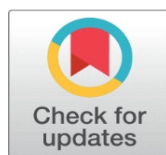
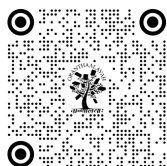


VISUALIZING NOVEL CHAURASI: AN EXPLORATION OF GRAHAN'S ADAPTATION INTO A WEB SERIES

Swati Sharma ¹✉, Dr. Ruchi Goswami ²

¹ Research Scholar, IIS (Deemed to be University), Jaipur, India

² Associate Professor, IIS (Deemed to be University), Jaipur, India



Corresponding Author

Swati Sharma,
swatisharma32992iisuniv.ac.in

DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.1852](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.1852)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Copyright: © 2024 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.



ABSTRACT

This study explores the adaptation of Satya Vyas's novel "Chaurasi" into the web series "Grahan". It provides an in-depth analysis of how the novel's narrative, character development, and themes are transformed and visualized in the web series format. By comparing the novel with its film adaptation, the research evaluates how well literary material is converted into a visual format and explores the associated challenges and successes. Adaptations of literary works into web series have increasingly become a significant trend, offering fresh interpretations and broadening audience reach. One notable adaptation is Satya Vyas's novel Chaurasi, which has been transformed into the Hindi crime drama web series Grahan. Created by Shailendra Jha and directed by Ranjan Chandel, Grahan premiered on Hotstar on June 24, 2021 (Wadikar, 2016). The Indian web series landscape has undergone considerable transformation in recent years, marked by a surge in content that delves into complex social and historical themes.

Keywords: Visual Storytelling, Narrative Structure, Thematic Representation, Cinematic Techniques, Screen Adaptation

1. INTRODUCTION

Grahan is a striking example of this trend, blending historical events with contemporary storytelling. The series is set against the backdrop of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots and explores the painful aftermath of this traumatic period in Indian history. It intertwines personal and political dramas to address themes of trauma, identity, and reconciliation (Times of India, 2021).



Source: Amazon.in

Source: Republic World

This paper examines how the adaptation process navigates the complexities of visual storytelling. It focuses on the changes made in narrative structure, character development, thematic representation, and the use of cinematic techniques. By analyzing these elements, the paper aims to understand how Grahan reinterprets Vyas's novel and contributes to the broader discourse on adapting historical and social narratives in digital media (Times of India, 2021).

In Film and Literature (New York: Longman, 1977), **Morris Beja** identifies two primary approaches to adaptation, though he acknowledges that his presentation simplifies these perspectives. One approach advocate for preserving the integrity of the original work, insisting that it should remain untouched and be the primary focus of the adaptation. The other approach supports a more liberal adaptation, arguing that it's essential to transform the original material to craft a new and distinct artistic creation suited to the different medium.

Various questions arise while adapting one medium to other for audience's entertainment and to make two-way flow of information like:

- 1) What elements are lost or gained when a story moves from written text to film?
- 2) How can we use literary and film theory to analyze and interpret screen adaptations?
- 3) In what ways do production methods and audience reception influence screen adaptations?
- 4) How might emerging technologies impact the creation and consumption of literature?

Controversy SPGC (Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee), Ahead of its June 24 premiere, Grahan, directed by Ranjan Chandel, faced controversy. The series, which is reportedly inspired by the 1984 Sikh riots, was criticized for allegedly portraying a Sikh character in a problematic way. During a press conference, Bibi Jagir Kaur, president of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), condemned the series for what she described as a fabricated accusation of Sikh genocide against a Sikh character. She called for a ban on the show, but it still premiered on its scheduled OTT platform. In the wake of the release, Zoya Hussain, who plays Amrita Singh in Grahan, has addressed the ongoing controversy (The Indian Express, 2021).

2. OBJECTIVES

The current study aims to;

- 1) To explore the important elements of adaptation as visualized in the novel and in the web series.
- 2) To compare and analyze the characterization, story and content between novels and web series.
- 3) 3.To assesses the effectiveness and challenges of translating literary content into a visual medium.

3. HYPOTHESES

The Hypothesis for the present study:

H1. Web series are gaining popularity than literature or novels due to heterogeneous audience.

H2. Appealing Content and Visual and cinematic techniques on OTT help the audience to connect.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative comparative approach, analyzing both the original novel "Chaurasi" and the web series "Grahan". The analysis includes:

- **Narrative Adaptation**
- **Character Portrayal and Development**
- **Thematic Representation**
- **Visual and Cinematic Techniques**

Analysis and Interpretation

The study analysis the situation of 1984 riots through the blend of story as told in the novel with its dramatisation through the webseries. The comparative analysis of real versus reel portrayal leaves an impact to know more about the riots in 1984. For the purpose of research series was screened and watched many times taking the themes. Also, the secondary sources were used for references and justifications like the book, book reviews, newspaper reviews, interviews, and research material. Also online references were used to analyse and compare. The study has taken a quantitative and qualitative approach (The Print, 2022).

A. Narrative Structure: The narrative structure of the web series "Grahan" is characterized by its dual timelines and layered storytelling:

1. Dual Timeline Approach

Past Timeline (1980s) focuses on the events surrounding the anti-Sikh riots. It depicts the violence and chaos of the period, exploring the experiences of various characters caught up in the turmoil. This timeline provides context and background for the historical events that continue to influence the present-day storyline. Present Timeline narrative follows a police officer (or investigator) who is examining a case linked to the past riots. The investigation uncovers truths about the events and their aftermath, driving the plot forward and revealing connections between the present and the past.

2. Interweaving of Timelines

The series alternates between the two timelines, gradually revealing how past events affect the present. This interweaving allows viewers to understand the complexities of the characters' current situations through the lens of their historical experiences. This structure helps to build suspense and deepen the narrative, as viewers piece together the full story from both timelines.

3. Character Perspectives

Multiple Viewpoints both timelines feature multiple characters with their own perspectives and stories. This multi-faceted approach provides a comprehensive view of the historical events and their impacts (Jazzfeathers, 2020). Characters in the past timeline may be depicted in their younger years, showing how their experiences during the riots shaped their future selves. In the present, characters often reflect on these past events and grapple with their consequences.

4. Themes and Motifs

Historical and Personal Interplay dual timeline structure allows for a rich exploration of how historical events resonate on a personal level. By juxtaposing the past and present, the series highlights the continuity of trauma and the ongoing quest for justice and understanding. Flashbacks and Memories within the present-day storyline helps to provide backstory and context, enriching the audience's understanding of the characters' motivations and the significance of the historical events.

5. Narrative Tension and Pacing

The alternating timelines create suspense, as viewers are often left wanting to know more about the connections between past and present. The gradual revelation of information maintains narrative tension and engages the audience.

The pacing allows for deep character development. The exploration of how characters have been shaped by past events and how they confront their present dilemmas adds emotional depth to the story.

6. Resolution and Reflection

The series aims to bring closure to the historical events and their impact on the present. As the investigation progresses and secrets are revealed, the narrative works towards resolving the lingering questions and conflicts. The ending often reflects on the broader themes of justice, memory, and reconciliation, providing a conclusion that ties together the personal and historical aspects of the story. "Grahan" weaves together historical and contemporary narratives to explore the impact of past violence on the present.

B. Character Development: In the web series "Grahan," character development is intricately tied to the dual timelines and the unfolding narrative. Here's a brief overview of key character arcs:



Source: Cineblitz

Amrita Singh: An IPS officer played by **Zoya Hussain** who investigates a case of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots and discovers a possible connection to her father. As she investigates the riots, she uncovers disturbing truths about her father's involvement and the impact on her family. Her journey is marked by internal conflict and moral dilemmas as she reconciles her professional duty with personal revelations. Amrita evolves from a seeker of justice to a person grappling with the complexities of historical truth and familial loyalty, ultimately seeking a resolution that honors both her personal and professional values (India Today, 2021).

Gursevak: Amrita's father played by **Pavan Malhotra** who is accused of being a rioter in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. His character's journey unfolds through the lens of his family's suffering and the broader impact of the riots on their lives. His story is central to understanding the human cost of the violence. Gursevak's story highlights the enduring pain and the quest for justice, providing a poignant commentary on the impact of historical events on individuals and families.

Manu: Wamiqa Gabbi plays Manu in the web series Grahan, a Sikh girl who falls in love with Rishi Ranjan. Manu's character is marked by her strength and resilience as she navigates complex personal and historical challenges. Her relationship and experiences provide a deeply emotional and dramatic element to the series, intertwining personal love with broader historical and socio-political themes.

Rishi Ranjan: A Hindu boy who falls in love with Manu in 1984. In the web series Grahan, **Anshuman Pushkar** portrays Rishi, a Hindu boy whose character is central to the series' love story. Rishi is depicted as a passionate and determined individual, deeply involved in a romantic relationship with Manu, a Sikh woman. Their love story is set against a backdrop of historical and political conflict, which adds layers of complexity and tension to their relationship (India Today, 2021). Rishi's character navigates societal and personal challenges, highlighting themes of love, identity, and the impact of historical events on individual lives.

Karthik: In the web series Grahan, **Nandish Singh** plays the character Karthik, who is Amrita's fiancé. Karthik is characterized by his supportive nature, providing emotional stability and understanding to Amrita as she navigates her personal and familial challenges.

Characterization in Chaurasi

The novel provides a detailed exploration of characters, delving into their inner thoughts, emotions, and backstories. Each character's journey is meticulously crafted to reflect their personal and social struggles. Adapting such depth requires translating complex internal experiences into visual and auditory forms that can be conveyed through screen performances.

Characterization in "Grahan"

Visual Representation in the web series, characters are brought to life through casting, costume design, and actor performances. The adaptation may simplify or modify certain aspects of characters' arcs, affecting how viewers perceive their motivations and growth compared to the novel.

C. Narrative Structure and Adaptation:

Narrative Structure in Chaurasi

Chaurasi is a multi-layered narrative exploring personal and political themes through diverse perspectives and timelines. The novel intricately interlaces its characters' lives with the backdrop of political upheaval. The novel's non-linear structure and deep character exploration pose challenges for adaptation, requiring careful restructuring to fit episodic storytelling.

Adaptation in "Grahan"

The web series adapts the novel's complex narrative by simplifying and restructuring it for episodic content. This involves condensing timelines, focusing on primary plotlines, and integrating visual storytelling techniques. The series employs devices such as flashbacks, voiceovers, and nonlinear narrative techniques to convey the novel's intricacies effectively within the constraints of episodic format.

D. Thematic Representation: The web series "Grahan" explores several key themes:

- 1) **Historical Trauma and Legacy:** One of the central themes is the impact of historical events on individual lives and families. The series reflects on how the horrors of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots continue to affect the present generation. This theme is explored through personal stories and the long-lasting repercussions of collective trauma. In this regard the director Ranjan Chandel opines " socio political incident se inspired hone ke karan ek sensitive subject se deal karna mushkil hota hai....Ek responsibility bhi ho jati hai audience ki taraf....Hamne isme humanitarian angle daalne ki koshish ki hai...
- 2) **Identity and Belonging:** "Grahan" examines questions of identity and the sense of belonging. Characters grapple with their cultural, religious, and national identities amidst the backdrop of historical conflict. The series explores how these identities are formed and challenged by past events and personal experiences.
- 3) **Justice and Guilt:** The quest for justice and the burden of guilt are prominent themes. The characters' pursuit of truth and justice regarding past atrocities brings up questions of accountability and redemption. The series portrays the emotional and moral complexities involved in confronting a painful past.
- 4) **Family and Relationships:** At its core, "Grahan" is also about family dynamics and relationships. The series delves into how historical events strain and shape family bonds, exploring themes of estrangement, reconciliation, and the impact of secrets and lies within families.
- 5) **Resistance and Resilience:** The theme of resistance against oppression and the resilience of the human spirit is evident throughout the series. Characters display courage and strength in the face of adversity, highlighting their struggle to overcome personal and societal challenges.
- 6) **Memory and Perception:** The series delves into how memory and perception shape our understanding of history. It examines how different characters remember and interpret the same events, and how these differing perspectives influence their actions and relationships.

Themes in Chaurasi

Thematic Depth: Chaurasi addresses themes such as identity, societal conflict, and redemption through rich narrative detail and symbolism. In this reference the writer of the book Chaurasi, Satya Vyas says "*1984 ke dangon ke baare mein likhna hi apnaap mein ek chunauti raha, iss tarah ke subject ko logon tak phuchana bhi apnaap mein ek challenge hai, nishchay hi iss book ke madhyam se uss ghatna ke bare mein pathkon ko pata chala hoga...*". Conveying these themes visually involves translating abstract concepts into concrete imagery and auditory elements that resonate with viewers.

Thematic Adaptation in "Grahan"

The web series employs visual metaphors, cinematography, and music to represent themes from Chaurasi. Techniques such as color palettes, lighting, and camera angles enhance thematic expression. Evaluating the success of these visual techniques in capturing the novel's themes provides insight into the adaptation's fidelity and creativity.

E. Visual and Cinematic Techniques: In "Grahan," key cinematic techniques include:

1. Dual Timelines: The series utilizes parallel narratives, often switching between past and present. This technique helps draw connections between historical events (the 1984 anti-Sikh riots) and contemporary issues, emphasizing the ongoing impact of historical trauma on current lives.

2. Visual Symbolism: "Grahan" incorporates visual symbols to reinforce themes. For example, scenes may use specific colors, objects, or settings to symbolize concepts such as conflict, memory, or reconciliation. Symbolic imagery deepens the thematic resonance and adds layers of meaning to the narrative.

3. Lighting and Color Grading: The series employs distinct lighting and color schemes to differentiate between timelines and emotional tones. For historical scenes, it might use muted or sepia tones to evoke a sense of the past, while contemporary scenes could use a more vibrant or realistic color palette to ground the narrative in the present.

4. Cinematic Framing and Composition: The use of framing and composition in "Grahan" helps to convey emotional states and character dynamics. Close-ups can capture the intensity of personal conflicts and internal struggles, while wide shots may be used to emphasize isolation or the scale of historical events.

5. Camera Movement: The series employs different camera techniques to achieve various effects. Smooth, controlled movements are often used for introspective or intense scenes, while more energetic or unstable camera work helps to express tension, disorder, or urgency.

6. Sound Design and Music: The sound design and score are essential for establishing the atmosphere and amplifying the emotional resonance of scenes. The series likely uses music and sound effects to underscore key moments, creating an immersive experience that amplifies the viewer's connection to the narrative.

7. Flashbacks and Dream Sequences: To explore characters' memories and subconscious thoughts, "Grahan" may use flashbacks or dream sequences. These techniques provide insight into past traumas and personal reflections, adding depth to the characters' motivations and experiences.

8. Use of Space and Setting: The choice of settings whether it's historical locations, contemporary urban spaces, or intimate domestic environments helps to contextualize the narrative and reflect the themes. Settings are often carefully chosen to enhance the authenticity and emotional weight of the story.

9. Character Focus and Depth: By focusing on specific characters and their interactions, the series delves into personal stories within the larger historical context. This approach allows viewers to connect with the characters on a deeper level, understanding their motivations and struggles. Through these visual and cinematic techniques, "Grahan" effectively communicates its complex themes, immerses viewers in its narrative, and evokes a powerful emotional response.

F. Visual Storytelling in "Grahan"

The adaptation uses a range of visual techniques, including setting design, camera work, and editing styles, to translate the novel's narrative into a visual format. The series' aesthetic choices play a crucial role in creating the atmosphere and tone of the story (Hutcheon, 2006). The web series introduces new visual elements or reinterprets existing ones to align with contemporary audience expectations and enhance storytelling. Analyzing how effectively the visual techniques in the series represent the novel's narrative and themes compared to the book's descriptive passages. Considering viewer interpretations and engagement with the visual adaptation of the novel's content.

G. Case Study: Specific Adaptation Elements:

Episode Structure and Pacing

Analysis: Examine how the web series adapts the novel's episodic elements, including the pacing of plot developments and character arcs.

Impact: Assess how changes in episode structure affect storytelling and audience engagement.

Character Arcs and Development

Analysis: Compare specific character arcs in the novel with their adaptation in the web series, noting significant changes or omissions.

Impact: Evaluate how these changes affect character depth and viewer connection.

Setting and Production Design

Analysis: Review how the web series' setting and production design reflect the novel's atmosphere and cultural context.

Impact: Assess the effectiveness of these visual elements in creating an authentic representation of the novel's world.

5. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

"Grahan" emerges as a significant work that not only portrays a critical historical event but also examines its enduring impact on contemporary society. The dual timeline narrative structure allows viewers to see the long-term effects of historical trauma on individual lives and communities, bridging past and present in a meaningful way.

The series use of visual and cinematic techniques enhances its thematic exploration, effectively using color, lighting, and camera work to distinguish between different time periods and emotional states. This method highlights the emotional impact of the story and encourages a stronger connection with the themes of trauma, identity, and reconciliation.

Character development is central to the series, with complex protagonists and intricate family dynamics reflecting the broader socio-political context. This character-centric approach humanizes historical events, making them relatable and emphasizing the personal impact of collective trauma.

"Grahan" also serves as a critical commentary on historical narratives and contemporary socio-political issues. By challenging traditional accounts and encouraging reflection on justice and memory, the series contributes to a broader discourse on historical representation and its implications for society.

"Graham" web series exemplifies both the potential and the challenges of translating literary content into a visual medium. While the adaptation succeeds in capturing the essence of the novel and expanding its audience, it also faces challenges related to narrative condensation, internal monologue translation, and interpretative differences. Effective adaptations balance these elements to create a compelling and respectful representation of the original literary work, offering new dimensions to the story while acknowledging the inherent limitations of the visual format.

Overall, "Grahan" is a powerful exploration of historical trauma, identity, and reconciliation. Its blend of narrative depth, visual sophistication, and socio-political commentary makes it a compelling study for understanding the intersection of history and personal experience.

6. CONCLUSION

This research paper aims to analyze the Grahan web series through various critical frameworks, including historical representation, narrative techniques, and character analysis. By examining how the series portrays the 1984 riots and their repercussions, the paper seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on the representation of historical events in digital media. Additionally, it will explore the series' reception and impact, assessing its role in contemporary conversations about memory, justice, and communal harmony (India Today, 2021). The research study depicts that the adaptation of Satya Vyas's Chaurasi into the web series "Grahan" involves notable changes and innovations in narrative structure, character portrayal, and thematic representation. By employing visual and cinematic techniques, the series transforms the novel's complex narrative into a format that engages contemporary audiences.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

REFERENCES

- Atherton, S. (2012). Cops and Bloggers: Exploring the presence of police culture on the web. *Internet Journal of Criminology*, (2045-6743), 2045-6743.
https://pure.northampton.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/7098587/Atherton_Susie_AFJL_2012_COPS_AND BLOG GERS_EXPLORING_THE_PRESENCE_OF_POLICE_CULTURE_ON_THE_WEB.pdf
- Bateman, T. S., & Crant, J. M. (1999). Proactive behavior: Meaning, impact, recommendations. *Business Horizons*, 42(3), 63-70.

- Kinast, J., Gehrau, V., & Driesel-Lange, K. (2023). Police Careers in Series and Reality: The Influence of Police Series on Career Expectations of Law Enforcement Students. *Polizei & Wissenschaft*, (2).
- Khitrov, A. (2015). Real police and fictional police: a study of public perceptions through online commentaries. *Higher School of Economics Research Paper No. WP BRP*, 84. <https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/folder/mvumpty5gi/141900414.pdf>
- Lundahl, B. W., Kunz, C., Brownell, C., Tollefson, D., & Burke, B. L. (2010). A meta-analysis of motivational interviewing: Twenty-five years of empirical studies. *Research on social work practice*, 20(2), 137-160.
- Pogrebin, M. (1986). The changing role of women: Female police officers' occupational problems. *The Police journal*, 59(2), 127-133. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0032258X8605900204>
- Brooks, T., & Marsh, E. F. (2009). *The complete directory to prime time network and cable TV shows, 1946-present*. Ballantine Books.
- Burnett, R., & Marshall, D. (2004). *Web theory: An introduction*. Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9780203482254/web-theory-robert-burnett-david-marshall>
- Fadnes, P. F. (2020). *Jazz on the line: improvisation in practice*. Routledge.
- Graham, S., Daniels, G., Davis, D., Nakamura, Y., Simeonov, S., Brittenham, P., & Zentner, C. (2004). *Building Web services with Java: making sense of XML, SOAP, WSDL, and UDDI*. SAMS publishing.
- Tyler, T. R., & Huo, Y. J. (2002). *Trust in the law: Encouraging public cooperation with the police and courts*. Russell Sage Foundation.