infer the anticipations of guest and host, which are governed by an implicit social contract. The host is required to greet the guest a warm welcome and to provide food, drink, and accommodation as needed. In return, the visitor expresses gratitude by frequently accepting the invitation from the host. Girish starts to adapt to his new role and discovers who he is. This is the basic rule of the host-guest relationship that neither of them can hurt each other, but by opening the door to a guest, the host runs the danger of doing so. In this narrative, an inversion of this situation shows that the visitor also runs the risk of harm when they enter the host’s house. The issues with the host-guest relationship start to show up at this point in the story. The image given below demonstrates this inversion of the role of Girish from a respectful guest to a captive. The relationship changes from one of host and guest to one of master and slave when Rastogi captures Girish and Awasthy. False hospitality results in the capture of Girish and Awasthy, who ultimately meet their demise. The contact between the guest and host highlights the danger of fierceness in the friendly dialogue that is supposed to be kind. The host must extend a warm welcome to the visitor or stranger in order to uphold the traditions of hospitality. Although there are cultural variances in the standards of hospitality, the fundamental requirement is compassion towards the visitor and an unselfish soul. Derrida intricates this idea by concluding that power, an essential element of hospitality, renders the concept of pure or “absolute hospitality” impossible (*Of Hospitality* 25). Derrida claims that this prerequisite for hospitality also makes it impossible. In other words, the host always expects something in return; thus, there can never be pure hospitality — pure selflessness. Derrida views this something as a self-affirmation and a means of strengthening the host’s identity.



Fig. 5.6 Sarnath Banerjee. *All Quiet in Vikaspuri*, 123.

Banerjee's most recent graphic novel *Doab Dil* (2019) also presents some very good examples of the concept of hospitality as explained by Jacques Derrida. This graphic novel does not follow a single story-line. It is a mixture of numerous narratives. The book stands out due to its original subject matter and writing style. The book rows, back and further, right and left, into innumerable dreams. And these dreams are unfettered. It almost feels like a travel diary, containing in its pages the beauty of various countries, the secrets of many societies, the magic of different cultures, the wisdom of famous and some infamous philosophies. In an ordinary host-guest relationship, the host has the power to accept or reject the visitor, thereby establishing his or her dominance. Opening the door is motivated by the reinforcement of identity provided by the stranger's gaze, but doing so exposes the host to potential threats. Accepting this power imbalance within this relationship, this narrative proposes that several levels of welcoming intentions exist. An example would be inviting a guest into one's home with the expectation of conversation or a follow-up invitation. Despite not being pure charity, these criteria are logical

reciprocations under the hospitable contract and may even be mutually advantageous. This situation is well portrayed by Banerjee with the help of the relationship between nature and man. In this host-guest relationship, nature represents the host and man represents the guest. And the concept of hospitality that applies to this relationship is of unconditional hospitality.

Nature is always considered the mother of mankind. Man is surrounded by nature in many different ways. It plays a significant part in the continued existence of the human species. As a host, nature has given its everything in service to man. It has opened every gate for mankind to enter, conquer, and survive. It has provided everything to man unconditionally, that is, without asking anything in return. This connection can take many different shapes, and nature responds in kind. Nature has had a huge influence on human existence since legendary times. Man's needs, such as those for clean air, water, food, clothes, and habitat, are met by the forests, water bodies, and soil. Nature is an integral part of mankind. Poets, writers, artists, and many others have looked to nature for inspiration throughout history. They felt compelled to compose poetry and stories in praise of this amazing creature: "Francis Bacon considered gardens the purest of human pleasure. His ardent follower, seventeenth-century physician and polymath Sir Thomas Browne, had similar views. Browne considered gardens places for contemplation, wonder, and inquiry – a space from which he could observe the ever-changing patterns of nature. A garden for him was like a library, 'a collection of half-remembered stories'" (Ch I). It has provided everything to man in almost every sphere of his life.

It is one of man's greatest blessings, but modern man no longer acknowledges it as such. Man is not a true guest in the sense that he has destroyed nature. The journeys of nature and mankind have been closely connected in many ways, with mankind leaving permanent traces on nature in exchange. In the image given below, a gardener can be seen planting trees that are usually not available in nature. He is using different modern technologies to make perfect "gardens that are an improvement on nature" (Ch I). Man is trying to surpass the power of nature by creating his own breeds of plants. This image shows the number of planters that are used by gardeners to create

new plants that are not ordinary natural plants. Man's attempt to take nature's place in the process of creation of life represents his usurpation of the role of nature. Hence, he has taken the role of host by suppressing and dominating nature, giving it the role of guest: "In his poem "The Garden," Andrew Marvel talks about our tendency as humans to congratulate ourselves on growing what nature might grow anyway without our interference" (Ch I). Man is trying to master nature by taking its roles in its own hands.

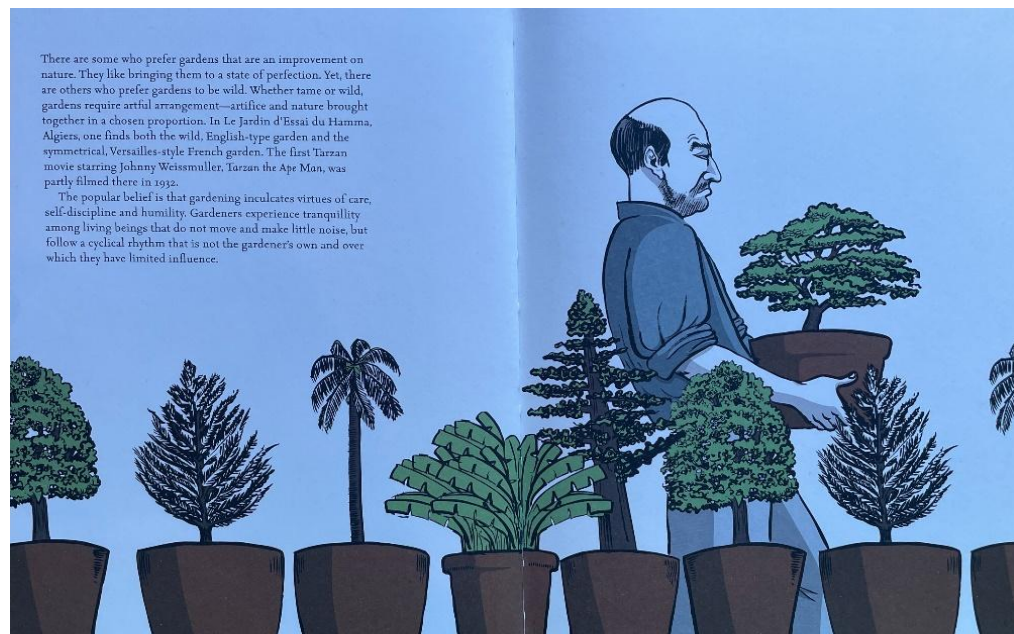


Fig. 5.7 Sarnath Banerjee. *Doab Dil*, Ch. 1, Garden: A Place of Inquiry

Another significant example of host-guest relationship is found in Chapter VII "Library" in the relationship of Indians and Britishers in India. The Indian soldiers did not receive the return gift of a respectful life under British rule in India. The picture given below has painted a number of Indian soldiers who are returning from World War I battleground. Indian soldiers represent Indians who are hosts to the Britishers visiting India. Indians followed the rules of unconditional hospitality in welcoming strangers into their nation. As unconditional hospitality suggests, Indians kept their doors wide open to the coming Britishers and also treated them as God. They helped them settle in their nation and offered them comfortable space. They did everything a host should do while welcoming his guests. Indians, in doing so, forgot that it could

be risky for them to give everything to Britishers. John Caputo states in *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*: “When the host says to the guest, ‘Make yourself at home,’ this is a self-limiting invitation. ‘Make yourself at home’ means: please feel at home, act as if you were at home, but, remember, that is not true, this is not your home but mine, and you are expected to respect my property” (111). Britishers, as guests, could not play their role well. Bhupinder Singh had pointed out that “British came to the Indian subcontinent as a trader. But within a short span of time, they cemented their commercial affairs with political hegemony in the region” (13). They turned against their hosts. By conspiring against their hosts, they took all that belonged to Indians – their homes, land, professions, identity, and dignity. They treated their hosts unfairly. They took the role of hosts for themselves, converting the earlier hosts into guests. In other words, Britishers started acting like hosts, forcing Indians to feel like strangers in their own homeland, leaving them devastated.

Unconditional hospitality always comes with risk for the hosts. The risk of losing their own identity as a host. The Indian soldiers, which are shown below in the picture, are the proof of that risk, which is involved in an unconditional hospitality. These soldiers went to fight for Britain in World War I. They were promised the freedom of their nation in return for their participation in the great war of the world. Indians believed the promises of their guests. Acting like a good host, they agreed to what they were told to do by the guests. However, the freedom that was promised to Indians was never given to them. The image given below is showing the Indian soldiers’ condition on their way back to their homeland. They are given no security and offered no escort on their way: “In army, the British soldiers and officers were given more privileges than Indian soldiers” (Rajagopal 5653). They are left to survive on their own. They are not only kept deprived of their freedom, but their participation was also not recognised by the Britishers: “While the First World War is commemorated with great ceremony in Britain and Australia, the story of the Indian soldiers who fought in it remains largely untold. Except for Kip, the Sikh sapper in Michael Ondaatje’s book *The English Patient*, there are hardly any Indian soldiers in Western literature and movies. Because they fought for the colonialists, back home too, their contributions were never fully appreciated” (Banerjee, *Doab Dil* Ch VII).

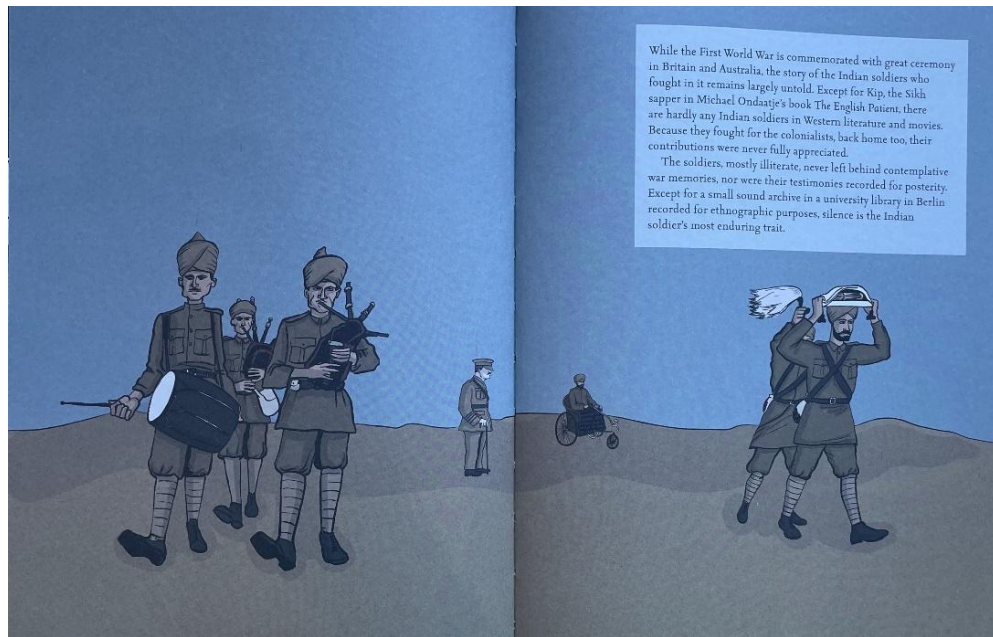


Fig. 5.8 Sarnath Banerjee. *Doab Dil*, Ch. 7, Library

Another image painted by Banerjee shows the destruction of trees by man for making furniture. It shows that man is taking advantage of nature's unconditional hospitality. Nature, no doubt, has put no limits on man. Man can use nature the way he wants. He can take whatever and whenever he wants, and nature never accepts anything in back. But wide-ranging environmental changes brought about by man have furthered the irreversible degradation of nature and disruption of the ecological equilibrium. The entire natural equilibrium has been upset by the destructive nature of the human species. Nature has not had time to breathe because of ongoing development and building projects. Due to pollution and overuse of the environment, there have been ongoing changes in nature.

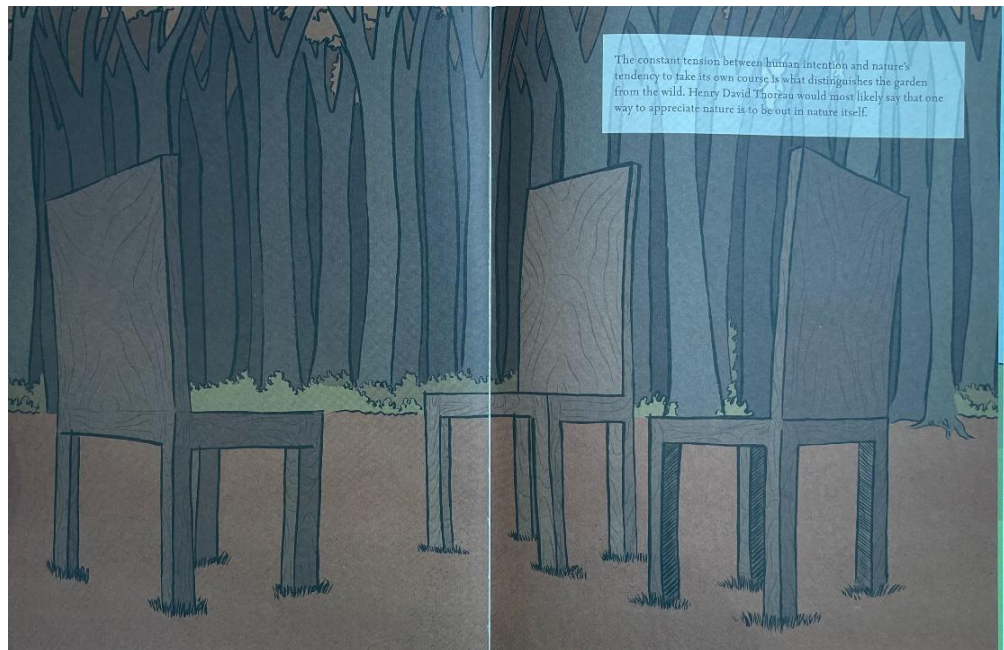


Fig. 5.9 Sarnath Banerjee. *Doab Dil*, Ch. 1, Garden: A Place of Inquiry

Using tales from the Mahabharata, Puranas, and other ancient Indian texts, Amruta Patil, the first woman graphic novelist from India, explores reoccurring themes like sexuality, feminism, existentialism, etc. In the world of Indian graphic novels, Patil is another notable personality who made the decision to eliminate evasiveness by addressing delicate and timeless problems. The theory of hospitality is present in various ways in Patil's novels, making it possible to analyse them using terminology and expressions that correspond to Derrida's ideas of conditional and unconditional hospitality. *Kari*, Patil's debut graphic novel, was published in 2008. It addresses topics related to lesbianism and homosexuality in general. In societies that are extremely heterosexual, homosexuality has an existential crisis and is even denied legal protection. The controversy about the social repression of queer sexuality and developing one's own identity is brought back to life by Patil's story. Kari, the main character, aspires to come out as lesbian, but she is prevented from doing so by the culture she is a part of. *Kari*, written in eighteen chapters, is a lesbian story about two girls, Kari and Ruth, and Kari's desperate search for a respectful life, despite living in a society ruled by traditional values, beliefs, conventions, and etiquette. The graphic narrative begins with the suicides of both the lesbian girls. Both are saved, Kari by the

water of a sewer and Ruth by the safety net of the building. Kari stays behind, ostracised for the rest of her life as she is forced to deal with a culture that has no pity for homosexuals and views them as outlaws, while Ruth quickly leaves the city. Ruth abandons Kari, leaving her utterly alone and alienated. Kari lives in “crystal palace” with Billo and Delna (15). She is a good host, following the traits of unconditional hospitality. She accepts Billo and Delna’s boyfriends in their flat without creating any chaos.

There are two rooms in the flat, which are shared by three girls: Kari, Billo, and Delna. She really cherishes her flat and loves to spend time with her flatmates. But there are two permanent guests who live in the flat: “We do have two dancing princesses though, plus two permanent houseguest princes who go by the superhero names Orgo and Zap” (17). Kari, in the beginning, allows Zap and Orgo, the boyfriends, to visit her flat, and now they have become permanent guests, leaving no space for Kari: “Too broke to take our private lives any place else, we bring them into this shared 2BHK. But the reality of three bodies squeezed into an 8’ by 10’ room will make a psychopath of a good human being. The bookshelf is the dam that keeps our tempers from running amok. I try imagine different worlds on the other side of the bookshelf” (17). Kari has come to this flat with dreams of enjoying with her flatmates, but she has never expected that her place in their lives will be usurped by two outsiders:

You would imagine that with so much clutter, the one thing you wouldn’t miss was company. But that isn’t true. When I first came here I had expected walk-in sisterhood. Head massages and face packs and fusion, end-of-the-day comparing of notes. This warbling Little Women camaraderie is a badge that must be painstakingly earned. (18)

The following image shows her alienated state in her own home. The first panel shows Kari offering Delna some soup that she is cooking. While the second panel shows Delna showing no interest in Kari and the soup she has made. Her flatmates have started treating her like a stranger in her own flat. The two outsiders,

Orgo and Zap, have taken her place as the host, forcing her to feel like an outsider. She is feeling alienated and in want of company of her girls.

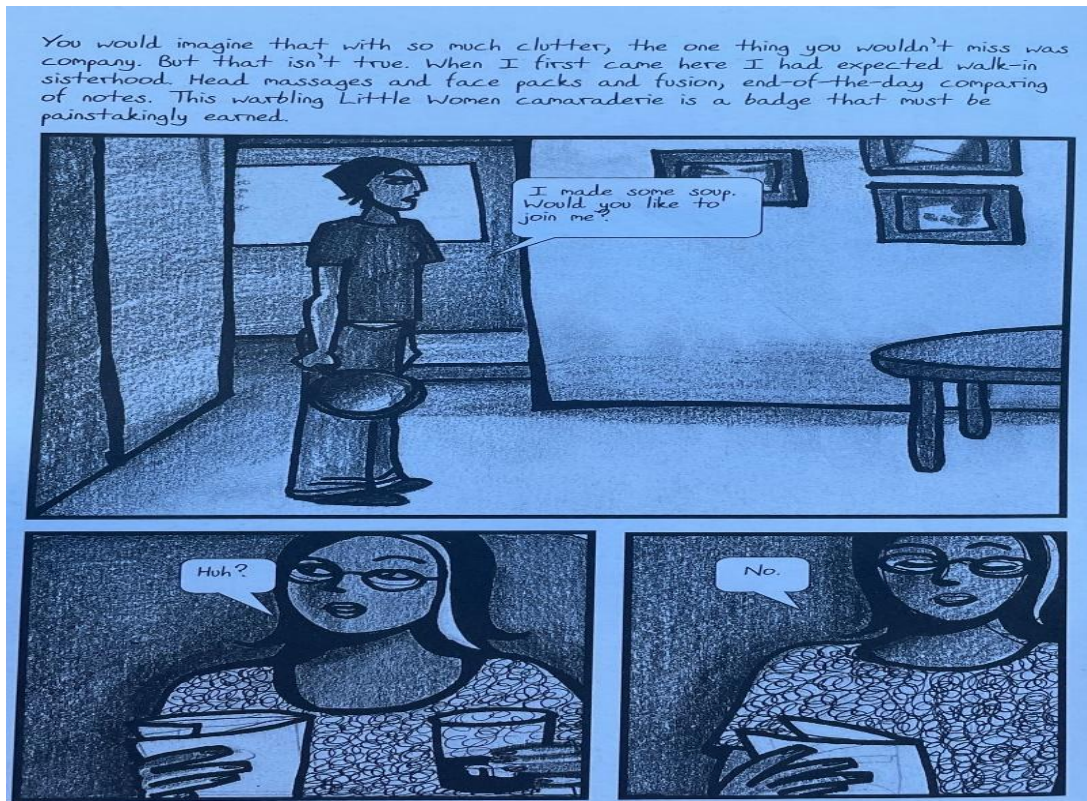


Fig. 5.10 Amruta Patil. *Kari*, 18.

In the fourth tale, “The Visitations,” Kari’s parents visit her and have planned to stay with her for a few days in her flat. The image given below also demonstrates the wrongful treatment of Kari, the host, by the guests, Orgo and Zap. They again make her feel like an outsider when she brings her parents to live in her flat. She and her parents are welcomed in a bizarre manner by the girls and the boys: “In 1.5 seconds, Mamma’s eagle eye takes in braless dress, lit cigarette, and the location of the young man’s head in Delna’s lap. In the next three days, she takes in other things as well” (29). She has had no idea of the boys in her flat. As the owner of the house, she should have knowledge of people’s arrival and departure, but nobody considers her one of the owners of the flat. She feels embarrassed in front of her parents and tries to keep them outside the flat as much as possible: “For the next ten days, until they leave, I try to distract them with movie outings and cuisines that they are

unfamiliar with and don't care for" (30). While having a place to stay, she and her parents are roaming the city. She is no longer the owner of her flat and hence has no power to host her parents as well. In this example, sexuality flips the connection of the host and the guest, giving the guests more control. After performing the role of proper host, she receives nothing but wrong treatment from the guests. Exemplary hosts go beyond meeting the minimal requirements of their visitors. The goal of hosts should be to make guests feel valued and welcome, and so does Kari while welcoming the boys into her flat. At the same time, it is the guest's responsibility to give proper treatment and respect to the host. But in the case of Kari, her guests take control over her power as host, leaving her roaming in the city with her parents.

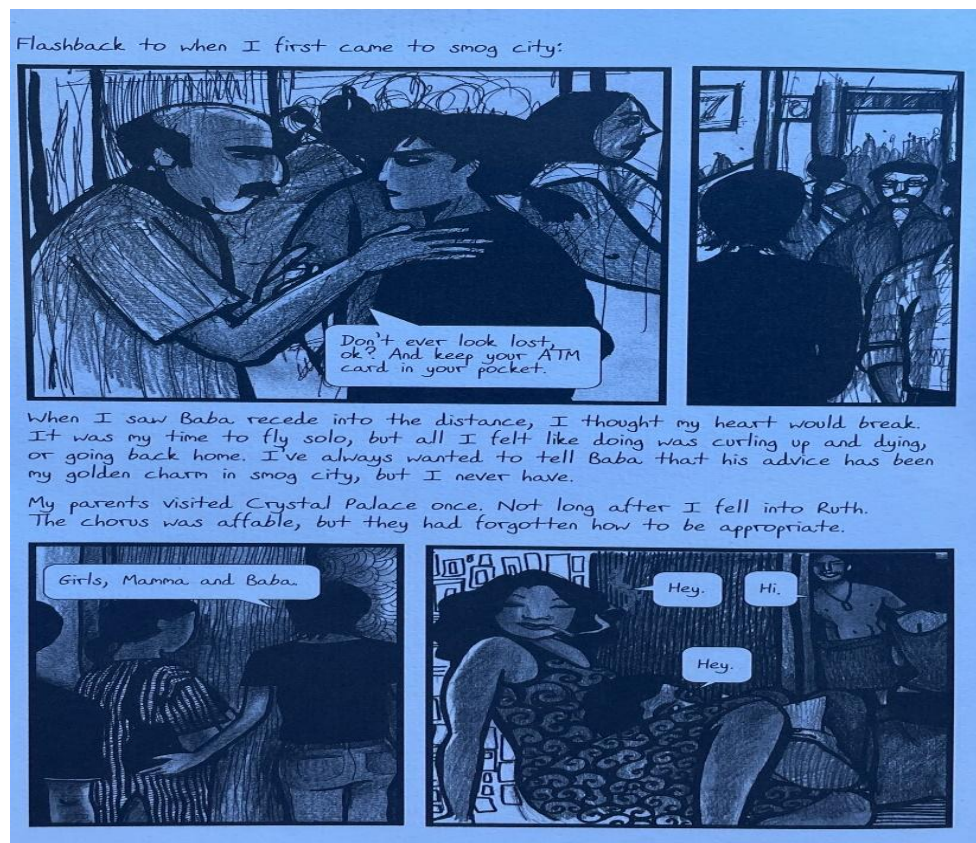


Fig. 5.11 Amruta Patil. *Kari*, 28.

Amruta Patil creates a story in *Kari* where humans are guests in the biological order and nature serves as a primeval host. Derrida's philosophical concept of hospitality can be a useful tool for analysing this framework. In this narrative's

ecological vision, nature seems to represent a kind of unwavering welcome. Human existence is sustained by rivers, forests, and landscapes without explicit requirements or demands for reciprocity. The natural world extends a warm welcome that predates and permits human presence by providing resources, shelter, and sustenance. Derrida does, however, also highlight the conflict that exists within hospitality ethics.

Although unconditional hospitality is a moral ideal, the guest's behavior frequently undermines it. This conflict is shown in *Kari*'s portrayal of humanity's interaction with nature. Human cultures often respond to nature's provision of food and space for human life with environmental deterioration and exploitation. Unchecked consumption disrupts ecological processes, urbanization changes landscapes, and rivers become contaminated. In this way, the human visitor transgresses the implied ethical obligation of hospitality. The host's generosity is met with forms of extraction that ultimately jeopardize the very circumstances of hospitality rather than with consideration or appreciation. Thus, Patil's work offers a crucial ecological allegory that connects with Derrida's thoughts on the morality of housing and hosting. The book highlights the moral imbalance between host and guest in the context of the environment by portraying nature as a host that gives unconditional hospitality. As the visitor, humanity ignores the obligation that comes with such kindness. The harm done to rivers and ecosystems becomes a symbol of this failure, showing how the visitor can turn the host's welcoming area into a place of exploitation.

Amruta Patil frequently highlights scenes of environmental deterioration in her graphic narrative to highlight how humanity's relationship with the natural world is failing. She depicts a dramatic and contradictory scene in which Kari falls into a contaminated sewer – described as a “stinking river of effluents that snakes past our neighbourhood, the one our buildings avert their faces from” (8). This moment becomes profoundly symbolic of the moral relationship between nature as host and humanity as guest when interpreted via the philosophical framework of Derrida's concept of unconditional hospitality. The river nevertheless serves its life-sustaining purpose even though pollution and human neglect have reduced it to a condition of degradation. Paradoxically, it turns into a place of rescue rather than death, representing an extreme kind of unconditional welcome.

The graphic tale shows rivers that have lost their vibrancy and purity in a number of scenes. These bodies of water seem stagnant, contaminated, and disagreeable rather than flowing as sources of sustenance and rejuvenation: “On my way back from work, the stench is a cheerful greeting. Hello, grins the sewer, I am still here. It’s hard to fathom the exact composition of the smell” (41). Foul-smelling rivers serve as a potent ecological metaphor that draws attention to the negative effects of urban growth, industrial pollution, and irresponsible disposal methods. According to Derridean theory, the visitor – humanity – violates the moral duty that goes along with hospitality. Human society reacts by exploiting and neglecting the riches that nature freely and unconditionally provides. As a result, the pollution of rivers becomes a metaphor for a more general breakdown in the moral bond between the host and the visitor. According to Derrida’s philosophy, unconditional hospitality means being open and not putting limitations on the visitor. In this way, nature welcomes humanity without conditions. However, the story shows that this openness makes the host susceptible to exploitation because the visitor frequently misuses the rights bestowed by this kind of hospitality.

In her second graphic novel, *Adi Parva* (2012), Patil has painted many scenarios that can serve as examples of the Derridean concept of hospitality. *Adi Parva* is a great amalgamation of various ancient stories of Rishis and Rishikas. It is a prequel to her third graphic novel, *Sauptik*, which tells the tale of the great Mahabharata. As a prequel, *Adi Parva* narrates the tales of people who are predecessors of the Kauravas and the Pandavas. It is a graphic novel adaptation of Mahabharata. Deepak Rana in his study points out that an “adaptation keeps the main characters of the story intact and simultaneously maintaining things differently around them. In adaptation, use of region specific text and language appropriate to culture into which it is adapted always come into play – it is the case of sensibilities and sentiments of a set of people” (4). He further states, “Sometimes, storyline, settings, dialogues, style and other major characteristics need to be changed to make an adaptation better suited for an environment of a medium, for every media needs different kinds of exposure in the use of elements in making an adaptation. A successful adaptation is one which adapt to its new conditions and brings novelty

every time it is adapted without losing its essence in the meantime” (4-5). Rana adds, “Mahabharata existed in every community, at every time, at every place, facing the ADDITION, SUBTRACTION, MULTIPLICATION and DIVISION of the text and translated, adapted, interpreted and reinterpreted every now and then to serve a purpose bigger than any role in the mankind – the preservation of *dharma*” (8). In his book *Myth and Metaphor*, Frye explains myth of society alters with the passage of time:

Society begins in an age of gods, where laws are assumed to be of divine origin and are interpreted by oracles and divination; it then moves into an age of heroes, where laws are drawn up in the interest of an ascendant class, then to an age of the people, where man is assumed to be responsible for his own laws.... This growth of law is nonliterary development of mythology, and it involves a new allegorical recreation of the mythology at each social phase. When we pass from an age of gods to an age of heroes, the actions of the gods become an allegory of the actions of an aristocracy or privileged class. When we pass to the age of the people, the actions of the aristocracy become an allegory of what we should now call a class struggle. Each interpretation is an effort to say what the original myth ‘really means.’ By doing so, it destroys the myth as a structure and replaces it with the new meaning ... this structural reshaping of myth is what we call literature. As the age of gods becomes the age of heroes, the myths of the gods modulate into romances about human champions; as the age of heroes becomes the age of the people, romance becomes more plausible and realistic. But the same mythical structures, the same devices for beginning and developing and ending the story, persist throughout. (129-130)

In the novel’s ‘Author’s Note’, Patil discusses her intentions behind writing this novel and choosing the particular characters. She points out:

A story passed down through the ages via oral storytellers cannot help but alter. A good storyteller, like a good teacher, speaks in the language of the

hour. Her only allegiance is to the essence of the tale; the essence safeguarded, she is free to improvise the narrative to reflect the time. There are very many stories, and each is an individual thread. The storyteller who wields and unfurls these myriad threads is traditionally known as the sutradhaar, threadbearer. (*Adi Parva* 259)

It shows the beginning of the earth through “Vishnu”, “Brahma,” and “Shiv” (16, 20, 30). The narrative begins with the tale of the beginning of the world: “To know your story, the beginning is as good a place to start as any other. One beginning among countless beginnings. One world among countless others” (15). The narrator minutely narrates the lives of marginalised characters, who are never discussed in detail in earlier ancient manuscripts. One such tale is of Shakuntala, the foster daughter of Kanwa Rishi. Shakuntala is a simple girl who belongs to a normal community of society. She lives with Kanwa Rishi. She is the biological daughter of Vishwamitra and Menaka, an Apsara. She is given the name Shakuntala because Rishi Kanwa discovered her in the forest, where birds guarded her. Indra, the King of the Gods, had directed Menaka to disturb the great sage Vishwamitra from his intense concentration. She was able to divert his attention, and they had a child together. Infuriated by the loss of the virtue he had acquired during his arduous years of rigid asceticism, Vishwamitra withdrew from the kid and mother to return to work. Menaka abandoned Shakuntla, just after birth, on the banks of the Malini River on the heights of the Himalayas after realising she could not leave the kid with him and that she had to return to the celestial regions. Shakuntala was given the name by Rishi Kanwa, who discovered the newborn child in the forest, shielded and protected by birds.

King Dushyanta once travelled through a forest while on a hunting expedition with his army. There were no signs of any humans anywhere in the forest. It was filled with animals. Dushyanta and his mighty army happened to travel through a vast desert before arriving in a healthy forest. There were several ashramas and fruit-bearing trees in that forest. There, Dushyanta discovered the ashrama of Kashyapa Rishi’s son, Rishi Kanwa: “King Dushyant and his hunting party have lost their way and find themselves near Kanwa rishi’s ashram, where he lives with his disciples and his foster daughter Shakuntala” (152). The Malini River was present on all sides. He

met Shakuntala in the ashram and “fell hopelessly in love with Shakuntala” (153). Fulfilling her host duties, Shakuntala welcomed the King and his army without any enquiry. Shakuntala proved to be a true host, providing the King and his army with all that they needed. Her father was absent from the ashram, still she let the wanderers come to her home and offered them the services of her house. She did not care to ask about their whereabouts and their purpose of visiting her house. She simply saw a few guests at the gate of her house and allowed them to come in and live for however long the guests wanted to. However, she also fell in love with King Dushyant, and he could see the light of love in her eyes as well.

In the absence of her father, she married the king. Shakuntala followed unconditional hospitality and even gave her body and soul to the guest. She showed great trust in her guest, and never gave a second thought to her decision of marrying the King. However, King Dushyant proved to be a false guest. His aim was not just to take a shelter but the body and soul of the host, Shakuntala. It is clear from his actions when he forced her to marry him without taking her father’s consent: “What does your father have to do with this? Your heart is your best ally, and your mind your most honest well-wisher. With their consent, how wrong could a decision be?” (154). He took everything he wanted and left her there in the forest alone. When it was time for Dushyant to return to his palace, he made a commitment to send an emissary to accompany her to his castle: “When the time is right, I’ll send for you to come to Hastinapur. You will arrive in full grandeur, as its rightful queen,” he assured her (156). Sampa Paul states:

After Dushyanta’s return to his kingdom, Shakuntala felt for solitariness in the hermitage. She often lost in the deep thoughts of king Dushyanta. She was in her own world and deeply disturbed by the sweet memories of love. She was thinking of Dushyanta’s quick return. One day the guest Durvasa, a great saint with intense anger visited the ashram of sage Kanwa. Shakuntala did not see the sage Durvasa as she was completely absorbed in her thoughts of Dushyanta. Durvasa became frustrated to see Shakuntala not receiving him properly and cursed her... (365)

Hence later on, when Shakuntala took her son to Hastinapur to live there as a prince, she was not acknowledged by the King: “When the time was right, Shakuntala made her way to Hastinapur so Sarvadaman could meet his father. She was guided along the way by a flock of migratory birds. The king she met in the city was quite different from the lover she had embraced in the forest” (Patil, *Adi Parva* 163). In front of his retainers and nobility, Dushyanta rejected the youngster and his mother, stating that he did not know the mother, did not recollect having slept with her, and that the boy she had brought with her could not be six years old: “You barge in when we’re discussing matters of state. I don’t recall any promise and I am not even sure I recall your face” (164). Shakuntala had the king’s child in the interim, and after he dumped her, she nurtured the child with the help of a sage. The following images show the way Shakuntala acted as a true host for King Dushyant and how King Dushyant failed her. Dushyant left her and returned to his palace. In this relationship, there is a give and take as both the guest and the host fulfil their societal commitments. However, only the host, Shakuntala, in this case fulfilled her duties, and the guest, Dushyant, ignored them.

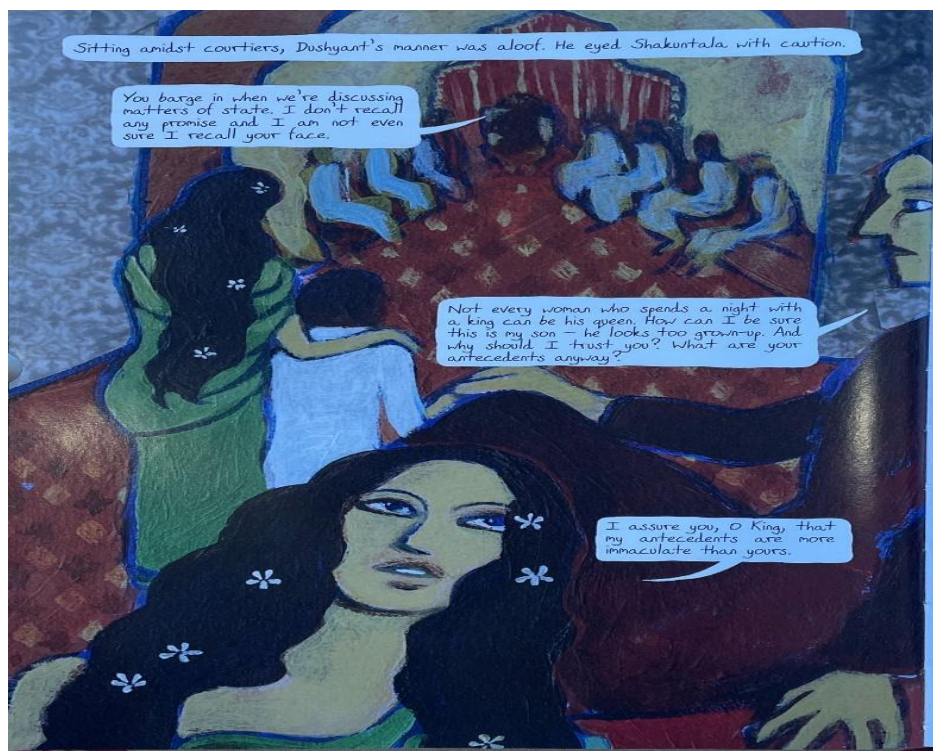


Fig. 5.12 Amruta Patil. *Adi Parva*, 165.

Patil's third graphic novel *Sauptik* (2016) is a sequel to her earlier graphic novel *Adi Parva*. This graphic narrative follows the lives of the Pandavas and the Kauravas right from their birth to the great war, the Mahabharata. The narrator of the narrative is Ashwatthama, who himself has a pivotal part in the lives of the Pandavas and the Kauravas. This graphic narrative shows the complexity involved in the host-guest relationship in multiple ways with the help of many characters. One such relationship is demonstrated in this graphic narrative with the help of one of the major characters, Shakuni. Shakuni is regarded as one of the primary antagonists in the epic Mahabharata. Shakuni's life story is not explicitly described in the narrative. Other legendary and historical accounts, however, provide insight into his life. Shakuni is the Prince of Gandhara. He has a sister, named Gandhari. He loves his sister unconditionally. The little kingdom of Gandhara is encircled by beautiful mountains and landscapes. He is a good brother, father, husband, son, and king. Shakuni is the eldest among his siblings. He is well known for his exceptional political intelligence. His sister gets married to Dhritrashtra, the blind prince of Hastinapur. He comes with his sister to her husband's house as a permanent guest. He lives in Hastinapur in the service of his sister's sons. Hastinapur received Shakuni with open arms and offered him unconditional hospitality. The Kingdom of Hastinapur acts as a true host while welcoming Shakuni. Hastinapur allows him to spend his life as he wants. Even he is allowed to indulge in the political matters of Hastinapur without any second thought. He is considered a family member by Dhritrashtra's family. However, Shakuni hates Hastinapur and the people living in this kingdom.

When analyzed through Derrida's concept of hospitality, the figure of Shakuni holds a contradictory place in the narrative economy of the Mahabharata. At least on the surface, Hastinapur's treatment of Shakuni seems to resemble the moral ideal of unconditional hospitality: as a marriage relative, he is freely admitted into the royal household, given access, trust, and political closeness. Shakuni's behavior as a visitor seriously undermines the moral foundation of hospitality. Instead of showing loyalty or appreciation in return for the host's candor, he uses his position to control the Kauravas, especially Duryodhana, in order to get revenge. He is instrumental in helping Duryodhana defeat the Pandavas in the notorious dice game. As

Duryodhana's emissary, Shakuni uses his alleged skill with dice – typically interpreted as the use of loaded or enchanted dice – to strategically influence the game's result: "The dice were no ordinary dice, you see. Shakuni had loaded their hearts dark and heavy. The dice would fall only as he wanted them to" (Patil, *Sauptik* 168).

His behavior is a prime example of what Derrida may refer to as the "perversion" (*Of Hospitality*, 53) of hospitality: after being welcomed, the visitor takes on a role that allows the host to be undermined. In this way, Shakuni exposes the structural weakness inherent in the idea of unconditional welcome rather than just breaking social conventions around guest hood. When the guest takes advantage of the lack of boundaries, the host's kindness becomes the condition of its own downfall. Shakuni's behavior as a visitor seriously undermines the moral foundation of hospitality. Furthermore, the ethical dichotomy of host and guest is complicated by his intentions, which stem from hatred over his sister Gandhari's marriage to a blind monarch. His presence in Hastinapur is not that of an impartial stranger, but rather that of a person with hidden agendas and past grievances. According to Derrida's theory, we might interpret this as a situation in which the stranger is never fully external since he is already involved in a web of political and familial ties that make it difficult to distinguish between inside and outside. As a result, his moral transgression cannot be the only reason for the failure of hospitality here; it also illustrates how impossible it is to maintain pure, unconditional hospitality in a society shaped by power, history, and unresolved conflict.

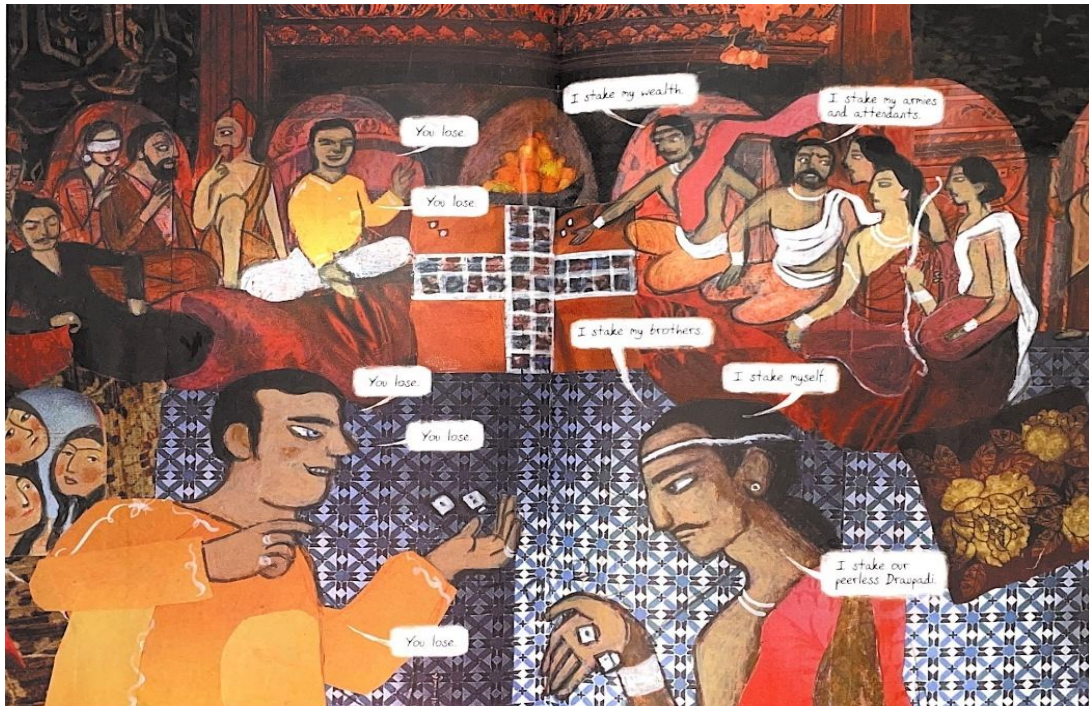


Fig. 5.13 Amruta Patil. *Sauptik*, 170, 171.

The character of Karn provides an engaging setting for analyzing Derrida's concept of hospitality within the graphic narrative. In this sense, Karn is a model host because of his well-known promise of generosity, which keeps him completely receptive to the needs of the other. His identity as a giver is determined by an unwavering ethical commitment to the act of giving itself, even when doing so results in personal loss, rather than by calculation or reciprocity: "As a little boy he gave his clothes away to the poor, came home naked. As a teenager he gave away the jewels he had. As a young man, if someone asked for his loyalty and heart – he gave both, unstingingly. He had no desire to hoard anything for himself" (Patil, *Sauptik* 106).

The story where Indra approaches Karn in disguise to ask for his heavenly armour and earrings is the most striking example of this moral inclination. Karn does not decline the request even though he is aware of the possible repercussions of giving up his protective abilities: "With the same fecklessness he viewed all material things with, Karn peeled off his golden armour and gave it away to the first person who asked" (106). According to Derridean theory, this situation is close to the ideal of unconditional hospitality as Karn does not question the visitor's identity, purpose, or

legitimacy or place restrictions on what can be provided. Rather, he exhibits an openness that surpasses the rationality of self-interest, providing even what is necessary for his own existence.

True hospitality, according to Derrida, entails a sort of dispossession in which the host is no longer in control of his own territory. In this way, Karn's body becomes the pinnacle of hospitality: the armor that once protected his identity as an unbeatable warrior is given up to the visitor, leaving him exposed. This act demonstrates how unconditional hospitality functions not only at the level of property but also at the level of being itself, blurring the line between existential exposure and material giving. Karn's transparency is therefore met with instrumentalization rather than reciprocity. This asymmetry is made clearer by Derrida's framework: because unconditional hospitality entails no obligations in return, the guest may take advantage of the host. As a result, Karn's gift becomes an example of how the host's moral rectitude and the guest's calculated strategy coexist, highlighting the fundamental conflict between politics and ethics. Karn satisfies the finest standards of hospitality by providing the visitor everything, but he also contributes to the reasoning that ultimately brings him to ruin.

Aranyaka (2019) is Patil's latest known work. Though its storyline demonstrates the time of early ages, it is still applicable in the modern world. In the story, how different students are received in Katyayani's home is a microcosm of how strangers or unexpected visitors are typically welcomed. The two types of hospitality Derrida discusses in his book *Of Hospitality* are directly related to the idea of hospitality that appears in *Aranyaka*. The names Katyayani and the Fig belong to two important characters in this graphic novel. Katyayani, who lives in her well-maintained and stable house outside a forest, allows a stranger named the Fig into her house. Katyayani embodies the characteristic of the unconditional host as articulated by Derrida by welcoming home a wanderer: "M, who came to be known as the Fig, arrived here alone and unescorted, terrifying apparition covered in soot" (113). The host-guest relationship between Katyayani and the Fig exemplifies the idea of unconditional hospitality by letting the Fig continue as a guest without any restriction.

Sadly, the Fig confirms the danger of unconditional hospitality as described by Derrida as she begins to assume Katyayani's role in her husband's life, who provides the Fig with shelter and other amenities without expecting anything in return.

Katyayani and Y have met for the first time with each other in the forest, where Katyayani has been living in exile and enjoying the forest's little supplies. Y has also visited the Aranya to seek enlightenment at the same time. After spending some time exploring and learning about the forest, Y starts a school for his followers so that he can teach them his knowledge. His wife, Katyayani, initially dislikes the shift and finds it difficult to detach herself from the forest. But ultimately, she learns to appreciate her time in the grove she has made for herself. The voyage of Katyayani from the wilderness to civilisation is conjured up in the following portions of Aranyaka, such as "others," "field," and "grove," particularly in light of her part in Y's life. Y's newly established school starts attracting students from far and wide, including the Weaver, Uppi, the Fig, and many more. She allows her visitors to stay in her house without inquiring about them.

The following picture shows the arrival of the Fig as an unknown guest and Katyayani's absolute welcome as an unconditional host, thus fulfilling the characteristics of an unconditional hospitality. Thus, no inquiry from her part proves her a host who does not want any authority over the guests resembling a host in the framework of unconditional hospitality. The universe of Y is clearly distinguished from her own. She says, "The forest as Y knew it was so different from the forest I knew" (42). Y has relocated to the forest in search of enlightenment, and Katyayani is born there. They must travel together as the two ends in the braid of Aranyaka's circle of life, which are Katyayani and Y. Y constructs his classroom to train students in the technique of knowledge acquisition. On the other hand, Katyayani decides to take on the responsibilities of managing his home and household tasks. She always neglected her husband's desires regarding her attending classroom lessons. Her neglect aids the starting of a new relationship between Y and the Fig. She never goes to Y's classroom for lessons; she is always worried that it will be difficult to get food on time if she goes for the lessons. So, she always says, "Who will feed us then?" (65).

In contrast to Katyayani, the Fig always remains attentive in the classroom, thus attaining Y's attention towards her: "M fed something in Y, a hunger I could not fathom" (113). Katyayani begins to realise her mistake of letting the Fig into her house. She starts hating the Fig when she notices a sudden change in Y's behaviour towards her and his scholar at the same time: "When the soot came off, I hated her even more. What made this new arrival so unbearable? Her stomata and lenticels I couldn't identify" (114).

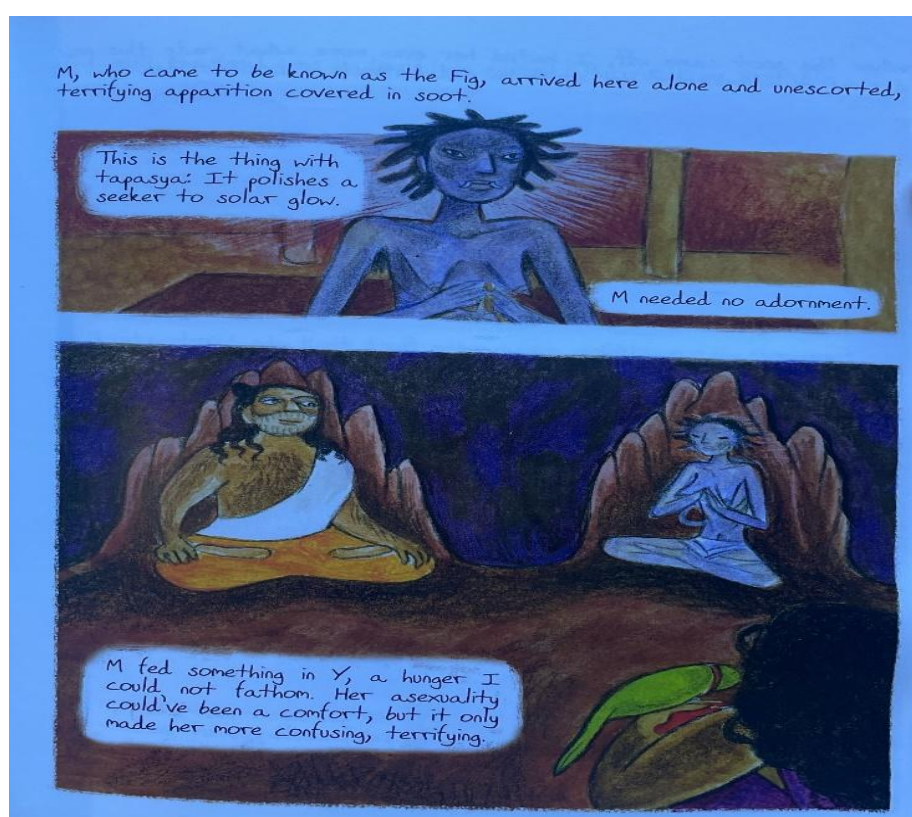


Fig. 5.14 Amruta Patil. *Aranyaka*, 113.

The Fig is a beautiful woman who understands her caliber. She thinks she is not made for sitting in four walls and doing household chores. As soon as she realises her skills, she left her house: "One day, M escaped in search of a teacher" (117). She knows about her beauty, so "she made herself unthreatening to the spouses of prospective teachers, so they wouldn't see her as a rival" (117). However, not her beauty but her intelligence attracted Y's attention: "The Fig's equanimity made her

popular confidante of the alphas. They mistook her quietness for complicity and fed on her receptiveness. Even Y, who thought he lived on air and pure intent, was a glutton for her attention. He gave her a special place in the class” (134). In addition, he starts ignoring his wife’s love and affection for him. He starts rejecting the food cooked by Katyayani, especially for him, leading her in devastated condition.

Katyayani’s condition is well expressed when she confronts her husband: “Such greatness to reject food and love for lofty thoughts while your wife starves for your touch” (135). Y is so overwhelmed with the Fig’s personality that he starts arguing with his wife: “I’ve failed you. You fed me for years, but I gave you no comforts. I will find a way to repay your debt and set you free” (135). This shows how the arrival of an unknown guest tears up the life of the host and her family.

Derrida explains the reason behind such behaviour of the guest: “the stranger, here the awaited guest, is not only someone to whom you say ‘come,’ but ‘enter,’ enter without waiting, make a pause in our home without waiting, hurry up and come in, ‘come inside,’ ‘come within me,’ not only toward me, but within me: occupy me, take place in me, which means, by the same token, also take my place, don’t content yourself with coming to meet me or ‘into my home’” (*Of Hospitality* 122). It is the host who allows the guest to enter his/her home and take the host’s place. Y yearns to be free of the constraints of a family and house. He finally leaves Katyayani and their home to continue a new journey with a new companion, the Fig. He tells Katyayani that the two of them are incompatible and that they ought to go their own ways: “I must withdraw from all this. I’m sorry for everything I did wrong. Forgive me, Katyayani, and allow me to go” (Patil, *Aranyaka* 152). Katyayani exemplifies unconditional hospitality when she welcomes a newcomer named M who has no place to stay and a valid identity to live with her. Katyayani makes an effort to be welcoming to this visitor in all ways unconditionally. Sadly, M fails to behave as a true guest by ruining the peaceful life of Katyayani.

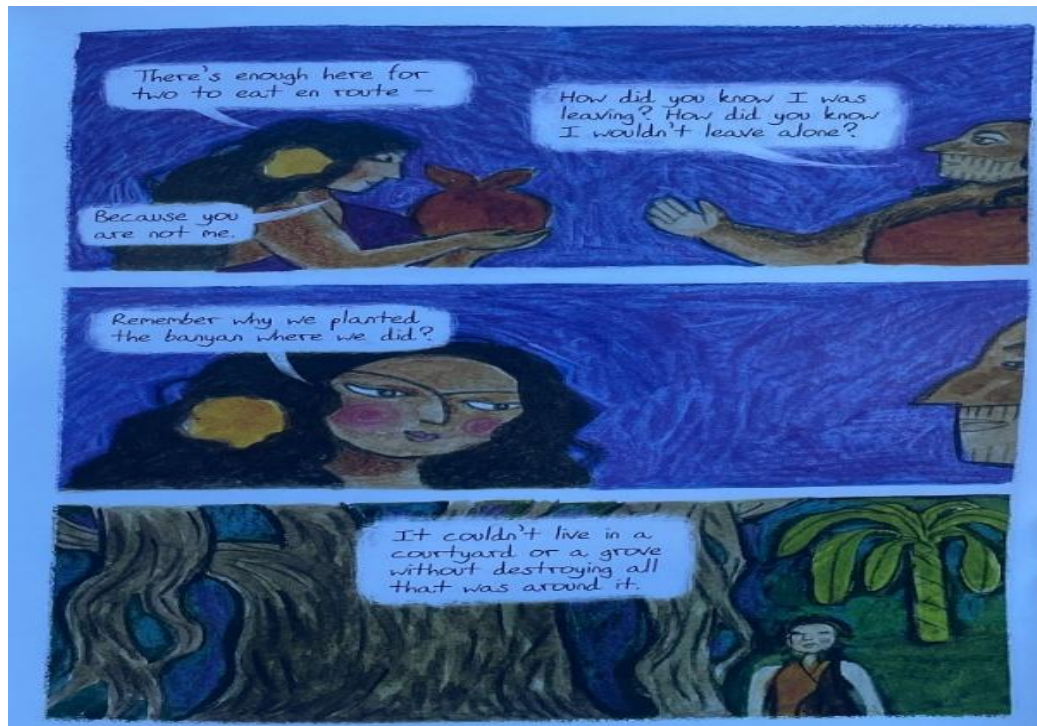


Fig. 5.15 Amruta Patil. *Aranyaka*, 153.

Derrida was certain of the dangers of practicing unconditional hospitality, where a host is compelled to accept the “risk of the other coming and destroying the place, initiating a revolution, stealing everything, and killing everyone” (Derrida, *Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility* 71). Therefore, there is an inferred link between unconditional hospitality and violence and risk. Derrida’s idea challenges the fundamental tenets of hospitality, exposing its inconsistencies and the moral ramifications of welcoming the other. Derrida presents the concept of hospitality as an intractable and paradoxical conflict between two conflicting but complementary demands. The law of unrestricted hospitality, on the one hand, requires that the other be received without reservation, without bias, and without expectations. The conditional laws of hospitality, on the other hand, regulate the legal and practical frameworks through which hospitality is offered and frequently place limitations and demands on the visitor. The core contradiction of hospitality is created by this duality: being genuinely hospitable requires being open to others without any limitations, but being hospitable also entails having control over a guest’s admission and stay. Conditional hospitality functions in the domains of politics, law, and social

conventions. It entails establishing obligations and rights, as well as figuring out who can enter, when, and for how long. The laws and regulations that regulate this type of hospitality frequently represent the beliefs and interests of the host community. Although it is essential for communities to function, it is by its very nature exclusive and constrained because it is unable to provide the complete transparency required by unconditional hospitality.

In contrast to this, according to Derrida, unconditional hospitality is a moral principle that is independent of political and legal frameworks. It is distinguished by an openness to the other that is independent of their status, identity, or level of recognition. In order to practice this type of hospitality, the host must greet the visitor without requesting their name, nationality, or other identifying information. It is a complete openness that comes before all expectations and circumstances. Derrida concedes that such an ideal is practically impossible to achieve. The act of hospitality is subject to conditions since it requires identity and recognition in order to be performed. This contradiction underlines how impossible it is to provide unconditional, genuine welcome. However, it is precisely this difficulty that upholds the moral requirement of hospitality, compelling us to pursue it despite our awareness of its impossibility. Derrida's examination of hospitality forces us to confront the moral and political ramifications of extending hospitality to others. It forces us to examine the terms under which we extend welcome and to acknowledge the restrictions and exclusions ingrained in our hospitality practices. Additionally, it challenges us to think critically about how the ideas of home, homeland, and belonging influence our relationships with others by calling for the dismantling of these concepts. A larger struggle between the moral obligation to welcome others without reservation and the pragmatic realities that call for limits and exclusions is reflected in the contradiction between unconditional and conditional hospitality. Instead of providing a solution to this conflict, Derrida highlights how critical it is to maintaining the relevance and urgency of the hospitality issue. We are compelled to interact with one another and to regularly reevaluate our hospitality practices because of this unresolved conflict.

Since unconditional hospitality does not impose any conditions or obligations in return, there is always a chance that a visitor will turn on a host. As a result, a host must constantly be on guard while extending unrestricted hospitality because it is impossible to predict how a visitor will react. As a result, in a place without any constraints, a guest can injure the host. The people mentioned above demonstrate the risk of unrestricted hospitality by using their hosts, who give them shelter, to their advantage. Shakuni, the Fig, Orgo, and Zap, King Dushyant, as well as Britishers and Industrialists, plot to remove their hosts from their own house or country. By abusing their trust and naivety, the visitors took advantage of their hosts, demonstrating the flaw in unconditional hospitality. The hosts that are detailed above welcome their guests without any requirements that they do them no damage; yet, the hosts ultimately pay the price for that. The host and guest relationship starts with a welcome in all of the novels of Banerjee and Patil, but with differing degrees of sincerity. In the graphic narratives, there is frequently a dearth of authenticity that highlights the nuanced nature of the guest and host relationship. The interactions between guests and hosts are complicated by factors including race, social class, and gender, as seen by these complex hospitable encounters. The many examples mentioned above illustrate how hospitality can sometimes be utilised for selfish ends. Every host has a goal, and every visitor has objectives.

Derrida thinks that extending hospitality to others serves as a moral examination for both individuals and nations. The guest is rarely undervalued or, in the worst situations, rejected throughout everyday interactions with them. The guest is often required to embrace the host's viewpoints in the spirit of hospitality. According to Derrida, allowing the guests to exist on their terms allows the host to have new experiences. People frequently fall short in their attempts to act in a gracious manner, despite their best efforts, which complicates the hospitality relationship. Genuine hospitality appears to be a bit of a mystery, according to Derrida's beliefs. The reason behind this is not a philosophical conundrum, but rather the fact that hospitality cannot be known with any degree of objectivity. A gift offered by the host to the guest and subsequently shared, hospitality is a quality that can only be understood via lived

experience. The essence of hospitality is an act of kindness witnessed by the guest that temporarily transforms an outsider into a good companion.

Conclusion

This research work pushes the graphic novels of Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil within Derridean deconstructive perspective for examining and inspecting the different aspects of their narratives in terms of Derridean deconstruction. This work analyses their graphic narratives from Derrida's deconstructive approach for pulling apart the stability, singularity and single meaning of the texts under study. It navigates the intricate and convoluted philosophical trajectories of the Western European tradition concerning the metaphysics of presence and its significant influences and consequences, which have manifested as inhibiting and fossilising deadlocks of aporia in meaning and centralised structures of human thought, thereby hindering the exploration of new horizons. The study aims to analyse the texts under study through a Derridean deconstructive lens. As a result, the current study tries to interpret the texts' many aspects. Simply put, the terminology examined in this work are pertinent to the nature of the study. This work shows how the binary oppositions, phonocentrism and hospitality imprint precautionary effects on mindset of human beings, and lead them to the aporetic trap of omnipresent and omnipotent logos. The study aimed to reveal how characters are trapped within the illusory web of the logos due to the preventive stumbling aporic blocks of centralised and fossilised structure of their minds. The study also comes to the conclusion that until and unless man dismantles the logocentrism of the dominant tradition of the metaphysics of presence—which places the assumed logos at the center of our vision of the universe—he will not be able to perceive and interpret the text.

Essentially, this research work has shown that the texts studied are dynamic, complex structures that encourage ongoing interpretation and reinterpretation rather than being static entities with set meanings. By dismantling the closed interpretive frameworks, phonocentric biases, and binary oppositions that have historically guided our comprehension of these texts, the study has highlighted the value of accepting ambiguity and difference in the search for meaning and created new opportunities for critical engagement. In addition to enhancing reader's comprehension of the texts themselves, this deconstructive method questions more general cultural and

philosophical presumptions, promoting a more inclusive and morally conscious way of reading and interpreting literature. The “metaphysics of presence” which emphasises immediacy, stability, and singular meaning, is one of the fundamental frameworks of Western metaphysics that is contested in this work. This work exposes the inconsistencies and complexity present in Western philosophy by challenging binary oppositions, phonocentrism, and hospitality.

This research work seeks to provide alternate interpretations of a text. It offers a different way of understanding graphic novels as a truly textual-visual medium. In order to do this, the graphic novels of the selected authors are analysed with a Derridean approach. The approach is developed by first highlighting the gaps in the literature that has already been written and the study of graphic novels. This is achieved by looking at the graphic novels from the perspective of their visuals, since the images in these works have been more carefully studied. This thesis aims to both describe and conduct a series of close readings influenced by Derrida’s philosophy, investigating it in and through ancient and early modern life representations in the works of Banerjee and Patil. It attempts to enter the texts themselves, engaging not only in observation but also in the performative gestures that give them life. A method like this has to be imaginative. It is a countersignature that both confirms the accuracy of a text and adds new information in the process. It is a technique of reading as an event in this sense, even though it goes beyond the limitations of methodology in terms of expectation, prediction, and control. Using this method, the second goal is to attest to the importance of Derrida’s writings to early modern texts and the allure and productivity of reading with him. This was accomplished by reading both inside and outside of our main texts to bring the disruptive back-and-forth motion of the performative in motion—the dynamism that drives all literature to life. This requires examining the contradictory behaviours of the different personalities in order to reveal their innately additional and polarising characteristics. Similarly, this work unearths the self-limiting paradoxes that underpin the core ideas of authority, identity, and the absolute with the help of Derrida’s concepts of binary opposition, phonocentrism, and hospitality.

The attention to multiplicity and close reading in the contemporary, early modern critical canon is addressed by what has been seen and done here. Additionally, it addresses important topics of the time as binary opposition, phonocentrism, and hospitality. But it does it in a way that is critical and innovative, striving to go beyond the limitations of the historicist approach that presently rules the subject. We give centuries-old texts a voice in the present by approaching reading as an event and realising that something irreparable happens every time we read. This keeps the texts alive and active in a way that trying to reproduce the past does not. One example of how Derrida-influenced close reading can enliven early modern texts is this examination of the ideas of binary oppositions, phonocentrism, and hospitality.

The goal of the current study is to use Derridean deconstruction to analyse the works of Banerjee and Patil from a fresh and creative angle. It illustrates how phonocentrism and binarism have preventative effects on the human mental structure. People submit to the authority of ingrained customs. The goal of the study is to demonstrate how the graphic techniques employed in these works by Banerjee and Patil challenge preconceived notions about graphic novels and approach the texts in a manner that is very similar to Derridean deconstruction, which discards and dissects the text's fixedness of meaning or inherent transcendental meaning. This study aims to investigate if humankind can establish a peaceful environment founded on a shared conviction in our common humanity, as well as the degree to which ideas and things have evolved or stayed the same over time. These urgent concerns that have captured the interest of scholars, writers, activists, and researchers have received a lot of attention during this investigation. The novels of Banerjee and Patil have mostly been studied in depth, providing insightful analyses of these intricate subjects. This final section synthesises the key findings covered in the previous chapters and provides a thorough summary. The conclusion summarises the main ideas and issues covered in the first several chapters and integrates and evaluates them.

It also highlights areas that need more research and inquiry, providing ideas and recommendations for further investigations. The ideas of binary opposition, phonocentrism, and hospitality have all been thoroughly examined in the preceding

chapters, especially as they pertain to the novels of Banerjee and Patil. The researcher highlights the important discoveries that address the goals stated in this study in this final chapter. The research's examination of the books and topics has illuminated the nuanced ways in which binary oppositions are expressed in modern culture. The writings of Banerjee and Patil offer perceptive viewpoints on the effects of binarism on people and communities, emphasising the continuous challenges that these people encounter. Through a thorough analysis of the graphic novels' complex layers of binarism, phonocentrism, and hospitality, this study has revealed the significant impacts that adhering to these ideologies may have on both individual and group experiences. It has made clear how discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender, and class maintains power imbalances and obstructs the pursuit of true identities.

Additionally, the research has placed a strong emphasis on appreciating a variety of voices and narratives, which has helped to advance our knowledge of binary opposition, phonocentrism, and hospitality. Addressing the ingrained prejudices that support discrimination is made feasible by elevating the voices of the marginalised and challenging prevailing narratives. The study recognises that discrimination against people of different classes and genders is a persistent problem, but it also emphasises the possibility of progress and change. By analysing the nuanced depictions of binary opposition, phonocentrism, and hospitality in the works of Banerjee and Patil, the study elucidates the complexities of human experiences and the common humanity that unites all people. We can work towards a more inclusive and equitable society by empathetically recognising and actively challenging oppressive systems of oppression.

This study discusses the lives and works of Banerjee and Patil in detail, along with the factors behind the emergence of Indian graphic novels. This will make an effort to examine the genesis of images, their subsequent usage, and the way in which word and image are juxtaposed to create a new story. An attempt has been made to examine the growing significance of Indian graphic works within the canon of Indian literature. The status and influence of visual images, together with their uses and

misuses, have been the subject of a deluge of discourses, comments, and ideas during the past few decades. Graphic novels have seen tremendous growth in both the industrialised and many developing countries. It makes obvious that the current deluge of pictures and the profusion of critical analysis that aims to make sense of this proliferation will significantly have impacts on the sphere of cultural creation as a whole. The substance and form of contemporary literary fiction have been significantly impacted by the widespread exchange of pictures over the last half of the 20th and the first two decades of the 21st centuries. In order to answer some important problems about the relationship between literature, visual culture, and reader functions, this work evaluates the suggestions and value of images for the production of stories. Comprehending the written word and visual components of a graphic novel generates a distinct form of literacy that is not inferior to conventional reading.

The selection of their works is primarily based on how well Banerjee and Patil address the topics and the fact that the only thing they have in common is the genre. Furthermore, not much documented research has been done on these graphic novelists. Their graphic novels are appealing to all of our senses. Banerjee navigates the challenging spaces of this visual medium by fusing his western bourgeois modernism with Indian visual culture to create narratives that defy the traditional novelistic mode. The graphic story genre has shown itself to be highly appropriate for portraying the voice of the disillusioned women. Amruta Patil takes complete advantage of this genre. She uses her painting skills efficiently for representing the plight of women in ancient as well as modern Indian society. She depicts strong female characters in all of her graphic novels. Her visual storytelling explores the topic of unequal roles for men and women, which has been one of the most important and longest-running disputes in human history. Ironically, this is the oldest problem as well as the most recent. Indian women, who have historically been oppressed by men, have written numerous works of literature advocating for justice in their fight for equality and emancipation.

The Indian graphic narrative has undoubtedly matured over time, having progressed from suspense and mythology to fables, folklore, fiction, wit and humour, Sanskrit literature, conflict, social injustice, and even autobiographies and personal

life accounts of historical personalities and nationalist leaders. While most of the graphic narratives about Indian history are based more on popular interpretations than on in-depth academic research, they have been successful in raising consciousness and generating enthusiasm in country's illustrious legacy. Battleground or struggle scenes are portrayed without being obscene or nasty. While many of these pieces claim to have amazing visuals, very few, if any, actually copy Western graphic storytelling. In India, graphic novels are becoming more and more popular over time. They have effectively matured into a really Indian style of narrativisation by Indianising the Western influences on them, no doubt inspired and affected by developments in other nations. Once again, the story is enhanced by the use of mixed media and the mingling of genres, which surpass boundaries and introduce powerful emotional moods, abstract ideas, and interpretive possibilities. This research shows that, aside from adding a visual element to the text, an Indian graphic novel fulfils all the requirements of a literary work, including character development, plot, and metaphorical language use. This narrative approach broadens the range of depictions that address themes of gender, marginalisation, violence against women, child abuse, and caste prejudice. Indian authors now have access to a new language for critiquing politics, religion, socioeconomic situations, issues of sexuality, and marginalisation: the language of the graphic narrative, which is the interaction of image and word.

This work elaborates on and analyses the deconstructionist approach espoused by Jacques Derrida. Derrida uses deconstruction as an anti-logocentrism technique. The goals of Derrida's deconstruction are to displace, decentralise, and dismantle logos. Deconstruction is a critical analysis of texts that demonstrates the variety of interpretations that are possible for a given text. Derrida notes that a text has multiple meanings that reverberate. This suggests that one must abandon the quest for the text's cohesive, single meaning. It is actually not appropriate to view the text as a cohesive entity. By considering the metaphors in the text and considering alternative interpretations of the words – meanings the author may not have intended – the attention should instead be on the irregularities and paradoxes of meaning in the text. Apart from connecting the meanings found in the text with those that are missing but can still be connected to it, the reader has the option to challenge, invert, or replace

established hierarchies and oppositions. Deconstruction is, thus, a type of what has traditionally been referred to as a critique. An analysis of a theoretical system's shortcomings is not the same as critiquing it. It is not a list of suggestions meant to improve the system. It is a study that centres on the viability of that system. The criticism proceeds backward from what is normal, evident, self-evident, or universal in order to demonstrate the significance of these things, their historical background, and the influences they have on subsequent developments.

The study's theoretical approach is the Derridean approach. Thus, it delves further into the deconstruction theory and the opinions of its principal proponents. Also, in this study, important Derridean concepts like binary oppositions, phonocentrism, and hospitality are uncovered in order to examine the graphic texts of Banerjee and Patil. A description of the life, works, accomplishments, and philosophy of Jacques Derrida, as well as an attempt to place him in his respective age, are included in this research work. It also contains the opinions of a variety of intellectuals regarding Jacques Derrida and his theory of deconstruction.

Furthermore, the concept of binary opposition is analysed. In this instance, three opposing pairs are examined: high class and low class, man and woman, and heterosexuality and homosexuality. All of them are investigated in terms of the story, the characters, the setting, and the ensuing philosophy. The focus of the study has been on nine novels: five of them are by Banerjee and four by Patil. This research work thus examines the ways in which these novels display the binary structure in three parts. The texts of Banerjee deal with the binary of high class and low class. Almost all the novels of Banerjee portray this binary pair of high class and low class. In Banerjee's first novel, *Corridor* (2004), the lower-class people are represented by the shopkeepers like Rangoonwalla and various street vendors shown in the different panels throughout the novel. They are sketched thin, filthy, and dirty in comparison to high-class people almost at every stage of the plot. Indians in *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* (2007) are treated as lower-class people by the British. Indians are mostly appointed as servants in the British households. They are appointed to do the chores that are not suited to any Britisher in India. Like the huccaburdars, valets and carriage drivers are all Indians. They are forced to do these chores without their will,

and that too on low wages. Even the wealthy Indians like Tarachand are not spared by the Britishers. Britishers weigh rich Indians and their servants on the same scale. There is no difference between a rich and poor Indian for Britishers. They are all lower-class people for them. J.C. Bose in *The Harappa Files* (2011) is another character who faces hardships in his life because of the binary of high class and low class. As a colonised subject under Britishers, he loses the one and only chance of achieving the Nobel Prize. Low-class people in *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* (2016) are deprived of water in the capital city of Delhi. They do not have the privilege of a basic amount of water, which is necessary to live a peaceful life in Delhi. High-class people get more water than the lower class on the basis of their wealth. Water prices are skyrocketing which makes it impossible for a low-class person to buy an adequate amount of water to fulfil his or her basic needs. These are the high-class people who decide the prices of water and ultimately the devastated lifestyle of low-class people in the city of Delhi. Banerjee's fifth novel, *Doab Dil* (2019), depicts the situation of Indian soldiers under the British. It shows that the Britishers live a life of high quality and force the natives of their colonised land to live under their rule. Thus, Indian soldiers too receive the same treatment as a common man under Britishers receives. The war stories of brave Indian soldiers who fought in World War II from the British side were left untold and unrecognised by the British rulers.

Moreover, the narrative of *Adi Parva* shows how men rule, as they do in all patriarchal societies. In this narrative, Gandhari is forced to marry blind prince Dhritarashtra for the sake of a marriage alliance between two kingdoms. She has to sacrifice her happiness for the sake of her father's wish to make his kingdom strong by establishing a relationship with the kingdom of Hastinapur. Like Gandhari, Ambika and Ambalika are also used to give heirs to the Kingdom of Hastinapur. They both are forced to bear children of Vyasa so that the Kingdom of Hastinapur can have a rightful heir to the throne. Draupadi in *Sauptik: Blood and Flowers* (2016) also faces many problems in the male dominant society. She marries five men just to feed the ego of male-dominated society. She has to follow the rules made by men to run society according to their will. She confines herself to a limited world, and on the contrary, her five husbands live as they want to. Her five husbands even married other

women, leaving Draupadi alone and devastated. It is only Draupadi who has to follow the rules of marriage, where as her husbands are free to choose as many wives they want to. In *Aranyaka* (2019), Katyayani always faces dominance from the side of Y, her husband. He makes her feel inferior in every aspect of life. He never considers her point of view in taking decisions related to both of their lives. Her talent and competence are never recognised by Y. He underestimates her knowledge of cooking because he thinks the knowledge he has is the only knowledge required to survive in the world. Just because he is a man, he has the opportunity to decide the importance of the knowledge he imparts. This study demonstrates the binary of heterosexuality and homosexuality in Amruta Patil's very first novel, *Kari* (2008). The novel's homosexual protagonist, Kari, is forced to live a secluded life in a world dominated by heterosexuals. Patil, through Kari, shows that homosexuality is still not accepted in our society. Homosexuals are still considered a bad influence on our society. However, all these people who are marginalised deconstruct the concept of binary opposition. Some do this by interrogating the hierarchy, some by excelling in their regimes, and some by proving their worth.

The goal of Derrida's deconstruction is to destroy the entire framework of western philosophy. Because, in his opinion, it has been misled by its abhorrent inability to understand the nature of language and meaning since the time of Plato. This thesis deconstructs the age-old phonocentric ideology of society by analysing the graphic texts of Banerjee and Patil. Phonocentrism is the ideology that supports the belief that speech is more important and reliable than that of writing. Through the character analysis, the study shows the consequences of following this ideology. For instance, in Banerjee's *Corridor* (2004), the researcher finds many people in the novel following the ideology of phonocentrism. One such character is Shintu, who falls under the spell of the magical words of Hakim and ends up losing his money. He believes in every word of Hakim in pursuit of his happiness. The hakim tells him to use a certain oil to last long in sexual intercourse, and desperate Shintu agrees to each and every word of that hakim. He takes no interest in checking the hakim's certificates. He does not even look at the bottle label once to make sure he has bought a good thing, and hence, faces the consequences of favouring speech over writing.

The anonymous protagonist of *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* (2007) too chooses speech over writing. He is looking for a book throughout the novel because he has heard a rumour that the book costs a large amount in the present time. He starts searching for the book because he is eager to get money. He not even once thinks about the content written in the book that actually makes that book costly. This clearly indicates that he is following phonocentric ideology.

Furthermore, another incident that proves that he gives preference to speech over writing is when he ignores the list given to him by Digital Dutta. The list contains the names of the people who may have his book, but the protagonist does not take interest in this list either and simply follows the person whom Digital suggests to follow. Hence, the unknown protagonist fails in finding the book at the right time. At the end, he discovers that the book has always been in the possession of Digital Dutta. He may have found the book if he has taken any interest in the written documents that Digital uses to find the book. In *The Harappa Files* (2011), phonocentric ideology is represented through the characters of Banerjee, a committee member, the salesmen in the Jaguar car showroom, and many more. All these people's lives are surrounded by the phonocentric views. They visualise their society and people living in it through this ideology. For instance, the salesmen in the Jaguar car showroom are trained to influence people with their words. They are required to put words in the ears of their customers that are suitable to their personalities, and what they want to hear. Banerjee's *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* (2016), however, presents a different picture. There are a number of people in this narrative that get demoted to underground as a punishment for wasting water. These characters do not hesitate to accept their punishment. This shows that they follow phonocentric ideology. The orders regarding their punishment are not legal because there is no written order for their demotion.

They simply one day find themselves underneath the surface of earth with some order that tells them to stay there. Some of these characters are instructed to find the river Saraswati, and some are told to stay there without mentioning any time limit of their punishment. These people accept their punishment without any retaliation. They do not question the authority that has sent them down. They do not even try to know the authority that has ordered their demotion to underground. This shows how

much these characters give preference to speech and ignore the written words. These people do not realise how following this ideology blindly has changed their lives entirely. Al-Kindi, an Arab philosopher, faces problems in his philosophic career due to the phonocentric ideology. Al-Kindi is a character in Banerjee's fifth graphic novel *Doab Dil* (2019). His enemies who believe in phonocentric ideology take control over his library, hence stopping his valuable research process. These enemies of Al-Kindi are those people who do not want him to share some new facts with society. These new facts can make people in their society question the old societal norms, which are not acceptable to them. The people who belong to his group of enemies represent those people in society who believe in old sayings. These old sayings represent speech, and the facts that Al-Kindi wants to share with his society represent writing. The people who have confiscated his library give more preference to old saying; hence, they do not want the change that Al-Kindi is going to bring to society through his research.

Amruta Patil's novels are rich with visuals that demonstrate the phonocentric ideology of society. Her novel *Kari* is a tale of two lesbian girls who love each other, but they part ways because the world in which they exist considers homosexuality a sin. Their society believes in old sayings. The old sayings and norms are against homosexuality, due to which it becomes difficult for homosexuals to live a simple and happy life. They need to behave according to the rules and conduct of society. Kari's mother, roommates, colleagues, and every other person who she knows have hate towards the homosexuals. Their hateful attitude towards homosexuality and homosexuals is because of their society, which teaches them that heterosexuality is the only possible way of love. All these people live their lives according to the sayings of their old generation. These sayings represent speech. People believe in them because the person, people, or institution that has said these things has had great influence over them. This person, people, or institution influenced society with attractive words, phrases, and examples. This shows that people give more preference to the speech or words of someone since they are easily available to them. They hear such things now and then all over their surroundings. The speakers are some influential people in society, and people believe them easily. But it is difficult to

believe a written word or document because there is no guarantee of the writer. People do not feel any desire to reject the speaker and accept the written words of some unknown person who has written a document. In a similar manner, Kunti in *Adi Parva* becomes the scapegoat of the phonocentric ideology of her society. Because she is also a part of her society, she too lives her life according to phonocentric ideology. She possesses phonocentric views and shuns writing in favour of speech. Hence, she and Karn, her son, both face the consequences. *Sauptik* has Ashwatthama as its narrator. He is appointed to tell tales of Pandavas to the people of a village. The people come to listen to Ashwatthama's stories from far-flung places. These stories are the only source of information for these people. They do not know to write and read. They keep themselves dependent on someone else's words or speech. They gather knowledge by listening to the tales from the mouth of a narrator. They do not even question the authenticity of the stories they are listening to. This shows that these people have phonocentric views. Hence, give priority to speech over writing. This narrative tradition is also demonstrated in Patil's last novel, *Aranyaka*. In this novel, Y's herd and his teachers follow phonocentric ideology. They learn and agree to everything they are taught through speech. There is no written material used for teaching. When Y questions this way of teaching, they all compel him to leave the herd. Phonocentric ideology allow, Y's teachers and friends to believe in whatever they are taught in class without questioning its authenticity.

This research work shows the artificiality of hospitality as it is portrayed in the works of Banerjee and Patil. It analyses the two types of hospitality: conditional hospitality and unconditional hospitality. Conditional hospitality comes with some conditions and restrictions on the guest, whereas in unconditional hospitality the guest is free from all kinds of restrictions. Derrida asserts that unconditional hospitality is impossible. It exposes the consequences of offering and receiving unconditional hospitality from the part of both the host and the guest. It shows how the various characters in these graphic novels feel trapped when they receive conditional hospitality and how the hosts feel trapped when they offer unconditional hospitality. For example, in Sarnath Banerjee's *Corridor*, Brighu's girlfriend Kali receives conditional hospitality from her landlord. Kali feels trapped in that house because her

landlord always peeks into her personal life. She has put certain conditions on Kali, which she has to accept. In *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers*, the host-guest relationship is portrayed with the help of Britishers and Natives of India. Natives of India are the hosts and the Britishers are the guests in this graphic novel. This relationship is the perfect example of unconditional hospitality, where the host places no conditions before welcoming the guest. Natives of India also welcome Britishers in their unconditionally. They give them freedom in every aspect. They allow Britishers to move freely in their country and do whatever kind of business they want to do, like a host in unconditional hospitality does for his or her guest. But in return, the guest, that is, the Britishers, take wrong advantage of this freedom and start abusing their host, that is, the natives of India. *The Harappa Files* shows the complex connection between host and guest with the help of the salesmen and the customers in one of the sections of the graphic narrative. In this relationship, the host takes advantage of the naivety of the guest. The nature of the hospitality is not made clear by the host in this relationship. The host does not offer conditional hospitality to the guest because there are no conditions placed in front of the guest. The guest is free to move and roam inside the showroom. The guest is not even stopped at the entrance of the showroom. Since it is not conditional hospitality, it makes it clear that it is unconditional hospitality being offered to the guest. Hence, the host, that is, the customer, thinks that the host is treating him/her in the manner that is appropriate in an unconditional hospitality. For instance, the salesman in the showroom tries to influence the customer and succeeds in convincing him to buy a car from the showroom. The salesman uses all tactics to mislead the customer. The salesman is trained to influence the customer by using high words of praise. The customer finally gets influenced, thinking that the host is true to his nature and hence speaking truth.

In this host-guest relationship, it is the host who exploits the guest by using an unconditional type of hospitality. In *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* (2016), the people of village Tambapur have suffered from many problems because they offer unconditional hospitality to a foreign company. They welcome the company's new owners unconditionally and face its bad consequences in return. This company comes into the village with the promises of more development and employment for the

people of the village. However, instead of fulfilling its promises, the company laws and the way of working, force the people of the village to leave the village and find employment somewhere outside the village. Hence, the guest leaves no choice for its host but to leave the authority in the hands of the guest and move out from its own premises. This host-guest relationship in *Doab Dil* (2019) is represented through the relationship between man and nature. There is an unconditional hospitality in this host-guest relationship. Man represents the guest here and receives an unconditional welcome from the host, which is represented by nature. Man receives everything from nature in abundance and without any burden of returning it back to nature. However, man tries to overturn the roles of host and guest in this correlation by taking control of everything in his hands. He is trying to capture the power of nature. The man in this novel is trying to create a new kind of vegetation that is usually not provided by nature. He is trying to take the place of the host by taking everything under his control.

Amruta Patil, the first women graphic novelist of India, has penned down four great graphic novels. In her debut graphic novel *Kari*, the eponymous protagonist is represented as a host. She offers an unconditional hospitality to the boys who are introduced as her flatmates' boyfriends. She gives them full freedom in every aspect. They can stay in her flat for as long as they want without any condition to fulfil. But soon she faces the consequences of being an unconditional host. Her flatmates and the guests start ignoring her. They do not show any interest in spending some time with Kari. They consider her an outsider in her own home, making her feel alienated and depressed. In *Adi Parva*, Shakuntala is also alienated by her guest Dushyant after she gave him everything she has owned. Dushyant enjoys her unconditional hospitality when he first meets her. He takes full advantage of his kind-hearted host and leaves her alone at the end. Shakuni in *Sauptik* is painted as a guest in Hastinapur who receives an unconditional hospitality there as he is dear brother of Gandhari. The kingdom of Hastinapur welcomes him with open arms. But no one knows his real intention behind his arrival in the kingdom. He has come to Hastinapur to take his revenge. He starts taking part in the political matters of the kingdom. He tries to alter the ruling methods of his host kingdom. Thus, proving himself a guest is dangerous

for the host's position. In *Aranyaka*, the main protagonist, Katyayani, also faces the same consequences of offering unconditional hospitality to her guests as the other characters mentioned above do. Katyayani acts as an unconditional host to her guests when it comes to hospitality. She accepts all visitors to her house without enquiring them. But this unconditional hospitality fails her when one of her guests, the Fig, usurped her husband, who is the whole world to her. She tries to give others more than she can, but at the end she receives nothing in return but deceit.

This research examines the various aspects of Sarnath Banerjee and Amruta Patil's graphic novels in a novel and creative approach by using a Derridean deconstructive lens. The primary objective of this research is to examine and analyse the texts' constitution and meaning by placing these graphic novels under the lens of Derridean deconstructive theory. In this way, the study concentrates on the text of these graphic novels in order to break down and undermine its unity, fixity, and singularity. The study also addresses the nature of binary oppositions, phonocentrism, and hospitality and their effects on human cognition, all of which are important aspects of the minds and existence of the characters in these graphic novels. The study comes to the conclusion that these elements provide human cognition with a stable, definite, and predetermined meaning.

The texts written by Banerjee and Patil do not really imply anything, or at least not anything coherent, consistent, and unified. The reading breaks down the texts to demonstrate that each novel has multiple meanings. The novels serve as examples of the deconstructive concepts, which aim to illustrate how ideas, structures, and meanings are constantly replacing one another. Textual facts can serve as a basis and a catalyst for additional empirical research into the pragmatics of discourse and the nature of human communication by pointing out intentions and interpretations that we might not have otherwise been aware of. This interpretation might hold true until it is superseded by a different one that dismantles it and assumes its place.

Deconstructionists must be conscious of any changes or fractures in the text that could eventually lead to instability in meaning and attitude. Deconstructive reading sharpens our critical thinking skills and makes it easier for us to recognise how assumptions ingrained in our language shape our reality in ways we are unaware of.

Recommendations

This research study undoubtedly has inherent limitations and bounds, just like any other research study. The three main concepts of Binary Opposition, Phonocentrism, and Hospitality have been the subject of lengthy discussions with a wide range of viewpoints; nevertheless, other well-known Indian graphic novelists have not been included in this study. This exclusion is due to the intrinsic limitations of the current investigation. This study has not deconstructed other graphic novels of prominent Indian graphic novelists. However, these novelists could be studied for future research endeavours. Thus far, the research has not provided an exhaustive analysis of several significant themes. These themes include the examination of ideological trends in the writings of the writers as mentioned above, the exploration of the postcolonial predicament within their works, the presence of magical realism in their literary creations, the depiction of child abuse, and the utilization of imagery and flashback techniques. These themes present opportunities for further investigation in future studies. The textual and graphical content, and narrative strategies employed in their literary works are important for scholars specializing in stylistics and pragmatics. To date, the research has not yielded a comprehensive examination of various critical subjects. Themes encompass the analysis of ideological trends in the aforementioned authors' writings, the investigation of the postcolonial condition within their works, the incorporation of magical realism in their literary compositions, the portrayal of child abuse, and the employment of imagery and flashback techniques. These themes offer avenues for additional exploration in subsequent research. The textual and graphical elements, along with the narrative techniques utilised in their literary works, are significant for scholars focused on stylistics and pragmatics.

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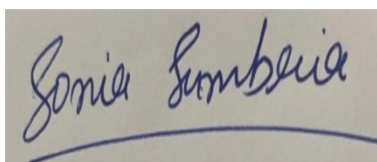
CERTIFICATES OF PUBLICATION OF PAPERS FOR PH.D

This is to certify that Sonia Sumbria, enrolled in the Ph.D. program in the Department of English with Registration Number 41900268, under the guidance of Dr. Meenakshi Rana, has the following publications / Letter of Acceptance in the Referred Journals / Conferences. This fulfills the minimum program requirements as per the guidelines of the UGC.

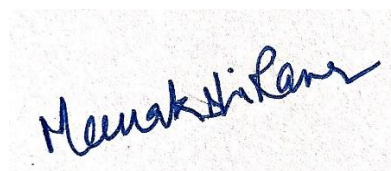
S. No	Title of Paper With authors name	Journal/Conference	Publish ed date	ISSN no/ vol. No/ issue no.	Indexing in Scopus/Web of Science/UGC CARE list
1.	Deconstruction of Patriarchy in the Graphic Novels of Amruta Patil: A Derridean Study	Anusandhanv allari	August, 2025	ISSN: 2229-3388 Vol. 2025 No. 1	UGC-Care

2.	Binary of Major Character and Minor Character in Amruta Patil's Graphic Novel <i>Sauptik</i> : A Deconstructive Study Dr. Meenakshi Rana, Sonia Sumbria	South Eastern European Journal of Public Health	25th October, 2024	ISSN: 2197-5248 Vol. XXV	Scopus
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6.	Deconstructing Patriarchy in the Novels of Indira Goswami: A Study of the Characters of Giribala and Saudamini Papari Das	International Conferences	10 th and 11 th December, 2022		
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