

Utilising Graphic Novels to Promote Sustainable National Development and Global Harmony

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Abstract. India's vast knowledge and traditions could always lead mankind to a sustainable and peaceful future. These traditions provide timeless knowledge about living in harmony with nature, social justice, and spiritual well-being that may be utilised today. But in a digital era, how can we keep these old traditions relevant and accessible? Graphic novels, a unique combination of visual narrative and words, may convey these timeless principles to modern audiences. Its appealing images and engaging storytelling make complicated concepts accessible and inspirational. But this isn't just about pretty pictures; it's about how these graphic novels tackle big questions that resonate today. How do they reimagine ancient tales to speak to our modern struggles with sustainability, fairness, and unity? How do they invite readers to explore the rich tapestry of Indian culture and wisdom? And perhaps most importantly, how do they inspire us to think differently about our world and our place in it? Through various academic analyses of the narratives of three remarkable works - *Adi Parva: Churning of the Ocean* by Amruta Patil, *Bhimayana* by Subhash Vyam, Srividya Natarajan, S. Anand, Durgabai Vyam, and *Chanakya: Of Serpents and Kings* by James Peaty and Rajesh Nagulakonda—the paper will go on a quest to find the answers of the above questions and to understand how these tales breathe life into age-old Indian knowledge and traditions. This paper also advocates for the integration of graphic novels into educational curricula and cultural initiatives, envisioning a world where the wisdom of the past harmonizes with the aspirations of the future.

Keywords : Graphic novels; Knowledge; tradition; National development; harmony.

When it comes to sustainable living, social peace, and spiritual well-being, India's cultural history is rich with traditions and knowledge that have stood the test of time. The wisdom that has been handed down through the ages is just as applicable now as it was then. Nevertheless, in a world that is becoming more and more digital, the task at hand is to

hold on to this priceless information and pass it on to current audiences, particularly the young people who are completely immersed in modern media.

Graphic novels provide a compelling alternative to traditional narrative forms by combining visual storytelling with narrative depth. Graphic novels may unite traditional knowledge with contemporary values by using storytelling and visual elements. They provide a fresh setting in which classic stories and ideas may be rethought and reintroduced to modern audiences.

To promote Indian knowledge and traditions for sustainable national development and world peace, this paper explores the possibilities of graphic novels as a medium. Here the paper examines how three graphic novels reimagine ancient tales to tackle modern problems by analysing *Adi Parva : Churning of the Ocean* by Amruta Patil, *Bhimayana* by Subhash Vyam, Srividya Natarajan, S. Anand, Durgabai Vyam, and Chanakya: *Of Serpents and Kings* by James Peaty and Rajesh Nagulakonda. Let's also take a look at how they encourage readers to dig deeper into the vast array of Indian culture and knowledge, which may lead to fresh viewpoints and understanding. Also let's hope that one day graphic novels will be a part of school curriculum and cultural programmes so that students may learn from both the past and the present, and that this will lead to a world where peace and prosperity are the norm.

Literature Review

The research on graphic novels covers a range of fields such as literature, art, education, and cultural studies. Recently, there has been an increasing interest in the distinctive storytelling capabilities of graphic novels and their capacity to communicate complex concepts and stories via visual representations. Several significant topics arise in the literature while promoting Indian knowledge and customs.

Scholars emphasize the significance of graphic novels for cultural representation and preservation. Bhagwan Wadhwa and Anuja Sharma highlight in their research *Graphic Novels as a Medium for Intercultural Dialogue* the ability of graphic novels to connect diverse cultures by providing an understanding of other communities and belief systems. They claim that graphic novels provide a visually captivating medium for depicting ethnic diversity and questioning preconceptions

(Wadhwa, Sharma 2016). Furthermore, an increasing amount of literature investigates the pedagogical possibilities of graphic novels. Lisa Guernsey and Michael Levine explore how graphic novels might improve students' reading skills and critical thinking in their essay "Using Graphic Novels in the Classroom: A Common Core Unit for Teachers and Librarians". Graphic novels are recommended for their ability to captivate readers via visual narrative, which helps simplify complex ideas and make them more interesting (Guernsey, Levine, 47).

Scholars have also analysed how graphic novels contribute to advancing social justice and activism. Michelle Ann Abate's book *Graphic Novels for Children and Young Adults: A Collection of Critical Essays* looks at how graphic novels tackle topics including racism, sexism, and ecology. She contends that graphic novels may incite social change by increasing awareness of social injustices and elevating marginalised voices (Abate, 33). Scholars are investigating how graphic novels might be used in Indian culture to preserve and spread knowledge and customs. Karla J. Strand and Kenneth Shearer explore how graphic novels might communicate cultural values and customs via visual storytelling in their essay *The Graphic Novel as Cultural Artefact: Implications for Librarianship and School Libraries*. Graphic novels are proposed as a dynamic medium for examining various cultural viewpoints and fostering cross-cultural comprehension. Scholars have also analysed how graphic novels rework ancient tales and folklore to tackle modern challenges. Pramod K. Nayar's work *Indian Graphic Narratives: Postnational Readings* looks into "how Indian graphic novels address topics including globalisation, urbanisation, and identity politics. He believes that graphic novels provide an opportunity to reinterpret conventional stories in a manner that mirrors present-day circumstances". (Nayar, 169)

The literature on graphic novels highlights its potential as a varied and effective medium for disseminating Indian knowledge and customs. Graphic novels provide an interactive medium for delving into intricate cultural concepts and sparking profound discussions by blending visual elements with rich storytelling. Therefore, they serve as a crucial instrument for preserving culture, educating, and promoting social change in a world that is becoming more linked.

Methodology

A qualitative study approach will be used to investigate how graphic novels promote Indian knowledge and customs. Analysing three well-known graphic novels – *Adi Parva: Churning of the Ocean* by Amruta Patil, *Bhimayana* by Subhash Vyam, Srividya Natarajan, S. Anand, Durgabai Vyam, and *Chanakya: Of Serpents and Kings* by James Peaty and Rajesh Nagulakonda. The study will concentrate on identifying themes, and narrative approaches, and visual aspects used to communicate Indian knowledge and customs.

The study will include a comprehensive analysis of the chosen graphic novels, including detailed scrutiny of both the text and visual elements. A comparative study will be performed to discover similarities and variations in the interpretation and representation of Indian knowledge and traditions in the works. Relevant academic literature on graphic novels, Indian culture, and traditional knowledge will be reviewed to give theoretical frameworks and contextual insights.

Analysis of Selected Works

I. Adi Parva; Churning of Ocean by Amruta Patil

Amruta Patil's *Adi Parva: Churning of the Ocean* is a modern reinterpretation of the ancient Indian epic *Mahabharata* in the form of a graphic novel. *Purba Chakraborty*, an Assistant Professor rightly points out in her book review of *Adi Parva* :

Less discussed characters like Vinata and Kadru, two sisters married to Kashyap, or Matsyagandha, whose union with Parashar rishi gave birth to Krishna Dwaipayana Vyas who will later compile the entire Mahabharata, rightfully plays their part in intensifying the complexity of the narrative. In other words, *Adi Parva*, disengages the general preoccupation with the Kuru-Pandava conflict, or the battle of Kurukshetra, by drawing our attention to the dense weave of stories, one leading to the other, that inform the entire narrative of *Mahabharata*. (Chakraborty, 27)

The examination of following various elements of the book will focus on how Patil's work revitalises ancient Indian knowledge and traditions via its thematic depth, narrative approaches, and visual aspects:

1. **Thematic Depth:** Patil's *Adi Parva* explores enduring themes such as power, politics, morality, and human nature, which are fundamental to *the Mahabharata*. Patil presents a new viewpoint on the epic story via colourful graphics and poetic writing, encouraging readers to rethink well-known characters and events. The graphic book goes into the moral quandaries encountered by characters like Draupadi and Karna, emphasising their internal problems and challenges. *Adi Parva* encourages readers to contemplate fundamental truths and ethical ideals that are enduring across many cultures and periods.
2. **Narrative Techniques:** One of the strong points of *Adi Parva* is its creative narrative tactics that combine classic storytelling with contemporary sensibility. Patil's story is told in a sequence of interconnected short scenes, each providing a brief look at various parts of the grand saga. The fragmented form reflects the episodic character of oral storytelling traditions, enabling many views and interpretations. Patil uses flashbacks, dream sequences, and symbolic imagery to construct a complex story that encourages readers to delve into the deeper meanings of the work.
3. **Visual Elements:** The visual components of *Adi Parva* are essential for communicating its conceptual complexity and emotional profundity. Patil's detailed drawings blend classic Indian art elements with modern graphic design concepts, creating a visually striking style. The vivid colours, complex patterns, and dynamic compositions evoke a visual rhythm and movement that reflects the grand scale of *the Mahabharata*. Patil uses symbolism and visual metaphors to create mood and atmosphere, enhancing the depth and complexity of the tale.

II. ***Bhimayana* by Subhash Vyam, Srividya Natarajan, S. Anand, and Durgabai Vyam**

Bhimayana is a graphic biography depicting the life and challenges faced by Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, the key force behind the Indian Constitution and a significant leader in the Dalit cause. According to research by Prajna Desai :

Bhimayana uses Khairlanji (not exceptional, but emblematic of caste in India) to set off a domino-like chain of news items about dalit lynchings that thematically intercut the three main events of the Ambedkar story and his various political feats, including the Mahad Satyagraha, Ambedkar's differences with Gandhi, the Constitution, and the Hindu Code Bill. (Desai, 31)

The following research related to the book's various aspects will examine how the graphic novel combines traditional art forms with contemporary narrative approaches to communicate Ambedkar's legacy and the obstacles encountered by the Dalit community:

1. **Thematic Depth:** *Bhimayana* explores issues of social justice, discrimination, and empowerment that are fundamental to Ambedkar's life and legacy. The graphic book provides a detailed representation of Ambedkar's life from birth to maturity by blending traditional Gond painting with modern visual narrative. The film delves into the social and political challenges encountered by Ambedkar and the Dalit community, emphasising the systematic inequities and prejudice present in Indian society. *Bhimayana* encourages readers to contemplate topics related to caste-based discrimination, as well as the pursuit of equality and dignity.
2. **Narrative Approaches:** *Bhimayana* stands out for its combination of traditional art forms with contemporary narrative approaches. The graphic book merges Gond art, a tribal art style from central India, with graphic narrative techniques to produce a visually unique look. The use of vivid colours, elaborate patterns, and stylized artwork enhances the story, fully engaging readers in Ambedkar's universe. The graphic novel uses a nonlinear narrative framework, including flashbacks and dream sequences, to depict Ambedkar's experiences and inner conflicts. This fragmented approach reflects the intricacy of Ambedkar's life and the obstacles encountered by the Dalit community.

3. **Visual Elements:** The visual components of *Bhimayana* are crucial in communicating its conceptual complexity and emotional impact. The graphic book incorporates Gond art, known for its strong lines and geometric patterns, to represent Ambedkar's cultural past and identity. The images inspire a feeling of ethnic pride and strength, honouring the numerous creative traditions of the Gond people. The graphic book uses symbolism and visual metaphors to depict Ambedkar's fight for social justice and equality. *Bhimayana* provides a moving depiction of Ambedkar's legacy and the continuous struggle against caste-based discrimination via vivid visuals and compelling narration.

III. Chanakya : Of Serpents and Kings by James Peaty and Rajesh Nagulakonda

Chanakya: Of Serpents and Kings is a graphic book that offers a fictionalised portrayal of the life of Chanakya, an ancient Indian philosopher, economist, and political strategist. Aditya Madanapalle, a journalist, writes in his article :

There is a touching epilogue, where Chanakya is seen writing his Arthashastra, and gives an in universe explanation of why he is called Kautilya. Chanakya seems to be very self aware about how he will be perceived in the future, to such a degree that it falls just short of breaking the fourth wall. There is however, a meta commentary where Chanakya explains himself, which is a great narrative approach for such a book. (Madanapalle, 19)

It's important to investigate the following different elements to show how the graphic book looks into themes of power, ambition, and treachery, providing insights into ancient Indian history and culture:

1. **Thematic Depth:** *Chanakya: Of Serpents and Kings* explores themes of political intrigue, manipulation, and the quest for power, which are fundamental to Chanakya's life and influence. The graphic book depicts Chanakya as a shrewd strategist who uses his intelligence and cleverness to manoeuvre through the intricate political

environment of ancient India. The graphic book uses vibrant pictures and dramatic narration to depict historical events, allowing readers to delve into the complexities of ancient Indian politics. The graphic book also poses stimulating inquiries on leadership qualities and the moral principles of governing, encouraging readers to contemplate enduring dilemmas with ethics and authority.

2. **Narrative Approaches:** The engaging narrative approaches of *Chanakya: Of Serpents and Kings* combine historical truth with fictional storytelling, showcasing one of the book's strengths. The graphic novel uses a dynamic narrative approach, including intriguing plot twists and intense confrontations to propel the tale. The graphic novel vividly portrays the lively personalities of historical characters like Chanakya and Chandragupta Maurya via dynamic character interactions and conversation. The graphic novel uses visual storytelling methods like panel arrangement and composition to improve the narrative flow and provide immersive storytelling experiences for readers.
3. **Visual Elements:** The visual components of *Chanakya: Of Serpents and Kings* are essential for communicating its subject's complexity and emotional resonance. The graphic novel has powerful linework, emotive character designs, and elaborate backdrops that capture the grandeur of ancient India. Colour and lighting enhance the mood and atmosphere of the tale, intensifying the suspense and drama of pivotal moments. The graphic novel uses visual symbolism and iconography to communicate complex topics and themes, enhancing the reader's comprehension of the story.

Discussion

The graphic novels *Adi Parva: Churning of the Ocean* by Amruta Patil, *Bhimayana* by Subhash Vyam, Srividya Natarajan, S. Anand, Durgabai Vyam, and *Chanakya: Of Serpents and Kings* by James Peaty and Rajesh Nagulakonda demonstrate various approaches to incorporating Indian knowledge and traditions into narratives that also tackle modern concerns. The texts provide distinct viewpoints on Indian culture, history, and philosophy, offering vital insights into the intricacies of Indian society and identity.

The graphic novels highlight the themes of resilience and resistance in challenging situations. The graphic novels *Adi Parva*, *Bhimayana*, and *Chanakya* showcase characters facing social injustice, advocating for equality, and navigating political intrigue in ancient India. These stories emphasise the determination of individuals and communities to challenge oppressive systems and strive for social transformation. These graphic books highlight tales of resistance and empowerment to celebrate human fortitude and motivate readers to combat injustice and inequality in their own lives. These graphic novels provide important educational chances to probe into Indian history, culture, and philosophy in a manner that is both accessible and captivating. Integrating graphic novels into educational courses helps improve students' comprehension of intricate topics and historical occurrences, as well as promote critical thinking and empathy. Graphic novels serve as a platform for increasing cultural literacy and cross-cultural understanding by providing insights into various cultural viewpoints and practices.

Graphic novels may be crucial in fostering knowledge and appreciation of Indian history and customs across various audiences as part of cultural endeavours. Graphic novels may captivate readers from many backgrounds and generate interest in Indian culture by presenting Indian art, mythology, and history in visually engaging ways. Cultural organisations and institutions may use graphic novels to interact with the public by organising exhibits, seminars, and events to highlight the many Indian storytelling traditions. The examination of *Adi Parva: Churning of the Ocean*, *Bhimayana*, and *Chanakya: Of Serpents and Kings* highlights the graphic novels' capacity to advance Indian knowledge and traditions for lasting national progress and worldwide unity. These graphic books use visual storytelling to provide fresh insights into classic subjects and encourage readers to delve into the diverse fabric of Indian culture and knowledge. They serve as a significant resource for educators, cultural activists, and enthusiasts, promoting discussion and understanding across cultural and geographical borders.

Conclusion

The study indicates that graphic novels can promote Indian knowledge and customs for sustained national development and world peace. Analysing works like *Adi Parva*, *Bhimayana*, and *Chanakya: Of Serpents and Kings* demonstrates how graphic novels may reinterpret old stories,

address current topics, and stimulate fresh viewpoints and understandings. The paper promotes incorporating graphic novels into educational curricula and cultural activities to create a future where historical knowledge aligns with future goals. Graphic novels may captivate and instruct audiences of all ages by using visual storytelling, promoting a greater understanding and admiration for Indian culture and history.

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