Hegemony and Its Others: Comic Books as Alternate Histories

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled, **"Hegemony and Its Others: Comic Books as Alternate Histories"** submitted by me, **Aldish Sikander Edroos**, under the supervision of **Prof. Rimi B. Chatterjee**, Department of English, towards the partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy (Arts) in English of Jadavpur University, is based upon my own original work, and has not been plagiarised. This is also to certify that I have not submitted this work in part or in whole for the award of any other degree/diploma of the same Institution where the work is being carried out, or to any other Institution. I have presented a paper out of this dissertation at a symposium at Ambedkar University Delhi thereby fulfilling the criteria for submission, as per the M.Phil. Regulation (2017) of Jadavpur University.

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On the basis of academic merit and satisfying all the criteria as declared above, the dissertation of **Aldish Sikander Edroos** titled, **"Hegemony and Its Others: Comic Books as Alternate Histories"** is now ready for submission towards the partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of degree of **Master of Philosophy (Arts) in English** of Jadavpur University.

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To My Father

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CONTENTS

Abstract

This dissertation problematises the categories of official History and historiography established by the dominant political discourse through comic books and graphic narratives that represent personal and collective histories of those sections of society that are displaced and marginalised by this dominant discourse. Why I choose graphic narratives for exploring this representation of alternate histories is not only because of the themes they use, but also because of their form. The grammar of a text is integral to its themes and politics. The graphic narrative form conflates the verbal and the visual and generates a critical literacy that brings to us newer and more accessible ways of rethinking, revising, and retelling history. Graphic narratives quite literally give history a face and a voice - they humanise history. In doing so, they impart agency to hitherto marginalised and voiceless stories. Even being voiceless is not an impediment because the verbal-visual literacy of the comic book form allows the reader to see this effacement of voices. I intend to analyse the subversive potential of these marginalised accounts when faced with an oppressive hegemonic state. In order to do that, one must first understand what this dominant hegemony is and how it establishes and maintains its dominance.

I begin the dissertation with a detailed examination of the concept of hegemony as seen through the Marxist theoretical lens. According to Antonio Gramsci, hegemony in a modern state is the perpetuation of dominant ideology, even by those whose interests it runs counter to because hegemony is not only limited to political predominance, but seeks to establish its supremacy in all aspects of civil society, one of which is establishing and perpetuating a particular way of seeing the world, human nature, and relationships. This perpetuation when played out in a socio-cultural context is termed cultural hegemony. It seeks consent from all social, economic, cultural aspects of the state to gain legitimacy

because it is this legitimacy that gives hegemony the ultimate authority within a society. A fully functional hegemony must rest on constant active consent. This is how the construction of the concept of the nation based on a narrative of homogenisation takes place. The homogenisation project of modernity is thus based on the illusion of a single and coherent past. It is steered by a misguided sense of nostalgia, and a notion of the idyllic past.

The next step for the nation after establishing itself as hegemonic, is maintaining this hegemony. This takes place in a number of methods, one of which is the projection and dissemination of an idealised state History. We capitalise History because it represents the grand, overarching structure under which the state gains its dominant identity. Undertaking sweeping othering practices, the state elevates only those records that bolster its hegemony to the level of official History. The rest are either relegated to an ahistorical realm, or are erased from memory altogether.

Since consent is the very essence of hegemonic history-making, the process has an endemic tendency to naturalise itself as unarguably given, as always already present. What this process does in addition to building up History as a monolithic entity is that it disenfranchises and excludes huge tracts of historical traditions from society. There is thus an urgent need to dismantle and demystify this monolith in order to undo the damage and danger that such unidimensional thinking can inflict upon the society. One way of achieving this is by reintroducing hitherto hidden histories into popular culture, and challenging the hegemony through them.

Comic books, because they operate in popular culture, challenge hegemonic forces when they question existing political structures and institutions. Such efforts showcase the importance of comics in spreading greater social awareness by bringing to light new interpretations of institutions that run contrary to the prevailing favourable opinions of those institutions. Graphic narratives by depicting stories of these marginalised and hitherto

unknown hybridized images in mainstream culture shift the focus of historical narration to the individual, the human. The graphic visualisation of individual trauma brings history into the realm of the personal. At the same time, this documentation of the individual can also be seen as a mode of agency awarding it a place in the larger historical process of the nation. In doing so, comic books force us, the readers, to pay attention to these alternate histories that are running parallel to, and are constantly struggling against, the dominant hegemony. Not only does this process empower these groups, but also compels the readers to rework their own assessment of dominant History in more radical and critical ways.

This dissertation examines three graphic narratives that represent three different manifestations of alternate histories. The texts are *Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability* written by Srividya Natarajan and S. Anand, and illustrated by Durgabai Vyam and Subhash Vyam, Orijit Sen's *The River of Stories*, and Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Delhi Calm*. What is unique about these texts, and indeed about the entire graphic narrative genre, is that they present accounts of three starkly different, albeit interconnected histories of marginalized sections of the Indian society across multiple temporalities and geographies. Interestingly, and more importantly, the dominant hegemony against which these comic books pit themselves remains the same thereby alerting us to its entrenchment and immense strength, and reminding us that the struggle against oppression must emerge from all sections of society and culture to form a persistent and aggressive attack.

Bhimayana traces the life of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar through the fictive plot of a conversation between two college students - a Dalit woman and a caste Hindu man waiting at a bus stop. While narrating the struggles of Dr. Ambedkar in a casteist society, the woman relates similar struggles she has to go through of growing up Dalit in a casteist twenty-first century India. The dissertation juxtaposes *Bhimayana* alongside Amar Chitra Katha's biographical comic book of Dr. Ambedkar titled, *Babasaheb Ambedkar: He Dared to Fight*. I

analyse how *Babasaheb Ambedkar* presents a story that is superficial in its understanding of the struggles of the oppressed classes, and erases Dr. Ambedkar's radicalism by choosing to portray his struggle as solely an individual one divorced from the others belonging to his caste. On the other hand, *Bhimayana* seeks to further the emancipatory struggle of the Dalit movement through the narration of the text by a Dalit woman thereby establishing a continuity and continuum in the quest for emancipation as well as the timelessness of caste-based atrocities in India.

Similarly, Sen's *The River of Stories* charts the gross violation of human and environmental rights brought about by the government through the promulgation of the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project on the Narmada river valley, and the consequent protest movement, the Narmada Bachao Andolan. The text flits between the present and the indigenous mythic historical past of how the river valley came to be. This enmeshing of the mythic with present day material struggles makes the reader see the continuity of social history.

Ghosh's *Delhi Calm* is a graphic novel about the twenty-one-month long state of Emergency declared in India in 1975 by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The novel works in a sort of palimpsest model where fictional narratives are imposed upon mythic ones, which in turn are derived from factual history. I intend to first uncover the connections between urban infrastructure and state censorship, and how the two influence the dominant city narrative. I then explore how *Delhi Calm* facilitates the formation of a space that negotiates free speech and thought to combat this dominant city narrative of state censorship and surveillance. I also intend to construct *Delhi Calm* as a microcosm of the nationwide obsession with nation building and progress in post-Independence modern India while exploring the gradual cultivation of the political and cultural right wing of the country that took place in this period.

We as readers are drawn into the multiple temporalities that these texts inhabit so as to understand that social structures as they are presented in the present do not emerge in isolation, devoid of any connection with the past. Nor do past events remain forever frozen in time. The chosen texts show that multiple timelines inhabit the same socio-cultural and geopolitical locations, and that present structures are in constant dialogue with the past.

Introduction

A comic book or a graphic novel is any narrative that recounts a story in graphic form. It ranges from genres like graphic fiction, picture stories, and newspaper comic strips, to photojournalistic works like graphic memoirs, and reportage of witness accounts of catastrophic events like natural disasters, war, and violence. In *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud says that the panels within a graphic narrative have the ability to fracture space and time, and together with the gutter, offer both a frame of recognition and an opportunity for closure in a unified reality. They also demand considerable participation from the reader to foster what McCloud calls an intimacy in closure. [1] Thus the multi-layered structure of comics facilitates a meaningful proliferation of historiography into the graphic text. The performance of trauma is made possible only because of the visual possibilities of the graphic narrative. The horrors of history are delivered to us not only through official documentation, but also through the visual self-portraits of a horrified narrator, as seen in the dehumanisation of the Kashmiris in Malik Sajad's graphic narrative about the Kashmir civil uprising, *Munnu*. The narrative's aim, then, becomes to evoke a very different, and far more visceral, reality than official History - a hyperreality. This dissertation hopes to problematise the categories of official History and historiography established by the dominant political discourse through graphic narratives that represent personal and collective histories of those sections of society that are displaced and marginalised by this dominant discourse. I have chosen two graphic narratives, which closely engage with these personal and collective histories to bring to fore their marginalisation by state hegemony. They are Orijit Sen's *The River of Stories* and Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Delhi Calm*.

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[1] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: [The Invisible Art]* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1994), 67-69.

Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith in *The Power of Comics*, understand the comic book as a blending of aural and visual elements. This blending converts the message from mere text to icon signs acting as placeholders of the actual message. [2] However, due to the dynamic and additive nature of the comic book, readers are free to draw from their own set of socio-cultural experiences while reading the text. This then morphs the comic book into an assemblage of index signs with messages that can be extraneous to its immediate meaning.

Pramod K. Nayar, while discussing the grammar of the graphic narrative, states that the medium with its verbal-visual and critical literacy and image-text facilitates the creation of a nuanced language to address contemporary concerns, and provide a politically-edged cultural critique of the problems that surface in (and because of) a post-liberalised India. [3] Since the graphic texts function within an urban social milieu, one also proposes an investigation into the rise of the rhetoric of modernisation when looking at the history of India after Independence. A text's grammar is constitutive of its politics. In other words, the medium of comics is always already self-conscious as interpretive, and never purely mimetic.[4] This may be seen as a technique to foreground their location and draw attention to official history as an exercise in discourse-construction. The graphic narrative form conflates the verbal and the visual and generates a critical literacy that brings to us newer and more accessible ways of retelling and revising history.[5] Graphic narratives, quite literally, give history a face and a voice - they humanise history. In doing so, they impart agency to hitherto marginalised and voiceless stories. Even being voiceless isn't an impediment because this verbal visual literacy of the graphic text enables the reader to *see* the silencing. It is thus important to understand the visual culture of historicity for graphic texts to lay claim to their

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[2] Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith, *The Power of Comics: History, Form, and Culture* (New York and London: Continuum, 2009), 10.

[3] Pramod K. Nayar, *The Indian Graphic Novel* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 8.

[4] Hillary L. Chute, *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 198.

[5] Nayar, *The Indian Graphic Novel*, 13.

authenticity. This self-consciousness exists together with the medium's confidence in its ability to express history. It is taken for granted that "pure" historical representation is never possible. Graphic narratives therefore, call into question any stand of an "objective" or "realistic" account of history, (including historiographies) which relies on the apparent objectivity of language. The graphic narratives' interpretive power could then also be seen as a sort of stylized anti-realism.

The "graphic" in a narrative when used plainly indicates a certain degree of realism in representation (graphic horror, graphic violence, etc.). When understood in this manner, the Indian graphic narrative can provide a new representative mode to would require a new methodology and pedagogy. By adding a visual dimension, Indian graphic texts take the complex concerns and themes of Indian literary writing and discuss them in the popular medium of comics. This exercise not only democratises the forms of socio-political commentary, but also the very language of cultural analysis. [6] This new language can help hone a sharp cultural critique of contemporary socio-political concerns. Israeli visual theorist, Ariella Azoulay suggests that the bottom-up approach towards historiography facilitates alternative avenues of understanding, and indeed of recognition, of sub-cultures terrorised by human rights violations. She calls this process "potentializing history." [7] Furthering Azoulay's argument, I propose that bottom-up interventions like those seen in *Delhi Calm* and *The River of Stories* help potentialise marginalised narratives by creating an entirely new and permanent space for them. Furthermore, their presence makes it possible to understand the entire corpus of history as a dynamic force and as a violent reminder available to future generations as means of protest and political subversion.[8]

According to Italian social theorist, Antonio Gramsci hegemony is the perpetuation of dominant ideology, even by those whose interests it runs counter to. This perpetuation when

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[6] Nayar, *The Indian Graphic Novel*, 7.
[7] Ariella Azoulay, "Potential History: Thinking through Violence," *Critical Inquiry* 39, no. 3 (2013): 565-566.
[8] Azoulay, "Potential History."

played out in a socio-cultural context is termed cultural hegemony. In *The German Ideology*, Marx observed, "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas…" Gramsci complicates this idea further while developing his concept of hegemony. Hegemony forms the basis of his analysis of folklore and popular culture, and the relationship between intellectual philosophy and the world view of the mass of the population.[9] While medieval and early modern times hegemony referred mostly to the political predominance of a ruler or a monarchy, in the modern bourgeois state, Gramsci argues, consent from the non-ruling class takes on a much larger importance. Hegemony is not only limited to political predominance, but seeks to establish its supremacy in all aspects of civil society, one of which is establishing a particular way of seeing the world, human nature, and relationships. It is important to note that hegemony is different from ideology because unlike ideology it doesn't only depend on acceptance from the ruling class. It also seeks acceptance as "normal reality" or "common sense" by those classes whose interests it does not serve. In other words, hegemony seeks consent from all social, economic, cultural aspects of the state to gain legitimacy because it is this legitimacy that gives hegemony the ultimate authority within a society. The concept of hegemony then gains extreme importance in societies where the social structures are determined by electoral politics and public opinion.[10] The struggle for hegemony in such societies becomes a decisive factor for any kind of radical change in authority.[11] Tom Bottomore when defining hegemony in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* mentions that for Gramsci, state hegemony equalled force plus consent. As the state evolves into a late capitalist one, the material basis of its hegemony involves reforms and compromises for the non-ruling class to secure their consent. In this way, the leadership of the ruling class is maintained, while other classes have certain demands met.[12] Gramsci called

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[9] Tom Bottomore, *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 231.
[10] Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 145.
[11] Williams, 146.
[12] Bottomore, *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, 230.

this passive revolution. Carrying this idea forward, Gramsci posits that a fully functional hegemony must rest on constant active consent. Electoral politics is one such manifestation of this active consent. Thus, a fully democratic society is also a fully hegemonic one.[13]

Gramsci uses this conceptualisation of power and hegemony, and says that as people's acceptance of certain relationships and social hierarchies continues from one generation to another. In the cultural sphere, it becomes not only uncomplicated but also commercially beneficial to "play it safe" and support society's hegemonic concepts until someone reconsiders the notions more critically or a new ruling class emerges. [14] Comic books because they operate in popular culture challenge hegemonic forces when they question existing political structures and institutions. Such efforts showcase the importance of comics in spreading greater social awareness by bringing to light new interpretations of institutions that run contrary to the prevailing favourable opinion of those institutions.[15] Further, the underlying reality in the narratives of the chosen texts is itself symbolic for it is an attempt to give a body to something invisible and hidden. History assumes corporeality through visual representation within a graphic narrative - it is given a body. [16]

The concept of the nation is based on a narrative of homogenisation of dominant social groups. Accordingly, this homogenisation is contingent on the marginalisation of certain other, non-dominant social groups. The role of modernity within a nation's self-fashioning may also be seen as a Janus figure, a two-sided phenomenon, which simultaneously harks back to the past as well as looks ahead to the present/future. Indeed it looks to the present/future with reference to, and in opposition with, the past. In "The National Longing for Form," Timothy Brennan mentions that the nation as a concept refers to both the modern nation-state, and a historical and nebulous entity, which is contingent on a

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[13] Bottomore, *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, 231.
[14] Duncan and Smith, *The Power of Comics*, 263.
[15] Duncan and Smith, *The Power of Comics*, 265.
[16] Pramod K. Nayar, "The Visual Turn: Affect, Autobiography, History, and the Graphic Narrative," *IUP Journal of American Literature*, (2009): 62.

sense of belonging. This simultaneous existence is often glossed over by the aggressive nationalist aspirations of placing one's country in an "immemorial past where its arbitrariness cannot be questioned."[17] The nation as a discursive formation makes use of fiction as a cultural buttress to transmute ideas of nation and nationalism from a mere allegory or imaginative vision to a gestative political structure.[18] The homogenisation project of modernity is thus based on the illusion of a single and coherent past. It is steered by a misguided sense of nostalgia, and a notion of the idyllic past. History, when seen through this formulation of the nation, is an amorphous, objective, and impersonal whole. It identifies what particular anxieties threaten the notion of its whole, idyllic past and works towards marginalising them. Historically, these have been groups that possess a hybridized image, which emerged from a sustained dialectical negotiation with racial, religious, and ethnic differences.[19] Graphic narratives by depicting stories of these marginalised and hitherto unknown hybridized images in mainstream culture shift the focus of historical narration to the individual, the human. The graphic visualisation of individual trauma brings history into the realm of the personal. At the same time, this documentation of the individual can also be seen as a mode of agency awarding it a place in the larger historical process of the nation. In this sense, the graphic narrative "humanises history."[20] A study of this imaginative literature would then further one's understanding of the functioning of these concepts, and the prejudices that guide them.

Through their visual nature, graphic texts bring to consciousness situations and locations of trauma different from ours. *Delhi Calm,* for example, extracts historical trauma from being relegated to the past as a dark period to being hypervisible by representing it in a

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[17] Timothy Brennan, "The National Longing for Form," in *Literature in the Modern World*, ed. Dennis Walder (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 211.
[18] Brennan, "National Longing," 213.
[19] Sonia Sahoo, "Resituating Brexit: Anxieties of Early Modern Cultural and Linguistic Translation," *Caesurae: Poetics of Cultural Translation* 2, no. 1 (2017): 60.
[20] Nayar, *The Indian Graphic Novel*, 14.

form that is familiar, mainstream, and popular. Hypervisible history is the serious transmission of extreme historical trauma from under the weight of censorship, official documentation, and unverifiable sources to the public gaze through an apparently frivolous and 'comic' medium. [21] In the "Introduction" to the graphic memoir, *Palestine* by the Maltese-American graphic journalist, Joe Sacco, Edward Said writes that Sacco has the power to detain the reader by furnishing suffering and injustice that has received too little humanitarian and political attention. [22] However, this power to detain could also risk a state of stagnation in the reader's understanding. By limiting the reader to certain narrative paths, the account risks freezing the subjects in their position of victims in perpetuity without affording them any scope for change in their status. [23] Historical and temporal incongruities thus become the very markers that legitimise a subject. Judith Butler complicates this idea further by using Hegelian recognisability, which delineates general conventions and guidelines within which the subject can be prepared for recognition, and differentiates it from a more pointed "recognition." However because of its amorphous structure, one can also apprehend something beyond recognition or something not yet recognised by the pre-existing norms of recognition.[24] Bearing witness, and bearing witness to that witness then becomes essential in understanding a democratic public space in the face of a "lying world order," argues Peg Birmingham.[25]

Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability is a graphic memoir of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar written by Srividya Natarajan and S. Anand, and illustrated by Durgabai Vyam and Subhash Vyam. It traces the life of Dr. Ambedkar through the fictive plot of a conversation between two college students - a Dalit woman and a caste Hindu man waiting at

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[21] Nayar, "The Visual Turn," 62.

[22] Edward Said, "Homage to Joe Sacco," Introduction to *Palestine* by Joe Sacco, (London: Jonathan Cape, 2001), v.

[23] Charlotta Salmi, Reading Footnotes: Joe Sacco and the Graphic Human Rights Narrative, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 52, no. 4 (2016): 420.

[24] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), 5.

[25] Peg Birmingham, "Elated Citizenry: Deception and the Democratic Task of Bearing Witness," *Research in Phenomenology* 38, no. 2 (2008): 198.

a bus stop. The city and the bus stop are unnamed, perhaps to suggest the universality of the story. Through narrating the struggles of Dr. Ambedkar in a casteist society, the woman relates similar struggles she has to go through of growing up Dalit in a casteist twenty-first century India. She and the text represent the embodied impact of history through the verbal-visual spatial grammar of the text. The narrator brings in caste atrocities carried out within India since before Dr. Ambedkar's time, and as such, the text incorporates news reports on casteist anti-Dalit violence, letters, legal documents, and speeches by political figures. This enmeshing of multiple temporalities is not only possible through the graphic medium, but is also pivotal in focussing the readers' attention to the embodiment of the very material impact History has on individual lives and collective memory. The choice of narrator is important because by choosing a seemingly non-political narrator, Natarajan and Anand enable a popularisation of a social and historical wrong; what Nayar calls a demotic register.[26]

The impact of *Bhimayana's* retelling of the history of caste-based oppression through the individual journey is best seen when compared to another account of Dr. Ambedkar's life - Amar Chitra Katha's comic book *Babasaheb Ambedkar: He Dared to Fight.* Even before we begin to delve deeper into the texts themselves, the titles and cover pages evoke sharply different images of the same individual. Amar Chitra Katha (roughly translated to mean "Immortal Picture Stories") (hereafter ACK) is one of India's most popular comic book series founded in 1967 by Anant Pai.[27] The comic books' main focus is the dissemination of popular Hindu cultural mythology and folklore to children. In an effort to diversify, ACK introduced their "Visionaries" series that narrated romantic tales of the lives of India's political and cultural leaders. *Babasaheb Ambedkar: He Dared to Fight* is one of them. Its cover page (see fig. 1.1 in Appendix A) is a dominated by the signature portrait of Dr. Ambedkar in his blue suit and red tie as the first Law Minister of independent India. It is

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[26] Nayar, *The Indian Graphic Novel*, 110.
[27] "About Amar Chitra Katha," Amar Chitra Katha, accessed on April 3, 2019, https://www.amarchitrakatha.com/in/about.

placed above the sun setting over a Buddhist temple. Both the temple and the sun are significantly smaller in proportion and occupy about one-third of the page at the bottom. Dr. Ambedkar's portrait is a disembodied apparition in the sky indicating his relegation into a mythic, almost divine status; the subtext being that his politics is far too removed and ahistorical to concern itself with anything of social relevance today.

Bhimayana's cover page (see fig. 1.2 in Appendix A) is also a rendition of Dr. Ambedkar, a side profile with his right arm and index finger raised in objection and/or vindication. The artwork is in the tradition of the Pardhan Gond art movement pioneered in the mid-1990s by Jangarh Singh Shyam, and to whom the book is also dedicated. Here too, Dr. Ambedkar dominates most of the page. However, the portrait is replicated four more times in increasing proportions. The back page functions as an extension of the portrait with his hand holding a book, most likely the Constitution of India. The bottom left corner and most of the background of the back cover is a wash of azure blue with the outlines of a mass of people drawn roughly in the signature indigo blue one has come to associate with the Dalit movement. The entire spread when taken as a whole gives the impression of Dr. Ambedkar embedded in a mass movement demanding for justice, and not as an amorphous entity divorced from social sentiment as ACK would have us believe. This graphic dissonance with the hegemonic narrative forms the core of the entire text.

Coming to the titles themselves, *Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability* is an echo of the Hindu epic Ramayana. This intertextual connection serves as another subversive plot device, at once implicitly critiquing the Hindu system of hierarchy while simultaneously asserting the right of the oppressed classes to self-realisation. *Bhimayana*, the title, alerts the readers to the connection the collective history of the Dalit movement has with the cultural hegemony of casteist Hindu culture. The subtitle, "Experiences of Untouchability" only serves to drive the point further that the text is not interested in preserving some caste Hindu

monolithic image of a united and harmonious society. ACK's title, *Babasaheb Ambedkar: He Dared to Fight*, is not only completely non-agential, but also possibly detrimental to any Dalit cause. Firstly, Dr. Ambedkar has been addressed as Babasaheb, which may seemingly suggest respect, but is in fact relegating him to the realm of the revered and (ironically) untouchable class of historical leaders while stripping him off of his educational qualifications; something which he insisted was the only way out of caste-based oppression - his lifelong motto being "Educate, Agitate, Organise." Further, while the subtitle, "He Dared to Fight" may paint him as a man of bravery and courage (which he indeed was), the word "dared" does denote a pejorative tone, almost as if to say, "He, a Dalit, had the *audacity* to fight."

The body of the texts both attempt to trace the personal history of Dr. Ambedkar. As mentioned previously, Chute suggests that graphic narratives are well poised to explore collective histories and their intersection with personal life stories. However, ACK's *Babasaheb Ambedkar* presents a story that is superficial in its understanding of the struggles of the oppressed classes, and erases Dr. Ambedkar's radicalism by choosing to portray his struggle as solely an individual one divorced from the others in his caste. He is made out to be a gifted young man who rises higher in life due to his gifted mind, which he honed *despite* being an untouchable. Not once is the word "Dalit" mentioned in the entire thirty-one-page comic book. The only time the word "brahman" (not brahmin) is mentioned is when addressing a caste Hindu teacher who was "affectionate" towards young Ambedkar and because of whose early guidance he achieved all his success later on.[28] The implication here is clear; no Dalit, not even Dr. Ambedkar can achieve emancipation without the help of caste Hindus. ACK not only fails to provide any representation to the oppressed classes through the

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[28] *Babasaheb Ambedkar: He Dared to Fight*, ed. Anant Pai, script S. S. Rege, (Mumbai: Amar Chitra Katha, 2018), 7.

text, but in fact goes a step further and attempts to completely reverse the progress made by the entire Dalit movement.

The text of *Bhimayana*, on the other hand can be described as an exercise that seeks to further the emancipatory struggle of the Dalit movement. The narration of the text by a Dalit woman establishes a continuity and continuum in the quest for emancipation as well as the timelessness of caste-based atrocities in India. What the insertion of news articles, legal documents, etc. does is transform the novel from a mere biography to a palimpsest of multiple histories, stories, and retellings across time. This not only enables the reader to establish a clear connection between the past and the present, but also alerts them to the mediated nature of the monolith that is state History. Further, the reframing and retelling of official and political texts in a graphic narrative makes possible a larger circulation that in turn brings the audience closer to understanding chronicles that were hitherto inaccessible due to the country's bureaucratic framework and language. In this manner, writing and reading such graphic narratives becomes an exercise in emancipation.

"Official accounts" like the *Amar Chitra Katha* comics have broadly been accepted as the norm when it comes to explaining India's history in popular culture. However, alternate Indian graphic narratives, like *Bhimayana*, *Delhi Calm*, *The River of Stories*, and others, with their verbal-visual duality, focus on individual traumatic histories, and critical literacy display texts (and indeed history and culture) as situated within unequal social fields of caste, patriarchy, and capitalism, and demands that readers becomes alert to the positions they take vis-á-vis not just the text, but the social domains represented in it. [29]

The concept of modernisation in India brings with it narratives of industrialisation, urbanisation, development, neoliberalism, and late capitalism post the 1991 economic reforms. This rhetoric of "growth" and "development" is shared by both the BJP and the

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[29] Nayar, *The Indian Graphic Novel*, 8.

Congress, and is often used to legitimise unequal power relations and capitalist exploitation of socio-cultural and natural resources. It is also interesting to note that the intensive drive of rampant urbanisation and industrialisation that took place after the first two five-year plans divided the nation between modern, rational progressive forces of "development" versus a sort of a pre-industrial, luddite impulse to preserve a romantic idea of a rural, agrarian India. The Emergency became the launching ground for a kind of new consumer modernity with efficient state machinery, affordable private consumption (Sanjay Gandhi's vision of the People's Car), focus on the inculcation of an urban rationality, and an intensive economic development agenda. This last aspect has been a rural phenomenon as well, and has been used since independence to justify the displacement of the rural folk. Hydroelectric and irrigation projects are the largest source of displacement and destruction of habitat in the country. [30] In "The Greater Common Good", Arundhati Roy traces this line of thought to the pre-partition era where an intense Nehru versus Gandhi binary functioned on similar impulses. In one of his speeches, Nehru called dams the temples of modern India. Dam-building is a legacy of the Nehru-Mahalanobis model of economic strength and modernity. It is seemingly socialist owing to its developmental nature, but is also deeply entrenched in a transnational late capitalist ideology, and is at the same time invested in the rhetoric of nation-building and nationalism. Chapter One will analyse the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project in the Narmada River Valley as a manifestation of the narratives of national progress and economic development within this late capitalist neoliberal ideologies, and explore the possibility of an alternative historiography through Orijit Sen's graphic novel, *The River of Stories*. Regarded as the first Indian graphic novel, *The River of Stories* uses myths of the Bhilala ethnic community of Madhya Pradesh as a device to bring to fore the injustices inflicted upon those displaced due to the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project. It traces a history of

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[30] Smitu Kothari, "Whose Nation?: The Displaced as Victims of Development," *Economic and Political Weekly*, (15 June 1996): 1476.

the river from prehistoric times right down to the modern age, and in doing so, reveals the intimate connection the indigenous tribes have with the valley, and the intertwining of both their existences. The book also probes into the neoliberal binary of primitive nature versus progressive technological modernity thereby unearthing the deep-seated hypocrisy of the urban Indian society, and the hollowness of the promise of development in the twenty-first century. Briefly touching upon the Narmada Bachao Andolan, *The River of Stories* also explores possibilities of subversion against such oppressive narratives in order to maintain a healthy ecological base for future generations. I intend to supplement my reading of the graphic novel with Arundhati Roy's essay "The Greater Common Good," to bring to fore the mechanisms of erasure used by the neoliberal state to supplant small, marginalised narratives with a dominant and repressive state history. Here too, the mythologisation of the personal histories of a marginalised community challenge the dominant narratives of the prevailing hegemony by compelling the readers to take notice of sentimentalities different from their own. Further, by conflating the mythical, the popular, and the political into one, Sen brings upon concerns of displacement and destruction of indigenous tribal communities a cultural legibility - a new avenue of dissent for an issue that was hitherto debated solely within a juridical realm. Thus, this chapter will also explicate how works like Sen's draw attention to those dispossessed and omitted from official history by extreme capitalist and urban structures of economy and power, and commit them to unofficial memory and spaces of dissent.

Keeping these frames of reference in mind, Chapter Two will understand the construction of India within an urban political economy especially during the 1975 Emergency. I will use Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Delhi Calm* as the primary text to analyse this aspect of the nation-building process. The novel works in a sort of palimpsest model where fictional narratives are imposed upon mythic ones, which in turn are derived from factual

history. On June 26, 1975, the Prime Minister's Cabinet asked President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed to declare a state of Emergency citing external threat and internal disorder. This not only ushered in an era of censorship, preventive arrests, curtailed civil rights, but also bureaucratic efficiency, lower corruption rates, and better civil services. *Delhi Calm*'s protagonist is Vibhuti Prasad (VP). He and his friends are driven by a dream of change, and thus decide to join Baul's syndicate, i.e., Jayprakash Narayan's ideology of "Total Revolution." Delhi is reimagined through their eyes during the Emergency into a dark, blood-smeared slum where nothing is right, yet everything is calm. The Emergency suspended India into a sort of alternative narrative of modernity and nation building. Things seemed normal, but not quite. It seemed to be hegemonic because it aspired to the dominant modernity, but since it was ostensibly the dominant hegemony, its modernity should ideally have been the dominant one. It is thus possible that it was aspiring to a mythic, ur-modernity, which may or may not have existed. One could conclude, then, that the Emergency transformed India into an uncanny modernity, where things were similar, but not the same. In contrast with other fictional works that portray the Emergency as a draconian shadow over the state (like Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* or Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*), *Delhi Calm* gives a rounder, more nuanced, and morally ambiguous picture. It visualises the earnestness of Indira Gandhi and VP when they both begin their respective agenda of nation building, and ends with their subsequent disillusionment of political structures. In a way, it disturbs and distorts our notion of how History might be received and dispersed, and reconfigures it outside the frame of public memory and into the frame of personal recall and sentimental narratives. [31] Additionally, since *Delhi Calm* is a thinly fictionalised graphic narrative, it interlinks personal fictive narratives with socio-historical and institutional powers, which then accentuate the issues of otherness within the text. [32] To that end, Chapter two will also

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[31] Nayar, *The Indian Graphic Novel*, 22.
[32] Nayar, "The Visual Turn," 131.

explore the tension between the hegemonic state and the nation as an organic entity, and how the latter comes to be subordinate when faced with the power of the former. A basic chronology of India's key political events from 1947 to 2017 forms an appendix at the end of this dissertation. Its intended purpose is to better understand the progression of the alternate histories the chosen texts discuss, and to better contextualise them vis-à-vis official History sanctioned by the State.

A critical inquiry into a graphic narrative invites the reader to dismantle the ideology underpinning that particular text. Like other cultural expressions, comic books too are a product of individuals who bring to them their own set of ideological belief systems. Any attempt at analysing these texts in a socio-economic, political and cultural setup will inevitably contain an analysis of the author's historical and cultural legacy. In this sense, critical inquiry into graphic narratives is localised and also temporally bound. To that end, it is important that these texts and the analyses that accompany it are not taken as universal and absolute especially given the postmodern nature of most urban societies today. The study undertaken in this dissertation hopes to serve as an interruption in the universality of hegemonic structures, and aims at understanding and wielding these comic books as counter-hegemonic tools to dismantle it. It is thus essential to situate these texts and their authors' ideologies within a specific time frame since both of them (and the canon at large) are dynamic entities prone to changes and self-contradiction.

Since the graphic narrative can trace its evolution back to the popular political cartoon strip form as well as photojournalism, the comics medium can easily be used to enmesh and bring forth an existing culture of visual aesthetics, political commentary, and representation into popular culture. The mode eschews jargon, and is thus a demotic medium of dissemination. Paradoxically, given its high production value and labour costs, the product itself is at the higher end of the consumption spectrum, and caters primarily to an urban

audience.[33] As a result, the critiques attempted by these texts are also targeted at a decidedly urban audience. The concluding chapter of this dissertation will delve into the temporality, logistics, reachability, and ability of the medium as a credible space for dissent and possible reform.

Through this study, I will explore how graphic narratives can help destabilize the mythic urtext of the homogenous national history by covert acts of subversion as well as explicit political commentary. Due to the physiognomy of the medium, graphic narratives very clearly provide a "miniaturized representational context" for grasping all the socio-economic, political, and cultural anxieties that are constraining the existence of a pluralistic heterogeneous national identity.[34] In his historicist mode of analysis termed as 'cultural materialism', Williams develops the Gramscian notion of cultural hegemony, and relates a peculiar distinction between "dominant", "residual," and "emergent" aspects of culture.[35] I propose that if the official, national rhetoric is the dominant aspect of culture, then the memoirs and oral narratives of the victims of the dominant fascist ideology may be categorized as the residual aspect while the resultant modes of expression such as graphic narratives, and other forms of art are the emergent aspects of culture which Williams talks about. Following this, Marist theorist Terry Eagleton opines, "correct revolutionary theory assumes final shape only in relation to a mass political movement."[36] (Original emphasis) Criticism, according to Eagleton, must dismantle received notions of culture, and reveal their ideological role in shaping subjectivity. It must expose the rhetorical structures by which hegemonic works lead to politically undesirable effects, and should interpret such works, whenever possible, against the grain. I argue that the chosen texts can be used as tools for rereading the processes of history-making against the grain in the twenty-first century.

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[33] Nayar, The Indian Graphic Novel, 10.
[34] Sahoo, "Resituating Brexit," 69.
[35] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016), 121-127.
[36] Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism*, (London: NLB, 1981), 98.

Chapter One

"Put your money where your mouth is. Right there. Near the bottom of your face. Put your

money in there. Eat it. Eat your money. This has been the financial news."

- Night Vale Podcast

This chapter will look at the graphic narrative *The River of Stories* written and illustrated by Orijit Sen as an example of histories running parallel to, and in opposition with, the state-sanctioned hegemonic history. Published in 1994, Orijt Sen's *The River of Stories* is arguably India's first graphic novel. Orijit Sen has been an active member of the Narmada Bachao Andolan, the protest movement against the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project. Right before the prologue, Sen writes, "Although parts of this narrative are based on real people, places and events, it has been conceived as a work of fiction."[37] Further, Rewa is also another name for the river Narmada. Much like *Bhimayana*, then, *The River of Stories* is also a semi-fictional account. It charts the gross violation of human and environmental rights brought about by the government through the promulgation of the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project on the Narmada river valley, and the consequent protest movement, the Narmada Bachao Andolan.

The text is divided into five parts: "Prologue: A Dream," "Part I: The Spring," "Part II: The River," "Part III: The Sea," and "Epilogue: Under the Mahua Tree." The text consists of three stories functioning in three different temporalities enmeshed together by the overarching theme of the history of the Rewa river valley. Vishnu, a journalist is sent to the valley to document the agitation by the local communities against the Rewa Sagar Dam Project, the construction of which will result in their displacement. The struggles and lives of the people, and their protest against big government form the other arc of the text. All

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[37] Orijit Sen, *The River of Stories* (New Delhi: Kalpavriksh, 1994), 2.

throughout, *The River of Stories* flits between the present and the origin story of the Rewa valley through Malgu Gayan's narration of what appears to be the first ever iteration of the myth. This enmeshing of the mythic with present day material struggles makes the reader see the continuity of social history. We as readers are drawn into the multiple temporalities that the text inhabits so as to understand that social structures as they are presented in the present do not emerge in isolation, devoid of any connection with the past. Nor do past events remain forever frozen in time. *The River of Stories* shows that multiple timelines inhabit the same geo-social locations, and that present structures are in constant dialogue with the past.

This chapter sees *The River of Stories* as a graphic narrative that problematises categories of official historiography established by the dominant political discourse through representation of personal and collective histories and myths of a people displaced by that very same dominant discourse. The visual nature of the medium allows Orijit Sen to engage with this overarching hegemonic discourse, and facilitate a safe space for the negotiation and representation of individual and collective memory simultaneously. It is important to note that collective memory is not the same as dominant history because the collective here is in stark opposition to the dominating hegemony - the collective is its other. Sen places this hegemonic discourse alongside witness accounts of the displaced as relayed to Vishnu, as well as Vishnu's own first hand experience of the protest. We as readers are thus made aware of how these non-official witness accounts are systematically erased or rendered ahistorical and apolitical by covert and overt actions of the state hegemony. Hillary Chute says that the graphic narrative medium is important because it explores how individual memories and collective histories intersect. In *The River of Stories*, the struggle of the indigenous communities of the Rewa valley to preserve their land and culture is constantly at odds with the government's stance that certain sacrifices ought to be made to usher in a global modernity.

In order to analyse how *The River of Stories* works as an alternative to the dominant state narrative, we must first understand what the dominant narrative is, how it functions, and how exactly it came to be dominant. We have already seen in the "Introduction" how hegemony establishes itself through covert consent in the realm of the political, the economic, and the cultural. The next step for the state after establishing itself as hegemonic, is maintaining this hegemony. This takes place in a number of methods, one of which is the projection and dissemination of an idealised state History. We capitalise History because it represents the grand, overarching structure under which the state gains its dominant identity. Undertaking sweeping othering practices, the state elevates only those records that bolster its hegemony to the level of official History. The rest are either relegated to an ahistorical realm, or are erased from memory altogether. An example of this could be the disassociation of the figure of Bhagat Singh from Leninist Marxism. We remember Bhagat Singh as a young nationalist who started out as a follower of Gandhian nationalism, but took to revolutionary methods after Gandhi's withdrawal of the Non-cooperation Movement. However, that he was extremely influenced by the ideologies of Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky, and was an atheist are facts that are often ignored by national history when appropriating his role in the Indian freedom struggle.[38] Similarly, the popular creation of Dr. Ambedkar is limited to his being the architect of the Indian Constitution and someone who strove to uplift the oppressed. His staunch and scathing criticism of Hindu casteism is by and large avoided in mainstream cultural expressions like his biography, *Babasaheb Ambedkar: He Dared to Fight* in the Amar Chitra Katha series. History is clearly constructed by selections and decisions made by human agency. By its nature, History is exclusive and hierarchical. As Gramsci explains, consent is the very essence of hegemonic history-making, which is why it has an endemic tendency to naturalise itself as precisely that - natural. It is important for History to fashion

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[38] Bhagat Singh, "Why I am an Atheist," last modified October 5-6, 1930, https://www.marxists.org/archive/bhagat-singh/1930/10/05.htm.

itself as unarguably given, as always already present, and not as a construction of human agency or discrimination so as project itself as the exact opposite of what it actually is - made-up, temporary, and not at all all-encompassing.[39] What this process does in addition to building up History as a monolithic entity is that it disenfranchises and excludes huge tracts of historical traditions from society. There is thus an urgent need to dismantle and demystify this monolith in order to undo the damage and danger that such unidimensional thinking can inflict upon the society. One way of achieving this is by reintroducing hitherto hidden histories into popular culture, and challenging the hegemony through them. *The River of Stories*' documentation of the Narmada valley's history and the Narmada Bachao Andolan is one such account of hidden and challenging histories. However, how effectively *The River of Stories* challenges this grand narrative can only be understood once we know exactly how massive and deeply entrenched the narrative is.

The Savagery of the Civilised

On July 8, 1954 upon inaugurating the construction of the Bhakra Dam in Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru said,

> "As the nation rejoices at the successful completion of this monumental project, which will provide benefit to the whole nation though more to Punjab and adjoining states of Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, I congratulate you all. The accomplishment of this mammoth task represents our resolve to build this immense country of ours. This dam is not meant for our generation alone but for many generations to come as well who will drive benefits from it. You have participated in an historic and monumentous effort and those who partake in such a noble cause rise in stature themselves. This Dam has been built up with the unrelenting toil of man for the benefit of mankind and therefore is worthy of worship. May you call it a Temple or a Gurudwara or a Mosque, it inspires our administration and reverence"[40]

A few years earlier, on April 12, 1948, while laying the first batch of concrete for the Hirakud Dam on the Mahanadi River in Odisha, Nehru said, "If you are to suffer, you should

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[39] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2014), 197.
[40] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Ji's Speech," last accessed March 3, 2019, https://bbmb.gov.in/speech.htm.

suffer in the interests of the country." Thus began one of Nehru's most enduring legacies – the neoliberal zeal for rapid development and modernity and the complete and absolute erasure of indigenous cultures and marginalised histories that came in its wake. As with all post-independence discourses, the one about progress and economic development is linked with specific forms of power, and is further bolstered by the construction of a complex legal apparatus around it. The dominant discourse of economic development in India is one that depends heavily on the extensive use of natural resources. For communities that depend on these natural resources for their livelihood, these projects destroy their dynamic living conditions, and the consequent displacement deprives them of their sense of rootedness, the psychological trauma of which alone is enormous. However, the national attitude towards those facing displacement and marginalisation due to such development projects is largely ordained by the rhetoric set in place by people in power like Nehru. So much so, that it has become a part of the constitution.

Chapter II: Offences of Atrocities, Section 3(f) of The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) (PoA) Act as amended in 2017 qualifies any non-SC/ST person as liable to punishment under the Indian Penal Code if they commit the following offences:

3(f) wrongfully occupies or cultivates any land, owned by, or in the possession of or allotted to, or notified by any competent authority to be allotted to, a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe, or gets such land transferred;

3(g) wrongfully dispossesses a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe from his land or premises or interferes with the enjoyment of his rights, including forest rights, over any land or premises or water or irrigation facilities or destroys the crops or takes away the produce therefrom.

3(t) destroys, damages or defiles any object generally known to be held sacred or in high esteem by members of the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes.

Explanation — For the purposes of this clause, the expression ─ object means and includes statue, photograph and portrait (emphasis added)

3(y) denies a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe any customary right of passage to a place of public resort or obstructs such member so as to prevent him from using or having access to a place of public resort to which other members of public or any other section thereof have a right to use or access to;

3(z) forces or causes a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe to leave his house, village or other place of residence:

Provided that nothing contained in this clause shall apply to any action taken in discharge of a public duty;

(za) obstructs or prevents a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe in any manner with regard to—

> (A) using common property resources of an area, or burial or cremation ground equally with others or using any river, stream, spring, well, tank, cistern, water-tap or

other watering place, or any bathing ghat, any public conveyance, any road, or passage.

Hydroelectric projects are guilty of all these offences, and yet cannot be held under any of these clauses by way of the explanation give for clause 3(t). For the communities around rivers, the river's geography and their relationship with it is a primary factor in constituting their cultural identity. Their subsistence is solely dependent on forests and the land surrounding them, water bodies like rivers, streams, springs, and the indigenous flora and fauna. Because they survive as a community, most do not live in a disparate nuclear family set-up, but rather in extended ones that as a whole make up the larger community fabric.

Chapter V: Rehabilitation and Resettlement Award of The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (amended from the 1984 Act) (hereafter Land Acquisition Act, 2013) contains the following clauses under Section 41. Special provisions for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes:

(1) As far as possible, no acquisition of land shall be made in the Scheduled Areas.

(2) Where such acquisition does take place it shall be done only as a demonstrable last resort.

(6) In case of land being acquired from members of the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes, at least one-third of the compensation amount due shall be paid to the affected families initially as first instalment and the rest shall be paid after taking over of the possession of the land.

(7) The affected families of the Scheduled Tribes shall be resettled preferably in the same Scheduled Area in a compact block so that they can retain their ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity.

(10) The affected Scheduled Tribes, other traditional forest dwellers and the Scheduled Castes having fishing rights in a river or pond or dam in the affected area shall be given fishing rights in the reservoir area of the irrigation or hydel projects.

(11) Where the affected families belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes are relocated outside of the district, then, they shall be paid an additional twenty-five per cent. rehabilitation and resettlement benefits to which they are entitled in monetary terms along with a one- time entitlement of fifty thousand rupees.

However, section three of the Supreme Court's judgement in the historic Ram Chand Vs. Union of India (1993) case states,

> "The power to acquire private property for public use is an attribute of sovereignty and is essential to the existence of a Government. *The power of eminent*

domain was recognised on the principle that the sovereign State can always acquire the property of a citizen for public good, without the owner's consent. Later, either in the Constitution or in the Act enacted for that purpose, not only this power was recognised, but limitations on exercise of such power were prescribed, for striking a balance between the interest of the public and the individual."[41] (emphasis added)

As is amply evident, this ruling has the power to reverse all of Sections 1 and 2 of Chapter V of the Land Acquisition Act, 2013. "Public good" in a wider socio-political context has hitherto been used (since the first Five Year Plan 1951-56) to mean economic and infrastructural development projects that are ostensibly designed by and for the urban population. These planners see any rural impediment around these development projects as obstacles in the nation's progress.

Chapter VI: Procedure and Manner of Rehabilitation and Resettlement of the same act mandates the appointment of an Administrator with a rank no lower than that of a Joint Collector, and a Commissioner chosen by the state government for rehabilitation and resettlement. The Act also makes provisions for appointing a project-level committee for the same purpose. Apart from government officers, the Committee is to consist of a woman representative from the affected area, a representative from each Scheduled Caste and Schedule Tribe residing in the affected area, a representative of a voluntary organisation working in the area, a representative of a nationalised bank, the Land Acquisition Officer of the project, the Chairpersons of the panchayats or municipalities located in the affected area, and the Chairperson of the District Planning Committee, a representative of the Requiring Body, and a Member of Parliament and a Member of the Legislative Assembly of the concerned area. On a vote share basis, the representation of the local inhabitants of the affected area stands at 21.42%, and this is assuming that the representative of the organisation working in the affected area is a sympathetic local. One can see, then, that the representation of the local communities within these governmental committees is all but

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[41] Union of India v. Ram Chand, 1994 SCC (1) 44, JT 1993 (5) 465, (1993),
https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1465016/.

marginal, and their concerns could easily be overridden by the decisions of the other members. These other members are by definition from an urban background, and do not have any personal stake in the displacement drive. Having little to no empathy for the preservation of the cultural identities of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, these policymakers are brutal in the decisions they take for the "development of the nation" and often apathetic to the plight of the tribal communities, viewing them as impediments to progress and dismissing their concerns as 'sacrifices that must be made for the development of the nation.'[42] (Indira Gandhi to Baba Amte) That rehabilitation is only a clause in an act primarily aimed at acquisition, and not even an independent policy or law in its own right is indicative enough of the direction in which the government skews when it comes to "national" progress.

In "The Greater Common Good II," Arundhati Roy observes (as have many others before and after her) that Large Dams sequester resources from rural India and divert them to "the cream of the crop that lives in urban India."[43] The villages are meant for the sole purpose of subsidising the cities. In return, the cities undertake, with an almost missionary zeal, the noble endeavour of modernising these villages. Champions of urbanisation view stances like Roy's as catering to a neo-luddite and anti-development impulse - an immature romanticisation and ennobling of the savage hindering the rational and progressive forces of the nation. Smithu Kothari hits back with the argument that this current path of development has led to massive destruction of the ecological fabric of the country and has entrenched further the already widening gap between the rich and the poor. The urban agenda of "civilising the savage" often does not impart any control to the adivasis in determining their own future. Democratic progress should take place with democratic consent and not due to

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[42] Letter from Indira Gandhi to Baba Amte, cited in Smitu Kothari, "Whose Nation? The Displaced as Victims of Development," *Economic and Political Weekly* 31, no. 24 (1996): 1484.
[43] Arundhati Roy, "The Greater Common Good II," *Outlook* (1999).

"the arrogance of those who believe that their model of development is in the "national interest" just because they have been elected to power."[44]

According to the Central Water Commission's National Register of Large Dams, as of 18 February 2019, India has 5264 completed large dams and 437 large dams are under construction.[45] As of 2014, out of the 36000 displaced due to the Bhakra Dam in 1954, only 800 families have gotten ownership of new land.[46] Meanwhile the Bhakra Dam, as of August 2018, is functioning at its lowest capacity of 1568 feet (out of a maximum capacity of 1683 feet) in a decade.[47] The Hirakud Dam, which is even older than Bhakra, is estimated to become redundant within the next decade.[48] The provision of compensation for the families displaced by the Hirakud Dam began only in December 2018.[49] Arundhati Roy calls this blatant undemocratic disregard of the needs and interests of the rural citizens of the country by the urban elite, "the savagery of the civilised."[50]

The Mountains were Changing

A close reading of *The River of Stories* would reveal how Orijit Sen illustrates each of these methods of exploitation that have led to the construction of the state history and how each is countered with a corresponding alternate histories. Kothari in another essay says that the economic evaluations of project planning and policy are inherently biased because of the

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[44] Smitu Kothari, "Who Can Speak for the People?" *Friends of River Narmada*, accessed February 10, 2019, http://www.narmada.org/debates/ramguha/smitusresponse.html.

[45] "National Register for Large Dams," accessed February 26, 2019, http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/file/NRLD%202018.pdf.

[46] "50 Years On, Bhakra Dam Oustees Wait for Rehabilitation," *The Times of India*, last modified October 22, 2013, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/50-years-on-Bhakra-Dam-oustees-wait-for-rehabilitation/articleshow/24504585.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst.

[47] Anju Agnihotri Chaba, "Bhakra Dam Water Level At Decade's Lowest," *The Indian Express*, last modified August 3, 2018, https://indianexpress.com/article/india/bhakra-dam-water-level-at-decades-lowest-5289258/.

[48] Ranjan K. Panda, "Death of Hirakud Dam," *The Times of India*, last modified May 13, 2018, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/death-of-hirakud-dam/articleshow/64144645.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

[49] Suryakant Jena, "Compensation Process For Hirakud Dam Oustees Begins," *Odishatv*, last modified December 15, 2018, https://odishatv.in/odisha/compensation-process-for-hirakud-dam-oustees-begins-339852

[50] Roy, "The Greater Common Good II," (1999).

fundamental gap in the lifestyles of the planner and the local communities.[51] State intervention and law support wholly the drawing up of projects like hydel plants because of the misguided notion that they are in the interest of the public or the nation. The planners are also economically and socially better off than those they plan to displace and thus simply lack empathy for their plight. There is also a socially-ordained arrogance gained from the bureaucrats viewing the tribal communities as belonging to the "lower caste," and so not really warranting much empathy to begin with. One may then argue that there exists a class and caste bias in the very processes of planning and implementing these projects. Given the verbal-visual literacy of *The River of Stories*, it is possible to experience these biases in a more visceral and effective manner. This section will analyse the hegemonic state narrative in the previous section and counter it with examples of alternate histories from *The River of Stories*.

Let us begin with the very definition of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. Under article 342 of the Constitution, India defines the Scheduled Castes in a certain state or union territory as, "the castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within castes, races or tribes which shall for the purposes of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Castes in relation to that State or Union territory, as the case may be." Article 342 of the Constitution, Scheduled Tribes "specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which shall for the purposes of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes in relation to that State or Union territory, as the case may be." Right off the bat, in *The River of Stories*, this definition is completely undone by the retelling of the myth of "Kujum Chantu." According to the myth, the *adivasis* were the first humans (*adi* meaning first, *vasis* meaning inhabitants) who lived on the very belly of the universe, Kujum Chantu.[52] She created the world out of a clump of dirt from her chest (one can't help

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[51] Kothari, "Whose Nation?" 1477.
[52] Sen, *The River of Stories,* 9-12.

but see a subtle subversion of the biblical creation narrative too), and forms the earth humans now inhabit. Not only is this a starkly contrarian view of the modern Indian state, it also covers a larger ambit than the Constitution's definition making their existence universal, timeless, liminal, and hence, indefinable.

Next, the Constitution tells us what constitutes as violence against the adivasis. Clause 3(t) of the PoA Act is of particular interest as it says that defiling any object of importance is a punishable offence. However, the adjoining explanation of what an object actually means is painfully limiting because it does not take into account their symbiotic relationship with their surrounding ecology. The only clause in which their environment is even mentioned is 3(za)(A), which treats rivers, streams, springs, etc. as common property belonging to the government, but available for use to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes living in that area. Thus the government usurps all rights to that ecology. Not only does this take away any claim the adivasis might have onto their land, but also further renders their living conditions as temporary and contingent on the whims of the bureaucracy. In *The River of Stories*, when the forest officials come to Jamli to exercise the "power of eminent domain," this conversation takes place:

> Villager: Sahib, these hills and forests are our home! We were born here - our ancestors have lived here and after us our children…
> Forest Officer: No! The time has come for all this nonsense to stop. You people have to give up thinking of the forests as *your private property* to use as you please.
> Villager: I don't understand this. What has this got to do with the sarkar? And how is it possible to live without farming or hunting?[53] (Emphasis added)

Again, Sen invokes myth and past folklore to counter this state narrative - in this case, "The Children of Rewa." It starts off some time after Kujum Chantu ends. The prologue to the myth is provided at the beginning of Part II of the book in the chapter titled, "The Mountains were Changing." The chapter intersperses contemporary dam construction activity

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[53] Sen,16.

with the invocation of the mythical troubadour figure of Malgu Gayan. He is invoked by another mythical figure, Relukabadi, to use a new rangai (flute) to spread again the music of the river of stories. [54] A few pages later we have the retelling of "The Children of Rewa." The art for the mythic parts of the narrative is pencil-shaded, as opposed to the fluid, cartoonish quality of the contemporary storylines of Vishnu and the dam construction. This pencilling gives a soft grey quality to the artwork rendering each panel like a painting. The two storylines meld as the narrative progresses and so does the art styles. Sen use this technique in *The River of Stories* not only to bring out the stark differences between the two temporalities encoded within the text, but also to point out the comfort with which myths and narratives are written into the landscapes of the valley, and coexist in relative harmony without the need to have an overarching History. This seamless transition of the Malgu Gayan of myth into Vishnu's contemporary world further highlights the fact that the adivasis of the Rewa valley still adhere to the same sartorial and lifestyle perspectives about the world.[55]

"The Children of Rewa" narrates how the river itself took up the responsibility of caring for the daughters of Relukabadi, the one entrusted with sculpting the rangai. While felling the tree that would make the range, he breaks a pot of water, which washes away his daughters into the Ambarkhant valley - whom the locals refer to as 'the mother.'[56] The valley's spirit then took care of the daughters and renamed them Rewa (Ganga) and Vijali (Jamna).[57] Thus the valley and the river are not merely the geographies that were inhabited by the adivasis' ancestors, they *are* their ancestors. Modern state's bureaucratic impositions of private and forest land, then, make little sense in the face of an organic and unbreakable bond between land and human. Further challenge to the state's definition of land comes from

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[54] Sen, *The River of Stories*, 30-31.
[55] Mimi Mondal, "River of Stories," *Kindle*, last modified November 1, 2013, http://kindlemag.in/river-stories/.
[56] Sen, *The River of Stories*, 48.
[57] Sen, *The River of Stories*, 38-40.

the narrative arc of the 'Rewa Ghaati Andolan' - an allusion to the ongoing Narmada Bachan Andolan. Through this mode and through Vishnu's lens, the Rewa Ghaati Andolan questions the government's proposed development model that seeks to erase the independent and self-sustaining local cultures and ecology with large-scale industrialization and schemes to modernise agriculture.[58] Thus, the merging of these two distinct streams of story and style could also be viewed as a response to this basic contention between the two developmental models.

On page 19 (see fig. 2.1 in Appendix A), there is a panel whose bottom half shows a local fisherman casting his net into the river Rewa looking at the top half of the panel, which has a bus travelling on a bridge that runs across the river. The bus is, from the point of view of the fisherman, almost one with the clouds in the sky thereby rendering it almost other-worldly. Sen seems to suggest the bus as symbolic of the dominant hegemonic notion of modernisation that appears to be so alien to the local inhabitants that it almost looks like something has been, quite literally dropped from the clouds. If we hark back to Nehru's equating of modernisation with divinity, this particular panel also seems to be suggesting that the bus, which represents modernity, is not only alien, but also divine - something that relegates the material reality (in this case the fisherman in the process of procuring his livelihood) to the very bottom of the panel and historical make-up of the country. By projecting the bus as an abstraction of the primary mythic narrative of the so-called modern India, other micro histories are side-lined and made secondary. By juxtaposing these two images and histories together, Sen not only draws our attention towards reading both these histories side-by-side, but also compels us to see how the two are enmeshed within each other and emerge because of each other. Additionally, this juxtaposition cautions us against favouring the dominant narrative of history as the only viable one, and uncovering to us the

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[58] Sen, 46-47.

violence, exploitation, and discrimination such a decision causes to the rest of the marginalised narratives. This new visuality that *The River of Stories* offers enables a reevaluation of history. It provides us with new and different histories of India; histories of violence, suppression, and marginalisation. More importantly, this new visibility also grants agency to the actors of this history, giving them a voice and thereby a valid and authenticated politics. Indeed this agency is expressed in a scathingly satiric manner in a panel immediately after "The Children of Rewa" on page 43 (see fig. 2.2 in Appendix A). It is the last panel on the page and covers two-thirds of it. It shows Malgu Gayan sitting on top of a cliff looking down upon a bus (presumably the same one) meandering its way through the valley. Here, Malgu is on the top right corner and the bus at the bottom left. The panel is a complete reversal of the one on page 19. Through this reversal, Sen tips the balance in favour of the mythic narrative by portraying Malgu as timeless and divine, looking over and protecting the valley with his rangai. The bus itself is tinier taking up about an inch in the bottom left corner. However, where in the previous panel, the bus's smallness was indicative of an aspirational, yet unattainable modernity, here it seems puny and powerless when placed within the vast and ephemeral narrative of the mythic valley.

The river itself comes to symbolise an alternate mode of historiography in the book. In Malgu Gayan's narration of "Kujum Chantu", "The Children of Rewa", and "Rewa: A map of stories told and as yet untold" we see a convergence of myth with history. These narratives are succeeded by scenes that are firmly placed in the consumerist material reality of the novel's present. "Kujum Chantu" is followed by "Relku's Story" which she narrates to Vishnu in whose house she works as domestic help. Her story recounts her family's displacement from the village Jamli because of the Rewa Sagar Dam Project. Vishnu's first encounter with the local inhabitants of the valley aboard a bus going to Manigam, and his learning of the systematic encroachment of the tribal land by the state and the ostracisation of

the adivasis follows immediately after "The Children of Rewa." Part III of *The River of Stories* opens with the Chairman of the National Water Commission having a squabble with his wife whilst holidaying on a beach resort. They are interrupted by a resort staff member who brings to the Chairman's notice Vishnu's story on the agitation against the Rewasagar Dam. The next two pages shift from the graphic narrative format and show a facsimile of Vishnu's news article.[59] In all these instances, Sen masterfully fuses mythic narratives with documented facts and verifiable history. This conflation not only forms the text's visual grammar, but also foregrounds the violence of hegemonic history and its constant tussle with counter-hegemonic myths and histories. [60] Further, by showing how these multiple temporalities function in the same paradigm, Sen uncovers the violent ways in which History suppresses any alternate iterations of historiography. In this way, not only does *The River of Stories* constitute history and myth, but also functions as a site where history and counter-history collide.[61]

These retellings of myths also serve to reframe the very processes of history-making. This harking back to the past, on the one hand, opens it up to the present generations of readers from different socio-political backgrounds. On the other hand, these retellings find resonance with contemporary readers. This establishes continuity and a continuum in reading works like *The River of Stories*, which ensures a sustained supply of alternate narratives not just for the marginalised and the oppressed.

In her essay, "The Generation of Postmemory," Marianne Hirsch while discussing mourning within the narrative of the holocaust, argues that photographs mediate between public and personal memory by "reindividualising" the former. "Post" indicates a temporal delay of the event as also a widening of its location. [62] Hirsch argues that more than oral and

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[59] Sen, *The River of Stories*, 52-53.
[60] Nayar, *The Indian Graphic Novel*, 121.
[61] Nayar, 122.
[62] Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (2008): 106.

written histories, photographic images outlive their subjects longer, and are a more enduring representation of the past. Experiencing these images after the event takes place does not replace participation in that History, but does enable a displaced participation which in turn returns the trauma suffered during the period to the realm of the personal, and thus successfully provide a semblance of closure. Pramod K. Nayar extends this argument to material artefacts. Using Vishwajyoti Ghosh curated partition anthology, *This Side That Side*, Nayar remarks that a three-dimensional, material artefact is far more potent in inculcating memory citizenship within displaced peoples than a two-dimensional photograph.[63] He uses the postmemory attached to different objects in the different stories of *This Side That Side* to illustrate this point further. Noor Miyan's *surma* in "Noor Miyan", the ledger in Ankur Ahuja's "The Red Ledger," the house in "90 Upper Mall or 1 Bawa Park" all use material objects as their focus to reinstate the personal and the individual within History – they reindividualise History. [64]

I propose that postmemory can be extended to geographical locations as well. Whether it is the Delhi urbanscape post Emergency (that we shall see in the subsequent chapter), or the colonial and casteist Bombay and Nagpur in *Bhimayana*, or the local settlements around river Rewa in *The River of Stories*, geographical locations mediate the historical memory of the people inhabiting that space. The resultant narratives then help "undercut the narrative of officialdom" by producing more humanised and reindividualised histories. These histories then acquire the agency to form a network and become our collective shared legacy. Furthermore, as discussed in the "Introduction," the verbal-visual graphic narratives tend to provide an intimacy in closure due to their dual action of fracturing

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[63] Nayar, *The Indian Graphic Novel*, 43-47.
[64] Vidrohi, Tina Ranajn, "Noor Miyan," in *This Side That Side*, curated by Vishwajyoti Ghosh (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2013), 59-67.
Ankur Ahuja, "The Red Ledger," in *This Side That Side*, 169-175.
Ahmad Rafay Alam and Martand Khosla, "90 Upper Mall or 1 Bawa Park," in *This Side That Side*, 177-189.

temporalities and impelling the reader to participate in that fracturing.[65] They thus form the perfect conduit for this reworking of postmemory as a means of reclaiming the past.

Pages 48-50 form a three-page-long pullout that maps the course of the river Rewa from its source in Ambarkhant to the construction of the Rewasagar dam in present day. The pullout titled, "Rewa: A Map of Stories Told and as Yet Untold" doesn't merely map the topography of the valley, but also it's historical and mythical past and present. It forms the third mythical retelling of the text, one that works as a palimpsest that at once distances itself because of its esoteric existences and simultaneously draws us closer to understanding them. This entire spread can then be seen as the site where the text's post memory functions. By superscripting multiple stories, temporalities, and memories spanning across time upon the same geographical location, *The River of Stories* forges a strand of remembrance and resistance that undercuts official History and provides us an accessible, reindividualised legacy.

The River of Stories shows how the state presents modernisation as a natural progression of history. By employing the above-mentioned strategies, the state hegemony projects the concept of modernisation as something longer than life and society. It fashions a mythology around itself so as to render itself an untouchable and untarnished part of the official History even though it is very clearly a mere fabrication of the late capitalist state. By juxtaposing this false myth of modernisation and progress alongside the myths of the river Rewa, Orijit Sen problematises the very construction of categorisations, and interrogates the established modes of perceiving and understanding such categorisations. Ideologically, *The River of Stories* is positioned on the side of the pre-modern. The pre-modern critical literacy of the text outrightly rejects the mediated access an industrialised modern state provides to a historical past.[66] It is thus conscious and mindful of offering to the reader only an unmediated

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[65] McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 8.
[66] Nayar, The Indian Graphic Novel, 118.

history. This makes visible the mediation prevalent in state history by contrast, and brings to fore the idea that history and counter-history are often constitutive of each other. Additionally, and somewhat counter-intuitively, this self-reflexivity also points to the inherent mediation within of history that takes place in the pre-modern version as well. In the end then, all history is mediated through the politics of those who disseminate it. I propose that in this manner, graphic narratives like *The River of Stories* in addition to interrogating, problematising, and engaging with the hegemonic narratives also make visible other/alternate histories that inhabit, emerge from, and are caused by dominant known histories.

Chapter Two

"Having a democracy does slow down things."

- *Indira Gandhi*

As proposed in the previous chapter, geographical locations are spaces that negotiate postmemory. Histories are played out on multiple spaces both cultural and geographical. While the preceding chapter discussed multiple histories in the rural space, the current chapter explores the urban cityscape of Delhi as a site for playing out historical pasts as seen in Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Delhi Calm*. When analysing Indian graphic novels, the city is an automatic motif given that most narratives are largely places within the confines of an urban or semi urban space.[67] Examples include the city of Bombay in Amruta Patil's *Kari*, Delhi and Kolkata in Sarnath Banerjee's *Corridor* and *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers*, Srinagar in Malik Sajad's *Munnu*, and so on. Where *The River of Stories* problematised official History through the representation of collective rural histories and myths of the people displaced by it, *Delhi Calm* tries to negotiate a space for articulation of urban histories and trauma of the people functioning within, and victimised due to, that same official History.

Delhi Calm is a graphic novel about the twenty-one-month long state of Emergency declared in India in 1975 by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The novel works in a sort of palimpsest model where fictional narratives are imposed upon mythic ones, which in turn are derived from factual history. *Delhi Calm's* primary narrator is Vibhuti Prasad. He and his friends Parvez and Vivek Kumar (Master), are driven by a dream of change, and thus decide to follow the ideology of "Total Revolution" as espoused by Jayprakash Narayan, who in the text is represented by the character of Baul or The Prophet. Delhi is reimagined through their

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[67] Hillary Chute, *Why Comics?: From Underground to Everywhere* (HarperCollins, 2017), 327.

eyes during the Emergency into a dark, blood-smeared slum where nothing is right, yet everything is calm. The novel follows the life stories of Vibhuti Prasad, a young hopeful socialist, Mother Moon (Indira Gandhi) and her Indian National Caucus (Indian National Congress), and The Prophet's Total Revolution; all of them eager to attain absolute control of Powerpolis (Delhi). Under the spiritual leadership of The Prophet, Vibhuti Prasad and his friends form the Naya Savera Band, and tour the rural areas in the northern parts of the country to spread his message of Total Revolution. The band eventually dissipates as The Prophet fails to gain much political traction against Mother Moon's Indian National Caucus. Vibhuti, Parvez and Master reunite in Delhi (Powerpolis), this time under the shadow of the Emergency through which Mother Moon and her two sons the Prince and the Pilot rule rampant and without consequence. The Prince and the Pilot here are quite obviously Sanjay Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi respectively. The text ends with the lifting of the Emergency and launching the country into an era of uncertainty and instability that would be the government formed under the Janata Alliance.

An Urban Uncanny

The first section of this chapter will see *Delhi Calm* as doing for the mobilization of marginalised groups in urban and semi-urban spaces what *The River of Stories* did for dissenting narratives in the rural and tribal spaces. The aim here is to first uncover the connections between urban infrastructure and state censorship, and how the two influence the dominant city narrative. We then explore how *Delhi Calm* facilitates the formation of a space that negotiates free speech and thought to combat this dominant city narrative of state censorship and surveillance. According to Dominic Davies, the spatialisation of urban landscape of a city, i.e., how the city is segregated into class hierarchies is directly related to

the polarised manner in which wealth and power are distributed in that city.[68] Just as *The River of Stories* examines the displacement of indigenous populations to make way for modernisation and economic development, *Delhi Calm* studies the segregation of classes in the urban setup of Delhi brought about by the need to cultivate a particular aesthetic of a neo-liberal urban ethos - a need to make Delhi a "world-class city."[69]

The question that then arises is how is this aesthetic cultivated and diffused in society's popular consciousness by the state? As argued in the Introduction, the post-independence comics culture was dominated by the likes of ACK and others, which functioned primarily as a conduit for state propaganda that encouraged conformation to a monolithic nationalist identity. It adopted the vision of a successful and progressive India on a path to achieving economic development at par with the West while also preserving its cultural heritage. We hence see comics where the protagonists are middle-class Hindu families living in clean, planned cities, and who have a healthy progressive mind frame about education with a smattering of impish humour to make it attractive to children ("Ramu and Shamu" from Tinkle, *Billu* of Diamond Comics), but are also equally respectful of their elders and their rural and traditional roots (P. K. Sharma's *Chacha Chaudhary*, picture stories from *Chandamama* and *Champak*). At the same time, in order to appease the non-dominant sections of the Indian society, we have deeply stereotypical representations of minorities and supposed oddballs painted in a palatable and humourous light indicating very clearly that they may not be a part this national monolithic vision, but are unquestionably acquiescent to it. Examples include "Suppandi" from *Tinkle*, a dim-witted village simpleton of ostensibly South Indian origin who works as an errand boy in cities, and "Anwar" and "Nasruddin Hodja" also from *Tinkle* - both Muslim characters known almost solely for their wit (something that can be easily construed as connivance and cunning in a larger historical

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[68] Dominic Davies, "Urban Comix: Subcultures, Infrastructures and "The Right to the City" in Delhi ," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 54, no. 3 (2018): 414.
[69] Davies, 425.

framework). Incidentally, all three of these characters were also created by Anant Pai. Deepa Srinivas sees these comics as pivotal in forming the ideas of citizenship and selfhood in urban and semi-urban middle-class children.[70]

Delhi Calm subverts this national aspiration by its ostensible shabbiness, and stained and dirty colour schemes that bring to mind mud-stained papers or old, forgotten sepia-tinted photographs rather than pictures of a pristine cityscape. Ghosh thus consciously positions *Delhi Calm's* narrative as outside the mainstream. Almost every page in *Delhi Calm* is peppered with one form of signage or another. These include hoardings, banners, slogans, newspaper articles, billboards, posters, flags and so on. Though their presence may seem offhand at first, used merely as white noise to fill in the blank spaces of the page, a closer study reveals their very focussed purpose. In *Why Comics?*, Hillary Chute describes the space of the city as a "cacophony of voices."[71] She argues that the narration of history in a graphic novel situated in a city is frequently interrupted and disrupted by the use montage, non-linear images and verbal organisation, collages, and a mash-up of all possible attitudes because this hybridity is what makes up the social fabric of the city in the first place.[72] As such, Ghosh constantly breaks the urban space of the narrative by intermingling the rural and multiple pasts. Davies giving the example of *Bahadur* by Indrajal Comics explains that hegemonic narratives have usually followed the geographical movement from the city to rural India as an exercise in civilising and modernising. Something we also see in *The River of Stories*. He says that the urban mind-set is to foray into rural India to "re-establish order, suppress a criminalized political dissent and remind villagers of their obligations to the nation."[73] What *Delhi Calm* does is simultaneously show the readers how this rhetoric functions while also subverting it through explicating the fissures in this line of thinking by using the rural and

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[70] Deepa Srinivas, "Graphic Histories" (presentation, Symposium on Graphic Storytelling in India, Ambedkar University Delhi, New Delhi, November 22, 2018).
[71] Chute, *Why Comics?*, 363.
[72] Chute, 397.
[73] Davies, "Urban Comix," 424.

semi-urban landscape as a space where the urban counter-narratives retreat and seek refuge before advancing their counter-cultural agenda. Therefore, we have Vibhuti, Parvez, Master, and the rest of the Naya Savera Band flitting from village to village spreading the message of Total Revolution before the Emergency. Similarly, during the Emergency, the trio assembles in the seedy by-lanes of Delhi to plot out various courses of action against Mother Moon. During these advances, we see glimpses of the characters' personal lives; Vibhuti's romantic tryst with another band member, Mala,[74] and Parvez's familial problems regarding his future.[75] In this way, the geographical spaces not only function as alternative spaces where the public and the private collide, they also facilitate new sites of resistance to the oppressive state and urban infrastructures.[76] Page 15 (see fig. 3.1 in Appendix A) of *Delhi Calm* shows Vibhuti and Parvez sitting at a tea stall pretending to read newspapers watermarked with a picture of The Prince having his finger shutting his lips. The original poster of The Prince dominates the top half of the page and is supplemented with the text, "SSHH! DO NOT TALK POLITICS HERE!!!" This same poster also functions as the tea stall's menu card indicated by the text on the bottom left side of the poster, "Chai: 0.50 Breadtoast: 1.50…" The bottom right hand corner says, "We do not have any other branch." Behind the newspapers, Parvez (who is also hiding behind the mask of a Smiling Saviour volunteer) and Vibhuti are seen conspiring about a plan to circulate some pamphlets in Delhi to spread The Prophet's propaganda, and the need to carry out the operation secretly because they could be under constant surveillance. The text achieves two objectives through this entire panel. On the one hand it shows that the invasive effects of state censorship are so extensive that even a roadside tea stall has become a site of spreading nationalist fervour and fear. On the other hand, it brings to light the fact that even passive spaces that have resigned themselves to the

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[74] Vishwajyoti Ghosh, *Delhi Calm* (India: HarperCollins, 2010), 75.
[75] Ghosh, 26-28.
[76] Davies, "Urban Comix," 424.

dominance of the state are susceptible to the clever permeation of free thought, free speech, and subversive resistance to the hegemony.

Throughout *Delhi Calm*, we see this tussle between the official urban rhetoric of the dominant state narrative and the decrepit and informal spaces not only wilfully asserting their autonomy against the hegemony, but also going a step further and subverting it through pillorying it with the comic devices of parody, satire, and black humour. An excellent example of this pillorying is the use of the masks of smiling faces in the text by the workers of the Indian National Caucus, the Smiling Saviours. The sections of the text that narrate Indira Gandhi or Mother Moon's story depict her as having the same mock smile on as those on the masks. This caricaturing of Indira Gandhi and the use of masks is strongly reminiscent of the use of the Guy Fawkes masks in Alan Moore and David Lloyd's graphic novel about a dystopic Britain, *V for Vendetta.* As mentioned earlier, graphic narratives make the visceral and the real hypervisible because of their verbal-visual medium, and thus enable the reader to see the trauma and violence inflicted on the marginalised sections of the society by the dominant hegemony. The witnessing within the narrative is indicated through the body language and the shocked, pained, horrified, sad, angry facial expressions of the narrators and those around them. Historical trauma is performed through the body. This depiction in and of itself forms the subversive framework of most political graphic narratives. In *Delhi Calm* however, this subversion technique is complicated further by using masks and caricatures.

In his essay, "Of Mice and Mimesis: Reading Spiegelman with Adorno," Andreas Huyssen introduces the concept of mimetic approximation when speaking of Art Spiegelmen's pioneering graphic memoir about his father's experiences as a Holocaust survivor, *Maus*. By mimetic approximation, Huyssen refers to the act of alluding to devastating events like the holocaust through symbolic imagery (the mice and cats in *Maus*) rather than directly engaging with the event. He argues that not only does this make it

marginally easier for the author to reimagine the events with less trauma, but also, inversely, increases the force of its perception for the reader. The reader is taken almost to the brink of something horrific and left there to imagine the sinister nature of the event bubbling beneath the approximation. The viscerality evoked is much stronger than anything pure mimesis would evoke. Devices such as anthropomorphising animals as characters, using ellipsis and drawing shocked faces of the characters to denote violence through trauma, using visual synecdochic techniques to connote the brutality of war, etc. are all used to effectively to bring about mimetic approximation in a graphic narrative. Although, the Emergency was not as statistically devastating as the Holocaust, it remains one of the darkest periods in the history of post-Independence India, and *Delhi Calm* effectively uses mimetic approximation to bring to fore its horrors. Through the use of allusions, metaphors, and ciphers to effectively relay that which is beyond linguistic communication (silences, gestures, repressions, mannerisms), the text seeks legitimacy for itself as an alternate retelling of history rather than claim authenticity *from* History.[77] In *Maus*, this takes place through the animalisation on humans into cats, mice, pigs, etc. In *Delhi Calm*, the mimetic approximation occurs with the acts of caricaturing the political figures, and the masks of the Smiling Saviours (see fig. 3.2 in Appendix A). Since mimetic approximation simply alludes to trauma, the actuality of it all is left to the readers' imagination. The things unsaid and shielded, then form the sinister underbelly of the historic trauma which when conveyed through mimetic approximation are much more impactful than if they were to be depicted plainly. The masks in particular offer a clever distortion of the "all are equal" agenda of the state by depicting smiling happy people on the face of it, but also simultaneously indicating the covering up of a deeper social malaise that we need to see through. Following similar lines, Nayar argues that *Delhi Calm's* reliance

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[77] Andreas Huyssen, "Of Mice and Mimesis: Reading Spiegelman with Adorno," *New German Critique*, no. 81 (2000): 72.

on texts like newspapers, posters, banners, historical figures, what he calls "call-ins,"[78] evoke not only a sense of familiarity within the readers, but also a certain recognition of strangeness because of their uncanny nature. This partial familiarity helps to lead the readership to reach the eventual desired realisation of texts like *Delhi Calm* - all history is mediated.[79] The use of megaphones, the interspersing of Mother Moon's and The Prophet's private lives with their political agenda, the deceitful, duplicitous, and menacing nature of the Emergency shown through the smiling masks are all devices used to expose the mediation of history while simultaneously perpetuating that mediation. *Delhi Calm* as a text is thus, deeply self-reflexive when trying to problematise this functioning of histories, and it does so on multiple levels.

Pages 212 and 213 of the text show Parvez and Vibhuti discussing rumours about the forced sterilisations that were carried out during the Emergency. Vibhuti is explaining to Parvez that while some rumours are true there are many other, more horrific ones that are used solely to spread fear. In the middle of the top one-third of page 213 (see fig. 3.3 in Appendix A) is a panel with only a disembodied Smiling Saviour mask saying, "My Smiling Experience says there's always another version of a truth lurking somewhere…" In an extension of this conversation, page 216 (see fig. 3.4 in Appendix A) is a large one-panel spread of a main road in Delhi replete with megaphones, hoardings, barricades, and people. The top left corner has a crow sitting on top of a hoarding that says, "AVOID LOOSE RUMOURS." The crow in turn is saying, "Please share only genuine rumours…" The last panel on the following page 217 (see fig. 3.5 in Appendix A) shows two men and a woman whispering about the alleged attack on a leader. The bottom of the panel has yet another disembodied line whose purported author is Parvez, but who is never shown on the entire page. The line reads, "When everything else fails, people turn to paanwallahs, tea stalls and

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[78] Nayar, *The Indian Graphic Novel*, 31.
[79] Nayar, 31.

tiffin houses. There they all talk loudly, in whispers. Real news!" Two very important objectives are achieved in all these panels.

i) They expose the hollowness of the state propaganda machinery when it carries out and mediates events aimed at domination like the Emergency. All the panels discussed show no human speaker as saying anything subversive or antagonistic towards the state machinery; the subtext here being - in a state where the people have lost their speech only the inanimate (the mask) and the non-humans (the crow) can speak the truth. In other words, they offer a mimetic approximation of the repression and trauma inflicted upon the people.

ii) The panels in showing the silence of the people in public spaces and their whispers in private spaces reveal that not only the readers, but the characters in the text itself are aware of the political chicanery that is underway. The characters are thus awarded the agency of collectivising outside the mainstream to form sites of resistance that would effectively counter and subvert state authority.

Delhi Calm does not attempt to provide a coherent explanation for the Emergency and the events leading up to it. What it does undertake is a meticulous deconstruction of the mythological topography of the city of Delhi as a microcosm of the country and offers up different possibilities for envisioning a new future. Ultimately, it serves as a tool to excavate a period relegated to a timeless past, uncover its lost inhabitants, histories, and memories, and bring them in contact with the present in order to rekindle and reclaim a sense of self-assertion and hope.

"India is Great, Let's Make it Greater"[80]

Much like The River of Stories, Delhi Calm also begins with a disclaimer. The very first page has a Harold Pinter quote as an epigraph below which is a megaphone announcing the

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[80] Ghosh, *Delhi Calm*, 25.

following in a speech bubble - "Nothing like this ever happened. If it did, it doesn't matter any more, for it was of no interest or relevance even while it was happening. Any resemblance to persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental. This is a work of fiction. Self-censored." This immediately evokes a tension between the dominant history that is being discussed, the retelling of its insurgent counter history, as well as the text's fictive imagining of the entire narrative. This point is reiterated through out the texts with similar disclaimers. For example, pages 61-68 form a facsimile of an article from a periodical called "The Inquilaab Gazette," which functions as a meta-narrative foil to recount Baul's transformation from a student in Wisconsin into The Prophet. The article ends with the following disclaimer, "An INQUILAAB initiative. INQUILAAB is a private media initiative and not a public sector enterprise. Views and opinions expressed in this section are not necessarily those of INQUILAAB. All rights reserved."

In this section, I intend to see *Delhi Calm* as a microcosm of the nationwide obsession with nation building and progress in post-Independence India spearheaded first by Jawaharlal Nehru, and then taken to an extreme by Indira Gandhi. I also explore the gradual cultivation of the political and cultural right wing of the country, which reached its first peak in the formation of the Janata Alliance in 1976. As such, in order understand this phenomenon, we must study its rise along with the rise of India's liberal democratic politics. Therefore, this section will expand the text's investigative ambit from merely the Emergency years to the period spanning from 1947 to 1980. Much like the previous chapter, in order to comprehend *Delhi Calm* as a text that interrogates and challenges dominant political rhetoric with alternative avenues of dissent and history making, we must spend some time understanding and unravelling what that dominant rhetoric really is.

This period of thirty years was primarily marked by the politics of Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi. This liberal political rhetoric has claimed that the nation is a pluralistic

entity, which includes and celebrates the diversity in its ethnic, cultural, and religious differences. This has been the path followed by the liberal and left wing factions since before independence. At the outset, socialism, democracy, and secularism were the broad paradigms that defined Indian polity. These were more or less adhered to owing to Nehru's non-aligned foreign policy, and the five-year plan (FYP) blueprint. These paradigms were weakened by the Indo-China war in 1962, and then further with Nehru's death in 1964. Even so, a certain degree of socialist political hegemony prevailed until Indira Gandhi promulgated a state of Emergency within the country in 1975.[81] The consequent populist backlash was spearheaded by the Janata alliance and led to the formation of the first non-Congress, right-wing government in India post Independence. Even though the Janata alliance stayed in power for only three years, it established the RSS as a formidable force in Indian culture and politics.

Delhi Calm deftly uses caricature and mimetic approximation to document the political and personal trajectories of Indira Gandhi and Jayprakash Narayan. Like The Inquilaab Gazette, Mother Moon's life is brought to the readers in the form a news bulletin produced by the *United News Division* and ends with a disclaimer almost identical to that of the Inquilaab initiative. Huyssen's mimetic approximation becomes relevant once again here because by presenting these biographies as pieces of news, the text seeks authentication of a political rhetoric that depended upon the projection of its leaders as custodians of this great nation in order to mask the deep antagonism they actually had with it and its people.

A plural, inclusive imagining of India has been challenged by the notion of an ethnically and culturally clean Hindu Rashtra put forth by the Sangh Parivar, which includes the right wing Hindutva political and cultural organisations of the BJP, the VHP, the RSS, and the Bajrang Dal.[82] That the very notion of a unified, homogenous History is a fallacious one has already been pointed out when critiquing the idea of a golden past. Along with the

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[81]Aijaz Ahmad, "India: Liberal Democracy and the Extreme Right," *Verso*, last modified March 24, 2017, https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3144-india-liberal-democracy-and-the-extreme-right.
[82] Ramachandra Guha, *Patriots and Partisans* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2012), 27.

Nehruvian socialist, and later the neoliberal, model of development that the nation adopted post-Independence, the nation also saw the steady rise of a strong religio-cultural right wing. This right wing systematically inserted itself into the political economy of the nation until it had penetrated all the rungs of the country's bureaucratic framework. Aijaz Ahmad's essay, "India: Liberal Democracy and the Extreme Right" (hereafter "Liberal Democracy") traces the history of India's far right, and brings to light this systematic infiltration within the country's bureaucratic, cultural, and liberal democratic institutions. Looking at the cultural transformation within India through a Gramscian lens, it is possible to investigate the emergence of covert narratives of consent that lead to the marginalization of fringe groups by the Hindu right wing. One can thus chart the rise of the Hindu right wing in conjunction with the rise of liberal democracy, and how these two helped in the formation of the idea of India. Ahmad observes that unlike the right wing ideologies of Europe and America, the doctrine of Hindutva has never overtly rejected liberal democracy. Ironically, the growth trajectory of the RSS has also followed the Gramscian principles in that its rise to an enduring political power followed a bottom-up approach that built upon the foundation of a long historical process of cultural and social consent and dominance. The RSS also used sustained organised majoritarian violence against Muslim and/or Christian minorities to quell dissent, but almost always represented (and thus allowed) it as retaliation to misconduct by said minorities. To translate this into political power was then only a matter combining this religion-cultural consent and violence with the neoliberal capitalist discourses of development and modernisation through the liberal democratic institutions of domestic governance.[83] The Indian society has always been organised on the axes of caste, religion and region. Colonisation entrenched these axes further to gain a structural and tactical edge in governance. This heightened religiosity of the Indian society serves as the backdrop against

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[83] Ahmad, "Liberal Democracy."

which *Delhi Calm* analyses the simultaneous emergence of late capitalist liberalism and Hindu nationalism. Carrying Ahmad forward, I propose that *Delhi Calm* charts this simultaneous and parallel rise of a majoritarian Hindu right wing as well as the rise of the late capitalist liberalism. Consequently, it is this larger hegemonic framework, and not just the years of the Emergency, against which *Delhi Calm* offers avenues of dissent and spaces for alternate narratives to flourish.

Throughout the text, one sees a foregrounding of the depiction of majoritarian as well as state violence as it intrudes upon everyday life and meaning making. It shows the ubiquitous presence of the right-wing sectarian narratives vying for domination while also charting the growth of the concomitant narrative of the state as an engine of development and its schemes for a new India. The full-length panels on pages 79, 80 and 84 are stellar examples of this synchronous growth of the two movements, as also the reframing of these in the context of dissent. Page 79 (see fig. 3.6 in Appendix A) shows a hot air balloon rising in the sky with a large portrait of the Prophet on its envelope. The basket of the balloon says Total Revolution, and has Vibhuti and Parvez with a megaphone spreading their agenda. The balloon is surrounded by kites (the text tells us they are red in colour) with Karl Marx's face painted on them. One of these kite Marxes is shown to be saying, "It is a revolution that organises counter-revolution." The bottom of the panel has an underprivileged woman holding her child looking up hopefully at the balloon. The very next page (see fig. 3.7 in Appendix A) shows Mother Moon firmly wedged in the clouds with a halo behind her head, her status of divinity already established. She is holding a placard saying "Garibi Hatao! Bye Bye Poverty!" Below her are hordes of poor all with faces raised and hands pressed together in deep reverence towards her. There is no Marx, but there is a woman saying, "Transform this casteist, classist nation into a socialist India, o Mother…" One can see how the two panels are almost identical in their portrayal of leaders that are larger than, and indeed, far

removed from everyday life. *Delhi Calm* quite literally, enables one to see the *rise* of these two competing, but organically interlinked ideologies and their contribution to solidifying the political rhetoric of the country.

Page 84 (see fig. 3.8 in Appendix A) serves as a foil to the previous two panels because it shows a collision between the two dominant ideologies and the resultant scepticism that it such collisions foster within the public. The page recounts the violent arrest of the Prophet by the police alleging him of inciting mob fury. It is further revealed that The Prophet has ties with the rightist Regimental Social Service (RSS) group. Pictures of a man dressed in an RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) uniform splayed across a circle like da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man." Parvez, Vibhuti, and Master are seen questioning The Prophet's loyalty and commitment towards democracy and progress while also reinvestigating their own beliefs - "We hadn't hit the panic road yet, but our truck was slowly moving into fear gear." In this manner, Vishwajyoti Ghosh transforms what should've been a celebratory portrait of national character and the democratic spirit into a setting of injuries, betrayal, trauma, and murder.[84] Further the reframing of the personal and political lives of the leaders in the fashion it does, allows the text to demonstrate effectively the history of both post independence India and a subversion of that envisioning by both subsequent hegemonies and counter hegemonies.

The Indian political rhetoric's fixation with urban modernity (which greatly shaped *The River of Stories*' dominant hegemonic narrative) also makes its presence felt in *Delhi Calm's* within the character of Mother Moon's son, "Prince," a caricature figure of Sanjay Gandhi. India's consumer modernity began taking shape during the Emergency with sharp retail movements in the urban Indian market such as Maruti's "People's Car" campaign, utmost emphasis on an efficient bureaucracy, meticulous organisation of civic life on a

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[84] Nayar, *The Indian Graphic Novel*, 73.

micro-economic level (forced family planning, strict adherence to curfew, etc.). It would not be unfair, then, to say that in an effort to explain the declaration of the Emergency as an important step towards preserving the country's democracy, the Indira Gandhi government took Weberian rationalism to its fascist and authoritarian extreme. Texts like *Delhi Calm* help dismantle and re-evaluate these events in India's political modernity by challenging the fundamental processes involved in the construction and preservation of the state, its citizenship, and its democracy. Furthermore, the text has no fixed narrative authority. The palimpsest model allows multiple narratives and histories to overlap and engage with each other. This sharing of narrative authority to enable multiple retellings of the same stories from different points of view makes sure that the text's larger narrative is constantly flitting between these different accounts. If read tactically, this flitting slows down the pace of the narrative as well as that of the reader, who is then forced to fully take in the viscerality of counter-narratives making their impact much more potent. The recognition of these counter-narratives, even decades later, is important because it ascribes legitimacy to their agential humanity. In fact, this legitimisation is only possible because the text is not produced and consumed in the same time period as the historical event. That *Delhi Calm* was written thirty-five years after the Emergency was declared awards an external acknowledgement of historical trauma that not only establishes the present's connection with a murky, dark past, but also renders the text impervious to local and temporal co-option, and thus more dynamic and powerful.

Conclusion

Through this dissertation, I have attempted to read comic books as viable chronicles of unofficial histories that meaningfully challenge the hegemony of the state. Cartoonist Peter Kuper in his essay, "Launching World War 3" says, "Comics are a perfect medium to address portentous subjects."[85] Chute in *Disaster Drawn* takes Kuper forward by understanding graphic narratives as having the potential to be extremely powerful because they intervene against a culture of invisibility through what she calls the "risk of representation."[86] The aim here is to place the chosen comic books in conversation with a history hitherto unavailable to the masses, and make it accessible and open to debate and critique. By their nature, comic books are enmeshed in popular culture, a quality that helps them bring complex discourses into daily parlance. More importantly, the visual culture of comic books ensures that the importance of these complex discourses is not lost or mitigated when making the transition into the popular. This also facilitates a safe and productive space to negotiate individual memory and collective histories of marginalised identities thereby rescuing them from systematic discursive and physical erasure of their history, and from the risk of being relegated into an ahistorical and apolitical realm. Hence, this dissertation argues for a need to see hegemonic frames and historical categories through interventions like *Bhimayana, The River of Stories,* and *Delhi Calm* in order to examine them, rethink them, and engage meaningfully in the act of critique. Chute suggests that graphic narratives gain their importance because of their ability to explore what can be said and shown when collective history and individual memories intersect.[87] This does not mean that the interventions that comic books partake in are contradictory to historical accuracy. It simply means that they

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[85] Peter Kuper, "Launching World War 3," in *The Education of a Comics Artist*, ed Michael Dooley and Steven Heller (New York: Allworth Press, 2005), 28.
[86] Chute, *Disaster Drawn*, 5.
[87] Hillary Chute, "Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative," *PMLA* 123, no. 2 (2008): 459.

understand and exhibit alternate, mostly silenced and invisibilised, frames of vision of the same historical event. This project is an attempt to examine the prevalent forms of seeing delineated by dominant national discourses, and to interrogate their legitimacy in light of the alternative frames provided by the comic books.

Accordingly, I began the project's "Introduction" with the preliminary question, why are comic books best suited for representing the performance of trauma and personal memory? Through works like Hillary Chute's *Why Comics?* and the particularly nuanced *Disaster Drawn*, Scott McCloud's pioneering *Understanding Comics*, Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith's *The Power of Comics* and others, one was able to understand how comic books (or as Chute calls them, graphic narratives) are not only the most apt medium, but perhaps the *only* one to comprehensively apprehend the simultaneous magnitude and popular impact that counter-hegemonic histories warrant. Pramod K. Nayar's *The Indian Graphic Novel* helped in locating these points of view within the perspective of a post-independence Indian society. He suggests that the verbal-visual critical literacy that graphic narratives generate is most suitable to penetrate the complex and varied inter-cultural sentiments and viewpoints that make up the Indian social fabric. Consequently, I set out to define what exactly one means when one talks about the dominant hegemony within a social framework. Since Marxist political theory analyses and delineates counter-cultural resistance and dissent quite thoroughly, I have used the theorisations put forward by Antonio Gramsci, Terry Eagleton, and Raymond Williams to explain the concepts of hegemony and counter-hegemony, cultural hegemony, and ideology. In order to successfully extrapolate these theories to the Indian socio-political, I called upon Aijaz Ahmad's diligent analysis of the Indian political rhetoric.

Having established these concepts, the "Introduction" moved on to exploring the agential capabilities of graphic texts beyond representation, and whether they could

potentialise history to spur radical social change. In order to substantiate this hypothesis, I brought in Natarajan and Anand's *Bhimayana,* juxtaposing it with Amar Chitra Katha's *Babasaheb Ambedkar* so as to fully examine the mobilizing effects of history. A close reading of the texts demonstrated how the exact same life history of a public figure when looked at from different ideological leanings could have drastically different social outcomes. Where ACK seemed to project a sanitised, de-radicalised image of a leader of the oppressed classes and castes and co-opt him into the dominant hegemony, Navayana's *Bhimayana* reclaims Dr. Ambedkar's deeply oppressed personal history, and intersperses it with present-day experiences to accentuate the continuity of oppression. This interspersion also makes spaces for a dialogue between the past and the present thereby promoting solidarity across time and social contexts. Not only does this make *Bhimayana* a narrative that represents alternate histories, but also reconstructs its Dalit history in an emancipatory and self-assertive light.

Keeping these transformative capabilities of graphic narratives in mind, "Chapter One" discussed Orijit Sen's *The River of Stories*, which is yet another account of an oppressed section of the society, this time, the so-called Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The graphic novel deals with the tussle between urban modernity and the preservation of rural indigenous environments, and charts out the progression of the Narmada Bachao Andolan against the oppressive narratives of the modern urban state. I found *The River of Stories* to be special for multiple reasons. Firstly, due to the inherent urban-ness of the medium, Sen's choice of topic was remarkably profound. Since the graphic narrative can trace its evolution back to the popular political cartoon strip form as well as photojournalism, the comics medium can easily be used to enmesh and bring forth an existing culture of visual aesthetics, political commentary, and representation into popular culture. The mode eschews jargon, and is thus a demotic medium of dissemination, but is still very much catering to an educated

urban audience. For Sen to trick this audience into consuming a text diametrically opposite to, and indeed critical of their way of life made the text particularly powerful. Given its high production value and labour costs, the graphic text itself is at the higher end of the consumption spectrum, and caters primarily to an urban audience. *The River of Stories* was not only produced with a grant from the NGO Kalpavriksh's subsidiary Kalpavriksh Publications, but was also substantially less expensive than the average cost of a graphic novel. Although the book is out of print now, Kalpavriksh Publications still furnishes photocopies of the original at a minimal price.[88] One can see that the book refuses to adhere to the urban standards of economic production that are expected out of it, thereby adding another layer to its subversion of its own material reality. Lastly, the fact that *The River of Stories* was arguably India's first graphic novel, and was so radical in its construction helped immensely to set the tone for the Indian graphic narrative culture in the years to come.

To analyse this potential agency of the text, then, I chose to collide it directly with the legitimising narratives of urban development, i.e., the country's juridical machinery. Since the exploitation of the people facing displacement and harassment due to activities like dam-building is shrouded in layers of legal jargon and memoranda of understanding, the nexus between corporate interests and government agencies is not visible to the common people, who are fed the myth of urban modernity. I analysed how The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) (PoA) Act as amended in 2017 has made the erasure of indigenous cultures not only easy for corporate companies, but practically unavoidable - perceiving them as collateral damage in India's march towards progress. I chose to use analyses posited by environmental economist Smitu Kothari, and social activist Arundhati Roy to bolster this argument. To examine the affective element of the text, I chose to work with Marianne Hirsch's ideation of postmemory, which deals with the reception and

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[88] Kalpavriksh Publications, email message to author, May 14, 2018.

documentation of the experiences of historical trauma of a people by subsequent generations. Hirsch uses material artefacts, specifically photographs, to suggest that these, and not official accounts, formulate the retelling of history for generations to come. They communicate and carry forward historical legacy in a manner that is much more durable and emphatic than other methods of documentation. This has to do with what Hirsch calls the institutionalization of memory. According to her, personal memories when relayed to others by people subjected to trauma and oppression, are also mediated by them for a myriad of reasons like self-preservation, the need to adhere to a cultural framework of performance so as to not disturb national memory, etc. Postmemory is the process by which latter generations seek to uncover and fill in gaps in individual experiences with the help of these artefacts. In doing so, they unwittingly situate themselves within the evolution of that history – what Hirsch calls a displaced participation. In Chapter One, I proposed that just like photographs, geographical locations could also be treated as artefacts of postmemory that will help people reformulate the historical past of that region and temporality. Layers upon layers of history sedimentation accumulate on geographical locations like river valleys and cities. In this manner, these geographies make the past available for reinscription for generations to come

Having tackled how state hegemony manifests itself through the juridical framework in a rural setting, in Chapter Two, I chose to look at the political and cultural manifestations of state hegemony in an urban landscape. For this, I chose Vishwajyoti Ghosh's graphic narrative on the 1975 Emergency, *Delhi Calm*. I analysed the city as a palimpsest upon which multiple signage, histories, stories, and lives impinge upon and feed off of each other. The text melds the everyday with the political through the constant collision of these paratextual elements. In doing so, Ghosh creates friction between local narratives and state hegemony that makes the latter vulnerable to scrutiny. In *The Power of Comics*, Duncan and Smith argue that the readers' affective reaction upon approaching a comic book ranges from

"degrees of ritual, pleasure anticipated, and pleasure remembered."[89] In other words, comic books invoke a familiarity within the readers that makes them more welcoming of the genre. Texts like *Delhi Calm* use that familiarity to inject their subversive agenda within popular culture thereby invoking an uncanny resonance with the medium, and by extension the content. I see the city of Delhi during the Emergency in *Delhi Calm* as having descended into a mythic uncanny realm where the general feeling of everyday life seems familiar, but not quite the same. The text depicts Delhi as it was in 1975, but with little tweaks in its landscape that make it seem slightly bizarre. This estrangement helps create the distance needed to engage critically with a text. I complicate this idea further by bringing in Andreas Huyssen's concept of mimetic approximation, a technique that makes use of allusions, metaphors, and other forms of lingual and para-lingual communication techniques to legitimize itself as an alternate retelling of history rather than claim authenticity as History. The chapter also explored the larger political framework of post-Independent India, and how the text constructs itself as a microcosm of the national project of nation-building. This zeal for a single unified nation is seen in all political factions of the country, particularly the Hindu right wing whose evolution I also trace by expanding the investigative ambit of the text.

In this concluding chapter, I intend to delve deeper into the effects that reading graphic narratives have upon the readers, and whether or not their theoretical prowess over the historical realm is strong enough for engaging in a sustained social as well as academic critique of the hegemonies discussed. Through this dissertation, I have tried to explore the role history and culture plays in framing and defining categories such as memory, history, trauma, and the human herself, and figure out the scope for negotiation and recognition of these categories in order to arrive at a sustainable, diligent, and mobilising representation of

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[89] Duncan and Smith, *The Power of Comics*, 12.

marginalised communities. Additionally this dissertation also examines the role graphic narratives like *Bhimayana*, *The River of Stories*, and *Delhi Calm* play in humanising their witness-narrators' lives and accounts within certain specific parameters of representation by simultaneously investigating and problematising discourses of collective identity and nationalism, and accordingly chart out a way to reverse the former's erasure caused by the latter.

In the chosen texts, both official History, and collective and individual memoir work together to project a better, more comprehensive sense of events. Neither one is allowed to speak for itself. Official histories in the texts are summarily rejected by subjective memories of the same. Historical events like the Emergency, violent development projects like dam-building, and entrenched caste discrimination therefore can only be mediated for us through subjective and personal accounts[90] Through texts like *Bhimayana*, *The River of Stories*, and *Delhi Calm*, the authors equip the readers with alternative modes of representation and agency by dismantling state narratives and enabling a transcultural reading of victimised cultures.

Furthermore, by disrupting the chronology of the narratives, all three texts create an epistemological space for witness narratives within the larger frameworks of state history.[91] It becomes clear then that one of the texts' real focuses and aims is to highlight the systematic discursive, and physical erasure of the agency of the non-hegemonic groups, and their relegation into an ahistorical realm. *Bhimayana*, *The River of Stories*, and *Delhi Calm* are a pertinent example of what Salmi terms as graphic human rights writing. Moreover, since these texts offers the reader a history from below, i.e., from the base, it would not be wrong to align them with the genre subaltern histories.

The graphic narrative can evoke within our consciousness the many varied situations

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[90] Amy Malek, "Memoir as Iranian Exile Cultural Production: A Case Study of Marjane Satrapi's Persepolis Series," *Iranian Studies* 39, no. 3 (2006): 360.
[91] Salmi, "Reading Footnotes," 416.

and locations of marginalisation and victimhood from cultures around the world. The three chosen texts choose to represent three different kinds of oppression and thus, help transport historical trauma from an invisible realm into a hypervisible one. This they achieve by representing the texts in a form that is familiar, mainstream, and popular. Hypervisible history is the serious transmission of extreme historical trauma from under the weight of censorship, official documentation, and unverifiable sources to the public gaze through an apparently frivolous and 'comic' medium.[92] Like other artefacts of mass media, comic books embody elements of ideologies and provide oppositional readings that lay bare the assumptions presented in the dominant narrative. They bring to our notice the simple fact that ideological assumptions should never be accepted at face value.[93] Critical reflection from those functioning outside of, or working towards resisting an ideology's influence can expose an ideology's biases. Identifying how ideology works in graphic narratives is an important intellectual undertaking because its manifestations are inextricably linked with networks of power. These networks of power only benefit those in power and those who wield it.[94]

When used in its common form, the term "graphic" in a graphic narrative is indicative of a certain degree of realism and viscerality in representation (graphic violence, gore etc.). If understood in that manner, the "graphic" narrative proves to be an appropriate medium for the subject matter at hand - the sinister nature of violence of the Emergency in *Delhi Calm*, the gross violation of human rights and dignity in *Bhimayana* and *The River of Stories*. One of the limitations of the graphic medium however, is that eventually, the underlying reality of these narratives is essentially symbolic for it attempts to give materiality to something shrouded in time and silence. Having said that, one can argue that the visual representation of this foundational symbolism works along with traumatic realism of witness narratives, and goes a long way in imparting corporeality to their histories. In other words, graphic narratives

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[92] Nayar, "The Visual Turn," 62.
[93] Duncan and Smith, *The Power of Comics*, 248.
[94] Duncan and Smith, 247.

give trauma and history a body.[95]

In the "Introduction" to Joe Sacco's *Palestine*, Edward Said says that works like Sacco's have "the power to detain"[96] the reader by providing visual representation of the gross suffering and injustice meted out to vulnerable groups who have hitherto received very little humanitarian and political attention. This is important because by holding the reader's attention, not only do graphic narratives lend visibility and a considerable amount of political gravity to these sections, but they also implicate the reader in this progression of history. Inversely, Charlotta Salmi argues that this power to detain could also risk the reader reaching a state of stagnation in her understanding of the text. If the graphic narrative limits the reader to particular narrative path, it runs the risks of permanently framing the subjects of the narrative in their position of a victim thereby not affording them any permanent agency or scope for change. Historical as well as temporal dissonances then become important markers for legitimising the selfhood of the identities in these narratives.[97] Azoulay becomes relevant once again here because in narratives like *Bhimayana, The River of Stories,* and *Delhi Calm* readers share the responsibility of signification with the authors, the hegemony, and the subjects. As such their incongruity then represents a potentiality of choice — one that can halt the process of co-option and erasure.

Judith Butler in *Frames of War*, complicates the Saidian idea of apprehension further with the Hegelian notion of recognisability. Talking within the context of war and violence, Butler explains that recognisability can be understood through the determination of a universal personhood, which is pivotal in according legitimacy of the human subject. She also draws a difference between 'recognition' and 'recognisability' saying that recognisability pertains to a larger framework within which recognition functions — "general terms, conventions, and norms "act" in their own way, crafting a living being into a

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[95] Nayar, "The Visual Turn," 67.
[96] Edward Said, "Homage to Joe Sacco," v.
[97] Salmi, "Reading Footnotes," 240.

recognizable subject, though not without errancy or, indeed, unanticipated results."[98] It is due to this amorphous structure of recognisability that a reader can apprehend and decode something beyond their personal recognition as well as something not recognised at all through preexisting norms of recognition. A reader's ability to apprehend a history may go beyond her frames of recognisability, but at the same time will not evoke as strong a reaction as instant recognition precisely because of the former's fluid nature. To better understand this, Butler brings in the performative device of the frame. When a subject is framed within a certain landscape (in this case the graphic panel and the historical event), the author and the reader codify the subject's movement. The frame seeks to contain, convey, and determine what is seen. This again calls into question the subject's agency. Although in the late capitalist consumer framework within which most graphic novels are circulated, all frames are reproduced for mass consumption. Naturally then, they are also consumed in varied and newer contexts with each instance of consumption, and thus can never be said to frame any subject or historical event statically or permanently. McCloud's ideation of the frame spilling out, constant bleeding, and interacting with the gutters ensures perpetual breakage in the narrative structure of comic books thereby shielding them from being prone to an enduring co-option. Butler also uses the term "framing" to mean being conned or dispossessed of one's truth.[99] If one were to see narratives like ACK's *Babasaheb Ambedkar* in this manner, frames could also be used to explain how dominant state narratives orchestrate the systematic delegitimisation of counter-hegemonic narratives.

The question that most commonly arises when analysing a graphic text dealing with an event in the past is, "Why the past, and not the present?" In *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition,* Kelly Oliver explains that hegemonic forces' use of extreme experiences of oppression are purposefully perpetrated towards those being oppressed as a method to erase

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[98] Butler, *Frames of War*, 5.
[99] Butler, 11.

their humanity and selfhood.[100] Once that has been achieved, it is not difficult to perpetuate and reproduce these techniques in the socio-cultural realm because the victims are now not seen as human. Graphic narratives are pivotal in re-humanising these victims of state hegemony in the eyes of the readers. Since dehumanising and objectifying also involves silencing, graphic narratives show the victims as being rendered speechless or robbed of speech (see fig. 4.1 in Appendix A). Oliver also observes that if witness narratives are presented within that same cultural milieu from whence the oppression occurred then the dominant hegemony will swiftly co-opt their credibility.[101] This is why it is important to analyse historical pasts from alternate viewpoints. All three of the graphic narratives have chosen a frame of narration far removed from their present because it not only represents an external acknowledgement of hegemonic oppression, but also renders the text impervious to local co-option. Recognition of these experiences, then, becomes especially important in legitimising the agency of these multiple histories.

Works like *Bhimayana*, *The River of Stories*, and *Delhi Calm* can thus be viewed as sites where discourses of dominance, and graphic narratives enmesh to create and put forth alternative discourses of dissent. Rebecca Scherr suggests that the communicative power of the image-texts in graphic narratives depends on how viscerally the hypervisible history is invoked within the readers, and that this invocation's power is directly proportional to the level of recognition and legitimacy granted to the subjects. Scherr further argues, that the same comic books that also can help uncover the mechanisms through which national discourse maintains its own hegemonic power by erecting personhood and nationhood as non-dynamic, reified categories[102] - much like the RSS vision of a unified, homogenous Hindu Rashtra.

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[100] Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 95.
[101] Oliver, *Witnessing*, 99.
[102] Rebecca Scherr, "Framing Human Rights: Comics Form and the Politics of Recognition in Joe Sacco's *Footnotes in Gaza*," *Textual Practice* 29, no. 1 (2015): 113.

This dissertation has undertaken the task of deconstructing the grand narratives of statehood, nation, society, development, progress, and others through the three texts with the aim of reversing the erasure of personal memory, collective history, human identity, and ecological well-being. This erasure is brought about not only by an aggressive rhetoric of nationalism, but also the non-documentation of these conflicts at the socio-cultural level, both locally and internationally. The chosen texts' ability to enable the reader to constantly flit from frames of marginalised histories to those of state narratives garners recognition, empathy, and consequently, the ability to formulate their own frames of political and social commentary. This in turn facilitates the growth of a more nuanced and politically dynamic society that can not only perceive the limitations of the parameters for reifying categories, but also allow for an exploration beyond these parameters into possible avenues of radical dissent. Given it's perpetual breakage, the graphic narrative becomes the perfect space for manifesting, in a late capitalist world, the precarity of humanness which is ceaselessly evolving, thereby enabling a constant flow of conversation with and against possible forms of individual assertions and hegemonic oppressions.

Comic book theorists that have been cited in this dissertation have spent years trying to decode the mobilising potential of graphic narratives. At an international level, graphic theory has come a long way in posing a serious challenge to pre-established pedagogical norms, and is now one of the key fields through which cultural theory and critical literacy is being reimagined and disseminated into society. Commentators of the genre like Nayar, Sen, Ghosh, and others are pivotal in bringing this international critical literacy into the Indian framework and engaging with the medium's potential as a newer, more powerful form of representation. This project envisions graphic narratives, with their innovative pedagogy, as harbingers of a more nuanced understanding of suppressed histories. Interventions like mine are but a small attempt at bringing us closer to that tolerant and just cultural reality.

APPENDIX A - ILLUSTRATIONS

Introduction:

Figure 1.1

Babasaheb Ambedkar: He Dared to Fight, ed. Anant Pai, script S. S. Rege, (Mumbai: Amar Chitra Katha, 2018).

Figure 1.2

Srividya Natarajan, and S. Anand with Durgabai Vyam and Subhash Vyam, *Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability* (New Delhi: Navayana, 2011).

Chapter One:

Figure 2.1

Orijit Sen, *The River of Stories* (New Delhi: Kalpavriksh, 1994), 19.

Figure 2.2

Sen, *The River of Stories*, 43.

Chapter Two:

Figure 3.1

Vishwajyoti Ghosh, *Delhi Calm* (India: HarperCollins, 2010), 15.
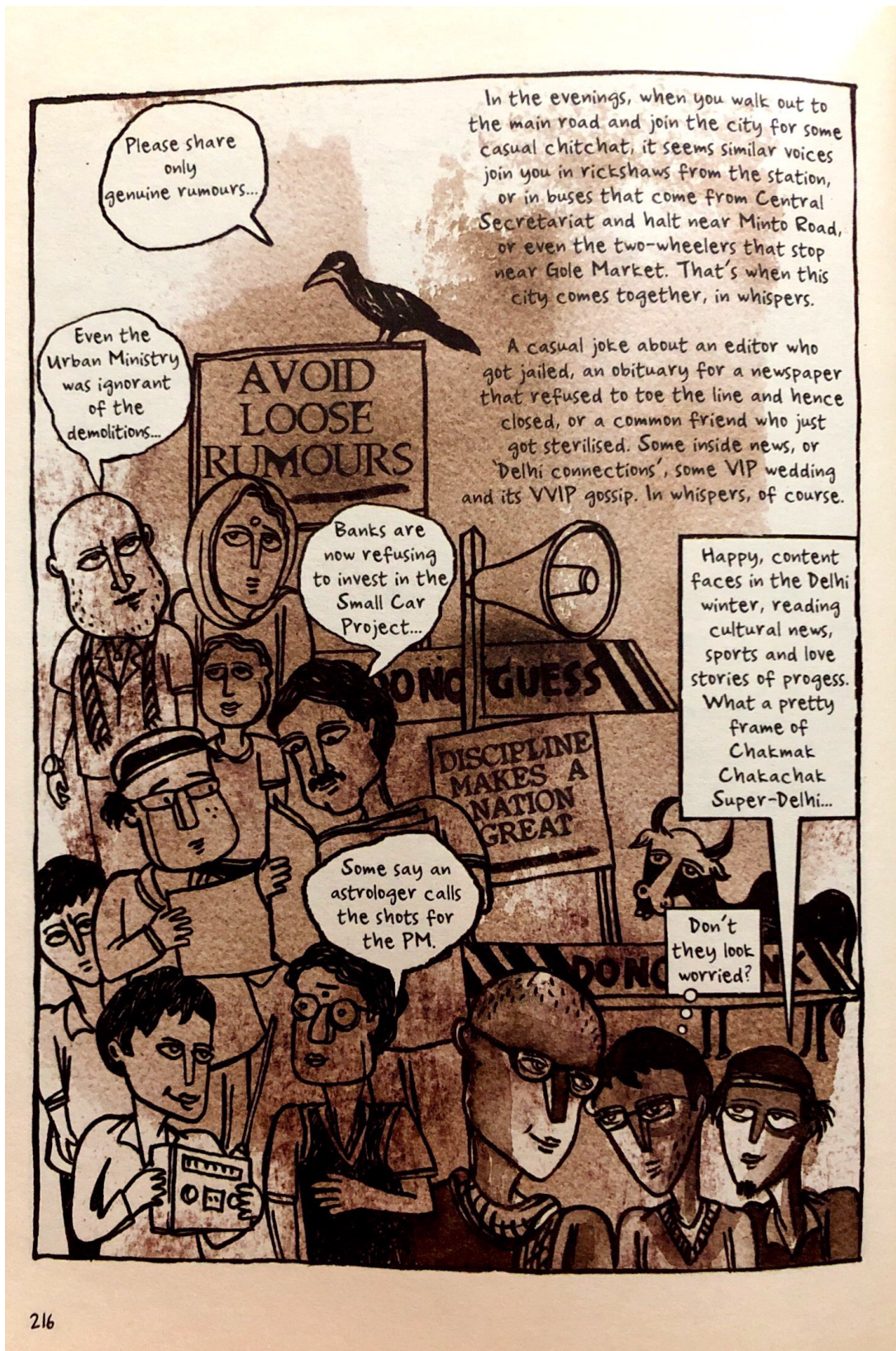
Figure 3.2

Ghosh, *Delhi Calm*, 17.

Figure 3.3

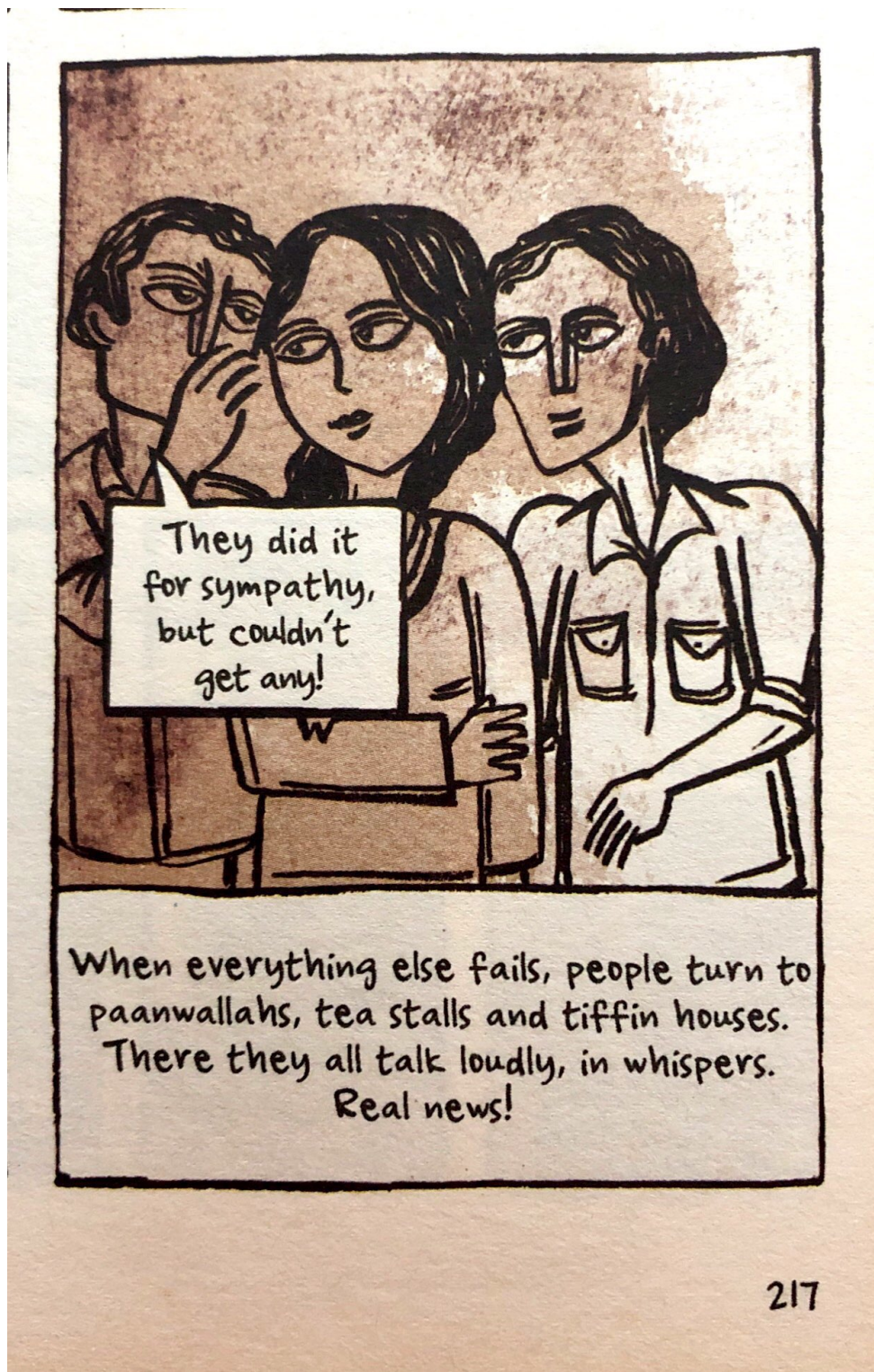Ghosh, *Delhi Calm*, 213.

Figure 3.4

Ghosh, *Delhi Calm*, 216.

Figure 3.5

Ghosh, *Delhi Calm*, 217.
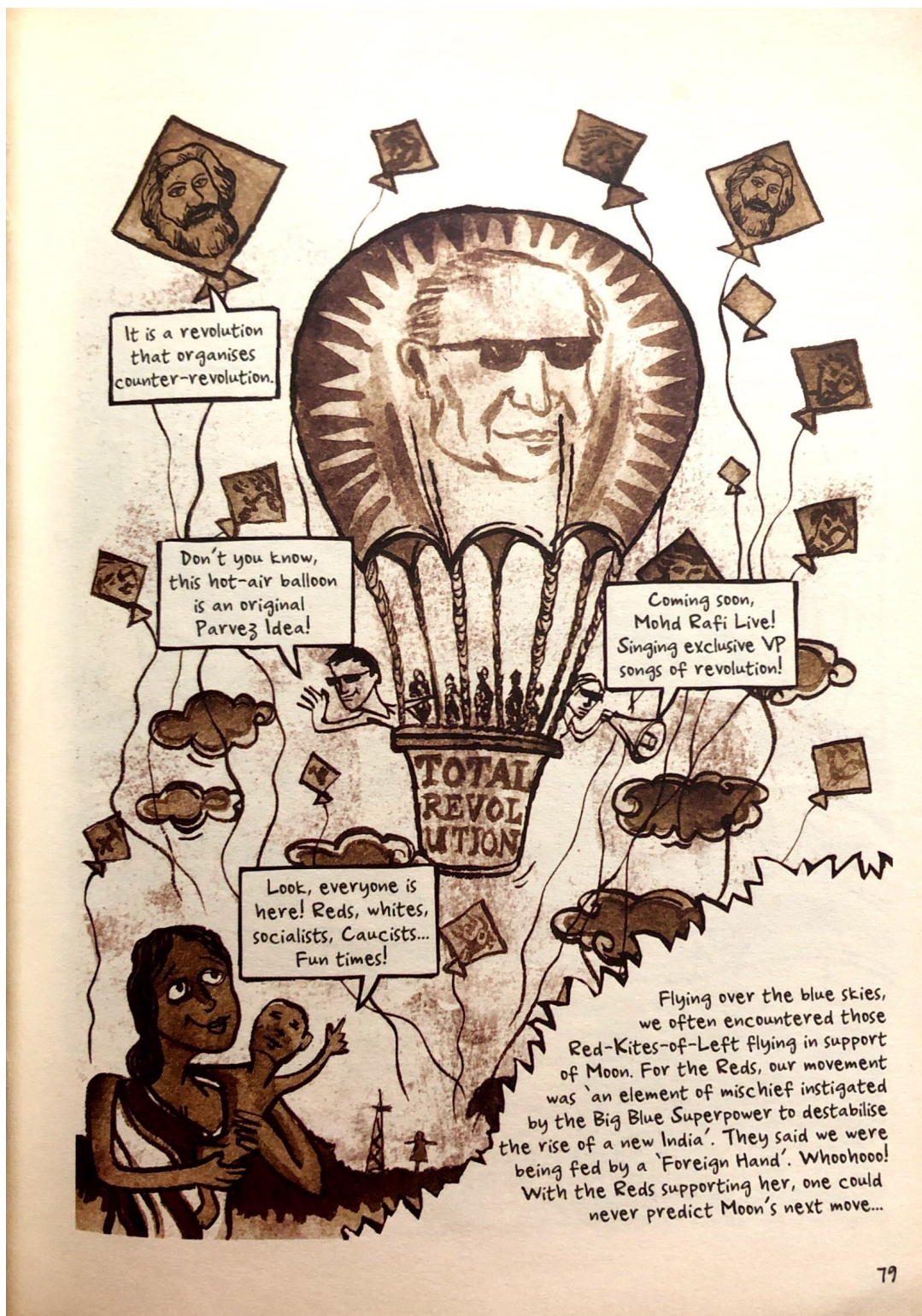
Figure 3.6

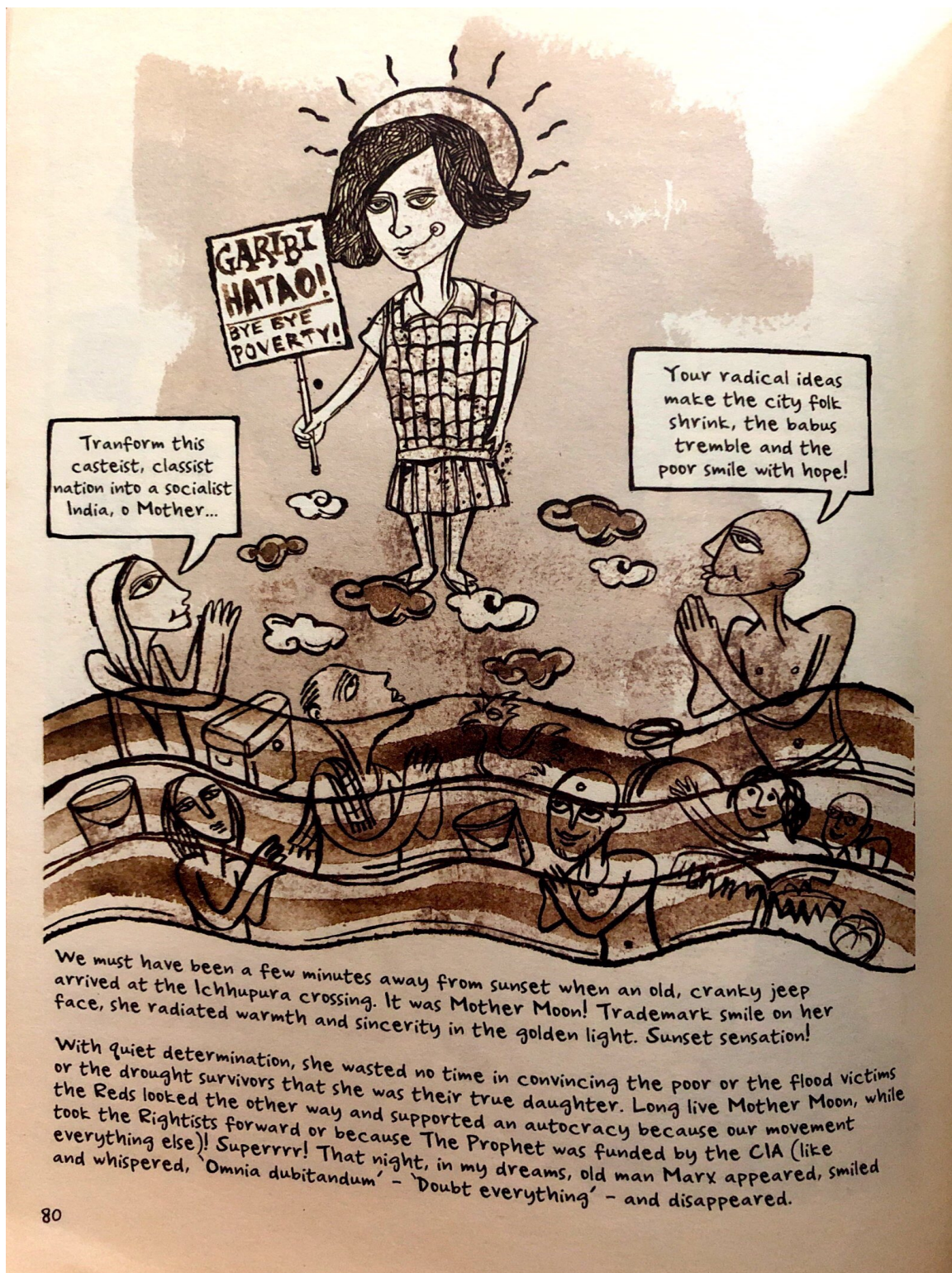Ghosh, *Delhi Calm*, 79.

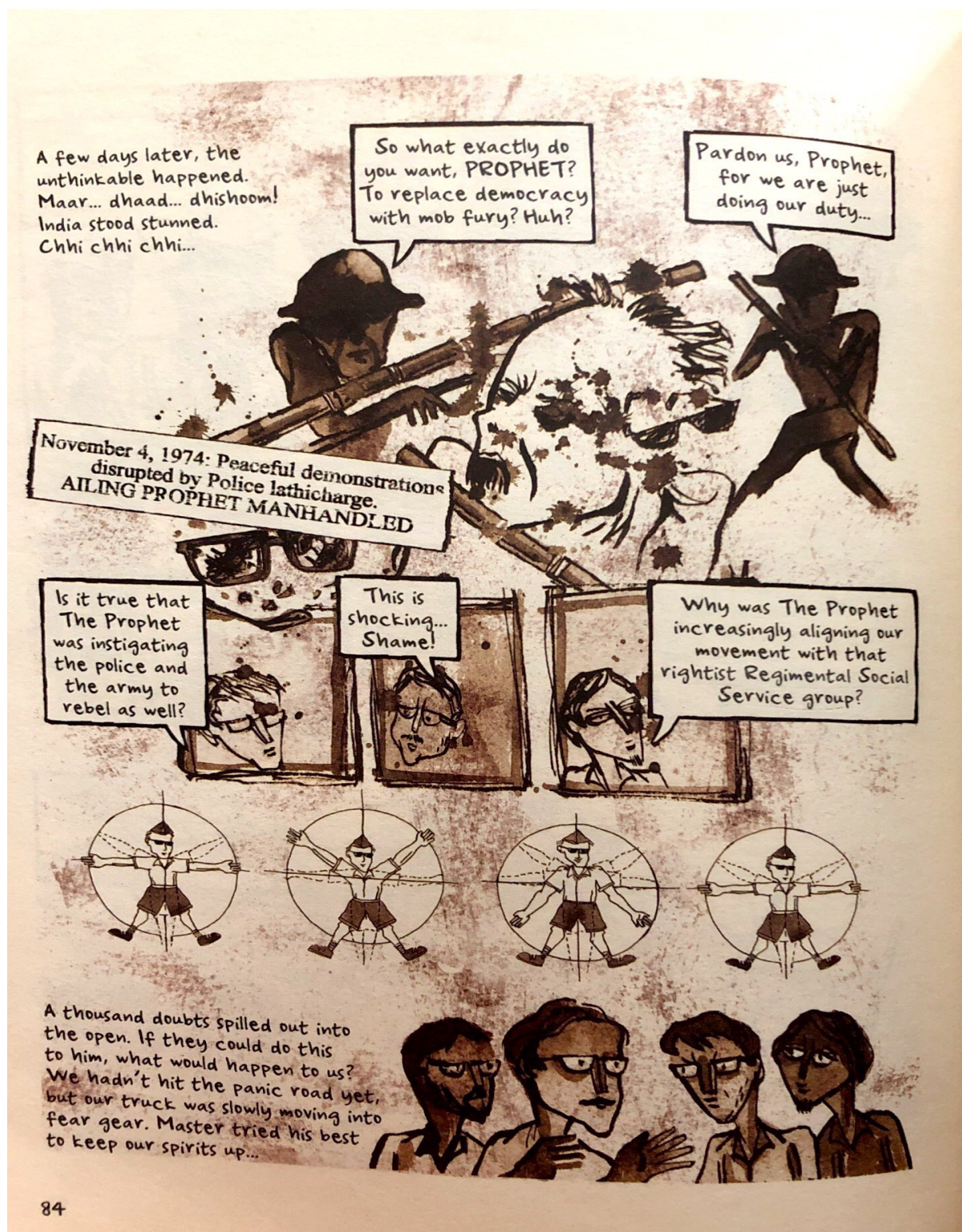**Figure 3.7**

Ghosh, *Delhi Calm*, 80.

Figure 3.8

Ghosh, *Delhi Calm*, 84.

Conclusion:

Figure 4.1

Ghosh, *Delhi Calm*, 5.

APPENDIX B – POLITICAL TIMELINE

Since this dissertation treats *Bhimayana, The River of Stories*, and *Delhi Calm* as alternate retellings of history, it is important to fully contextualise them with reference to the dominant History that they are pitting themselves against. These comic books do not follow a temporal narrative strategy, and enmesh the past and present with each other to establish and maintain a continuous analytical dialogue with multiple historical pasts. Hegemonic narratives on the other hand rely on a static and one-dimensional partisan chronological progression of history to bolster their dominance. It would be prudent, then, to form a timeline of the events cited in these atemporal official narratives so as to shed better light on the revisionist retellings in the texts discussed in this dissertation. The timeline also includes the progression of the various counter-hegemonic movements in order to bring out the difference and comparison more starkly.

1925 - The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is formed.

1932 – Poona Pact signed between Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi after reaching a compromise on the issue of the reservation of electoral seats for the depressed classes in the legislature of British India.

August 16, 1932 – British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald initiates the Communal Award granting separate electorates in British India for the Scheduled Castes, Muslims, Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, Europeans, Depressed Classes, etc.

August 8, 1942 - Quit India movement.

1946 - Central Waterways, Irrigation and Navigation Commission (CWINC) surveys the Narmada river basin; recommends seven promising water storage sites. Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra to benefit.

August 1947 - Independence and Partition. Dr. Ambedkar becomes Minister of Law in the first Cabinet of independent India, and is appointed Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee

November 1948 – Dr. Ambedkar formally introduces the Draft Constitution containing 315 articles and 8 schedules in the Constituent Assembly

November 1949 - The Constituent Assembly adopts the Constitution, including Article 17, which formally abolishes untouchability.

1951 - The first Five-Year Plan (FYP) with a focus on the primary sector launched. Dams included in new irrigation policies. Dr. Ambedkar tables the Hindu Code Bill in Parliament in February, which then postponed it leading to Dr. Ambedkar's resignation from the Cabinet in November.

1952 - First general elections. Jawaharlal Nehru elected Prime Minister.

1956 - Second FYP with a focus on the public sector and rapid industrialisation launched.

October 14, 1956 - Dr. Ambedkar formally converts to Buddhism along with thousands of other Dalits in Nagpur.

December 6, 1956 - Dr. Ambedkar dies.

1959 - Indira Gandhi becomes the Congress President for a year. Dismantles the Communist EMS Namboodiripad government in Kerala.

1961 - Third FYP launched. It starts out with a focus on the development of agricultural production, which is later shifted to defence development in the wake of the Indo-Chinese war of 1962.

1962 - Indo-Chinese border war. India defeated.

November 1963 - Bhopal agreement between the central government, and state governments of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra signed.

May 1964 - Jawaharlal Nehru dies. Gulzarilal Nanda becomes interim Prime Minister. Congress President Kamaraj chooses Lal Bahadur Shastri, a Nehruvian socialist, as the prime ministerial candidate over the conservative right-winger Morarji Desai.

June 1964 - Lal Bahadur Shastri sworn in as Prime Minister. Fresh elections not held.

January 1966 - Lal Bahadur Shastri dies after securing a ceasefire with Pakistan in light of the 1965 Indo-Pak war in Tashkent. Gulzarilal Nanda becomes interim Prime Minister again. Kamaraj passes over Morarji Desai a second time, and chooses Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister.

May 1969 - Government establishes the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal after preliminary objections.

1969 - Fourth FYP. Focus on economy, nuclear advancement, and the green revolution. It is the last FYP to focus on agrarian development.

1971 - Indira Gandhi launches the Garibi Hatao programme. East-Pakistan war takes place, which eventually leads to the creation of Bangladesh.

June 26, 1975 - Indira Gandhi's Cabinet asks President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed to declare a state of Emergency citing external threat and internal disorder.

1977 - Janata alliance wins majority and forms government. Morarji Desai (finally) elected Prime Minister.

January 1, 1979 – Mandal Commission established by the Janata Party government to identify the socially or educationally backward classes of the country and redress problems of casteism, and consider the question of reservations.

January 1980 - Congress wins back power. Indira Gandhi returns as Prime Minister. Construction of the foundations for the Sardar Sarovar Dam begins.

1983 – Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) determines that neither Sardar Sarovar nor Narmada Sagar dam projects meet requirements regarding environmental consequences, and withholds clearance.

April 1983 - Operation Blue Star.

1984 - Foundations of Narvagam (later Sardar Sarovar) and Narmada Sagar (later Indira Sagar) dams laid. World Bank-commissioned report by Professor Thayer Scudder (California Technical Institute, USA) confirms inadequacies of resettlement programmes.

October 1984 - Indira Gandhi assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards. Anti-Sikh riots follow. Rajiv Gandhi becomes Prime Minister.

1989 - Narmada Bachao Andolan coalesces, sealing the growing split between pragmatist NGOs focusing on resettlement and more opposing NGOs seeking to stop the Narmada Project completely.

October 1989 - Civil uprising in the Kashmir Valley.

January 1991 - 21-day standoff between Narmada Bachao Andolan leaders and supporters, and Gujarat state authorities. It ends when NBA calls off the confrontation.

May 1991 - Rajiv Gandhi assassinated by a Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) militant.

June 1991 - Congress wins majority. PV Narasimha Rao elected Prime Minister. Manmohan Singh becomes Finance Minister. Economy is liberalised in order to overcome the country's twin deficit.

1992 - Construction of Indira Sagar Dam begins.

October 1992 - World Bank Executive Board adopts West German-proposed compromise of authorizing loan if India meets certain conditions regarding environmental impacts and resettlement within six months.

December 6, 1992 - Babri Masjid demolished.

March 12, 1993 - Bombay blasts.

March 1993 - The central government and the three state governments decide to continue the Narmada Project without World Bank funding.

May 1994 - NBA petitions the Indian Supreme Court to stop construction of Narmada Project dams at least until resettlement issues are handled satisfactorily.

January 1995 - Supreme Court issues a stay order limiting Sardar Sarovar construction to 80.5-metre height already attained pending further review; the order does not require stopping work on canal or other aspects of the project.

1998 - BJP wins majority. Atal Bihari Vajpayee elected Prime Minister.

1999 - Kargil war between India and Pakistan. Pakistan withdraws its forces from the Indian side of the Line of Control.

February 1999 - Indian Supreme Court authorises construction to increase height of Sardar Sarovar Dam to 85 meters.

October 2000 - Supreme Court rules that the Narmada Project will go ahead as designed in the NWDT Award, orders that oustees be resettled before each additional stage of dam construction is undertaken.

2002 - Godhra riots.

November 2003 - Pakistan announces ceasefire in the Kashmir Valley. India reciprocates.

January 2004 - All units of Indira Sagar Dam powerhouse in operation.

May 2004 - BJP loses power to Congress. Manmohan Singh elected Prime Minister.

December 2004 - All five units of Sardar Sarovar canal head powerhouse in operation.

March 2005 - Indira Sagar Dam opened.

May 2014 - BJP wins majority after ten years of UPA rule and forms government. Narendra Modi becomes Prime Minister.

17 September 2017 - Sardar Sarovar Dam opened.

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