

Narrating Partition through Textual and Graphic Literature

Narrative

Narrative is a process that constructs connections between events and intent of characters that connect to indicate a point which makes the story worth telling. A story is a sequence of events and a narrative recites these events. Narrative helps to shape the series of events in a story. Narrative can be devised in many thematic and schematic categories like in non-fiction it can include the works of biography, journalism, historiography etc. and in fiction proper it includes literature in prose and poetry, novels ,narrative poems etc. When the narrative is in oral form it is called 'oral narrative' and the written form is called 'written narrative'. In the context of Graphic Novel, the narratives are formed through the mixing of the visual and the verbal i.e. images and the text respectively or through the images or visuals alone. The visual-verbal narratives play an important role in comprehending the imagery on a graphic page directly instead of forming its own visual imagery.

Narrative as Meaning-Making in Graphic Novel

In the context of Graphic Novel studies, the imagery on a graphic page is a narrative medium. They communicate their stories through their texts, visuals, and their placement of sequences and page layouts, this all constitutes a story. The narrative on a graphic page unfolds between story, discourse and plot. The narrator, focalizer and observer can feature when the story is passed on to the readers. When the reader has to study the narrative of a graphic text, he or she has to look into the associations between at the clues and the uses where they are situated. Karin Kukkonen in her seminal work *Studying Comics and Graphic Novels* explains that,

Narrative patterns allow us to connect events into meaning wholes and into complexes of intentions and agency to which we can relate and which we can

evaluate. Perhaps not all thinking is shaped by the causality, agency and tellability of stories, but they help us to understand and communicate what happened when, where, and why. (49)

As the cognitive approaches in the study of literature points out, the stories not only give us a sense of what has happened already but also what might happen again.

Narratology

Narratology is the study of narratives. In explaining the narratology, Karin Kukkonen puts it, “Like semiotics, narratology understands the entirety of cultural production to be its main domain and endeavors to provide a framework for analyzing narrative and storytelling in literature, films, comics, but also everyday encounters”(128).

The telling of stories is a permeating facet of our natural world. They shape our experiences and influence our perceptions. In the study of Graphic Novels it is the artists whose rendition of the imagery is what sets the tone of the narrative. The artists bring in his own point of view and focalization of the characters and create the visual imagery of his narrative. Roland Barthes in his *Structural Analysis of Narrative* suggests,

Narrative does not show, does not imitate; the passion which may excite us in reading a novel is not that of a 'vision' (in actual fact, we do not 'see' anything). Rather it is that of meaning, that of a higher order of relation which also has its emotions, its hopes, its dangers, its triumphs. 'What takes place' in a narrative is from the referential (reality) point of view literally nothing; 'what happens' is language alone, the adventure of language, the unceasing celebration of its coming. (124)

What Barthes meant is that the role of the language is most important aspect of a textual narrative. An artist evokes his art only through the language and Barthes subverts the role of the 'author' in his analysis. But in a graphic narrative it is the 'artist' who takes the centre stage of the narrative where images are the more powerful element of its narrative. Pramod K. Nayar opines that in a graphic narrative medium the 'critical literacy' engages the readers through the visual and verbal vocabularies of the text and comment that the 'Critical literacy', "refuses the primacy of the verbal language" (192). He says, "Critical literacy invites readers to take up the ideology of a text, but it also examines the assumptions of the authors and readers, involving readers as active participants in the reading process" (192).

The artist or the author through its powerful use of the visuals in a graphic narrative sets its tone and structure. The artist may or may not use the verbal to make the point of his narrative but the visuals are inherent to the graphic narratology.

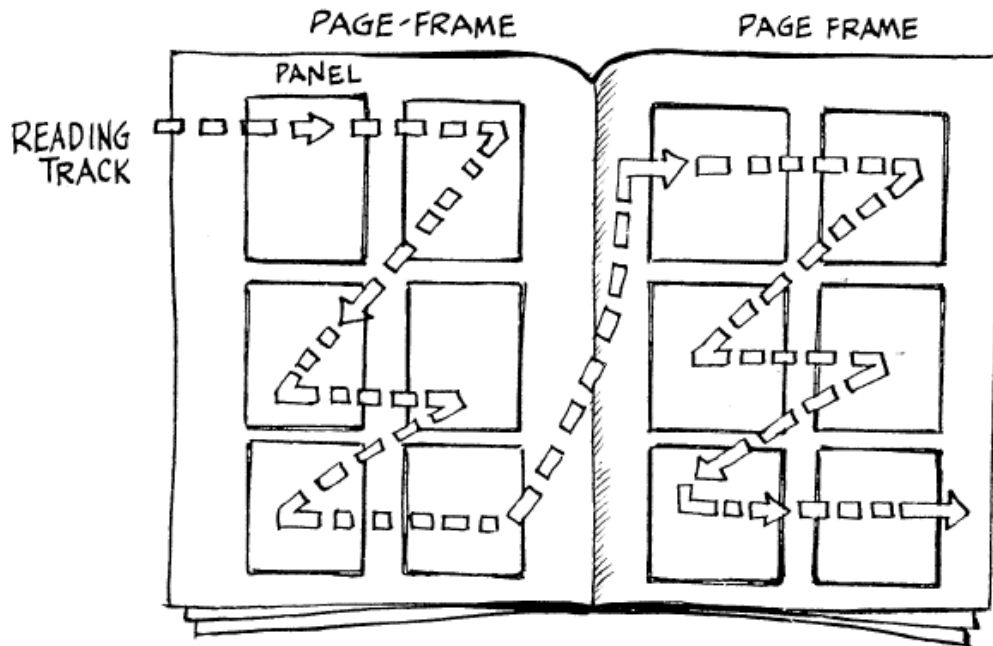
Verbal – Visual Narrative

The combination of the images and the text is a key feature in graphic narrative. Generally, the images functions to 'show' a story while the words 'tell' a story in a graphic medium. Kukkonen says, "readers pick up clues from both the images and the words, and mostly, the two modes work toward unfolding the comic's narrative in the panel sequence...each of these elements contributes to comics' capacity for storytelling"(32)

In order to understand the verbal- visual narratives on a graphic page, It is imperative for us to recognize some of its graphic terms and concepts:

Visual: The visuals are the imagery we see on graphic page. It contains the following:

(a) **Panel:** It is an individual frame or also refers to a cartoon consisting a single drawing. In the multiple sequence of a graphic or comic book, it depicts a frozen moment in a single drawing.



(b) **Frame:** It is the lines and borders which contain the panel.

(c) **Gutter:** It is the space between framed panels on a graphic page.

(d) **Bleed:** It is an image that extends to or beyond the edge of the graphic page.

(e) **Foreground:** It is the Panel closest to the reader/viewer.

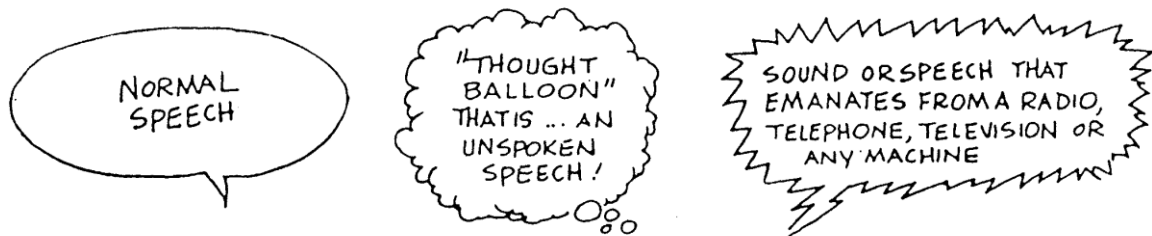
(f) **Midground:** It is the centering of the image in which the artist deliberately places the image where a reader or viewer would be most likely to see first. Placing an image off the centre creates visual tension but using the midground allows the illustrator to create a more accepted image.

(g) **Graphic Weight:** The artists create a definite focus with the use of colors and shades to his images.

Verbal: These are the texts that appear on the graphic page. It contains the following:

(a) **Captions:** Boxes that contain various textual elements or descriptions.

(b) **Speech Balloons:** These are the enclosure of the dialogues that come out from a speaker's mouth. They vary in shape, size and layout. Speech balloons hold both the external dialogue and the internal dialogue.



(c) **Special-effects lettering:** It is a method used for drawing attention to a text. It highlights the impactful words like bang! Or wow!. These are used to add sounds, a dimension that is missing in the printed medium.

Apart from these the concepts of body figures like the expression of faces and positioning of hands and feet are also employed to convey a particular meaning on a graphic page. Facial expressions require close-ups.

Verbal - Visual Narrative Strategies

The combination of verbal and visuals i.e. the words and the images forms the integral part of a Graphic Narrative and it is where all its power lies. It is not necessary that the visuals in the panel have direct connection with the verbal text. The images are independent and can have a meaning of their own if not combined with the text. In fact the combination of the visuals and the text is the centre of tension in comic books and graphic novel. The images can have a meaning of

its own and its intermingling with the text is not a requisite to it. There are Six types of image-text relations that can be found in a graphic text:

(1) **Additive**- It refers to the panels on a graphic page where the verbal narration elaborates the visual narration or vice versa.

(2) **Parallel**- It refers to the panel on a graphic page where the verbal narration and the visual narration follow different path without intersecting with each other.

(3) **Word-Specific**- It refers to the panels in which the visual narration exists, but adds or complete the verbal narration.

(4) **Picture-Specific**- It refers to the panels in which verbal narration is a sound recording or soundtrack to the visual narration

(5) **Montage**- It refers to the panels on a graphic page in which verbal narration is inherent part of the visual narration.

(6) **Interdependent**- These are the panels in which the verbal narration and the visual narration go hand in hand to communicate an idea which neither can convey alone.

Graphiation

The concept of 'graphiation' was proposed by Philip Marion in his seminal work *Traces en Cases*. He propounds the idea that in case of comic strips and graphic novels, the narrator draws the words and images which creates a narrative or a plot. Comic strips are drawings and as such Marion propounds the aspects of drawings to create a unique form of representation. Graphiation is the combination of graphic and narrative which is highlighted or enunciated in the graphic page; and the 'graphiateur' is the agent who is responsible for enunciating the gesture of the images. Graphiation refers to the colors and contours within the frame of a graphic page. It is

through the enunciator that the readers come to know about his unique style. The graphiateur is the implied author on a graphic page, as Beaten points out, “In the case of comics, the enunciator is of course also a narrator and a graphic artist – a maker of images and a calligrapher” (147). He defines “graphiation” as the discerning factor between the graphic artist and the narrator. He further adds, “Every drawing bears the trace of a graphiation” (147).

The visual style of a panel work toward the elements of ‘graphiation’. The lines, the contours and shade or colors constitute the gesture of enunciation. It gives us an idea of what the illustrator or the creator of the visuals is like. It is the visual ‘utterance’ on a graphic page.

The Partition of India

The partition of India has been one of the most defining moments of Indian Political history. It marked the creation of two sovereign states of India and Pakistan. The partition heralded the end of the British rule in India. The idea of two-nation theory proposed by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan resulted in the creation of India and Pakistan on religious lines. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, a Muslim leader, was the main spokesperson for the partition of India and Pakistan. He later became the first governor general of Pakistan. The majority Muslim areas of the Western (Punjab and Sindh) and the Eastern Frontier (East Bengal) areas became the part of Pakistan while the rest of the region constituted the Indian Territory. The people of both the nations celebrated their new found freedom from the clutches of the British. But the felicity was short lived. Nearly 14.5 million people migrated across the borders. The newly formed governments of both the nations were unable to handle the large migration of the people which resulted in mass violence, riots, and slaughter. According to the 1951 census data of Pakistan 7,226,600 people who were mostly Muslims, had migrated to Pakistan from India. Indian census data of 1951 reveals that 7,295,870 people. Mostly Hindus and Sikhs, entered India from Pakistan. Along with

the partition came the bitter experiences of violence and displacement. One of the most dreadful event in the history of South Asia is the large scale migration across the borders of India and Pakistan and the immediate violence that followed it. A large population of people migrated to other part of the new 'homeland' or the 'Promised land'. For the Hindus of Pakistan, India was their 'Promised land' and for the Muslims of India, it was Pakistan.

In 1971, the Bangladesh Liberation war further led to the partition of Pakistan, and East Pakistan became the new republic of Bangladesh. Like the partition, of India in 1947, the liberation war of Bangladesh too witnessed large scale violence and atrocities. Nearly 10 million East Pakistani refugees entered India and over 30 million of them faced displacement. The Bangladesh Liberation war that was started on 26 March 1971 ended with the formation of a new sovereign nation of Bangladesh on 16 December, 1971.

Partition in Indian literature and other media

The consorting violence that followed after the partition of India prompted many thinkers and writers to create the work of fiction or films on it. Many literary works on the Partition have been produced till date. While some writers choose to write on the violence and massacres during the migration, the others focused on the conditions of the migrants or refugees and the difficulties faced by them. These are the texts that describe the human cost of independence and partition. Prominent Indian writers like Khuswant Singh (*Train to Pakistan*, 1956) and Saadat Hasan Mahto (*Toba Tek Singh*, 1955) depicted and touched upon the issues of partition through their literary works. Several Hindi films have also depicted the horrors of partition through their visual medium. Films like *Garam Hava*(1973), *Pinjar* (2003) and *Tamas*(1987), have featured partition of India as main events in their screenplay. Even after 60 years of partition, the events

of partition continue to inspire the creative minds and that is the reason that the works of fiction and films based on it are still popular.

The Narratives of Partition in *This Side That Side* :

This Side That Side by Vishwajyoti Ghosh offers a fresh and modern approach to tell the stories about partition. It is a modern take on partition in a graphic format. There are 28 graphic narratives about the partition which has been completed with the help from forty contributors from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The narratives in the anthology are written in the form of poetry, reportage, fiction, non-fiction and memoirs and each of these are rendered in different visual styles and form. Writers, filmmakers, musicians, poets and certain fresh voices have collaborated with the illustrators and artists from across the border to bring the compelling stories in a graphic medium. On the collaboration of the artists and writers across the border, Ghosh says, “This phase was interesting as both had never met, neither were they aware of each other’s work. I was particularly in cross border collaborations and see how that progress.” (Ghosh.S.2011) Ghosh is of the view that the book focuses more on retelling the stories of partition rather than revisiting it. The stories in the book are short and crisp and each has a very distinct style of presentation. Many narratives of the anthology are translated from Urdu, Hindi and Bengali in English.

The first story of the anthology “An Old Fable” is an elusive dark humor which has a very symbolic representation of the era of partition as well as 1971 liberation war which was an aftermath of it into today’s time. Interestingly this is for the first time that ‘LaPrek’ and ‘Dastangoi’ have been represented in a graphic format. ‘Laprek’ in Hindi means ‘Laghu Prem Katha’ which is a kind short story. The description of ‘length’ about the laprek mentioned in *This Side That Side* is that ‘Laprek’ can easily fit into one’s Facebook status. Normally, a Facebook

status can have many number of words, But 477 is the number of characters that is highlighted without using the 'space' on a Facebook status, the description of the length of 'Laprek' points to this in all probability. In *This Side, That Side*, 'Laprek' has been contributed by popular NDTV news anchor and reporter Ravish Kumar in the story titled "Which Side?" Similarly 'Dastangoi' which is an ancient form of Urdu storytelling has been revived and presented in this graphic novel in the story titled "A Letter From India." There are photo stories that have also been featured prominently in this novel. Photo story is the photograph that tells or narrates a story. In certain stories like "90 Upper Mall" by Ahmad Rafay Alam and "Making of a Poet" by M Hasan has used photographs along with the sketches but these are not apparently be called a photo story. However, stories like "Welcome to Geneva Camp" by Maria M. Litwa and the last chapter of the novel "Making Faces" by Orijit Sen can definitely be categorized as photo stories which have real life photographs that convey its message or tell the story through it. There are stories of the life in the 'camps', e.g., "The Taboo" by Malini Gupta narrates the story of the "Cooper's Camp" which was India's largest refugee camp, Vishwajyoti Ghosh in his story "A good Education" narrates the story of his childhood and her grandma's experiences at the Mana Camp in Madhya Pradesh, "Welcome to Geneva camp" highlights the life of Bihari Muslim migrants living in the refugee camp in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The readers get an insight to the 'Camp' life and can easily notice the hardships and struggles associated with it. "The Taboo" highlights the deteriorating state of affairs of the refugee camps where all the anti-social activities take place. This actually explains the present scenario of the many camps which became the permanent settlement even after the war or partition. Some stories in *This Side That Side* contain the propagandist elements in it. Stories like "The News" by Bani Abidi and "Tamasha-e-Tetwal" by Arif Ayyaz Parrey and Wasim Helal, has elements of propaganda in it where hatred is created

among the people across the border by the conniving media (news outlets) on both sides of the border. Most of the stories contained in *This Side That Side* are autobiographical in creation. These are narrated in memoirs.

The Narratives of Partition in the *Orphans of the Storm*:

Orphans of the Storm: Stories on the Partition of India has been selected and edited by Saros Cowasjee and K.S.Duggal offers us the conventional stories based on the theme of the Partition of India in the textual form. This anthology is a collection of 30 stories that has been collected from the works of 24 writers. The anthology contains the works of Khushwant Singh, Saadat Hasan Manto, Mohan Rakesh, Mulk Raj Anand and Attia Hossain to its credit that are already an established name in the Indian literary world. It also contains the works of authors from across the border. These stories mainly deal with the traumatic phase of the Partition of India. Majority of the writers have addressed the violence that took place immediately after the Partition of 1947. Sexual exploitation of women during the Partition features prominently in most of the stories of this anthology. “Kulsum” by Kartar Singh Duggal is a story of a Muslim girl who is raped by an old Sikh man for not obliging to his order to have physical relation with his guest who is a schoolmaster. “Revenge” by Khwaja Ahmad Abbas is a tale of a father who seeks for vengeance after he saw his daughter stripped, raped and mutilated in his presence. “Reunion” by Saadat Hasan Manto is a story about a Muslim girl who has been raped repeatedly “Xuda ki Kasam” is about a mother’s quest for her daughter who is supposedly dead, although in reality she’s alive but fears meeting her corpse-like mother “Toba Tek Singh” is an interesting take on migration for Manto believed it to be a migration of lunatics on both sides of the border. “The Avenger” by S.H.Vatsyayan is about a Sikh father and a son who has lost everything they erstwhile possessed and now frequents between two Indian cities to check refugee like

themselves safely to their new homes. “Gods on Trial” by Gulzar Singh Sandhu is based on the theme of religious conversion. Some of the stories have been translated into English from their vernacular language. Qudrat Ullah Shahab’s “Ya Khuda” is a story of what betided Muslim women during partition. It has been translated into English by Faruq Hasan. Khushwant Singh’s “The Riot” is about the clashes between the two communities which happened due to the misunderstanding between the people. There are several other stories that recount the horrors of the Partition through its textual narrative but the theme of pain and sufferings remain constant in all these narratives.

A Comparative Study of the Two Anthologies: *This Side That Side* and *Orphans of the Storm*:

The reason why both these texts are compared and contrasted is because of the narratives in both the texts has a common theme of the Partition of Indian Subcontinent. The stories contained in both the novels vary and contradict in many ways rather than sharing commonalities. The narratives in *This Side That Side* have been contributed by professionals coming from different fields. *Orphans of the Storm* offers the readers the horrors and trauma of the partition to the readers. The writers have given vivid account of the violence and tensions associated with the Partition. The stories are based on the life of the people who became the immediate victims of the Partition after the communal clashes spread out throughout the country that affected millions of people across the border. Most of the stories of this anthology contain the horrors that affected the women like mass rapes, abductions etc. and that forms most of the themes compiled in this anthology of textual narrative. The writers have realistically depicted the consequences of these mass crimes and their life aftermath to showcase how the Partition changed their lives forever. Some stories deals with the life and circumstances of the migrants on

both sides of the border. The writers have focused their stories on the pain and trauma faced by the characters in their stories. The pain and trauma caused by the events of the Partition transcends every other human emotion.

However, *This Side That Side* is completely a different take on the narratives of the Partition. The stories don't highlight the violence that occurred immediately after the Partition. The simple reason could be that the writers of this anthology are third generations' writers and they are writing about partition from a very new perspective as these writers never had a firsthand experience of the events. Most of the contributors of this anthology are young and are born after the Partition happened, and so they can't make a connection with the horrors associated with it. Their stories completely subvert the violence associated with the partition. Most of the memoirs written in this anthology are the stories that these writers heard from their grandparents. Since most of them are young writers, they can't even make a connection with their once 'unified' nation. For them their country of birth is the only country they know as their motherland which was 'never' partitioned. The stories of this anthology mainly deal with the survivor's longing and desire for the 'other' land.

There are mostly differences rather than similarities in the stories depicted in both the novels. The faces keep on changing, only the theme of pain and longings remains the same and that is the 'only' similarity found between the two anthologies.

The next chapter will try to analyze the verbal and the visual narratives of *This Side That Side* and will look for the statement of its hypothesis.

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