

P1 Project Report

I'm Balanced - A short graphic novel

by Akanksha | 16U130014,
Under the guidance of Prof. Prasad Bokil.

Sheet of Approval

This design project report entitled “I’m Balanced - A short graphic novel” by Akanksha Murmure (16U130014) is approved in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Bachelor of Design (B.Des) Degree at IDC School of Design, IIT Bombay.

External examiner:

Internal examiner:

Project guide:

Chairman:

Date:

Declaration

I hereby declare that this written submission submitted to IDC, IIT Bombay, is a record of an original work done by me. This written submission represents my ideas in my words, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misprinted or falsified any Idea/ fact/ source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the Institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

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Abstract

Most parts of India have been following a men-forward system. The men being the breadwinners of the house and their wives the homemakers and caregiver of their children is a structure seen in almost every married household.

For fathers wanting to be the primary caregivers, it is a difficult choice. As many men lack not only the basic household chores that women are casually taught and prepared for, but also have a hard time facing the questions and taunts of society.

With an expectation to arouse a sense of empathy towards the under-appreciated work of housewives and celebrate the courage of the few husbands who choose to become a homemaker, I have created a short story and meticulously illustrated it into a short comic. During this project, I also wish to explore the art of storytelling and study the traditional ways of creating a comic book.

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Introduction

Over the decades as society evolved, certain family systems stayed the same throughout. In India, considered as a third-world nation, this is more true than the western parts of the world. Most parts of India have been following a men-forward system. The men being the breadwinners of the house and their wives the homemakers and caregiver of their children is a structure seen in almost every married household.

Even though Indian society is complex and diverse across states and communities, certain gender biases and stereotypes have been found in every state. Gender segregation starts from the school where boys and girls are differently taught and asked to take up particular subjects.

“More than a third of Indian women (both urban and rural) primarily engaged in housework report wanting to work for pay if a job were available.”^[1]

The burden of leaving their private sphere to reinforce the monetary needs has always been bestowed upon the men, leading to their absence in fatherly life. The gender stereotype that women should be the primary caregivers makes the fathers mainly the discipline givers. and this bias is carved into the fundamental structure of people’s everyday lives.

‘House-husband’ (alternatively ‘stay-at-home-dad’ or ‘house-dad’) is a term used to describe a male counterpart of a

couple taking care of the housework and other duties which have been traditionally associated with the women. For fathers wanting to be the primary caregivers, it is a difficult choice. As many men lack not only the basic household chores that women are casually taught and prepared for, but also have a hard time facing the questions and taunts of society. These social norms majorly restrict the participation of men in most household activities.

“There is a need for India to institutionalise the sharing of care work between men and women.”^[2]

Furthermore, the complication is increased with the skewed distribution of childcare leaves among males and females. This makes it harder as they are scared of sacrificing financial security if a man stays home. There is a need for recognising and de-feminising unpaid work, and caregiving.^[3] In Indian society, women spend 352 minutes a day on unpaid duties like taking care of the elderly, the sick, etc.; while men spend only about 52 minutes.^[4]

¹. Rohini Pande et al, “Getting India’s Women into the Workforce: A Smart Approach”, Harvard University, 2018.

². Terri Chapman and Vidisha Mishra, “Rewriting the Rules: Women and Work in India”, ORF Special Report No. 80, January 2019.

³. World Economic Forum, “Global Gender Gap Report,” 2017.

⁴. OECD Database, Employment: Time spent in paid and unpaid work by sex.

Research
Data collection

The society an individual lives in and its surroundings affect his/her upbringing in a particular way. And the belief and teachings taught to us in our childhood play a huge part in the decisions we make as an adult too.

It is difficult to accept newly formed systems. We are used to a certain lifestyle and so changing the mindset of the crowd becomes difficult and complicated.

But in recent times, the concept of 'House-husband' has been more accepted and practised in the metro cities. While I was learning more on this topic I came across numerous stories of men who have recently decided to leave their job and become a full-time caretaker for their family. Many have fallen into this responsibility due to unavoidable reasons like divorces or the death of their spouse. Some were success stories while most were recurring questions on how their relatives and society responded to their life choices.

Many people often think about their future rather than their present. And why not? That's what all the relatives are concerned about. "When will you get a job?" "What is the future plan?" Even closer ones like parents and in-laws pester with such questions. This leads to many fathers/husbands suspecting whether they can get a job in future if they want to make that transition.

Quora

- How is the idea of house husband in India?
7,320 Views >
- What is it like to be a house bond husband in India?
245 Views >
- Why are only husbands expected to earn money, especially in India? Can't they just be house-husbands?
1,489 Views >
- I want to become a househusband. Is it possible in India?
1,778 Views >
- Are Indian women okay if they work and the husband becomes a house husband? Will that be an issue/prestige issue for them?
962 Views >

vicinity, citing ailments and disability when none exists, except obesity.

Having dwelt on the issue so far, now let us try to get into the mindset of the sit in hubby. There are two issues. One is the feeling of guilt and the next one is the feeling of shame. Apart from this there is something called a Fear of Shame.

Fear of shame is too noble an emotion that may propel people to phenomenal levels of human endeavors and

By definition all Indian husbands are meant to earn and tend their wives and children. And all wives meant to beget children to their husbands and bring up the children **and tend their husbands as a corollary**.

have how the society makes him feel about it, including his wife and family.

The general tendency of the society will be, "Dekho! Biwi ka baithke khata hai" **Look, he sits and eats what his wife earns!**

(Images 1: Queries about the acceptance of house-husbands in the Indian society and Image 2: beliefs, taunts, etc. as answers on Quora)

Existing works



Ki & Ka (translation: Her & Him), a 2016 Indian Bollywood film. It tells about a young, married couple rejecting the conventional gender roles of businessman and housewife of the Indian society, by making the man as the house-spouse and the lady as the earning source.



Gokushufudou: The Way Of The House Husband, a manga comic which follows the daily life story of a serious ex-yakuza as he leaves behind his violence to become a funny stay-at-home husband. Tatsu, the protagonist, adapts to the challenges of the household battlefield made of failures in the kitchen and the supermarket sales.



Story of Suichi, an article on a 30-year-old man living in Japan. In this article, he tells his story about how his wife, in early 2000, chose to work to financially support their family while he was diagnosed with a disease.

Visual study

Style inspirations



A comic page out of a 4-page short story by Dina Norlund, a visual storyteller & illustrator based in the UK. The plain colours with the shadow and highlights brought out in single tones each was a noteworthy factor in developing my style.



Saga

A page out of volume 9 of a space opera/fantasy comic series published monthly between 2012-18. The facial features and inking styles in this comic have proved inspiring and influential for my work.



Rebirth

A panel of the fantasy series by Michi, published on Webtoons - a digital comics portal, which tells the story of a character Noah travelling back in time. The comic uses 3d modelled interior as backgrounds with digitally drawn 2d anime characters over them.

Staging
The Story

Meet the characters



Sneha

(31 years old)

Lives in Mumbai
Born and brought up Mumbai
Mech engineering
Working as Web developer
Workaholic
Tech-savvy
Night owl



Sushil

(33 years old)

Lives in Mumbai
Born and brought up Noida
Mech engineering
Currently working
Empathetic and Caring
On-time, punctual
Early riser



Riya

(7 years old)

Born and brought up Mumbai
Studying in 2nd grade
Mischievous
Makes fun and
Answers back

The story, divided into three sections, shows his journey starting from a big zero. The first chapter, the couple chooses the most common solution regardless of their convenience. But soon they are fallen into a situation where they have to break their conventionally set up mindsets. After he has achieved some control, in the final chapter, he is faced by the older generations' unacceptance and taunts. During this, his wife, who was initially unable to accept this unconventional solution, is now seen justifying him and fighting with the society for his respect.

I have kept a chain going through each chapter that shows that when one problem seems solved, a new problem arrives. This is intended to make the audience eager to turn the page over and know what happens.

Chapter 1 - The obvious solution

Sushil and Sneha, living in a high profile housing society in Mumbai, leave for their jobs early in the morning. Riya, their daughter, studying in 1st grade, waits at a friend's house after her school till one of her parents comes home.

For quite a few days, Sushil and Sneha have been stressed over household chores and their family matters. Quarrels and fights have become part of their daily routine. They argued over who would buy groceries, about forgetting keys or even over how to do the laundry. Trivial matters were enough to start a fire now.

Sneha had been thinking to discuss with Sushil about this imbalance. But Sushil, who has to leave for work early, would fall asleep before anybody. Not spending any time together was not only affecting the housework, but they were unknowingly affecting Riya too. She did most of her homework and projects by herself. Sneha was not much

available, while Sushil too struggled to provide time for their daughter.

In the midst of this chaos, Sneha finds out she is pregnant. Sushil is overwhelmed by this news and wants the baby. Sneha who thought they were not ready for another child, makes him realise their house is a mess and it is not ready for a newborn. He convinces her that they'll resolve their household imbalance. Without further confusions, it was concluded that Sneha shall take year-long maternity leave from work. Built-in a conventional way, their minds couldn't think past the 'man as the financial source and woman as the homemaker' model.

A week into her leave, Sneha is managing the home chores sufficiently well. Sushil leaves from work early and spends more time with her and Riya. Riya is also very happy about how things have changed.

Just when things seem to straighten, Sushil loses his job.

Chapter 2 - An unusual solution

Because of the sudden turn of events, Sneha gets back to her work. She was very fond of her professional life and proud of the job she had. She was recently promoted to Senior manager's post. She asks him to find new jobs, but Sushil says that their family is more balanced when one of them is at home. He takes up the responsibility of being the homemaker. Though Sneha is sceptical about the idea, they collectively decide to give it a try.

Sushil, brought up to be the breadwinner of the family just like most Indian upper-middle-class boys are, is very new to household chores. He takes longer to cook, forgets cleaning halfway as new things pop in between.

On one occasion, while getting Riya ready for her school, he is almost done tying her shoelaces and gets startled by a sound in the kitchen. As he runs towards the kitchen to stop boiling milk from spilling over the stove, his wife reminds him of the time. Realising she is getting late, he rushes to pack her tiffin. But is interrupted by Riya yelling, "Papa, right shoe's laceeeee!"

On another occasion, while they all are having dinner together, "This looks like India!" Riya exclaims, making fun of his irregular shaped rotis, "I put them all together. I can get a map of the whole world!" Sneha too laughs at first, but on noticing Sushil's embarrassed face, shouts at Riya to stop her mischief.

Sushil tries harder each time with little signs of progress. He is exhausted most of the time and their house looks like a mess. A heap of unfolded clothes on sofas, uncleaned cups in forgotten corners, oil splashes on kitchen windows, sink clogged by used tea leaves and cooking stains on all his clothes.

After two months into this, he is now able to manage certain tasks well and also is able to give enough attention to Riya. He is relieved as his daughter praises the dinner. Things have just started to seem manageable.

The doorbell rings, waiting outside is a new problem for him... his mother-in-law.

Chapter 3 - Society & the adversities

Since Sneha is pregnant, her mother was here to take care of her and the baby. She expected Sneha to be at home and having rest. But seeing her continuing work and instead, Sushil being unemployed, she was very unhappy about them.

As most mothers-in-law would, she too was against the idea of a househusband. She would question if Sushil is a failure in professional life and comment on how he might not have been brought up well. New quarrels sparked to life each day. Sneha justifies their decision as much as she can, but her mother was nowhere close to understanding their situation.

The neighbours too were questioning them. "Poor Sneha," an aunty says, "what sin has she done to deserve such an insensitive husband?" Another neighbour, an older man asks, "Was he living with only sisters? He must have had too many women around..." his expression changing into a frown, "...to be influenced into choosing such a life. Don't you think so?"

And indoors too, "There are certain responsibilities of a man towards his family. I don't understand what I did wrong in bringing up Sneha. How is she letting you do this to her? Why is she supporting you even though you are running away from your responsibilities." Sneha's mother would go on and on, saying how better it would be if a woman takes care of the house and that men are made for outdoor works, masculine tasks. Sneha was better at ignoring these remarks than Sushil. Also, she adds that their daughter would get negatively influenced by seeing a man being jobless.

One evening, Sneha's mother accidentally breaks her spectacles. Later she requests Sneha to get it repaired soon but Sneha says she will do it only after a few days as she is very busy this week. Sneha explains to her that she is working on an important project which is nearing its deadlines. Next day was almost over with blurry visuals and she was waiting expectantly for Sneha to return from work. But to her disappointment, Sneha was unable to get the spectacles repaired as she had said the previous day.

But before dinner, a repaired spectacles sat on the dining table. Sneha's overjoyed mother runs to thank her but instead is

surprised to know that Sushil got it repaired. That day she doesn't complain about his food and notices how clean he maintains the kitchen. Now, the mother develops a soft side for him.

She starts releasing Sushil's qualities. How he remembers the little things and puts efforts in making others happy even in small situations. Like how little sugar she likes in her tea or that Riya enjoys her drawings being put on the fridge or how Sneha likes listening to jazz after work.

She slowly seems to understand why he chose to be a homemaker and that different people can lead to different lifestyles. He thinks things seem to straighten out finally.

But... Bark! Riya brings home a dog. Everybody sighs.

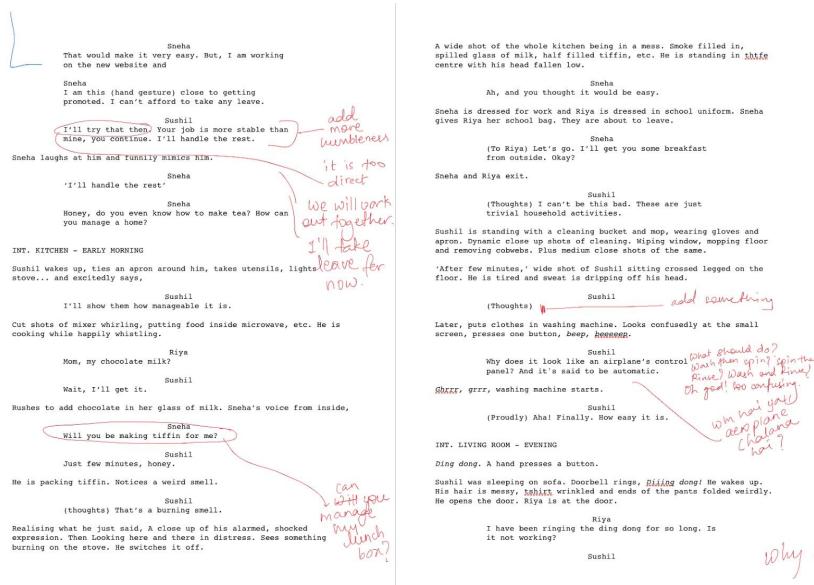
The end.

Writing
The Script

The Draft

Based on the feedback I received on my story, from my guide and others, I was required to constrain the story to a single chapter. So, I chose the second chapter as it best showed the struggles of Sushil trying to get used to the household life. Also to give an introductory idea that the couple was a mess and fought often over the housework and their daughters' care, I thought it was necessary to start the comic with a quarrel due to which they decide one of them should stay at home.

Evaluation and feedback



(Image 12: A page needing reworking)

I divided the script into parts, and after finishing the first draft of each part of the script, I had given it out to a few of my peers and other people. They pointed out certain corrections and useful dialogue changes.

Certain points they pointed out -

- Riya is a young and single child, so she can be funnier in her comments.
- Use of harsh words to give the feel of a quarrel. More emphasis on not so properly formed sentences.
- Lesser details about the mom's job and promotion.
- Sneha seems rude and ignorant. Make her take Riya to school, etc to show she cares at least.
- Sushil should be super enthusiastic in the start and should end up in bigger problems in the very initial trials, with smaller problems and mistakes are time goes.
- Sushil suggesting he can take leave is much more realistic than Riya or Sneha putting the idea on the table.
- Too many scenes while eating, he can take care of laundry and not just cook. Also, if they Belong to the normal middle class or above, they'll have a maid.
- Add some more emphasis on Sushil's thoughts about his progress if he is someone who believes in himself.

Ahead is the final script.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Sneha is talking over the phone and Riya is getting ready.

Riya

Mom, can you tie my shoelace?

Sneha

(covering the receiver) Riya, I am talking to someone. Try it yourself.

Riya tries tying her shoelaces in two-three ways. All weird wrong ways. Expressions of disgust and dissatisfaction. Annoyed, she throws a shoe at a wall.

Sneha

BEHAVE! RIYA!

Sushil

Eh, what's happening?

Sushil comes out running. Seeing Riya's helpless expression ties her shoelaces.

Sushil

See, first, you make a cross, then put this here. Then two loops and ...

He teaches her to tie shoelaces. Sneha comes out to ask Riya,

Sneha

I have told you not to interrupt when two grownups are speaking, didn't I?

Sushil

Why are you shouting at her? She is just 6, what do you expect from her?

Riya

Seven, I am seven papa.

Sneha

And Dumbo, still you can't tie shoes?

Sneha

She needs to learn some manners-

Sushil

Oh! Please, you are just frustrated because of work. Don't take it out on her.

Sneha

I am not. Don't you teach me how to talk to my daughter!

Sushil

You don't know anything about her homework, projects or exams. You are the one who needs to learn things, not her.

Sneha

Oh please, don't start again. I am done with you complaining every day.

Sushil

What do you mean 'done'? You are always busy and unavailable. How can 'you' be done?

Sneha takes her bag and jacket and turns to leave.

Sneha

Riya, are you coming? You'll miss your class.

Riya is confused but follows Sneha out of the door. Sushil's voice is heard over from behind.

Sushil

And that's how you deal with problems? Just ignore and escape?

INT. DINING ROOM - LATE EVENING

Riya and Sushil are having dinner at the table. Sneha is serving food.

Sneha

Sushil, I was thinking, let's enrol Riya at some childcare centre.

Sushil

No, there she'll not get any attention.

Sneha

But, she is getting affected here. We are not able to give her much attention either.

Sushil

No Sneha, I said once, She is not going to any childcare.

Sneha

Okay, then what do you suggest? She needs someone with her and we can't manage so many things.

Sushil is feeding Riya. (Frame needed for a pause in conversation)

Sushil

Umm, we can manage if one of us takes leave from work, can't we?

Sneha

That would make it very easy. But, I am working on the new website and

Sneha

I am this (hand gesture) close to getting promoted. I can't afford to take any leave.

Sushil

I'll try that then. Your job is more stable than mine, you continue. I'll handle the rest.

Sneha laughs at him and funnily mimics him.

Sneha

'I'll handle the rest'

Sneha

Honey, do you even know how to make tea? How can you manage a home?

INT. KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

Sushil wakes up, ties an apron around him, takes utensils, lights stove... and excitedly says,

Sushil

I'll show them how manageable it is.

Cut shots of mixer whirling, putting food inside a microwave, etc. He is cooking while happily whistling.

Riya

Mom, my chocolate milk?

Sushil

Wait, I'll get it.

Rushes to add chocolate in her glass of milk. Sneha's voice from inside,

Sneha

Will you be making tiffin for me?

Sushil

Just a few minutes, honey.

He is packing tiffin, notices a weird smell.

Sushil

thoughts) That's a burning smell.

Realising what he just said, A close up of his alarmed, shocked expression. Then Looking here and there in distress. Sees something burning on the stove. He switches it off.

A wide shot of the whole kitchen being in a mess. Smoke filled-in, spilled glass of milk,

half-filled tiffin, etc. He is standing in the centre with his head fallen low.

Sneha

Ah, and you thought it would be easy.

Sneha is dressed for work and Riya is dressed in school uniform. Sneha gives Riya her school bag. They are about to leave.

Sneha

(To Riya) Let's go. I'll get you some breakfast from outside. Okay?

Sneha and Riya exit.

Sushil

(Thoughts) I can't be this bad. These are just trivial household activities.

Sushil is standing with a cleaning bucket and mop, wearing gloves and an apron. Dynamic close up shots of cleaning. Wiping window, mopping the floor and removing cobwebs. Plus medium close shots of the same.

'After a few minutes,' wide shot of Sushil sitting cross-legged on the floor. He is tired and sweat is dripping off his head.

Sushil

(Thoughts) Ugh! Why did I sign up for this?

Later, he puts clothes in the washing machine. Looks confusedly at the small screen, presses one button, *beep, beeeeeep*.

Sushil

Why does it look like an aeroplane's control panel? And it's said to be automatic.

Ghrrr, grrr, the washing machine starts.

Sushil

(Proudly) Aha! Finally. How easy it is.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Ding dong. A hand presses a button.

Sushil was sleeping on the sofa. Doorbell rings, *Diiing dong!* He wakes up. His hair is messy, t-shirt wrinkled and ends of the pants folded weirdly. He opens the door. Riya is at the door.

Riya

I have been ringing the ding dong for so long. Is it not working?

Sushil
No dear, I had dozed off.

He yawns. Riya laughs at him.

Riya
Hehe, dad looks like a zombie!

They both go inside.

Riya
You know I got a burger for tiffin.
Very yum!

Sushil
But a burger is not good for health.
I'll make you some good snacks. Go
change and come.

He is at the kitchen counter, cooking. She comes out in normal house clothes. Climbs a chair and tries looking over dad's shoulder. Sushil serves her cornflakes and fruits mixed with milk in a bowl. He too sits. And feeds her.

Riya
Bleh. What is this?

Sushil
It's healthy. Open, aaaaa.

Riya
Noo, It's too salty.

Riya covers her mouth with her hand. Sushil eats a spoonful himself. Closeup of his weird face reaction. He looks at the kitchen counter, sees a bottle named 'salt'.

Sushil
Oh! I am so sorry. I didn't add any sugar.

Throws the food in the sink.

Sushil
(Thoughts) Not really my fault,
Those bottles are so alike.

Sneha
Honey, I am home.

Sneha comes into the kitchen. Riya is standing near the fridge, now peeping outside at her mom. She has chocolates in her hand.

Sneha
How was your first day at home? I hope you enjo-

Sushil
I cleaned everything, see, the

windows, the mirror, it's shining.
And did laundry also and...oh no!

He realises something and runs out of the room.
Sneha looks confused.

Sneha

What the..?

Riya
Washroom Mumma. Urgency. Understand
no.

Both Sneha and Riya giggle.

Sushil
(Voice) Umm, Sneha, I need your
help.

They are on the dry balcony, looking at the
front load washing machine. Smoke is rising out
from behind the machine and water is flowing
out from its front.

Sushil
I, I just-

Sneha
Don't. First, close the switch at
least.

Riya was about to open the lid. Sushil turn-off

the switch and opens the lid. There are too
many clothes filled in.

Sneha
Did you put all the clothes
together? Aah, even my workwear and
the bedsheets!

Sneha takes out some clothes in a basket. Riya
pulls-out a yellow frilled top out of the
basket.

Riya
My favourite top! Papaa?

Sneha
Have you not used a washing machine
before? Who puts so much?

Sushil
But it says to put on 30 clothes.

Sneha
Not when there are thick blankets
and bedsheets. The drum couldn't
rotate at all.

Sushil
Aah, this is all so wet. What now?
Should I hand wash everything? I
know how to.

Riya

Yeah, papa has washed my kerchiefs
before.

Sneha

Oh god! Just call the technician.
It'll be fixed by evening. Go Riya,
get my phone.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Sushil is at the dining table, arranging plates
for dinner.

Sushil

Sneha, Riya, dinner is ready.

Riya

(Voice) Just one more sum.

Sneha

No Riya. Let's continue the homework
later.

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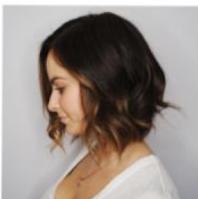
Explorations

Ideation

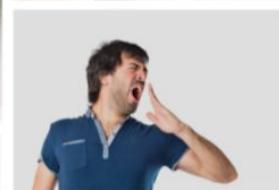
Mood-board / Reference-board



SNEHA



SUSHIL



RIYA



alamy stock photo



household



Initially, I began by collecting references similar to the characters I had in my mind. Sneha, a workaholic woman would have short hair, would have no obesity and prefers dressing well for most of the time. While Sushil, a laid back person, less particular about trivial things need not have an appealing dressing sense. Riya, who is somewhat like her mom, too prefers short hair.

Explorations

To give the Indian feel to the visuals, I tried to bring in certain details from my childhood and surroundings, like a kerchief pinned to the uniform, the bulky water bottle, a rectangular school bag, etc.

For the style, I experimented with the skills I was fluent in, i.e. natural proportions and realistic poses. Based on their characters traits, I drew them doing different actions (see next pages). For their colours, I was confused



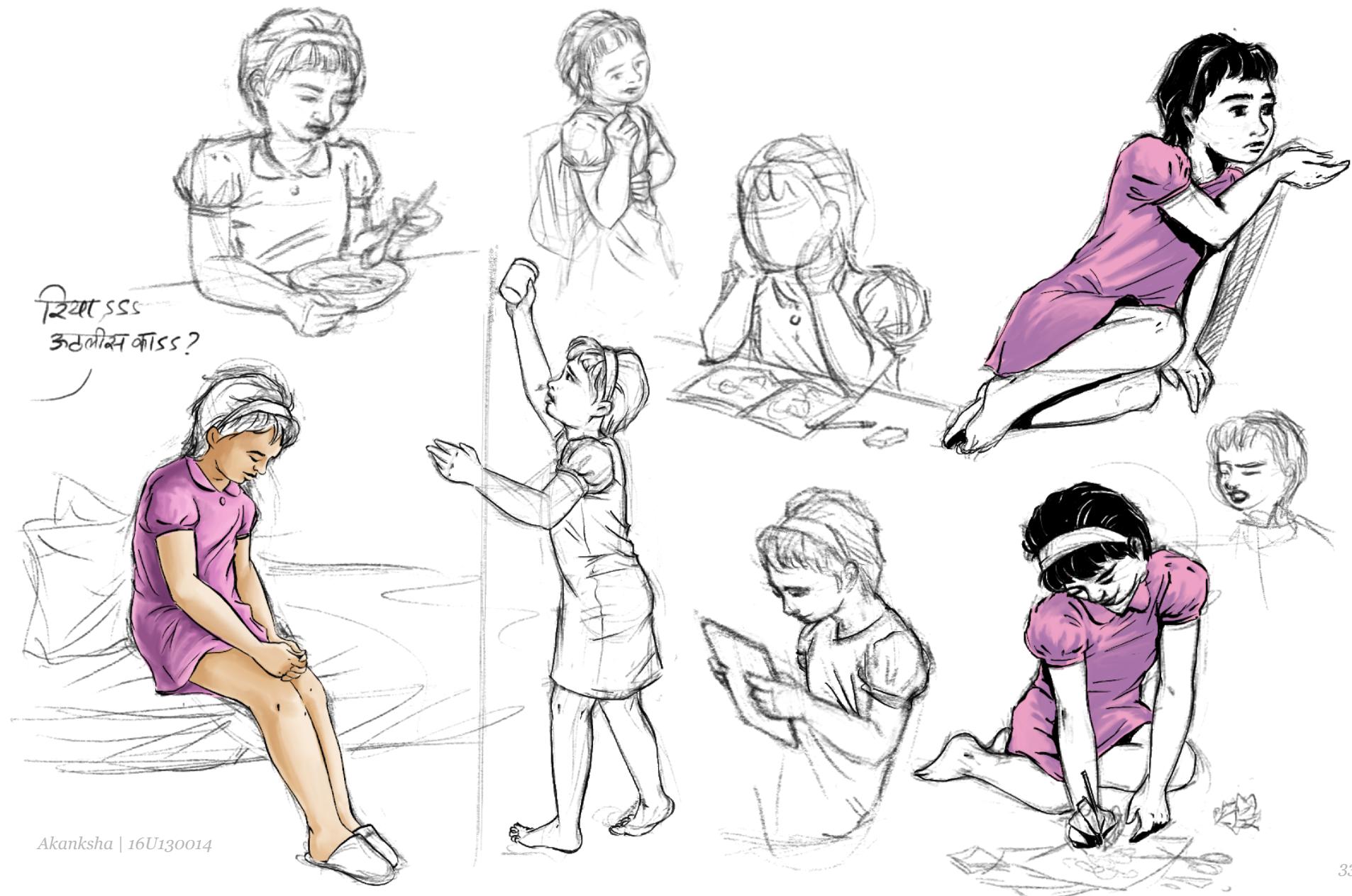
Sushil (early 30s)



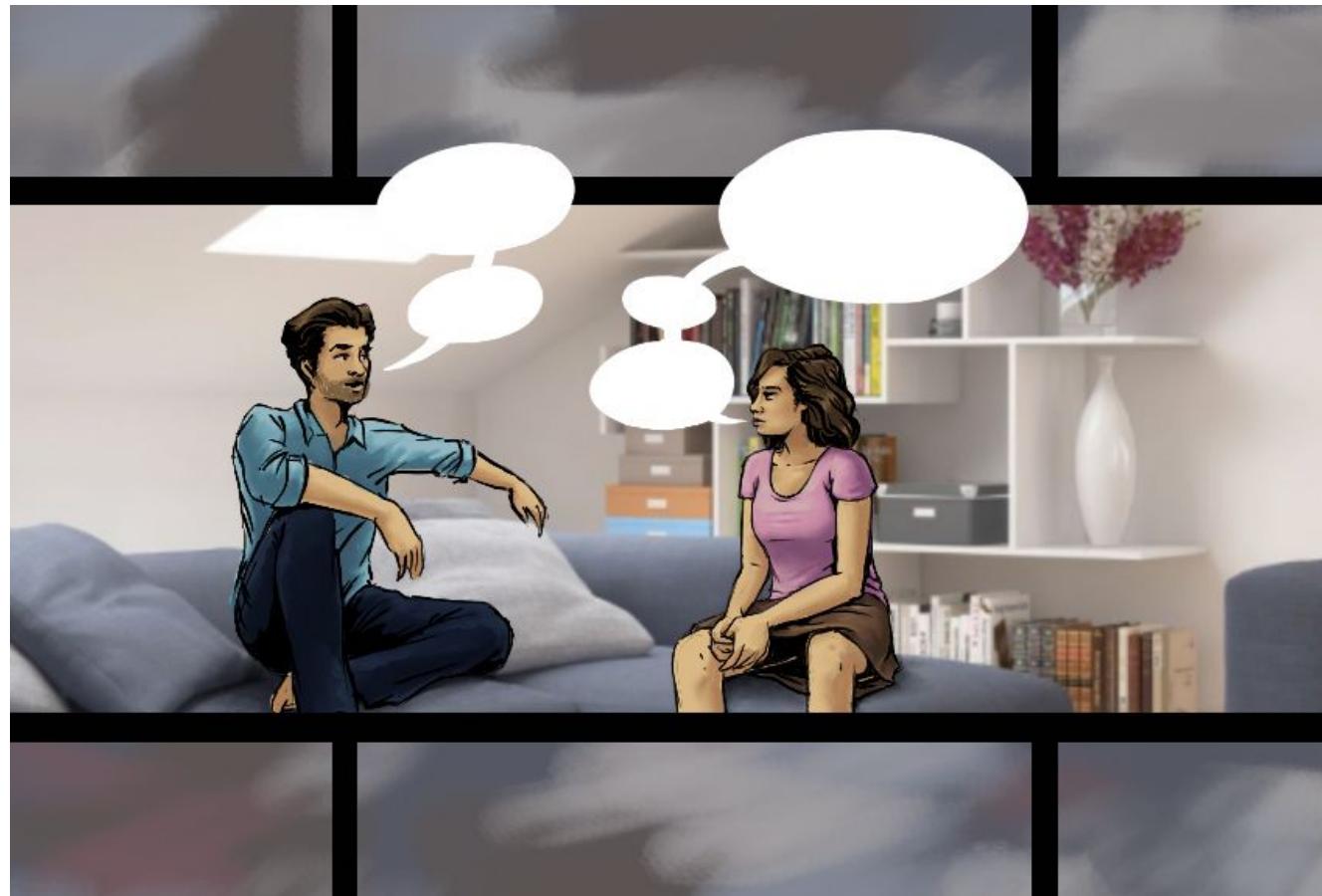
(Images 14 to 19: Character study and Images 20 to 25: style explorations)







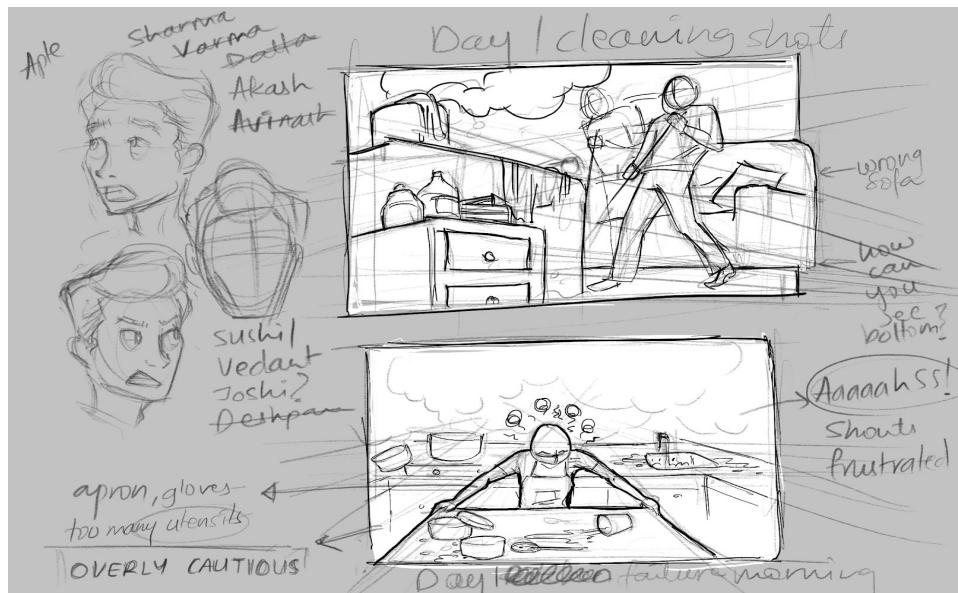




Plotting the
Storyboard

I began planning the storyboard soon after a little part of the script was done and then worked on both simultaneously. But I kept going back to the script and reworking on it as certain scenes weren't working well visually. After a point I realised, directly plotting the scenes visually was more effective and also made the panels more dynamic.

When Sushil failed and created a mess, with smoke rising and/or water spilling around, I tried to draw those panels in exaggerated perspective and specific angles - low for showing struggle or high for a messy room. This part of the process took the maximum time.



(Image 26: Ideation for the character's names and important panels

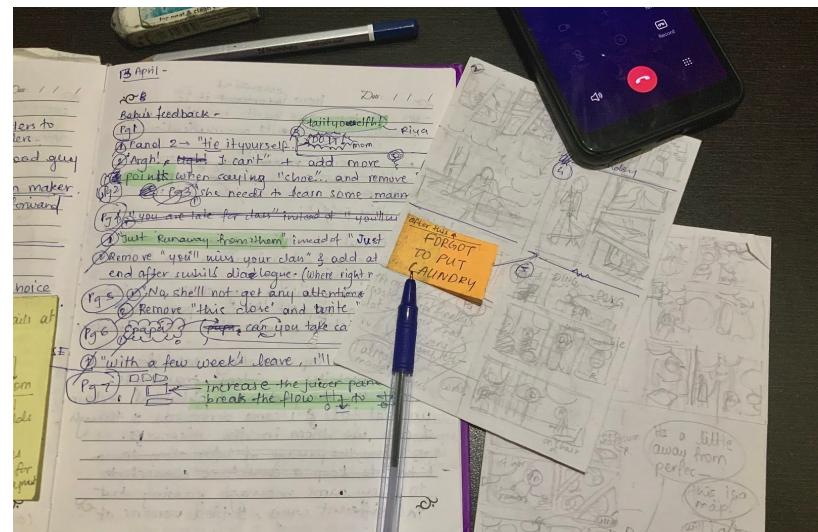
Evaluation and feedback



(Image 27: screenshot of a page with corrections)

Similar to the script, I shared the storyboard as a digital booklet with my peers and other friends studying film and in other creative fields. After I received feedback, I reworked and reshared the file with more people.

Since at this time there was complete lockdown due to the outbreak of Covid-19, many people began working remotely with maximum communications happening online and over calls. I too received my feedback over calls, but this reduced the quality of the suggestions as it wasn't easy to articulate and tell why a certain panel is not giving a certain 'feel'. Also, some people tried to correct the dialogue while not paying much attention to the panelling or the expressions.



(Image 28: Taking notes and feedback from people over a call)



Creating the
Backgrounds

3d Modelling

Since the whole story was happening indoors, I was required to draw every background with perspective and repeating the same scenes in different perspectives. So, I created a digital 3d space of a 1BHK household. This ensured the arrangement and continuity is maintained across all panels. And also saved my time as it was easier to edit or recreate any panels if required.

The textures being first painted in photoshop were then mapped on the respective materials in 3ds Max. After which I added certain accessories like wall paintings, chimney/exhaust, television etc. The smaller elements like utensils were to be painted with the characters later. Lighting the scenes was a very difficult task, but with enough explorations, the product was rendered with shadows.



(Image 30 & 31: Wall texture and wood texture resp. Two examples of the textures painted for mapping as materials)



(Image 32 & 33: Initial renders with normal materials and lighting)

Rendering explorations

My characters were 2d illustrations with fewer colour gradients than their 3d backgrounds. Therefore, to bring about consistency in the visual, I extensively experimented with photoshop effects and adjustments.



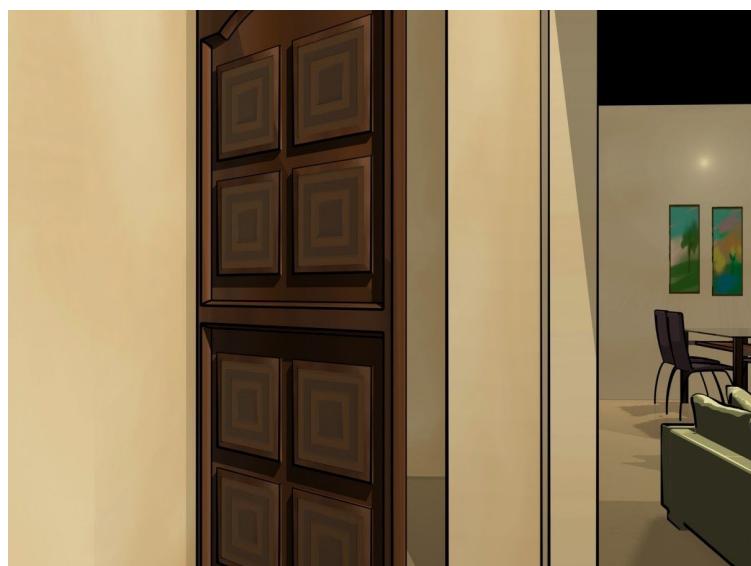
(Image 34 & 35: Using filters to reduce textures and add ink-like outlines)

Final renders

Finally, I found material in 3ds Max itself that saved me. This material was then mapped on every object to give the illustrative feel. It consisted of two sections, Ink - the outlines, settings of which did not provide much control and the Paint section whose settings allowed the shading to be reduced without discarding my previous texturing work. After a good amount of exploring with the controls, I achieved a satisfactory look, pictures of which are shown below.



(Images 36 to 40: Final renders with ink material and less shading)



Final style

The output

The process can be broken down into - (i) adding backgrounds + (ii) inking character based on perspective + (iii) final inking strokes + (iv) colouring the characters + (v) adding dialogue boxes. While these steps have been followed interchangeably (as the example below), this remained common throughout most panels.



(Image 41: an example of the process)



Cover page

'Imbalanced' is what the society would see this system as, while the husband corrects them saying 'I'm balanced'.

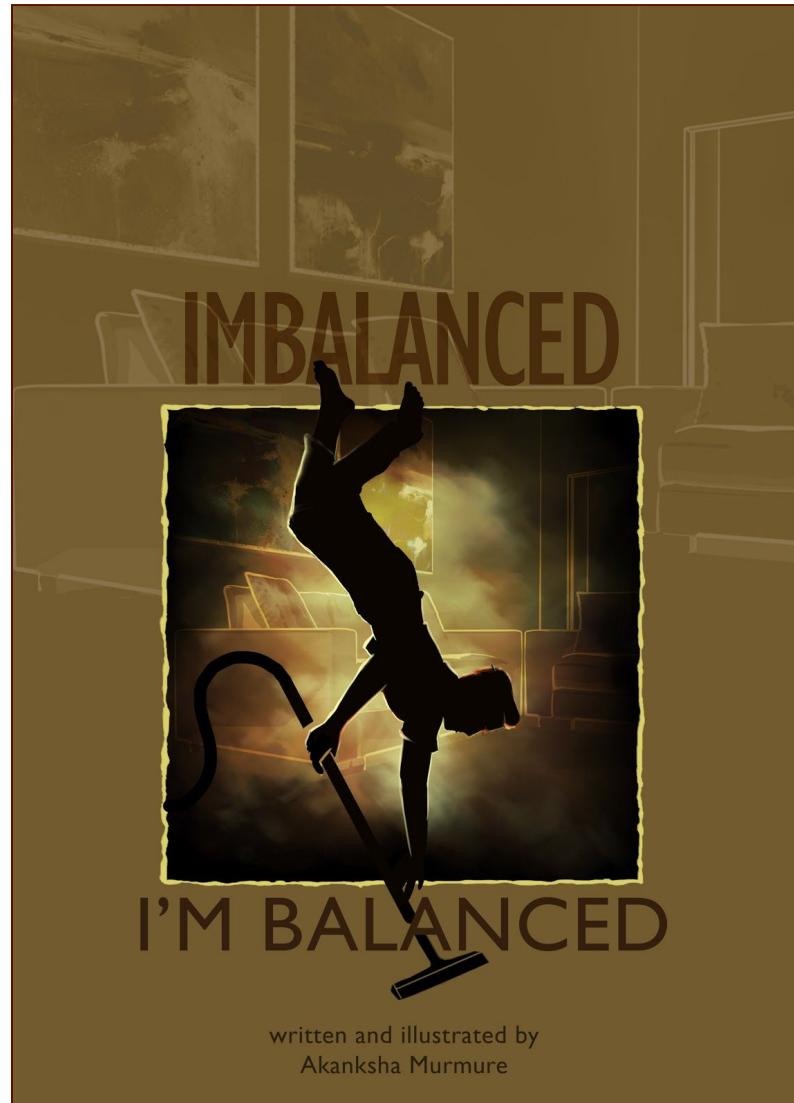
The character is placed upside down to depict the unconventional gender reversal they are following.

Initially, the character was to be illustrated balancing on a roti-rolling-pin, a household element to portray that he is trying to balance the household. Due to a few feedbacks showing that the rolling pin was not recognised well, I changed it to a vacuum cleaner.

The work of the house-spouse is considered secondary and is mostly invisible, hence the silhouette.



(Image 44: rough idea and
Image 45: The final cover page)



Conclusion

When discussing what their life expectations were, I rarely but very strongly heard someone say 'a househusband'. Most being young adults or even younger were unknown to how the Indian society would react if expressed such a preference. This topic has been casually discussed over many occasions between me and my peers, little did I know it would turn into a motivation to create this project. The process included many ups and downs. I had initially planned to create minimal illustrations around the comments of the society but with time, it worked out with required feedback and suggestions into a full storybook. In this project, I got a chance to learn many aspects of story writing and explore the vast field of comic books. The biggest learning would be recognizing the importance of perseverance and consistency. This has also taught me some time management skills. If provided an opportunity, I would love to create another chapter illustrating the external interferences and how the couple faces the questions of the society and their close ones.

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Akanksha M.

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