

Mapping Urban Alienation and Modernity: Narrative Representations in Indian Graphic Novels

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Abstract

Contemporary Indian graphic narratives have transitioned beyond traditional comic conventions into a distinctive literary-visual mode, encompassing historical elements, political frameworks, gender dynamics, caste structures, ecological life, and urban landscapes. Numerous critics have noted that post-twentieth-century Indian graphic novels diverge significantly from earlier market-oriented comics, as they pose complex socio-political questions and are frequently situated within the fragmented spaces of urban India. The urban transition in contemporary India has been dramatic, cities are projected to absorb a vital share of new job opportunities and population growth, even as the necessary urban infrastructure for the future remains incomplete. Within this evolving context, both modernity and urbanisation are represented through complex visual and narrative forms. While the majority of scholarship on Indian graphic novels has examined queer representation, isolation, intertextuality, and historical-political issues, a distinct research gap persists regarding comparative analyses of how urban alienation and modernity are depicted across key graphic narratives. This article specifically addresses this gap by analyzing how selected graphic novels represent urban lifestyles and the experience of modernity. Employing a qualitative and visual analytical approach, this study bridges thematic concerns with comparative interpretation. The theoretical framework integrates Karl Marx's concept of alienation, spatial theory, theories of modernity, Georg Simmel's sociology of metropolitan life, and graphic narrative theory. The central argument posits that the urban spaces depicted in these narratives function simultaneously as loci of isolation and ambition. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates that Indian graphic narratives intensify experiences of fragmentation, separation, loneliness, and identity crisis through their strategic deployment of disrupted chronology, visual collage, negative space, closure, and unstable page layouts. Ultimately, Indian graphic narratives offer nuanced interpretations of contemporary urban realities, exposing the political concerns, sensitive modes of narration, and spatial dilemmas intrinsic to modernity.

Keywords: urbanity, queer identity, isolation, spatial fragmentation, modernity, alienation

1. Introduction

A crucial development in contemporary South Asian literary culture is the rapid rise of Indian graphic narratives. Paul Gravett notes that contemporary graphic narratives in India have transformed comic culture, moving from a primary emphasis on children's entertainment toward adult-oriented visual storytelling and political consciousness. Gravett identifies Orijit Sen's *River of Stories* as a pivotal milestone and highlights how major publishers alongside independent presses have facilitated the consolidation of the field. Contemporary scholars similarly maintain that graphic narratives in India have undergone a profound literary and thematic evolution, deploying both verbal and visual modes to engage with contentious contemporary debates rather than merely reproducing mythological themes or conventional youth-oriented comic formulas (Paul, 2015).

Urbanity plays a pivotal role in this transition. Gravett remarks that urban India serves as a pervasive setting for these texts, explicitly linking *Corridor* and *Kari* to the fragmented realities and hidden lives and loves of the contemporary city. Contemporary research on Indian urban comics expands upon this assertion, arguing that these narratives do not merely employ the city as a passive backdrop; rather, they construct urban space as an interconnected environment through which writers and visual artists critique infrastructural development, socioeconomic inequality, structural disintegration, and the ideological promises of modernisation. Consequently, graphic narratives in India emerge less as a

standard cultural product and more as a sophisticated literary mode rooted in urban experience. (Vimal & Pillai, 2024)

This urban turn in graphic narrative studies must be situated within the broader trajectory of Indian urban modernity. Recent reports by the World Bank highlight that Indian cities function as engine rooms of economic growth; urban centers are projected to absorb more than 70 per cent of new job opportunities by 2030, accompanying a massive increase in urban populations. However, the report also stresses that the urban infrastructure required by 2050 will need to be 50 per cent greater than what currently exists. Similarly, reports by the Asian Development Bank indicate that while urbanisation in India drives manufacturing output, it generates critical social costs, including infrastructural strain, acute inequality, and uneven development. Thus, urban spaces in India operate not merely as sites of opportunity, but as arenas of intense conflict and contradiction.

At the core of modernity lies this fundamental contradiction. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines modernity as an interconnected network of scientific rationalism, administrative governance, rapid urbanisation, enhanced communication, commercial entrepreneurship, and the accelerating pace of daily life, emphasizing that modernity produces profound inequalities and reshapes human subjective experience. According to Anthony Giddens, the dynamics of modernity and globalisation intensify social interconnectivity, such that distant systemic forces profoundly shape local, lived existence. Marshall Berman's formulation of modernity emphasizes its dual character, offering liberation and innovative potential on one hand, while engendering contradictions and instability on the other. Furthermore, Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "liquid modernity" suggests that the contemporary condition is marked by fluidity, unmoored social structures, fluid identities, and shifting networks of community. These theoretical frameworks are deeply illuminating for the study of Indian graphic narratives, as the genre repeatedly portrays urban life as a domain where precarity, adaptability, ambition, and psychological strain coexist (Sharon, 2026).

The specific problem addressed in this study is that, despite the expansion of scholarship on Indian graphic narratives, urban alienation has yet to receive sustained comparative analysis across a representative selection of major texts. Existing literature has addressed mixed-media intertextuality in Indian graphic novels, feminist and queer gazes in *Kari*, the Emergency in *Delhi Calm*, postcolonial resistance and trauma in *Munnu*, and infrastructure and urbanity in Indian sequential narratives. Taken together, these studies reflect a vibrant critical landscape. However, it is evident from this body of work that the comparative question of how Indian graphic narratives articulate urban alienation as an embodied manifestation of lived modernity remains underdeveloped. Consequently, this article conceptualises alienation not as a secondary theme, but as an overarching framework that bridges space, labor, intimacy, memory, media, and identity (Sarma, 2018).

2. Review of Literature

Prashant M. Narayane's (2025) study adopts a qualitative descriptive and thematic review methodology to examine the historical evolution, major trends, dominant themes, and contemporary challenges within Indian graphic novels. Synthesising existing scholarship and representative graphic texts, Narayane traces the transformation of Indian visual storytelling from traditional comic publications, such as *Amar Chitra Katha* and *Raj Comics* to contemporary graphic novels that critically engage with complex social, political, and cultural realities. The study draws upon theoretical concepts from graphic narrative studies, visual culture, comics studies, cultural studies, postcolonial literary criticism, and adaptation studies, though it does not establish a new formal theoretical framework. Instead, it advances the understanding of Indian graphic novels as a rigorous literary and visual medium that synthesises indigenous artistic traditions with contemporary narrative forms, while illuminating key emerging trends such as independent publishing, alternative storytelling, digital formats, hybrid print-digital mediums, and international collaborations. Furthermore, it investigates the principal structural challenges confronting the industry, including limited readership, elevated production costs, distribution barriers, and growing competition from digital platforms and webcomics, concluding with an assessment of future prospects driven by digital media and global recognition. Narayane concludes that Indian graphic novels have developed into an indispensable literary medium capable of addressing intricate socio-political and cultural issues while preserving India's rich historical and mythological traditions.

Rathore's (2024) work utilizes a qualitative textual and interpretive methodology to analyze Prateek Thomas's *Hush* as a landmark Indian graphic novel reflecting emerging trends in Indian English literature through a postmodern lens. Conducting a close reading of the text, Rathore integrates concepts from postmodern literary theory, graphic narrative studies, visual culture, comics studies, and Walter Benjamin's theory of mechanical reproduction, contending that graphic novels constitute a legitimate literary and artistic mode capable of interrogating complex social realities. The study frames the graphic novel as a postmodern form characterized by self-reflexivity, intertextuality, hybridity, non-linear narration, metafiction, irony, and the synthesis of visual and textual storytelling. The analysis progresses from defining graphic novels and establishing their aesthetic legitimacy to evaluating the evolution of the genre in India, culminating in a detailed textual analysis of *Hush*. Rathore focuses specifically on its wordless storytelling technique,

expressionistic visual aesthetics, and representations of child sexual abuse, silence, trauma, gendered violence, and resistance, demonstrating how visual narrative conveys profound psychological depth in the absence of written dialogue. The study concludes that *Hush* represents a significant milestone in the Indian graphic novel tradition by expanding the narrative possibilities of visual literature through its innovative wordless storytelling and socially engaged thematic scope.

Khamparia's (2024) study employs a qualitative textual and thematic analysis to investigate the emergence and evolution of Indian graphic novels as an impactful literary and visual medium in contemporary Indian letters. Synthesising key representative works through the interdisciplinary frameworks of graphic narrative studies, visual culture, comics studies, postcolonial criticism, cultural studies, and adaptation studies, Khamparia argues that graphic novels have transcended their historical classification as children's entertainment to become sophisticated multimodal narratives capable of confronting complex social, political, historical, and cultural issues. The paper conceptualises the graphic novel as a hybrid multimodal narrative, emphasizing how the integration of textual and visual registers facilitates the representation of themes such as mythology, identity, gender, caste, urbanisation, historical memory, ecological concerns, and political resistance. It further examines key contemporary developments, including digital graphic narratives, independent publishing networks, multilingual storytelling, and transmedia adaptations, illustrating how Indian graphic novels negotiate indigenous traditions alongside global visual practices. Organized thematically, the discussion traces the historical development of Indian graphic narratives, analyzes their artistic and literary dimensions, evaluates major thematic concerns across representative texts, and assesses the industry's structural challenges and future prospects within Indian publishing and academic discourse. Khamparia asserts that the expanding scholarly recognition of graphic narratives, alongside heightened digital dissemination and formal experimentation, positions Indian graphic novels as a vital medium for mapping contemporary Indian identities, histories, and cultural transformations.

2.1 Research Gap

While scholarship on post-twentieth-century Indian graphic narratives has richly explored themes of queer representation, historical politics, caste dynamics, and intertextuality, a critical lacuna remains regarding the formal intersection of urban alienation and modernity specifically, how visual and narrative devices such as disrupted chronology, negative space, unstable panel layouts, and collage techniques work to depict the psychological and spatial fragmentation that accompanies rapid urbanisation. Although existing literature frequently acknowledges the shift from traditional comic conventions toward socio-politically conscious visual storytelling, there is a lack of comparative analyses examining how Indian graphic novels formally negotiate the psychological and spatial realities of urban transformation through these distinct artistic strategies. This research directly addresses this gap by investigating how selected Indian graphic narratives employ specific visual and structural techniques to represent experiences of urban alienation and modernity, thus aligning the study's objectives with a clearly articulated need in the academic discourse.

Current critical discourse often treats urban environments as static backdrops rather than dynamic, contradictory spaces that simultaneously foster intense ambition and profound isolation. Furthermore, few studies methodologically interrogate how distinct visual strategies, such as negative space, disrupted chronology, and unstable panel layouts, visually mirror the fragmentation, loneliness, and identity crises generated by metropolitan expansion.

This study bridges this gap by offering a comparative visual and thematic analysis grounded in Georg Simmel's metropolitan sociology, Karl Marx's theory of alienation, spatial theory, and graphic narrative theory. By examining how select narratives map the spatial costs of modern Indian urbanisation, this research moves beyond thematic summaries to demonstrate how visual form captures the lived paradoxes of the contemporary city.

2.2 Limitations

This research study is intentionally narrow in scope and deliberately focused. It concentrates exclusively on the primary graphic texts of Malik Sajad's *Munnu: A Boy From Kashmir*, Amruta Patil's *Kari*, Sarnath Banerjee's *Corridor*, and Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Delhi Calm*. These works collectively portray the complex contexts of modernity in India, including middle-class life in Delhi, Kashmir's armed and unhomey solitude, the exceptional atmosphere of the Emergency, and queer aloneness in Bombay. Although *Munnu* is not a conventional metropolitan narrative, its inclusion is justified because, as several scholars argue, the novel interrogates spatial violation, cartography, disruption, and surveillance, thereby addressing the contemporary conditions of urbanity, conflict, and migration. Including *Munnu* broadens the analytical framework, allowing for a richer comparative approach to urban alienation by showing how such experiences manifest not only in the metropolitan core but also in sites shaped by militarisation and contested belonging.

3. Objectives

- 1) To scrutinise the thematic concerns embedded within the selected graphic narratives.
- 2) To examine the formal representations of urban life and modernity.
- 3) To analyse the lived experiences and manifestations of alienation in the selected graphic novels.
- 4) To demonstrate how visual storytelling techniques deepen the literary engagement with estrangement.

4. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Karl Marx's theory of alienation serves as the primary conceptual cornerstone for this study. As outlined in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Marx's early philosophy treats alienation as a fundamental social pathology and delineates four distinct dimensions of alienated labor under capitalist conditions: the worker's separation from the product of labor, separation from the act of production, separation from other individuals, and separation from species-essence (*Gattungswesen*) that is, human capacities for free, conscious, and creative activity. Marx emphasizes that labor is not inherently a necessary evil; within a non-alienated social structure, work functions as a mode of creative self-realisation. When applied to Indian graphic novels, Marx's framework illuminates not only economic estrangement, but also the broader erosion of interpersonal relations, interior psychological states, and collective possibility under urban modernity. Urban characters across these texts are routinely estranged from meaningful labor, intimate relationships, community structures, and their own sense of agency (Wolff, 2020).

Georg Simmel's *The Metropolis and Mental Life* provides the second foundational framework. Simmel argues that the central dilemma of modern life stems from the individual's struggle to preserve personal autonomy and individuality against overwhelming social, economic, and technological structures. He directly links metropolitan life to the intensification of nervous stimulation, the dominance of intellectualism, the pervasive money economy, rigid punctuality, impersonality, social reserve, and the development of a blasé attitude. Within urban space, Simmel resists the notion that material forces reduce qualitative human variation purely to quantitative calculation, or that sensory overstimulation results in absolute detachment across global domains. This conceptualisation is extraordinarily pertinent to Indian graphic narratives: cities like Mumbai and Delhi appear densely populated and hyper-stimulated, yet systematically generate isolation, fractured intimacy, emotional detachment, and displacement. Simmel demonstrates that urban loneliness is not an anomaly, but a structural feature of modern life (Weinstein, 1950).

Modernity theory facilitates the transition from individual psychological estrangement to broader historical transformations. Anthony Giddens defines modernity as a system of social organisation that emerged in the seventeenth century and accelerated into "high modernity," rather than being superseded by postmodernity. Summarised in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, modernity is characterized by rapid urbanisation, heightened communication networks, bureaucratic administration, global capital flows, and rationalisation. Marshall Berman emphasizes the inherently paradoxical nature of the modern condition—a world of simultaneous creation and destruction—describing modern life as a shift from cohesive, stable social structures toward volatile and fragmented societal forms. Applied to Indian graphic narratives, urbanity offers promises of modern lifestyle, spatial mobility, and economic advancement, while simultaneously giving rise to class conflict, environmental vulnerability, precarious belonging, and infrastructural breakdown. This explains why graphic narratives consistently depict urban spaces as concurrently seductive and destructive (Giddens, 1990).

Graphic narrative theory is vital to this inquiry, as alienation in the selected texts is articulated through visual layouts as much as through plot and dialogue. As noted in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, comics consist of sequentially arranged images designed to be read in ordered succession, establishing sequential artwork as the core defining feature of the medium. Scott McCloud's concept of "closure" as elaborated in contemporary comics scholarship highlights how the reader actively synthesises narrative continuity across the unseen gaps between panels (the gutter); thus, the gutter is not an empty space, but a dynamic site of narrative association. Thierry Groensteen complements this perspective by conceptualising comic narration as a spatial system governed by page layouts, visual networkings ("braiding"), and panel solidarity, where meaning emerges from interconnected visual networks rather than isolated frames. These theoretical insights are especially crucial for analyzing Indian graphic narratives, where visual silence, redundancy, spatial dislocation, collage, and structural fragmentation depict alienation far more persuasively than textual exposition alone (Kunzle, 2025).

Spatial theory further enriches this analysis by establishing that urban space is socially produced rather than a pre-existing container. Henri Lefebvre's seminal work, *The Production of Space*, conceptualises space as a complex social product shaped by spatial practices, representations of space, and representational spaces. Complementing this view, Michel de Certeau's analysis of everyday life contrasts top-down urban planning ("strategies") with bottom-up tactical movements ("walks in the city"), demonstrating how individuals creatively navigate and reappropriate spaces designed by dominant institutions. Through these spatial frameworks, Indian graphic narratives can be read as arenas

where military checkpoints, surveilled domestic spaces, bookshops, rooftops, and narrow alleyways function not as passive settings, but as contested terrains. In effect, the city operates as an active narrative agent (Henri, 1991).

This article employs a qualitative research design based on interpretive literary and visual analysis. This methodological approach is appropriate because the study focuses on representations specifically, how streetscapes, visual iconography, verbal contexts, layouts, and character relations convey meanings of loneliness and modernity (Sarkar, 2026). The research treats Indian graphic narratives as socio-cultural texts, analyzing the inseparability of visual and textual elements. Contemporary scholarship on Indian graphic narratives similarly foregrounds visual and textual analysis to account for disparities in urban experience, structural fluidity, and organizational complexity.

The primary corpus comprises four seminal Indian graphic narratives: *Delhi Calm*, *Kari*, *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir*, and *Corridor*. Sarnath Banerjee's *Corridor* is uniquely suitable as, according to Penguin's documentation, its narrative is anchored in Delhi's Connaught Place and Kolkata, exploring modern urban solitude and unequal realities by interconnecting diverse character trajectories; critical commentators similarly highlight its vivid portrayal of New Delhi. Amruta Patil's *Kari* is widely recognized in comic criticism as a pioneering work in Indian queer graphic literature, capturing the protagonist's navigation of Mumbai's "smog city" through deep interiority, alienation, and identity fluidity. Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Delhi Calm* serves as a crucial text, praised by scholars for visually reinterpreting the 1970s Emergency in Delhi through an exploratory lens focused on dissent, memory, and political suppression. Finally, Malik Sajad's *Munnu* illustrates how personal trauma, autobiography, isolation, and cartography intersect to articulate the lived spatial conflicts of contemporary Kashmir.

The analysis is guided by three complementary analytical methods. First, thematic exploration identifies recurring motifs such as mobility, isolation, bureaucracy, resistance, surveillance, and spatial fragmentation. Second, visual semiotic analysis examines line work, page layout, panel architecture, negative space, bodily posture, visual collage, tonal contrast, and the rhythm of panel organization relative to urban temporality. Third, comparative narrative analysis investigates how these texts structure memory, point of view, temporality, and voice, noting regional variations, political realities, gender dynamics, and historical frameworks (Iyyer, 2017). This integrated methodology aligns with graphic narrative theory, recognizing that meaning unfolds across panel transitions, spatial layouts, page structures, and active reader involvement.

This study does not claim an exhaustive census of all Indian graphic novels. It is intentionally restricted to a small, highly influential corpus of English-language works and English translations. Furthermore, given the uneven distribution of page-specific scholarly documentation across texts, certain close-reading claims operate comparatively rather than through uniform line-by-line panel citations. Nevertheless, the empirical and textual evidence is robust, supporting an extended thesis on urban alienation precisely because each selected text has generated significant scholarship surrounding urban space, political structures, trauma, and visual experimentation.

To establish academic rigour and methodological replicability, this study employs a systematic, multimodal qualitative analysis of four landmark post-twentieth-century Indian graphic narratives *Corridor*, *Kari*, *Delhi Calm*, and *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* selected through purposive sampling for their explicit focus on distinct urban environments (Delhi, Mumbai, Srinagar) and differing socio-political dimensions of Indian modernity. The methodology proceeds through several clearly defined steps. First, the corpus was assembled based on purposive selection criteria: each text was chosen due to its concentrated engagement with urban space and modernity. Second, data collection involved the extraction of both textual content (dialogue, internal monologue, intertextual rhetoric) and visual elements (panel layout, gutter usage, negative space, colour palette, and iconography) from each graphic novel. Third, the analysis adopted a dual-layered coding process. Thematic codes were derived from theoretical constructs such as Karl Marx's taxonomy of alienation (economic, social, and bodily detachment), Georg Simmel's typology of metropolitan psychology (emotional numbness, hyper-stimulation, urban blas *é*), and spatial theory (Lefebvre and Foucault on surveillance, heterotopias, and spatial containment) while visual codes drew from graphic narrative theory (layout instability, broken chronology, unanchored framing). Fourth, each visual-verbal data point was systematically entered into a structured comparative matrix for cross-textual analysis. This enabled iterative qualitative interpretation of how literary and visual form jointly encode urban isolation within diverse spatial and social contexts. The methodology further specifies operational indicators for visual tropes, for instance, reading expansive negative space as signaling emotional void or unstable panel grids as mapping psychological fragmentation. This transparent sequence of steps underpins a verifiable and replicable analytical framework for mapping contemporary Indian urban alienation through graphic narrative scholarship.

5. Discussion and Analysis

5.1 The City as a Character

A primary pattern emerging across contemporary Indian graphic novels is that the city refuses to serve as a passive backdrop. Recent scholarship on Indian sequential narratives demonstrates that urban comics interrogate, politicise, and

destabilise grand narratives of city modernisation, revealing the impossibility of mapping Indian metropolises through standardized spatial grids. The city operates as an active, dynamic social product. Lefebvre's spatial theory elucidates how urban space is continually produced through social practices, while Certeau reminds us that everyday pedestrian movements tactically reconfigure the city from below. Across the selected graphic narratives, Delhi, Mumbai, Connaught Place, Kolkata, and the militarised spaces of Srinagar function as vibrant, active environments that actively shape consciousness, social relations, and political struggle.

Penguin's contextual notes on *Corridor* highlight a tea and second-hand book shop in Connaught Place as the narrative nucleus where literature, tea, conversation, and anxious urban desires converge. The novel's central male characters stem from diverse social strata yet remain linked through their visits to this shop. The publisher explicitly notes that Banerjee employs prose, sketches, illustrations, and archival photographs to represent alienation and fragmented reality in contemporary Indian urban life. Cultural commentary reinforces this, characterizing *Corridor* as a cult portrait of New Delhi that tracks urbanites preoccupied with literary collecting, aphrodisiacs, romantic anxiety, visa aspirations, and political ideologies. The city represented here is not a monumental or administrative Delhi, but an everyday, commercial, conversational, aspirational, cluttered, and intellectually overstimulated city. This represents Simmel's metropolis translated into an Indian setting, where market logic, intellectualism, and the quest for selfhood collide (Sarnath, 2023).

Alienation in *Corridor* is primarily social before it becomes tragic. Banerjee's characters circulate within a densely populated urban landscape, yet their internal desires remain sealed off from one another. One character pursues romantic connection and obscure collectibles, another seeks erotic enhancement, while another vacillates between Marxist theory and the promise of an H-1B visa. These figures embody what Simmel terms reserve and reflect the metropolis's heavy reliance on impersonal, calculative social transactions. They are linked by physical proximity, but disconnected in emotional depth. While the bookshop initially appears to offer a communal haven, it simultaneously underscores how urban sociability often manifests as transient, performative, or market-mediated contact. Consequently, *Corridor* provides a lucid narrative exploration of loneliness within the urban crowd.

Formally, *Corridor* intensifies this alienated condition through visual fragmentation. Banerjee's aesthetic style is characterized by collage techniques, stark black-and-white drawings, multilingual text, visual citations, print clippings, photographs, and non-linear temporal structures. Commentary in *The New Yorker* notes that Banerjee draws on a modernist visual vocabulary incorporating narrative fragmentation, repetition, mixed chronology, and complex textual-visual layering. In McCloudian terms, this narrative mode requires readers to actively perform closure across sharp narrative transitions, while Groensteen's network model of comics explains how urban disorientation in *Corridor* is architecturally organized across the physical page layout. Visual fragmentation is not merely decorative; it is the fundamental formal structure through which urban alienation is rendered legible (Srinivasan, 2016).

5.2 Queer Modernity and Urban Loneliness in *Kari*

While *Corridor* charts a predominantly male, public urban sphere, *Kari* shifts the focus toward queer embodiment and the intimate, domestic topographies of Mumbai. Surangama Datta identifies *Kari* as the first Indian graphic novel in English authored by a woman and a queer creator. The narrative follows Kari in the aftermath of a devastating romantic breakup, navigating Mumbai's "smog city" through internal reflection, urban drift, and reconfigured relationships. Datta emphasizes that the text resists reducing Kari's life to a reductive narrative of suicidal queer despair, instead developing an experimental visual language of interiority, fluidity, and resistant perception. This distinction is critical: Kari's alienation is neither pure social exclusion nor simple psychological pathology; rather, it is a uniquely gendered, urban estrangement born of navigating a heteronormative city that grants anonymity without offering genuine belonging (Datta, 2020).

Kari presents perhaps the most explicit examination of identity crisis within the selected corpus. Datta notes that the narrative gives graphic representation to the psyche of a young, deeply introverted, queer protagonist, deploying heteroglossia, mixed media, and experimental art to map her internal state. Subsequent critical studies similarly examine the narrative as an exemplar of alienation and fluid identity in urban Mumbai, highlighting its articulation of emotional detachment, cultural silencing, and psychological fragmentation within a heteronormative order. This positions *Kari* as a prime text for Marxian and Simmelian analysis: Kari is estranged from normative social institutions, fixed identity categories, and occasionally her own bodily stability, while the surrounding metropolis compresses intimacy, exhaustion, and sensory overload into a precarious daily existence (Patil, 2008).

The visual language of *Kari* is central to its political and aesthetic critique. Datta highlights Patil's dynamic use of ink, markers, charcoal, oil pastel, crayon, and found images, linking this intertextual style to a stream-of-consciousness focus on subjective interiority. The graphic medium emerges as a uniquely effective vehicle for portraying alienation because it juxtaposes the protagonist's interior psychological reality directly alongside the physical facades of the city.

Panels do not merely depict external events, they weave memory, emotional tone, detachment, fantasy, and physical texture into a single visual field. In this manner, *Kari* illustrates how visual storytelling heightens the representation of fragmentation and identity crisis. The reader does not merely read about precarity; they navigate it visually across the discontinuous spatial layout of the page.

5.3 Authoritarian Urbanism in *Delhi Calm*

Delhi Calm shifts the exploration of urban alienation into an explicitly political register. The British Council's overview of Indian graphic narratives characterizes the text as a major reinterpretation of the 1975–77 National Emergency, operating as both historical critique and political warning. Academic analyses of the work examine how visual comics spatially encode the urban politics of the Emergency, while broader research argues that the graphic medium democratizes historical narrative by exposing its own formal construction and resisting singular, authoritative historical accounts. Under Emergency governance, the city does not merely host political repression; it becomes the direct mechanism through which civil rights, language, physical bodies, and public memory are controlled. Urban space is systematically converted into an apparatus of surveillance, regulation, and state power.

Alienation in *Delhi Calm* manifests through the state's appropriation of both public and private spheres. Whereas Simmel highlighted precision, punctuality, and impersonal systems as defining features of modern metropolitan life, *Delhi Calm* demonstrates how these impersonal structures easily collapse into authoritarian coercion. The rationalized city transforms into a disciplinary urban space. Scholarly analyses emphasize how the novel depicts political suppression through formal innovation rather than literal realism employing visual omission, negative space, broken panels, allegorical absences, and layered historical framing. Consequently, alienation here signifies not only the estrangement of the citizen from the state, or the individual from community, but also the rupture between lived reality and official state rhetoric. Graphic silence operates as a visual index of political disenfranchisement (Ghosh, 2010).

The scholarly value of *Delhi Calm* for theories of urban modernity lies in its diagnosis of the modern city as a deeply bureaucratic and mediated environment (Davies, 2018). Modernity as defined by Giddens and *Encyclopaedia Britannica* involves pervasive bureaucracy, abstract systems, and distant institutional forces that shape daily life. *Delhi Calm* exposes the oppressive potential of these structures: modern communication, administrative discipline, urban planning, and state mechanisms do not automatically secure human freedom; instead, they can engender profound estrangement, political passivity, and enforced conformity. This insight aligns the text with Bauman's and Berman's formulations of modernity as a deeply contradictory phenomenon in which narratives of national progress exist alongside destruction, social anxiety, and fragile democratic institutions. The metropolis is modern not merely because it is technologically advanced, but because it is the primary site where state abstraction directly impacts human bodies.

5.4 Unhomely Urbanity in *Munnu*

At first glance, Malik Sajad's *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* might seem an unconventional choice for a study on urban alienation, as its emotional geography extends beyond standard metropolitan confines. However, critical scholarship confirms its profound relevance. The IIT Delhi catalogue entry describes the text as a coming-of-age narrative set against school closures, military identification parades, civilian casualties, and fractured communities. Sreyoshi Sarkar argues that the graphic novel employs cartographic interventions and speculative fabulation to destabilize dominant state narratives regarding Kashmir, while subsequent criticism explores its representations of corpse geographies, trauma, panoptic surveillance, and the production of "unhomeliness". Together, these studies demonstrate that *Munnu* maps a modern spatial crisis wherein the home, street, body, and official map are continuously destabilized (Sajad, 2015).

Munnu exemplifies how alienation can be conceptualized as a spatial politics. In critical discourse, the concept of the "unhomely" (*unheimlich*) describes the erosion of boundaries between private domestic life and public space under intense military surveillance and political conflict. This directly intersects with spatial theories advanced by Certeau and Lefebvre: if lived spatial practice relies on daily routines to establish meaning, ongoing surveillance and militarised violence transform lived space into an alienating environment (Dubey, 2024). The domestic home no longer offers shelter, the neighborhood fails to ground personal memory, and cartography functions not to map terrain, but to enforce state dominance. In Marxian terms, the subject becomes alienated not merely from labor or social relations, but from the fundamental conditions required to inhabit space securely.

The visual style of *Munnu* sharpens this sense of spatial alienation through the representation of trauma. Raina argues that the novel's persistent visual motifs of corpses and mass graves establish an iconography of geopolitical terror, while NEH analysis highlights the work's ability to humanize daily struggles within contested territories. Because sequential visual art distributes narrative meaning across sequential panels, traumatic repetition can be represented without requiring the resolving closures typical of linear prose (Raina, 2023). This reinforces the primary argument: graphic narrative heightens alienation by holding mundane daily routines alongside terrifying political realities within the same

visual field. This dynamic is exceptionally potent in *Munnu*, where childhood innocence, dark humor, terror, and death coexist without resolving into a simple narrative resolution.

5.5 Social Isolation and Psychological Fragmentation Across the Corpus

A comparative examination of these four Indian graphic narratives demonstrates that urban alienation is not a uniform condition, but a complex, multifaceted spectrum. In *Corridor*, alienation manifests as ironic sociability and unfulfilled middle-class ambition; in *Kari*, as queer loneliness and fluid selfhood; in *Delhi Calm*, as civic disenfranchisement under state suppression; and in *Munnu*, as traumatic unhomeliness within a militarised environment. Marx's fourfold model of alienation aids in linking these distinct forms: each text consistently portrays characters separated from meaningful labor, from interpersonal connection, from their agency, or from the environments necessary to sustain them. Simmel's sociology of the metropolis illuminates why this alienation persists despite the hyper-density, physical proximity, and intense stimulation of urban life. These texts are populated not by solitary hermits, but by subjects who cannot convert urban physical contact into genuine social belonging.

Psychological fragmentation is equally central to this corpus. Scholarship on *Kari* stresses emotional interiority and fluid identity; scholarship on *Munnu* highlights psychological trauma and spatial surveillance; and scholarship on *Corridor* highlights narrative fragmentation, temporal shifts, and visual collage. These formal and thematic strategies indicate that urban alienation in Indian graphic narratives is experienced as a rupture in self-continuity: individuals cannot fully inhabit their present circumstances, history, or desires. Consequently, modernity is represented not merely as an external socio-economic structure, but as a disruption of narrative and psychological coherence. Graphic narratives are uniquely equipped to capture this condition because they physically spatialise temporal and psychological rupture upon the page.

One of Simmel's most enduring insights is that metropolitan density frequently generates social reserve rather than genuine intimacy. Indian graphic novels repeatedly confirm this thesis. *Corridor* gathers diverse characters within a shared urban setting while keeping them emotionally isolated. *Kari* situates its protagonist within crowded Mumbai, yet frames her as a solitary consciousness navigating grief and social opacity. *Delhi Calm* depicts an urban center saturated with state power yet ethically emptied by fear and censorship. *Munnu* illustrates the profound isolation that occurs when public space itself becomes insecure and dangerous. The urban crowd, therefore, does not represent the antithesis of solitude; rather, it is the precise environment under which social isolation becomes institutionalized.

5.6 Globalisation and Cultural Change

Modernity across these graphic novels is inextricably tied to the broader transformations of global capital, media infrastructure, and individual aspiration. Giddens defines globalisation as the intensification of worldwide social relations that link distant localities to local events, while *Encyclopaedia Britannica* associates modernity with accelerated communication and cross-border exchange. *Corridor* is saturated with these markers: visa aspirations, ideological dissonance, and the multilingual, reference-heavy culture of New Delhi's middle class. Critical commentary in *The New Yorker* explicitly frames Banerjee's narrative around the rising economic tide, urbanisation, and socio-cultural paradoxes of "New India". Similarly, *Kari* set within the corporate sphere of advertising in Mumbai reflects a city shaped by global consumer landscapes and unstable identities. Urban alienation in these texts is not a lingering byproduct of pre-modern backwardness, but an intrinsic condition generated by global modernity itself (Fuchs, 2015).

These graphic novels do not reduce urban existence solely to economic struggle; they carefully analyze individual desire. In *Corridor*, desire flows through books, sexual encounters, visas, consumer objects, and social mobility. In *Kari*, desire is intensely intimate and existential, bound to love, social validation, and physical identity. Bauman's and Berman's theoretical frameworks illuminate this dynamic: while modernity multiplies choices and opportunities, this hyper-abundance of possibility can itself induce psychological instability (Zygmunt, 2000). The metropolis generates fantasies of upward mobility while routinely withholding lasting satisfaction. Thus, opportunity and alienation are not opposing forces, but two interconnected facets of the same urban condition.

The role of technology in these texts is best understood not as gadgetry, but as systemic mediation. Modernity constructs information, bureaucratic, cartographic, legal, and infrastructural systems that mediate human life at a distance. *Delhi Calm* illustrates the media state apparatus of Emergency rule; *Munnu* highlights state surveillance, administrative documentation, and cartographic containment; and *Corridor* depicts software-era flexibility embodied in the H-1B visa aspirations of a computer engineer torn between political theory and migration (Bera, 2023). These mediating structures reshape human relationships by rendering individuals visible, controllable, replaceable, or disposable. In this capacity, technological modernity operates as a relational force, reorganizing how individuals are perceived, governed, desired, or discarded.

5.7 Mobility and Displacement

Modernity promises unrestricted physical and social mobility, yet the selected graphic novels remain profoundly skeptical of these promises. In *Corridor*, mobility manifests as restless ambition lacking meaningful resolution. In *Kari*, movement is fluid, directionless, and emotionally burdened rather than liberating. In *Munnu*, physical movement is constrained by military curfews, checkpoints, and political violence (Certeau, 1988). In *Delhi Calm*, urban circulation is overshadowed by state surveillance and political regulation. Certeau's distinction between institutional visual strategies and tactical pedestrian practices is highly relevant here: these graphic novels continuously demonstrate that physical movement through the city is never purely uninhibited; it is an ongoing, tactical negotiation with power structures, historical trauma, class boundaries, and personal memory. Mobility thus functions as a primary axis along which urban alienation is expressed.

A central contribution of Indian graphic narratives is their capacity to render urban experience visually rather than purely through textual description. Recent analyses of *Corridor* demonstrate how Banerjee's manipulation of architectural features and cartographic signs exposes Delhi's physical and symbolic positioning as a landscape of power. Publisher commentary on *Corridor* similarly emphasizes the dense visual referencing of material objects and urban backgrounds. In *Delhi Calm*, negative space and visual absence operate as primary techniques for representing political coercion and suppressed memory. In *Kari*, mixed-media techniques and textual heteroglossia present the metropolis not as an objective panoramic totality, but as an emotionally saturated environment. In *Munnu*, cartographic interventions and traumatic visual iconography turn landscape into historical testimony. Across all four works, the city is constructed as an affective architecture (Joseph, 2026).

While page-level color analysis varies across available scholarship, there is strong critical agreement that Indian graphic creators employ tonal and material strategies to establish emotional atmosphere. Banerjee's visual style is described as raw, sketchy, collage-driven, and selectively vibrant; Datta highlights Patil's integration of diverse artistic media to visualize interior psychological states; scholarship on *Delhi Calm* centers on visual silence and graphic omissions; and studies of *Munnu* emphasize its stark, unsettling iconography. The cumulative result is that alienation is rendered tangible and sensorial. Mood is not artificially appended through interpretive commentary; it is structurally built through line work, spatial layout, visual layering, and the creative tension between verbal and visual elements.

A defining visual strategy across these texts is the strategic disruption of spatial continuity. Graphic narrative theory explains why this formal technique is so impactful: closure requires readers to deduce narrative continuity across missing visual links, with meaning emerging from the spatial arrangement of interdependent panels. When Indian graphic narratives employ structural fragmentation, visual silence, broken narrative pacing, and unexpected visual juxtapositions, they formally embody the unpredictability and disorientation of modern urban life. *Delhi Calm* achieves this through visual silence and expansive negative space; *Corridor* through visual collage and narrative jumps; *Kari* through fluid, subjective interior layouts; and *Munnu* through traumatic disruptions of domestic security. Alienation is thus not merely represented by characters within the story, it is actively enacted across the panels on the physical page.

5.8 Sequential Storytelling, Memory, and Multiple Perspectives

The four graphic novels utilize sequential narrative mechanisms in distinct ways, yet all rely heavily on memory and temporal layering. *Kari* adopts an introspective, non-linear, stream-of-consciousness narrative flow. *Corridor* relies on intersecting character arcs and discontinuous chronology. *Delhi Calm* reconstructs a contentious historical moment by multiplying narrative perspectives and resisting single, authoritative interpretations. *Munnu* synthesises coming-of-age autobiography, political history, and counter-cartography. These narrative structures are crucial because modernity in Berman's formulation is inherently characterized by flux, systemic contradiction, and unstable continuity. Sequential visual narrative is uniquely suited to represent this condition because memory can exist alongside the present within the same visual layout, allowing distinct temporalities to intersect unexpectedly.

Gender significantly differentiates the representation of urban space across these texts. Gravett notes that women creators remain underrepresented within Indian graphic narratives, with Amruta Patil standing out as a primary exception. *Corridor* focuses primarily on male urban anxieties and ambitions, while *Delhi Calm* prioritises political history over gendered urban subjectivity. In contrast, *Kari* positions a queer woman's interior and social life at the absolute center, re-evaluating the city through female friendship, desire, grief, and alternative gazes. This comparative contrast is highly productive. It demonstrates that urban alienation is not experienced uniformly: the masculine, public spheres of commerce and ideology in *Corridor* differ fundamentally from the queer, gendered, bodily isolation depicted in *Kari*. The city distributes spatial mobility, daily experience, and social vulnerability unevenly.

The politics of the gaze is especially vital in this context. Datta contends that *Kari* challenges dominant, patriarchal modes of seeing by forging alternative, feminist gazes grounded in intimacy, curiosity, and non-normative perception. When read against the male sociability of *Corridor* or the state-monitored landscape of *Delhi Calm*, *Kari* reveals that

perceptual reorientation can function as a vital form of resistance to urban alienation: to perceive the city differently is to inhabit it differently. While this does not erase alienation, it actively disrupts normative urban codes. Patil transforms visual form into a site of gendered agency.

None of the selected texts succumbs to absolute nihilism. Even in their most overwhelming moments, they delineate fragile forms of human agency and community. In *Corridor*, the tea and book shop operates as an informal public sphere where intellectual conversation resists complete social atomisation. In *Kari*, female and queer solidarity enables the protagonist to survive the metropolis without capitulating to heteronormative pressures. In *Delhi Calm*, the visual narrative itself constitutes an act of political dissent and memory work against state-enforced amnesia. In *Munnu*, scholars observe that the text reclaims lived Kashmiri history while highlighting everyday practices of communal resilience and ecological justice. These micro-resistances do not eliminate alienation, but they prevent it from defining the entire scope of human experience.

The most persistent counterforce to urban alienation across this corpus is not idealized social harmony, but fragile, partial community. Marx's critique of alienation highlights the suppression of human social capacities; these graphic novels repeatedly evaluate what forms of community remain viable under modern conditions. Their conclusion is modest yet profound: informal social spaces, affective bonds, historical memory, and collective storytelling can temporarily resist urban fragmentation. Banerjee's and Patil's urban environments retain micro-publics; Ghosh's Delhi can still be narrated against the official state narrative; and Sajad's Kashmir can be redrawn from lived memory. Belonging does not manifest as a restored whole, but as an ongoing, deliberate narrative effort.

6. Cross-Textual Cartographies of Urban Alienation: Parallels, Contrasts, and Narrative Convergences

Post-twentieth-century Indian graphic novels mark a decisive departure from the didactic and mythic visual traditions of popular comics, rearticulating the graphic medium as a potent site for socio-spatial critique. Far from treating the city as a neutral backdrop, contemporary graphic creators employ the unique formal affordances of the visual-verbal medium to map the psychological, political, and spatial costs of Indian modernity.

When read in conversation, Sarnath Banerjee's *Corridor* (2004), Amruta Patil's *Kari* (2008), Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Delhi Calm* (2010), and Malik Sajad's *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* (2015) construct a multifaceted cartography of urban alienation. Together, these texts demonstrate that metropolitan alienation in India is not a monolithic condition, but rather a fragmented spectrum, ranging from consumerist drift and queer somatic isolation to ideological surveillance and militarised spatial siege.

As the foundational modern Indian graphic novel, *Corridor* maps the disjointed topographies of Delhi, specifically Connaught Place, tea stalls, and cramped apartments. Banerjee captures the Simmelian blasé attitude through characters like Brighu, Digital Dutta, and Jehangir Rangoonwalla. The corridor serves as a key spatial metaphor: a zone of transit rather than belonging, where encounters are fleeting and superficial. Banerjee utilizes sketch-like, unstable panel structures, juxtaposing realistic line drawings with surreal imagery and non-linear narrative vignettes. The characters wander the city in search of rare books, aphrodisiacs, or intellectual validation, yet remain fundamentally disconnected from one another. Their alienation stems from the modern Indian middle-class condition, caught between traditional social fabrics and the hyper-individualism of a neoliberal capital city.

Patil shifts the locus to Mumbai, a metropolis characterized by verticality, claustrophobia, and environmental toxicity. *Kari* articulates an explicitly somatic and gendered alienation. Following a double suicide attempt by Kari and her lover Ruth, Ruth is absorbed back into heterosexual normalcy while Kari is left to navigate the city alone as an enigmatic, queer subject. Mumbai is depicted through motif-heavy iconography: the suffocating "smog," high-rise apartments, sewers, and "the boat" (a metaphor for emotional survival). Patil employs dense visual poetry, stark monochrome tones, heavy ink washes, and expansive negative space. The layout frequently breaks free from conventional grids, echoing Kari's internal unmooring. Body-centric, emotional, and heteronormative, Kari's work in an advertising firm exemplifies Marxian alienation from labor; she generates superficial capitalist desire while feeling entirely hollowed out. Her physical isolation within the crowded city reveals how modern urban architecture segregates non-normative bodies and identities.

Ghosh turns back to 1970s Delhi during the state of National Emergency, offering a satirical yet disturbing examination of political alienation. Through a trio of young men with differing political ideals (Vibhuti, Master, and Parvez), *Delhi Calm* illustrates how state-sponsored urban restructuring generates civic paralysis. Delhi is visualised as a panoptic, heavily controlled spatial grid where public speech is censored, slums are bulldozed under the guise of "beautification," and citizens are tracked by state apparatuses ("Mother Moon" and "Naya Saas"). Ghosh's visual palette uses sepia newsprint tones, vintage advertisement parodies, and rigid, mechanical layouts. The narrative chronology is deliberately disrupted, blending real historical radio broadcasts with surreal political propaganda. Ideological and political, alienation here is enforced by the state. The individual is alienated from their political agency, as urban public spaces

are cleared of dissent and transformed into disciplined sites of forced compliance.

Sajad's *Munnu* extends the scope of Indian graphic narrative scholarship by shifting focus from the postcolonial metropolis to the militarised urban zone of Srinagar. Urban space in Srinagar is defined by spatial containment: identity checkpoints, razor wire, curfews, bunker construction, and omnipresent military patrols. The city is not a place of neoliberal ambition, but an open-air prison. Sajad makes the crucial decision to draw native Kashmiris as the Hangul (an endangered species of deer native to Kashmir), while non-Kashmiri soldiers and authority figures are depicted as human. The page layouts feature heavily inked, woodcut-style cross-hatching that communicates spatial and bodily confinement. Colonial, militarised, and existential, *Munnu*'s alienation is not chosen; it is violently imposed. The transformation of a native boy's environment into a battlefield alienates him from childhood, safety, and his human identity.

These four texts fundamentally transform the understanding of how Indian graphic narratives represent urban alienation, offering major conceptual advancements. Historically, Indian visual narratives relied heavily on cohesive, heroic, or nationalistic frames (such as *Amar Chitra Katha*). *Corridor*, *Kari*, *Delhi Calm*, and *Munnu* collectively shatter this mythic unity. They demonstrate that the modern Indian graphic novel uses fragmented visual layouts to echo the fragmented experience of modern urban life. The visual gutter, the space between panels, becomes a literal and symbolic site where urban isolation resides, requiring the reader to construct meaning out of broken moments.

By mapping urban alienation across diverse geographies from the coffee houses of Delhi and the advertising studios of Mumbai to Emergency-era streets and the militarised alleys of Srinagar these selected graphic novels perform a vital scholarly service. They prove that the Indian graphic narrative is uniquely equipped to capture the psychological and physical fractures of modernity. Through their disrupted chronologies, negative spaces, unstable panel layouts, and haunting iconography, *Corridor*, *Kari*, *Delhi Calm*, and *Munnu* demonstrate that in the modern Indian city, alienation is not an accidental byproduct of urban life, but its defining structural logic.

7. Findings of the Study

The primary finding of this study is that contemporary Indian graphic narratives depict the city as an inherently paradoxical space of simultaneous opportunity and deprivation. Urban environments promise social mobility, creative expression, economic advancement, gender self-fashioning, and political participation; yet, they concurrently produce social reserve, structural fragmentation, precarity, surveillance, and profound isolation. This dual structure is evident across *Corridor*'s Delhi, *Kari*'s Mumbai, *Delhi Calm*'s Emergency-era landscape, and *Munnu*'s militarised Kashmir. The metropolis operates neither exclusively as a liberating haven nor solely as an oppressive prison; rather, it constitutes the contradictory arena of lived modern experience.

Furthermore, alienation within these narratives is multidimensional. It manifests socially as failed intimacy and eroded community; psychologically as mental fragmentation, emotional detachment, and identity disruption; politically as state coercion, surveillance, and civic disenfranchisement; and spatially as unhomeliness, structural destruction, cartographic violence, and overwhelming metropolitan density. Marx's theoretical model effectively accounts for the structural root of this estrangement, while Simmel clarifies why the metropolis engenders deep loneliness despite physical crowding and sensory hyper-stimulation.

Formally, graphic storytelling does not merely depict alienation as a thematic subject; it materially and structurally enacts it on the page. Disrupted chronology, mixed-media collage, closure across gutters, expansive negative space, visual braiding, and graphic silence force the reader to actively navigate narrative disjunction. The physical page functions as a spatial counterpart to modern subjectivity, where narrative continuity must be constructed across missing links, and where emotional tone resides within panel layouts as much as in textual dialogue. In this regard, Indian graphic narratives provide an exceptionally rich archive for modernity studies, as their visual form demonstrates fragmentation rather than merely describing it.

Finally, while resistance remains viable within these texts, it is localized and fragile. The selected graphic novels do not resolve urban alienation into harmonious resolution. Instead, they identify provisional counterforces: informal social networks, intellectual dialogue, queer gazes, historical memory, counter-narratives, and tactical negotiations of daily space. These strategies do not dismantle the systemic paradoxes of modernity, but they preserve crucial moments of personal and collective agency. Consequently, Indian graphic narratives are best understood not as documents of absolute despair, but as critical forms that maintain a productive tension between structural critique and fragile hope.

8. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Indian graphic novels provide a sharp literary and visual archive for analyzing urban alienation in contemporary South Asia. By examining *Corridor*, *Kari*, *Delhi Calm*, and *Munnu* through the theoretical frameworks of Marx, Simmel, Giddens, Berman, Bauman, McCloud, Groensteen, Lefebvre, and Certeau, this article

has established that these texts stage the city as a site where modernity is experienced as a fundamental paradox. They interrogate not merely the physical urban landscape, but the very nature of urban form—where ambition is shaded by exclusion, density by solitude, dialogue by silence, and mobility by displacement.

The contribution of this study is threefold. First, it advances scholarship on Indian graphic narratives by synthesizing texts that are often analyzed separately under disparate categories such as queer studies, political history, intertextuality, Kashmir studies, or urban infrastructure. Second, it bridges comics studies with urban sociology and literary theory, demonstrating that graphic narratives are essential for understanding how contemporary city life is conceptualized. Third, it establishes alienation as a robust comparative framework for graphic narrative analysis, particularly within postcolonial contexts where modernity is uneven, aspirational, volatile, and visually overdetermined. The core thesis posits that urban alienation is not incidental to Indian graphic novels, but serves as one of the genre's foundational structural insights into modern life.

This study also acknowledges specific limitations. The analyzed corpus is intentionally selective and cannot represent the full diversity of Indian graphic literature. The investigation is restricted to English-language texts and accessible scholarly documentation, meaning regional-language graphic traditions, small-press publications, and micro-level visual panel details fall outside the current scope. Additionally, while existing literature supports the premise that comparative scholarship on urban alienation remains underdeveloped, this claim relies on interpretive synthesis rather than bibliometric metrics. These limitations do not undermine the core findings, but rather point toward avenues for future systematic inquiry.

8.1 Future Scope

Future research in this field should expand along four primary trajectories. First, comparative studies could evaluate Indian urban graphic narratives alongside global texts from Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, or East Asia to examine whether alienation functions similarly across distinct postcolonial modernities. Second, scholarly attention should turn toward digital and web-based graphic narratives, particularly as contemporary urban experience becomes increasingly mediated through digital platforms and screen interfaces. Third, future inquiries could deepen the analysis of gender and sexuality by applying the insights derived from *Kari* to a broader corpus of feminist and queer graphic creation. Fourth, research should examine post-pandemic urban visual storytelling, investigating how heightened surveillance, public health regimes, migration, climate vulnerability, and precarious labor have reshaped urban experience. What remains clear is that Indian graphic narratives will continue to serve as vital sites of critical inquiry, as they do not merely document urban transformation, but actively conceptualise it through a visual form uniquely attuned to its disruptions.

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Author contributions

Dr. Vimal A contributed to all stages of the research and manuscript preparation. He conceptualized and prepared the complete manuscript, including the collection, review, and synthesis of relevant scholarly literature. He developed and integrated the theoretical frameworks employed in the study and conducted the textual analysis and interpretation of the selected texts. He thoroughly read and reviewed the primary texts, identified relevant textual evidence, and interpreted the findings in relation to the study's research objectives and theoretical perspectives.

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