

HL Essay FINAL sparsh

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Topic-Communication

Title- Effective depiction of Islamic culture in 'Persepolis'

The history of Iran is a bit complicated, but we should know it before reading the essay on Persepolis. In the second millennium, 'BC Indo-European invaders gave the name to Iranian plateau where they had started living. The word "Iran" came from "Aryayana Vaejo" which mean that the origin belongs to "Aryans"¹.'

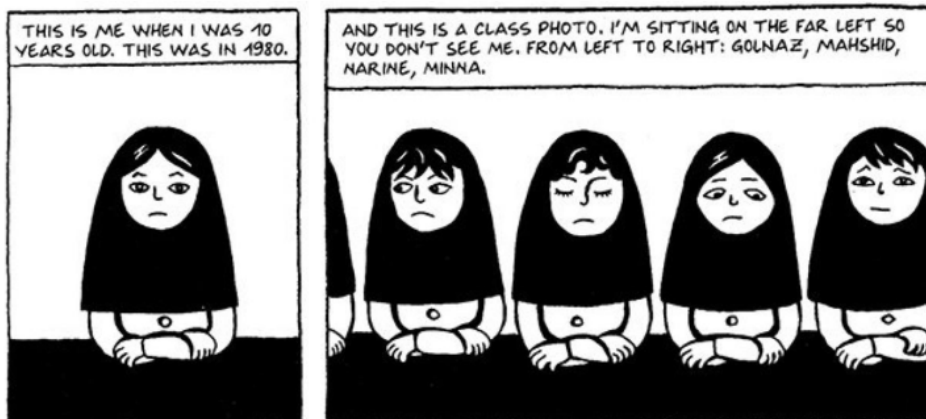
Persepolis is Marjane Satrapi's graphic memoir documenting her childhood during the Islamic Revolution in Iran(which took place in 1979). The novel also discusses the restrictions levied on the protagonist after the Islamic revolution took place. Through this autobiographical piece, the author has also portrayed the Islamic culture very effectively.

Before we start with the essay, the first thing that we must discuss is the title itself. Persepolis was the old capital of the Achaemenid Empire, that is to say, it was the capital of Persia, during the reign of Darius 1. Persepolis was a marvellous city, it enjoyed the favour of the Persian Kings for centuries. It was the centre point between the East and the West, during its height (that is because Istanbul still wasn't established adequately to take its rightful place like the Centre of the World). But the city itself is far older than even Darius 1, and it is common knowledge now that it was, in fact, Cyrus the Great himself that started the grand project that was to be Persepolis.

¹ Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis: the Story of an Iranian Childhood*. Jonathan Cape, 2003.

Now, why the history of Persepolis is being shared is because there are major similarities between in the timelines of Tehran of 1980s and Persepolis of the 5-6th Century BC. First, the place's history and culture are much more detailed and sophisticated than what a layperson might assume. Next is the conquering – both are considered Persia's capital and are conquered by some western power – in Persepolis, Alexander. In the case of Tehran, it was the British and the American. In this way, the author uses the title as a device to showcase the future events in the novel.

The novel depicts the struggle of Marji, (the protagonist) from childhood till adulthood. In this way, the author has used bildungsroman to show the protagonist's sensitivity, emotion, and moral growth from childhood until maturity. The author also uses Karr's theory which will help the reader understand the profound objective of Iranian history and its impact on Iranian people and especially Iranian women. Marjane Satrapi herself explained why she has decided to write this novel - to explain to the people about Western media's desires about the Islamic religion and the biases that the media imposes. She stated" Since [the Islamic revolution], This ancient and great culture has been primarily debated concerning fundamentalism, fanaticism, and terrorism. "As an Iranian who has lived in Iran for more than half my life, I know this picture is far from reality. This is why it was so vital for me to write Persepolis. I believe that the wrongdoings of a few extremists should not judge an entire country."

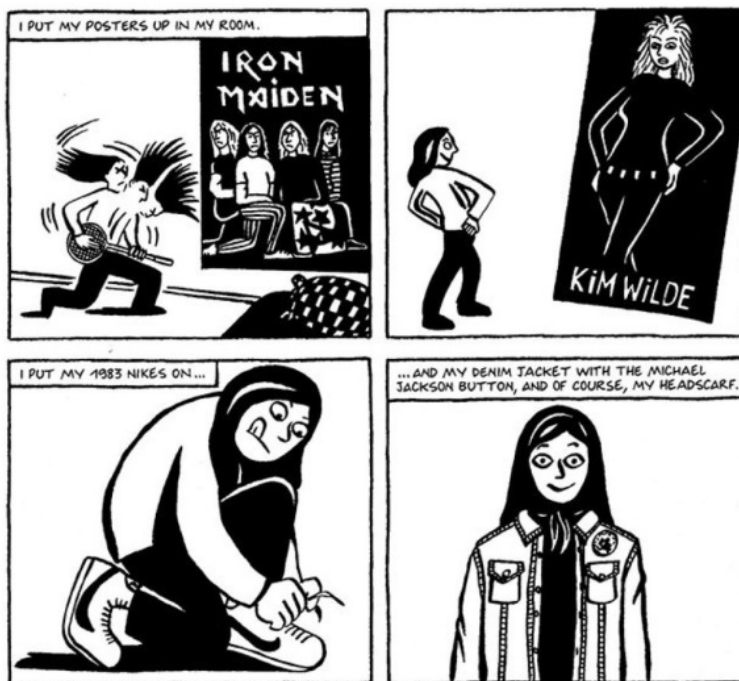


The novel starts with the chapter "Veil", the above panel shows movement to movement transition with eye level camera angle and the font of the book give him the essence of autobiography as it seems like handwritten. The colour of the panel shows that women in that time were living in the black side of the society where they cannot do anything of their willingness. The first panel shows three girls sitting together Satrapi stated that "This was me when I was ten years old. This was in 1980. And this is a class photo. I'm sitting on the far left, so you don't see me". This sentence has multiple meanings as she is sitting in left with a droopy shoulder which will attract the attention to another panel and this also states that the wearing a veil can hide one's identity and beauty. The chapter also symbolizes that for peace in the society, the veil is a vital piece of clothing for Marji to wear. Otherwise, she might be punished, which clearly shows the religious repression of the time. Marji explains how she started wearing a veil, from where her life segregates into pre-revolution life and post-revolution life and the time where the schism in the society has begun between religious and western influence. According to Kerr's theory in her book "the split self or inner conflict must manifest on the first pages and

form the book's thrust or through-line". The "split" used in the first chapter connotes that she is in the middle of two contradictory backgrounds – the religious East and the liberal West, as she is young, so she fond of doing makeup, wearing western clothes and listening to pop songs rather than wearing the veil. Gradually, Marjane becoming older and her westernization also picks up pace as she enters her teenage years.



The panels are from chapter "cigarette" which symbolizes that she has matured and has started to rebel against her mother because she begins to smoke cigarettes' and promptly gets scolded which shows the western taste in her as she does not want to follow the rule of Islams. The three panel has movement to movement transition and it's a long shot with eye level angle. The cigarette is the sign of westernization which was banned during that time. Background of the panel is black which connotes that eastern people are living in a very backward way because they have banned the western things in iran, this also increases the gap between western and eastern society.



The panels above shows scene to scene transition with different camera angles like eye level and high angle view. The panel of second image in long and has black and white

theme instead of colour which has used intentionally by author in order to add graphic weight to show the cultural difference between western and eastern society.

The cultural difference has been showcased through various things like clothing, a poster of a rock band, and Satrapi's room itself which has been decorated in the western style. She also regularly visited the black market, where merchants sold western things like audiotapes, This shows how influential a culture can be which compels Marji to showcase her personal identity and political beliefs as western, which was further aggravated because even her family supported this, which was proven when Satrapi's parents sent her to Austria to get an education in a westernized country. Her parents also knew other Iranian people who supported the western culture and modern education unlikely the average Iranian of their time. Satrapi has shown many contradictory things in her beliefs and values in her by wearing a jacket which has been bought by her father from Istanbul illegally because western clothes were totally banned at the time in Iran, she wears Nike shoes and a hijab with it which shows multiculturalism in her spirits by showing two cultures simultaneously - sharing western and eastern values. This moment has also been discussed in the "A graphic self comic" by Scholar Rocío Davis. He mentioned this as a juxtaposition of a sequential image in Persepolis and explains it - as she is 14 years old so we should continue to privilege her liminality as she confronted herself with two contradictory culture and also she managed to adapt with culture and her inner struggle rather than getting perplexed between the fight of those two different cultures.

Satrapi has shown the fight in the last chapter of *Persepolis* for the right to live her own life. The fight has been shown in the many ways in the novel - as she refuses to follow customs to take illegal things like a pop band poster that was banned in Iran. She also fought with her school's principal for her right to wear jewelry in the school campus. However, it was prohibited to wear any clothing items which captivates men toward women. This has shown the independent spirit and the autocratic leanings of Satrapi as she is getting older and older.

However, throughout the novel, the cultural difference has been shown to make the reader more knowledgeable about the cultural differences strife in Iranian society since the 1980s and are present even today – stuff like even after so many "modernizations" have happened in Iranian society some restrictions like for women to wear the veil or hijab compulsorily, and to avoid captivating men by wearing jewelry and such out in the open, are still present.

In conclusion - You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them." by Ray Bradbury². This means that people are educated or uneducated doesn't change people's mentality to judge them with their religion or culture that they choose. The only thing they need to change is their mentality of judging others by their religion and culture.

Word count:- 1501

² About The Author Terry Heick Founder & Director of TeachThought. "You Don't Have To Burn Books To Destroy A Culture." *TeachThought*, 15 Aug. 2017, www.teachthought.com/literacy/you-dont-have-to-burn-books-to-destroy-a-culture/.

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