Foregrounding Social, Moral and Psychodynamic Perspectives of Empathy: A Critical Study of Select Indian Graphic Narratives

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Kabita Mondal

(Registration No: NITD/PHD/HS/2018/01067)

Under the Supervision

Of

DR. Joydeep Banerjee

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

National Institute of Technology Durgapur

West Bengal – 713209

India

May, 2022

Abstract:

The dissertation aims to study how novel genres appear to go into interdisciplinary issues like empathy and discuss its different parameters with great competence and care and with a utilitarian aspect and attitude in order to create awareness to become a good citizen improving social, moral and psychodynamic traits or attributes. This dissertation explores the framework and different layers of empathy with the help of some Indian graphic novels and graphic non-fictional works. Though their literariness faces high literary dispute at first, they have ultimately entered within the periphery of traditional literature.

This critical study aims itself as an investigation whether graphic narratives with the help of its engaging representation of story might be able to induce a reader's empathy or not with particular reference to Indian graphic novels, and to what extent this multimodal narrative or medium may prove itself to be an authentic one. This topic is approached not intending to test any theory or structure, but rather with the incentive to learn more about the exploration of empathic details through the graphic mode. The theoretical paradigm of empathy as an interdisciplinary issue is examined in connection with contemporary graphic culture, a novel genre in culture studies. This study also examines the social and moral impact of those graphic texts enriched with empathic details on the readers. Also, it traces their psychodynamic impact on the readers. Another key area that has been explored here is the critical way by which these narratives employ those empathic details in comparison to the canonical texts. This study is designed as a template for future research and it intends to describe, discuss and illustrate the exploration of empathy and neuroscience in cultural texts. Therefore, the analysis, provided here, should not be construed as a fixed interpretation but one of several possibilities.