

Frames of Change: A Review of the Evolution, Expansion, and Emerging Trends in Indian Graphic Novels

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Article History:

Received: 06-08-2025

Revised: 27-09-2025

Accepted: 26-10-2025

Abstract:

Indian graphic novels are now fully formed and unique, joining visual art, literature, and criticism of society. Over the years, comics have mirrored how India's culture and ideology have changed, starting with the familiar stories of Amar Chitra Katha and going on to modern tales about city feelings, caste, gender, and politics. The paper looks back at how Indian graphic novels have developed, starting with early influences and the work of Orijit Sen in *The River of Stories*, and then considers important themes, new styles, and fresh ways of storytelling in these works. It examines how the medium is being adopted on the internet in webcomics, visual journalism, and educational stories. Moreover, the paper describes the trouble of reaching more viewers brought by limited broadcasting, online censorship, and the lack of speaking ideas in vernacular languages. Because of this, the text points out that graphic novels in India act as a communicative medium through which people talk about their culture, tradition, and modern times, fiction and reality, while connecting. By following these trajectories, the paper gives a clear picture of the medium's growth, how significant it is today, and what it may become in the future of Indian visual culture.

Key Words: Indian Graphic Novels, Visual Culture, Comics, Popular Media, Narrative Art, Contemporary India, Digital Comics, Cultural Identity

1. Introduction

In the last few decades, comic books have become a major storytelling form, bringing together literature, art, and discussion of social and political matters. To the wider world, Indian graphic novels are known for their rich plots and engaging artwork, as they have advanced from comic books with more Indian-culture appeal. Unlike its Western counterparts, the Indian graphic novel is a unique format that mixes traditional culture, stories, art, and today's issues.

Even though visual storytelling in India goes back hundreds of years, the publication of graphic novels only began in the late 1900s. Orijit Sen's *The River of Stories* (1994) formed the basis for a field that began to expand and included areas such as activism, journalism, and alternative art cultures (Lent, 2015). The aim of this study is to chart the course of Indian graphic novels, analyzing their history, expanding themes and visuals, and growing trends in various online platforms. By relying on important literature, illustrators, and studies, this essay looks at how graphic novels in India highlight the country's various traditions and richness.

2. Objectives of the Review:

1. To understand the way graphic novels in India have grown from the 1990s to the present.
2. To consider the themes and approaches that Indian graphic novelists use.
3. To point out the new developments, struggles, and future goals of Indian graphic novels.

This review is built on scholarly studies, artist statements, and careful reading of major artworks in order to cover all aspects of the field. The review aims to be an educational tool in understanding the changing nature of comics as well as initiating discussions about its future.

3. The history of the growth and development of Indian graphic novels

Indian graphic novels have taken their course, moving away from the Western trend of superhero comics. Amar Chitra Katha (ACK), which Anant Pai established in 1967, was the first significant success and helped children in India by introducing them to mythology, history, and principles of good conduct through comics. Though ACK aimed to teach and spread nationalist ideas, it later influenced art and writers who, while adopting elements seen in ACK, sought to challenge them (Chandra, 2008).

The River of Stories by Orijit Sen, published in the 1990s, was considered to be the first graphic novel made in India. It looked into the Narmada Bachao Andolan and used journalism, ethnography, and artistic storytelling to challenge the environmental and developmental policies of the time (Sen, 1994). At this stage, the idea of heroism changed from retelling myths to focusing on politics.

In the early 2000s, artists like Sarnath Banerjee started to appear, and his works Corridor (2004) and The Harappa Files (2011) centered on city life, fond remembrances, and some details about Indian society after liberalization. Banerjee placed graphic novels amid intellectual debates on cities, usually drawing similarities between them and European graphic novels (Banerjee, 2004).

Meanwhile, comics by Amruta Patil (Kari) and Parismita Singh (Hotel at the End of the World) broadened the storytelling by dealing with themes of identity, gender, and northeastern folklore in a beautiful aesthetic. Such works both challenged the usual choices in literature and the representation of gender in artworks (Patil, 2008).

During the 2010s, there was a rise in the number of collective anthologies and independent publishing like The Pao Collective's anthology of comics (2012) and Longform: An Anthology of Graphic Narratives (2018). Bringing together many artists and writers, This Side That Side (2013) dealt with the topics of partition, memory, and borders. These works often fused oral stories, magazine-style drawings, and new experiments with form, showing that graphic novels could achieve academic and activist goals.

4. Themes and Genres Explored

Indian graphic novels include a wide range of subjects and themes, capturing the diversity in India, the pressures of a post-colonial society, and the constantly evolving visual environment. In comparison to most traditional comics, Indian graphic novels appeal to the reader's mind and stay true to the country and its people.

4.1. Mythology and Epics Reimagined: In *Adi Parva* (2012) and *Sauptik* (2016), Amruta Patil retells the Mahabharata from feminist, philosophical, and ecological angles. Rather than simply re-telling the stories, these writings re-interpret, re-set, and discuss their themes, opening up the epic to discussion about history, justice, and the environment. The wall-to-wall illustrations in Patil's work match the forms of fine art, oral stories, and the voices of feminist ideas (Patil, 2012).

Samhita Arni and Moyna Chitrakar tell the Ramayana in *Sita's Ramayana* (2011) from Sita's perspective using the visual language of Patua scroll painting. The retelling of myths like this gives voice to people who have been ignored by the main interpretation of classic texts.

4.2. Urban Realism and Psychological Exploration

Indian graphic novels give great attention to the emotional and mental states of people who live in cities. Sarnath Banerjee's novel *Corridor* portrays Delhi after the liberalization of the 1990s and the confusion of its people. Although her tales are disjointed, contain bizarre moments, and use references

to Indian society, Banerjee still revels in emphasizing alienation and nonsense in big cities (Banerjee, 2004).

Kari (2008) by Amruta Patil is also a significant queer story in Indian visual literature. Heartbreak, stifling society, and personal uncertainty are key themes in the book, told through the eyes of an inner-guided lead character. The use of striking contrasts and poetic text makes the story less about a plot and more about an experience.

4.3. Political and Historical Critique [MOU1]

The political and historical genre gives people a chance to discuss important points from past times. The novel *Delhi Calm* (2010) by Vishwajyoti Ghosh is a work of fiction based in the Emergency years, memorably telling this story through visual description and witty criticism. The personal side of the novel also touches on how freedom is encroached upon in a dystopian future (Ghosh, 2010).

4.5. Folklore, Region, and Indigenous Voices

Graphic novels such as Parismita Singh's *Hotel at the End of the World* help bring ancient oral tales and the strange beauty of the north to a larger audience. By uniting local traditions and contemporary illustration, she bridges the gap for less known places.

Durgabai Vyam and Subhash Vyam, using Gond art, produced *Bhimayana* (2011) to tell the story of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's life. Instead of using panels, the artist chose expressive symbols to relay the topic of caste, mixing folklore with an important storytelling style (Natarajan & Ninan, 2011).

In addition, these books add different subjects to Indian graphic novels and include unique visual styles based on, for example, Madhubani, Gond, and Patua art forms. Indigenous motifs are integrated to serve a purpose, connecting the story to the unique traits of a certain culture and its politics.

4.6. Graphic Journalism and Social Commentary

Many Indian graphic novels are now engaging in graphic reportage. The *First Hand* series published by Yoda Press brings together several non-fiction comics that cover subjects including caste violence, people being displaced in cities, climate change, and education. Field research and visuals are used in these narratives to make it possible for all to understand and feel complex social matters.

These books use human understanding as well as collected evidence from interviews, documents, and events to create complex narratives. The images give shape to the feeling and emotion in the text in a way that encourages closeness and seriousness.

5. Key Works and Authors

Many talented artists and writers have helped shape Indian graphic novels by contributing their own ideas and visions. Many people consider Orijit Sen's *The River of Stories* (1994) to be the country's first graphic novel. In telling the story of the Narmada Bachao Andolan, Sen mixes politics with anthropological reports and sketches, helping create socially minded comic books in India (Sen, 1994).

Sarnath Banerjee is known in this medium for his work on issues of city life and middle-class drifting. With *Corridor* (2004), Banerjee showed Delhi after liberalization through meaningful stories and smartly woven comic scenes. In *The Harappa Files* (2011), he writes up fictional office documents to parody the inconsistencies in present-day India (Banerjee, 2004, 2011).

Amruta Patil is yet another writer making big changes in how graphic stories are told in India. Her graphic novel *Kari* (2008) looks at things like being gay, feeling alone in the city, and staying strong through a quiet story and drawings that use mostly quiet colors. Patil's books *Adi Parva* (2012) and *Sauptik* (2016) show new, creative versions of the Mahabharata with lovely writing and colorful pictures, and she focuses a lot on telling the stories from women's points of view and talking about nature.

Parismita Singh's *Hotel at the End of the World* (2009) is a beautiful and moody book that shows Northeast Indian culture and traditions. Her visual style mixes in elements of magic and simplified design, which gives audiences a unique way to see stories and traditions from less-known places and voices.

Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Delhi Calm* (2010) tells the story of India's Emergency time in simple black-and-white drawings and uses humor to make his points. His work on *This Side That Side* (2013) brings together accounts from people in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh to look at what life was like after Partition, as told through comics (Ghosh, 2010).

Collaborative works like *A Gardener in the Wasteland* (2011), by Srividya Natarajan and Aparajita Ninan, tell stories of fight against prejudice and share Jotirao Phule's life story in an easy-to-read way. Similarly, *Bhimayana* (2011), illustrated by Durgabai and Subhash Vyam, shows the life of B.R. Ambedkar using traditional Gond art, instead of regular comic panels, to show how caste problems hurt people in India (Natarajan & Ninan, 2011).

The story of the Ramayana is retold from Sita's point of view in *Sita's Ramayana* (2011), by Samhita Arni and Moyna Chitrakar, in a way that makes use of Patua painting. The graphic novel serves as a feminist retelling of the Ramayana by changing and adding to its narrative and images (Arni & Chitrakar, 2011).

Priya Kuriyan has designed books by herself and with others, and among them is *Indira* (2018) and *Drawing the Line* (2015), a book she helped edit and features women's experiences in graphic storytelling. Many of her projects address subtleties of gender and historical significance.

The Halahala series from Appupen takes a different turn, focusing on dystopian and mystical stories. His work critiques issues such as capitalism, the effect of technology on the environment, and authoritarian governments, using very stylish images.

When considered together, these authors and artists bring a vivid and wide-ranging group of works to the field. With their work, they advance the status of graphic novels in India and also use the form to explore and ask questions about personal, political, and sometimes mythic and contemporary themes.

5. Extensions into New Media and Audiences

As Indian graphic novels get more attention and are seen as an important part of Indian culture, people are using them in new ways and showing them to all kinds of audiences. This evolution can be seen in how digital tools have been included, public places now display more visual stories that relate to people's lives, and many more groups of readers are reading comics in different languages and ages. The growth of Indian graphic novels over the past two decades goes beyond showing more complex ideas and stories; it is also shown in how they have spread to different types of media and tried to attract more people who aren't just part of the usual audiences. This extension is both technological and sociocultural, as it has moved from books printed by big publishing houses to easy-to-share digital versions, from being just for a small group of well-off people to being read by anyone, and from mostly being used for stories to being read in schools, used for activism, and even performed on stage.

Advances in the digital world have had a major and transformative effect on our lives. As more people in India are online, use mobile phones, and join social networks, visual content has become much more popular to create and share. Many artists like Rachita Taneja (*Sanitary Panels*) and Alicia Souza have turned to Instagram and web publishing to engage and entertain younger crowds with short, humorous strips that address everyday issues and various forms of politics. As graphic narratives are now uploaded to platforms like Instagram, they can be viewed for free, interacted with, and reflect the events taking place in real time (Taneja, 2020). Thanks to webcomics, people who create stories

can do so in episodes or storylines and interact with their audience without working with traditional publishers.

At the same time as digital comics, graphic novels are also starting to be used more widely in education. An increasing number of teachers and educators are realizing that using verbo-visuals can help students learn critical skills. Teachers are using graphic novels like *Bhimayana* and *A Gardener in the Wasteland* in Indian schools to cover subjects such as caste issues, reform, and historical events. Thanks to narrative and visuals in these stories, readers can process, recall, and connect emotionally with concepts, no matter how difficult it might be. They are not only used as additional reading in one subject area but also as key texts in studying literature, sociology, anthropology, and visual culture (Nayar, 2016).

It has become an important tool for people to engage in community action and advocacy. Yoda Press, Manta Ray Comics, Zubaan, and Phantomville publishers and collectives have worked to support socially conscious graphic albums that work as protest literature. Initiatives like *First Hand vol 01 & vol 02*, both *Graphic Non-fiction from India*, and *Drawing the Line* have grouped various voices from across India to discuss issues such as gender rights, caste-based oppression, protecting the planet, and people migrating to cities. The graphic nature of these anthologies makes it easy to combine journalism, autobiography, and advocacy. The use of illustrations together with direct accounts and studies makes these stories feel personal while still holding onto the truth, as the pictures act as symbols for the struggles and strength of the main people.

Content can be adapted into the language that the audience speaks as part of localization as well. Initially, most Indian graphic novels were written in English for readers in big cities, but now an increasing effort is being made to create or translate them into Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, and Marathi. As a result, the stories reach a larger audience and are shown in a way that truly shows the regional language, manners, and aspects of art. As a result of this change, regional languages, styles of art and types of stories from India are now visible in graphic novels for the first time. As a result, the stories are easier for a diverse group of Indian readers to understand and enjoy (Nayar, 2016).

In India, graphic novels are now reaching more people by being turned into other forms and media. Works like *Adi Parva* by Amruta Patil and *The Harappa Files* by Sarnath Banerjee have inspired films and live theatre, as well as museum displays. Adaptations make the works more interesting and help them reach a wider group of people. For example, *Adi Parva* has appeared in several interdisciplinary artworks, while *The Harappa Files* has been performed by actors. By using multiple media sources, these stories allow more interaction from the audience and impact culture in various ways. Graphic novels, thanks to their use of symbolism, gesture, and rhythm, move easily into films using animation and stagecraft, where the presence of sound, movement, and interaction makes the storytelling experience more powerful.

The rise of independent publishing collectives and artist-run platforms has helped encourage new ideas and teamwork among various creative fields. Because of firms like BlueJackal and Blaft, Zubaan, and Phantomville, Indian literature is growing increasingly radical, unique in style, and open to everyone. Operating with scarce resources, these platforms decide to focus on featuring work that supports their political views, instead of what will bring in the most profits, letting emerging talent and queer voices shine, as well as writers from various marginalized communities. No longer controlled by mainstream editing, these authors can take chances and explore new models in graphic novels. These groups work as publishing houses and encouragers of creativity in Indian comics, which is why they are key to the growth of the industry.

Thanks to these various extensions, including digital tech, schools, local groups, traditional rituals, experimental videos, and publishing on their own, the Indian graphic novel has become an influential and flexible form of culture. It blends stories from people's lives with political themes, as well as mixing real facts with fiction. As it keeps responding to current trends in both creation and audience,

it can turn into one of the most influential mediums for stories, analysis, and preserving history in India right now.

6. Socio-political Engagement and Cultural Narratives

Many Indian graphic novels are very involved with the social and political issues found in the country. Though mainly seen as entertaining, many of these works act as a voice against oppression, represent the concerns of marginalized groups, and bring attention to the issues and uncertainties of India today. Indian graphic novels include stories about caste, religion, gender, the environment, nationalism, and life in the city, merging personal and political elements.

Caste and visual storytelling are fused in *Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability* (2011) by artists Durgabai and Subhash Vyam using Gond art to illustrate the book. The book recounts the life experiences of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and vividly expresses what it means to be caste oppressed in India. *Bhimayana* is unique in its stories and because it deviates from the regular comic book layout. Rather, it uses images that move smoothly, inspired by indigenous art, so each creature or nature element represents a different idea, challenging the structures and standards found in society and art (Vyam, Vyam & Natarajan, 2011). The work merges oral stories and accounts of political lives, reflecting how tradition and advocacy for progress can come together.

Caste narratives are also looked at in *A Gardener in the Wasteland* (2011), written by Srividya Natarajan and illustrated by Aparajita Ninan. This work focuses on Jotirao Phule, who fought against caste injustice in the 1800s, and it also compares how his issues are linked to issues we face today. Here, comics can help people learn by making complicated ideas easier to understand, and can also show history in a different way that isn't always neat like as presented in most textbooks. The graphic novel acts like a safe place for readers to think about tough topics and re-examine the ways people are treated differently from each other (Natarajan & Ninan, 2011).

Gender politics and feminist stories are clearly shown in Indian comic books as well. Amruta Patil's *Kari* (2008) is one of the first Indian graphic novels that talks about being queer and feeling alone in a city. The main character goes through sadness, feeling alone, and figuring out who she is as she moves through a place that both sets her free and makes her feel trapped. Through its poetic language and shadowy artwork, the story delves into the main character's inner thoughts and feelings, making it hard to put into just one category. More broadly, graphic anthologies like *Drawing the Line* (2015), which came from workshops with women artists from all over India, have helped the conversation about women and art grow in new ways. These works look at women's choices over their own lives, their bodies, and how they stand up against things they don't agree with, showing that what's personal can also be political and letting us see these ideas in images.

Religion and the sense of belonging to a community are main themes in fiction. In *Delhi Calm* (2010), Vishwajyoti Ghosh creates a fictional setting within the Emergency in India and uses humor and strong black-and-white images to highlight the power of authoritarianism and how democracy is easily threatened by such powers. In a similar fashion, in the book *This Side That Side: Restorying Partition* (2013), Ghosh collected stories from writers in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, which look at the various views on how Partition affected people and life afterwards. The work suggests that it is vital to hear from individuals whose experiences are usually missing from established history books (Ghosh, 2013).

In *Corridor* (2004) and *The Harappa Files* (2011), Sarnath Banerjee often uses cities to highlight various social and political issues. They show the strange and contradictory aspects of modern-day India after liberalization. Allusions to random stories, humor, and conversations among friends help Banerjee portray the emptiness of a generation affected by modern changes and forgetting their roots. In his towns, philosophers, cynics, civil servants, and dreamers are seen, each one responding to the rapid changes in morality and the market system (Banerjee, 2004, 2011).

Indian graphic novels often raise issues related to the environment. In 1994, Orijit Sen published *The River of Stories*, widely considered the first graphic novel in India, to explore the environmental and human results of the Narmada dam project. This work stands for the way graphic novels are well-suited to show small-scale movements and stories about nature. Small, close-up black-and-white sketches by Sen join humans, water, and the environment in one picture, expressing the theme of development and moving people.

One thing all these diverse works share is a concentration on questioning culture and working for social change. The writers do not only report social issues—they also analyze them. Graphic novels manage to mix real life and fantasy perfectly, making them ideal for discussing modern Indian society. Having both images and text in the same piece allows authors to present a range of emotions and ideas at once. So, the Indian graphic novel has become a way to express artistic ideas and represent cultural events, in addition to working as a form of activism.

When it comes to literacy in some countries, the ability to read graphic novels becomes a powerful tool. Thanks to their traditional and modern mix, Indian graphic novels allow everyone, no matter their background, to discuss and understand a wide variety of social issues. More and more images are being used in schools, community debates, and campaigns, showing their importance and potential to change modern life.

7. Stylistic and Aesthetic Shifts

Indian graphic novels have transformed both themes and ideas, but their visuals have changed as well. In the last three decades, comics have undergone significant style changes, moving away from how they used to look and trying out new ways to tell stories. Such innovations have meant that Indian graphic novels now have their unique visual style, combining local art forms with international graphic novel styles or even experimenting with new ones.

Amar Chitra Katha and other books in the early years of Indian graphic works followed a traditional style close to that of Western comics. The typical panel had unchanging gutters, straightforward passage, and a standard color. The early *Amar Chitra Katha* comics were full of text teaching lessons, and images were used mostly to show examples of the words written. Starting in the 1990s, the approach altered significantly since socially aware graphic novels began to focus more on how images and text connect with each other. (Murthy, 2009).

With the introduction of graphic novels in the 1990s, a major change in the way comics looked occurred. For example, Orijit Sen's *The River of Stories* (1994), chose to separate images to create an undulating effect. Rather than creating a traditional story, Sen embedded symbolism and used different visuals, prompting the reader to interact with the book as well.

A key part of this style change is including traditional folk and indigenous art styles. Bhimayana (2011), illustrated by Durgabai and Subhash Vyam, uses Gond art with images like birds, fish, and trees to stand for movement, feelings, and how a person fits into their society. Rather than staying on each panel, the art moves naturally from one page to the next, going against the straight-lined structure usually seen in Western comics. This approach questions and disrupts the usual ways of seeing and understanding art and literature that show dominance in the world today (Vyam, Vyam, & Natarajan, 2011).

Likewise, Moyna Chitrakar's work on *Sita's Ramayana* (2011), which was written by Samhita Arni, helped keep the Patua scroll art alive. Her visuals tell a story step by step and have a look that reminds of the style found in rural Bengal. The use of earthy colors, flatter styles of painting, and clear, emotive characters connects the epic to thousands of years of Indian culture and makes it accessible for people who usually don't get to see themselves in stories (Arni & Chitrakar, 2011). These mixes between spoken stories and pictures, older ways of doing things and newer styles, help Indian graphic novels stay unique and show the different styles present in Indian art.

Amruta Patil's *Kari* (2008) uses a lot of greys, blacks, and whites, mixed in with moments of bright colors to show moments where the characters feel strong emotions. Her compositions in other works are poetic, full of symbolic language, and many times do not have obvious meaning, depending on how well the text fits with the pictures. Patil's painting style makes it hard to tell comics apart from fine art, because the pages aren't just used to tell a story, but also as something the readers can look at and enjoy like a painting.

Sarnath Banerjee's works, especially *Corridor* (2004) and *The Harappa Files* (2011), use a mix of different visual styles and gives the text little humor. His panels are full of references to things like old Mughal paintings, Bollywood movies, and even building plans seen around a city. Banerjee often puts deep thoughts or questions side by side with simple city scenes, which makes the reader think more about the way images and words go together. His style is often messy on purpose because he wants to show all the confusion and mix of ideas that come from life in cities after economic liberalization (Banerjee, 2004, 2011).

Typography and lettering, in the way of arrangement of words and labeling things, have also become ways to show emotions and make the story more unique in Indian graphic novels. Rather than using regular fonts, many artists write or draw their own script styles that fit what the story feels like and helps stand out what is being said. In *A Gardener in the Wasteland*, the lettering changes the size and is densely packed together, so readers get a real sense of the emotions the story is evoking. Such innovations make it harder for people to just read or look at words and pictures quickly, which means they usually spend more time thinking about what they're seeing and reading to properly enjoy this narrative clues.

A further change comes from how artists play with time and place. Flashbacks, non-linear storytelling, dream scenes, and allegorical pictures are often among the tools Indian graphic novelists use to build their stories. These framing choices show how muddled the lives of the characters are, and also how complicated their communities are. The visual syntax does more than just illustrate; it helps create the meaning of the text. *Delhi Calm* (Ghosh, 2010) draws parallels between narratives and brings back the motif of surveillance, fear, and opposition during the Emergency. The way panels alternate from being full of detail to empty and silent mimics the back-and-forth between times of upheaval and times of control in politics.

Together, these changes in style and taste show that Indian graphic novels are coming into their own. Growing from a medium based on other works, it has become an art that skillfully brings together elements from different cultures and eras. Besides their creativity, the innovations in graphic novels resist corporate norms and invite fans to interpret work according to their own beliefs.

Because graphic novels are now using technology and multimedia in their displays, the ways in which these novels are created will become more diverse. Not only is Indian graphic storytelling found in books and comics, but it now appears in theater, classrooms, and interactive media. Hence, the stylistic approach of Indian graphic novels is deeply informed by a pluralistic worldview—characterized by its adaptability, incorporation of diverse cultural influences, and a deliberate departure from conventional narrative and aesthetic norms.

8. Emerging Trends and the Digital Turn

Currently, India's graphic novels are influenced by changes in media culture, such as increasing use of technology, worldwide cultural sharing, and modifications in who reads them. Indian graphic storytelling in the digital age now reaches a bigger audience and is made, accessed, and distributed in new ways. New trends in graphic narratives show an overlap of innovation, making the medium more accessible, while also promoting social activities, thereby expanding the medium further.

These days, graphic narratives are being manufactured digitally and offered to readers online only at first. This means for webcomics, graphic essays that are published as part of a series, and visual blogs, practitioners are able to experiment more freely in digital media because of how interactive it is.

Rachita Taneja (@sanitarypanels) and Priya Kuriyan have used social media outlets such as Instagram, Tumblr, and Scroll.in to release politically and socially meaningful visuals. Many people come across these comics to discuss current news and events by commenting on them. Its interactive form has helped the graphic novel take on the role of sparking discussions about civic issues.

There is also strong growth in putting the focus on mobile-first content. Creators in India are now creating visual and interactive stories for users who scroll up and down on their phones and read through apps. Story apps and outlets dedicated to comics, such as Toonsutra, Graphic India, and ones made in India, have begun producing comics that tell Indian stories in serial installments, often combining mythology, science fiction, horror, and romance. Following the style of the Korean webtoon industry, this model stands a chance of gaining the attention of younger tech-loving viewers who might ignore print media.

Thanks to the digital turn, more people can participate in the production process. Thankfully, low-cost software like Clip Studio Paint and online websites like Tapas and Webtoon allow Indian artists to make their work available without involving regular publishers. As India's creative sector shifts, self-publishers are able to control all aspects of their creative work, including how they earn from their writing and how their stories are received. Because of this, there are more and more small and crowdfunded visual storytelling ventures that allow creators to directly interact with their audience. Experiments with virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) in India might not be mature yet, but they are making their mark in the field of visual storytelling. We are now seeing AR-enabled artwork and VR setups using graphic narrative ideas in art shows and colleges. Reading these experiences is like being part of the story, as the viewer moves, looks, and gestures through the story, making it hard to distinguish between being a participant and just reading.

There is also a growing effort to acknowledge graphic novels in academics by researching and archiving them. Graphic narratives are being added more frequently to the core subjects taught in universities across India. Conferences, journals, and theses are now held and published specifically on the effects of Indian graphic novels on society, messages in their symbols, and ways they can be used for education. Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology, and Ambedkar University Delhi have sponsored student projects and exhibitions focused on graphic storytelling. This recognition has made the medium seem more credible and has enabled it to become part of wider public discussions. Now, Indian graphic novels are receiving more attention from people around the world. Indian works such as Kari, Corridor, Delhi Calm, and Bhimayana are being translated into foreign languages, and Indian artists are involved in big international comics festivals and book fairs like the Angoulême International Comics Festival, the Frankfurt Book Fair, and the Tokyo Comic Con. Going global allows writers to reach more people and helps inspire cultural exchanges and mixing of forms in stories.

When seen together, these trends herald a new phase for Indian graphic novels. Moving online has produced more voices, opened up the power to produce films to everyone, changed how films look, and expanded who views them. Because of it, graphic storytelling is no longer limited to paper and straight stories, making it possible for readers to interact using different modes and languages. As graphic novels in India develop further, they have the opportunity to both show and help create social changes.

9. Challenges and Opportunities in the Indian Context

Regular challenges in Indian society and the publishing industry stop graphic novels from making progress in mainstream media. Similar problems can be seen in the industry as a whole, due to restricted resources, languages being divided between various groups, and the fact that most people in India read only the mainstream genres. Even so, finding the right opportunities within their constraints can allow the industry to prosper and develop over time.

One of the main hurdles is that graphic novels do not attract many readers or make much money in India. Even though there are many young readers in the country, many people still picture graphic novels as uncommon or elite cultural works mostly read by urban people who speak English. The reason that few middle and lower income groups are able to afford graphic novels is that they are very expensive to make and often have high-quality paper and full-color prints. Consequently, most big publishers are reluctant to support the format, which has resulted in few places to display these books in bookstores and less chance for them to be noticed (Nayar, 2016).

There is also a concern about the lack of connections between different publishing companies. Many Indian graphic novels are created by small, independent publishers that have restricted ways to distribute their books. While they possess a lot of creative ideas, many of them do not have the marketing funds or backing needed to help their publications become national sensations. Because of this, many good and meaningful graphic novels do not reach a wide or varied audience.

Another problem is that language can be a real obstacle. Because India has many Indian languages, only a small number of people can read graphic novels in English. While some important books are being translated into regional languages, these efforts are irregular and often depend on what publishers or NGOs decide to do. In addition, many regional talented artists are unable to make and share graphic novels because they lack the infrastructure and resources to do so in their vernacular languages. Consequently, not only do less people read comics, but their traditional styles are kept out of the mainstream too (Chandra, 2008).

Political sensitivity and censorship make the process more difficult. Due to the social and political themes found in graphic novels, some conservative groups and authorities often oppose them. Discussing sexuality, castes, religious conflicts, or political satire in works can result in critics speaking out or the works being suddenly censored or taken off the shelves. As a result, radical and critical voices in the media may be discouraged by the lack of support for opposition in today's public sphere (Ghosh, 2013).

At the same time, facing these challenges also brings many great opportunities. Because more people in India have become digitally skilled and use the internet, they can now publish their books differently. With Instagram, Tapas, and Kindle Direct Publishing, creators can publish their work, connect with fans, and make money through subscriptions or crowd-funding. Digital technology comes with lower production costs and makes it possible to be more creative with both the appearance and languages used in books.

There is also more interest from schools and organizations in using graphic novels as a teaching and study tool. Universities now often include graphic novels in their classes no matter the subject, and aid groups use them to help spread information during their campaigns. This legitimization not only gives creators more ways to make a living, but it also makes graphic storytelling a more common part of our shared ways of learning and thinking.

Moreover, getting more people around the world to notice and talk about Indian graphic novels, like making translations, giving out awards, and being included in festivals, is helping them reach a wider audience. This global engagement helps creators make a steady income by opening up new places to sell their work and helps people from different cultures work together, which adds more variety.

The rise of artist collectives and teams that mix different types of art, like comics, shows, movies, and new technology, shows that graphic novels may soon move beyond just printed books and become part of a bigger set of stories people experience. Such groups give people a place to try new things, build a sense of community, and learn from each other, all of which help an independent cultural movement grow.

In sum, while the Indian graphic novel scene has some serious problems like getting their books seen by more people, getting enough money, and with censorship, it is still in a good spot to make use of new digital tools, reach schools, and become better known around the world. The challenges need the creators to stick with it, come up with new ideas, work together, and support each other, whether they

are writers, publishers, teachers, or in learning institutions. Only then can the Indian graphic novel really show how it can be both a creative medium and a way to help people imagine and think about different ways the world could be.

10. Discussion

The rise and progress of Indian graphic novels are not limited to a new approach for telling stories. they represent a shift in culture where literature, visual art, social commentary, and public topics work together. Formerly relegated to the periphery of literature and serious studies, graphic novels have grown into a platform that covers many angles and addresses social and political issues in India. Because the medium combines many ideas, artistic styles, and ways of revealing itself, it operates in many circles, providing a flexible space where stories, self-identities, and cultural memories can happen.

The move from the didactic format of *Amar Chitra Katha* to *The River of Stories*' political approach is an important change in the field's way of thinking. The work of Sen went beyond describing the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* to actively change the way old legends are told, making them relate to modern issues and serve as sources of inspiration against injustice. Later stories like *Bhimayana* and *A Gardener in the Wasteland* combined form and content by using traditional Gond and Madhubani art for narrative, thus opposing the usual idea of beginning-middle-end stories developed by Westerners (Nayar, 2016).

Amruta Patil and Sarnath Banerjee have pushed the boundaries even further with their unique way of telling Indian stories. With its monochrome coloring and story about a character who does not fit gender roles, Patil's *Kari* (2008) plays with general comic themes and ideas around gender. Through works like *Corridor* (2004) and *The Harappa Files* (2011), Banerjee has archived the urban reality of post-liberal India, mixing storytelling with subtle visual mockery. By choosing these styles, the artists are making the same "iconic abstraction" as described by McCloud (1993) for comics, but here, they are set in Indian cities.

Indian graphic novels show the variety in cultural stories by their themes. Issues like caste oppression, issues between communities, environmental justice, what it means to identify with a gender, and history after colonization are at the heart of this medium. In his anthology *This Side That Side* (2013), Vishwajyoti Ghosh uses comparative photographs to show how the Partition affected India and Pakistan alike, and *First Hand* anthologies collect visual stories about recent struggles across South Asia. They are not only about events — they write down counter-histories, personal accounts, and new ways of thinking, which support Chakrabarty's (2000) argument that we need to decentre dominant histories.

It's important to note that Indian graphic novels are shaped by the rules and tools found in India's publishing business. Independent presses such as Navayana, Zubaan, Blaft, and Phantomville are extremely important. They advise authors who think differently and favor new ways of storytelling, though they often find it hard due to shortages in funding, problems getting their books out to readers, and attempts at censorship. Their work shows they are dedicated to promoting projects that affect politics and also look exciting.

The digital revolution has contributed to making this space not centralized. It is apparent in digital projects such as those seen in Rachita Taneja's *Sanitary Panels* or on *BlueJackal* and Instagram that there is immediate, interactive, and politically relevant content. Since we live in a post-print, post-literary age, how easily and often a work is shared and shared again has a huge effect on its impact. Though this helps more people share their voices, democratizing media introduces fresh issues related to intellectual property, platforms blocking freedom of speech, and algorithms not displaying some content (Jenkins et al., 2013).

Graphic novels are being used more and more in schools as teachers find ways to use them for teaching critical thinking, learning to read images, and building a sense of history. Graphic

storytelling used in academics is akin to the ‘dialogic and emancipatory’ idea created by Freire (1970). As a result, Indian graphic novels show the truth of social life and also help to change and develop the culture.

The Indian graphic novel currently serves as both a record and a way of responding, performing, and restorying people’s experiences and cultural realities. It is found in the space shared by oral stories, digital social media, artistic and political figures, and shared power over what is told. It might be the ability to mix up style and form that truly sets this medium apart. As this area of literature evolves, people involved in creating and consuming graphic novels in India will ensure that the medium plays a major role in shaping stories ahead.

11. Conclusion

The Indian graphic novel is a colorful combination of serious thought, artistic styles, and uniqueness that cannot fit into just one category. The review illustrates how its progress has been affected by the traditions of Amar Chitra Katha, the storytelling in *The River of Stories*, the style of *Bhimayana*, and the witty notes in *The Harappa Files*. By mixing traditional and contemporary styles, the Indian graphic novel helps shape and reflect the country’s ongoing ideas and developments.

When it comes to themes, Indian graphic novels are capable of exploring challenging topics including caste, gender, helping the environment, post-colonial challenges, and city life. Merging facts, metaphors, personal experiences, and imagination helps them challenge strong historical traditions and promote a wider cultural openness.

The style of the medium has significantly advanced so that it makes use of regional and traditional art, experimental methods, and world influences. They are not only meant to look different, they involve a new way of thinking to free indigenous stories and currently revitalize indigenous knowledge systems in literature.

With more recognition from institutions and across countries, building upon the digital turn, artists now have more chances to share and discuss their work. By giving everyone a chance and encouraging original ideas, it has created new storytelling styles fitted to the present day. Not only does the medium allow for activism and thoughtfulness, but its use in schools and social movements highlights it as a helpful tool for both.

Economic issues, inability to publish in leading languages, a lack of publisher resources, and censorship make it harder for this field to keep going. At the same time, these hurdles make it clear that India needs ongoing help for graphic novelists and authors, improved translating efforts, and new rules that honor the importance of the medium.

In conclusion, the graphic novel from India supports new stories and also serves as a place of cultural protest and creativity. Because it encourages people from various fields and backgrounds to work together, it illustrates the diversity and development happening in today’s world. How this field evolves in the future will depend on its creators as well as the networks that realize its potential.

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