

Biography of marjane satrapi, author of persepolis



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“ Be true to yourself” is a piece of advice given to Marjane Satrapi, the author of the memoir and graphic novel, *Persepolis*, which is 1980’s Iran when the book is set, is very hard to follow. After the 1979 Iranian Revolution, women are forced to wear a veil and can neither voice their views and opinions nor have the same freedoms and rights as men in Iran because they are treated as inferior to men. All throughout the novel, the women in Marji’s life help shape the strong-willed protagonist and doesn’t let go of her roots. Therefore, this helps break the cycle of stereotypes created by those who comply with these rules. This stops Marjane from going into that cycle as well. Women portray both a traditional and an activist role in *Persepolis* which have an equal effect on the protagonist.

Born a decade prior to the Islamic Revolution, Marjane Satrapi grew up in the midst of turmoil. Her critically acclaimed graphic memoir *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*, which spans the years immediately before and after the Revolution, with a more accurate perspective on Iran. Implicit in this aim is a distinction between the Iranian Self and the Western Other, with the latter constituting Satrapi’s major implied audience. Satrapi’s assertion at the end of her introduction to *Persepolis*—“ One can forgive but one should never forget”—applies as much to Iranians as to Western readers and reflects her attention to the Self as the other important implied audience for the text. Indeed, as Amy Malek notes, many Iranian readers have praised Satrapi’s work “ for preserving the communal memory of a generation” (375). In narrating her own memories, Satrapi critically intervenes in the culture and politics of censorship and compulsory veiling under the post-

revolutionary Islamic regime and touches upon the important psychological consequences of such tactics of repression.

The women in Marjane's family do not comply with society's rules and expectations which allows Marjane to grow in her own right. Taji Satrapi, Marjane's mother, is brave and rebellious which teaches Marji to be strong herself. She does not allow the government to control her and continues to fight for women's rights in Iran. Taji demonstrates and protests even after brushes with perceived dangers. Marjane recalls: " At one of the demonstrations, a German photographer took a photo of my mother. I was really proud of her. Her photo was published in all the European newspapers. And even in one magazine in Iran. " My mother was really scared...She dyed her hair and wore dark glasses for a long time" (5). By protesting, she is a part of the women in Iran who push to be heard in a society that belittles them and would much rather them at home. This inspires the protagonist to be independent and work for her own right. Furthermore, Marji's grandmother always supports Marji to follow what she wants. She encourages Marji to stay true to herself and do what makes her happy like when she wanted to become a prophet and wrote her holy book, " Only my grandmother knew about my book." Marji explains to her grandmother the rules, specifically: " Rule number six: Everybody should have a car. Rule number seven: all maids should eat at the table with the others. Rule number eight: No old person should have to suffer." Her grandmother responds " In that case, I'll be your first disciple"(7). Her grandmother did not belittle her and shut down the idea completely, or simply laughed and called the idea foolish. She instead encouraged her to do what she wished to

do. The influences from her family helped Marjane long term, but the lessons from outside greatly impacted her as well. The school teachers and Guardians of the Revolution push a traditional and the regime's view of women onto Marji. The school teachers are the voices of the government at the school Marji attends, and they do seem hypocritical like how they previously showed support for the Shah and changed everything when he fell. Older Marjane explains " After all this joy, a major misfortune took place: the schools closed during this period, reopened and..." the school teacher instructs " children, tear out all the photos of the Shah from your books" which younger Marjane turns to ask her classmate " But she was the one who told us that the Shah was chosen by God!"(44) her classmate tells the teacher what Marjane had said, and the teacher responds with, " Satrapi! You shouldn't say things like that! Stand in the corner!"(44) This causes confusion for Marjane and this sparks her questioning and distrust in authority. Furthermore, the Guardians of the Revolution, created by Ayatollah Khomeini are an organizational branch of women who restrict people's behaviors(specifically women) and dedicated to a strict interpretation of Islam, also put regime's values onto rebellious Marjane. While Marjane was buying black market music tapes, they find her and interrogate her for her Western clothing choices and Marjane is left with no choice but to lie when they are about to arrest her. " At the committee, they didn't have to inform my parents. They could detain me for hours, or for days. I could be whipped. In short, anything could happen to me. It was time for action. " Marjane proceeds to tell the Guardians of the Revolution " Ma'am, my mother is dead. My stepmother is really cruel and if I don't go home right away, she'll kill me... She'll burn me with the clothes iron!"(133).

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The Guardians of the Revolution may have believed her, or at least pretended to, but she did let Marji go without arresting her. Due to being improperly veiled and dressed, this prompted a near an arrest of Marjane and because of her rebellious upbringing,

Marji is impacted by the courageous women came before her, the women that die unjustly, and even the women who attempt to take away her individuality. Throughout the novel, Marji is constantly trying to figure out who she is and whom she is going to become. But by the end of the novel Marji evolves into an independent woman who does what she wants with her life to make her happy, something that would never have happened without the influence of women throughout her life.

Throughout the years' women in Iran have been treated foully. " From June 9-12, women's rights activists documented 13 cases of women who were kidnapped and raped by militants of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or DAISH, the Arabic shorthand for the group's name. Of the 13 women, four of them committed suicide because they couldn't stand the shame. One woman's brother committed suicide because he could not bear the fact that he was unable to protect his sister".(Radwan, Zahra, and Zoe Blumenfeld. " Surging Violence Against Women in Iraq." Violence Against Women,) in the span of 3 days 13 women were kidnapped and raped, leaving them feeling like objects leading to 4 of them committing suicide. This is a prime example of the public stance for women, women in Iran are being used and looked at like objects for one's own desires.

Marjane's mother was one of the most influential people in her life, her mother taught her to be strong and independent. By introducing her mother through the story of her mother getting photographed at a demonstration, Marjane presents her mother as being independent and rebellious (Satrapi 5). Later in the novel, Marjane's mother argues with her father to allow Marji to come to a demonstration with them, she claims it is Marji's time to "defend her rights as a woman" (76). Because her mother taught Marji that it is okay for a woman to rebel and speak her mind, Marji never hesitates to speak up and will not conform and allow herself to become just another veiled, female traditionalist. Marjane's mother shows her acceptance of Marjane as an independent woman when she visits her in Austria and asks her for a cigarette (204). Marjane's mother is not ignorant, nor does she hold her daughter back to the rules of society. She knows Marji is grown up and treats her as an adult, allowing Marji not only to view their relationship in a different way but also to view herself in a different way: an independent adult who can make her own choices.

In Iran's society women aren't treated fairly, they are used for profit, looked at like objects and forcing them into sex trade. "Sex-Slave Trade Highly Profitable. The head of Iran's Interpol bureau believes that the sex slave trade is one of the most profitable activities in Iran today, and government officials themselves are involved in buying, selling and sexually abusing women and girls". "IRAN: SEX SLAVERY NEW FACE OF OPPRESSION OF WOMEN IN IRAN." *Women's E-News*, Iran's society is corrupt, sexually assaulting women and kidnapping them without leaving a trace separating them from their families. Not only in Iran, but also in the U. S., "[S]parse

attention is paid to the impact of the post-9/11 national security era on Muslim women, and specifically those who wear the headscarf. Irrespective of their place of origin or the color of their skin, the headscarf marks these women as sympathetic to the enemy, presumptively disloyal, and forever foreign. (192)". (Alimahomed-Wilson, Sabrina. " Invisible Violence: Gender, Islamophobia, and the Hidden Assault on U. S. Muslim Women." *Women, Gender, and Families of Color* , vol. 5, no. 1, 2017, p. 73+. *Opposing Viewpoints in Context* ,) following the tragedy that is 9/11 women no matter what color or race wearing a headscarf were discriminated and labeled as a terrorist, looked down upon by others apart from their religion. From racial slurs to manslaughter,

" We had demonstrated on the very day we shouldn't have : on Black Friday that day there were so many killed in one of the neighbors that a rumor spread that israeli soldiers were responsible for the slaughter"(39) people protesting for their rights, slaughtered by one of their own for speaking out and protesting.

In conclusion Women weren't treated fairly throughout Iran and the graphic novel/memoir *Persepolis*, even with time passed and the iranian revolution coming to an end , women will always be inferior to men and used for men's own profit and needs

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