

Persepolis: the story of a childhood essay



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Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood is a book written by Marjane Satrapi. It is an account of how Marjane has lived and coped with her childhood life since she was ten until she reached fourteen years of her life. In this book, Marjane narrates how she perceives, realizes, and opens her eyes to the inequalities and repression of freedom among the Muslims having Islam as their religion leading to their Islamic revolution.

It was written in the form of a contrasting black and white comical representation of Marjane's major scenarios in her childhood to depict the contrasting diversity present in Iran, considering the existence of difference in beliefs, culture, and religion (Satrapi 2003). Marjane's Background Having been born in 1969, Marjane Satrapi was raised by his grandfather (an emperor) in the Caspian coast of Rasht (capital of Gilan) in Iran. Marjane took her education at Lycee Francais in Tehran where she learned about the existing diversities. She left for Vienna in order to learn graphical illustration through comic strips representation and childhood style of drawing to narrate and make her stories more interesting, user-friendly, and appealing to all kinds of readers, especially the young kids. At present, Marjane is now residing in Paris while working on creating new editions and related sequels for this book in which some of her finished works are being widely used in newspaper and magazine circulations worldwide. Since then, Marjane has become a popular author of several children's books (Satrapi 2003).

Depiction of Captivity or Imprisonment and Freedom in Persepolis Captivity and imprisonment are depicted in Persepolis through the society's (Marjane's society) repression of the Islam's freedom. The repression is reflected in the government's coerced imposition on the wearing of black veils by the

Muslims to segregate and categorize the citizens of Iran. As a mark of segregating the Muslims and the non-Muslims, the imposition of this policy creates two categories of dwellers not only in Iran but also in this world: those Christians or other religions who are baptized (represented by white and non-wearing veils as shown in the drawings of the book), and the non-Christians who are the Islam followers and not baptized (represented by the black veil). Moreover, Marjane's work did not impose implications for who is right and who is wrong, whose race or religion should be favored, or whose race should be ostracized and disliked.

However, she gave her viewpoints and stance towards major beliefs imprinted in the minds of the majority of the public. According to Marjane's underlying message on the book, Marjane suggests that there is no right and wrong, but what matters most is the consequence of the actions (Satrapi 2003). For instance, war is not bad or good in itself, though it has an aftereffect that would surely leave a mark on the citizens, the sufferers, and those who have observed and felt the striking pain and bereavement that are the costs of war. These costs of actions are similar to the consequences of engaging into oppression, revolution, and other forms of rebellion for some minorities including the Islam race (Satrapi 2003). Other depictions of inequalities present in the book are the young Marjane sharing her ideals for the future that there should be equality among everyone.

As a child, she dreams that she wants to be an optimistic prophet who can foretell the ideal future in her society. She listed in her book three of these ideals involving the following: 1) that Cadillacs must be available to everyone (not only her dad as she perceives, should own one); 2) maids should also

eat at the same table with masters during mealtime; and 3) that old people should not suffer anytime (Satrapi 2003). Such examples of ideals coming from the child character's mind are a reflection of the observed inequalities and forms of captivity and imprisonment inflicted on the Islam culture.

According to the child, she does not want to wear a black veil herself, and she wonders why it has to be compulsory—she does not approve of the idea why it has to be imposed among them and why they do not have the right to violate the rule and carry on with what they desire to do. From Marjane's artistic style of imparting her views on the inequalities depicted, her writing style shows each scenario in such a democratic and subtle way as it was creatively designed and presented as an ideal and realization coming from a child's perspective. Analysis of the Visual Elements of Persepolis The effect of the format and writing style used by Satrapi resulted to give objective ideas on existing diversity in religion, culture, and beliefs of Muslim and non-Muslims.

For the drawings in the entire book, the author chose the colors black and white to touch the reader's mind and give the impression of the prevalent demarcation of people: the discrimination among the Muslim and their Islamic religion are clearly shown in the creation of two categories: Muslims (white) and non-Muslims (black). Further, the choice of black and white as contrasting colors adds to the visual effect of generalizing that there are two opposing elements in the entire story—the Muslim and non-Muslims. It represents the yin and yang figure: black and white colors representing the good and bad, night and day, clean and dirty (Satrapi 2003). In addition, Marjane Satrapi's style of drawing was intended to look like a stylistic

artwork of a child to make it humorous and comical in the eyes of the readers. It was intended to cover up or somewhat avoid the subjectivity of the presentation of facts and emotions during the oppressing scenarios for the Islam in a funny way (Satrapi 2003). Further, Marjane successfully illustrated the message she wanted to impart through her drawings in the book: It gave the audience the historical information all the readers have to know in order to understand the present situation of the Muslims that the latter never wanted the oppression, the categorization, the discrimination, and especially, the segregation; they all just wanted to live and have the rights to their freedom of expression, leisure, religion, and other activities.

To make her drawings more powerful, meaningful, and intelligible, Marjane has carefully chosen what symbolic patterns she had to include in her drawings to stimulate the creative and expressive minds of the audience and lead to their awareness and right interpretations to the current situation of the Muslims in Iran or all over the world (Satrapi 2003). Overall Significance of the Story The significance of the book centers its focus on the expression of such difficulty in living in and coping with an oppressive society from a child's perspective. However, the child character showed an attitude of optimism and perseverance amidst the unhappy repression that she encountered and realized for her race. Hence, Satrapi showed the significance of neither blaming others nor pointing fingers to oppressors; rather, one should learn from the course of actions in history that the same mistakes should not be repeated to prevent the same costs of the actions.

Conclusion Marjane Satrapi created the book *Persepolis: The story of a Childhood* to present an account of how it feels to live in and cope with an

oppressing and discriminating society from a child's point of view. Marjane expressed in her work how she objectively observes and presents the current existing inequalities and repression for freedom among her Muslim race.

Marjane suggests that there is no right and wrong, but what matters most is the awareness of consequence of actions, which implies that the repression that Muslims experienced may be good for the doer but bad for them. Such repression may lead to separation and further outrage and war due to the depression and frustration from their oppressors.