

Communication Design Project II | 2022

Change

A Visual tribute to the Adventures of Vijayan and Mohana

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Approval Sheet

This project report entitled 'Change: a Visual to tribute to the adventures of Vijayan and Mohana' by Lakshmi CHandran, 216450001, is approved for partial fulfilment of the requirements for Masters of Design Degree in Communication Design.

Project Guide:



Chairperson:

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Declaration

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where others' opinions or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated any idea/data/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 appropriately cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

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16/11/2022

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Finally K.R. Vijayan and Mohana Vijayan for inspiring me with their journeys. This novel is a tribute to the adventures of Vijayan with his wife Mohana around the world. May his soul rest in peace.

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Change

A Visual tribute to the Adventures of Vijayan and Mohana

Abstract

Change is a Web Graphic novel that captures the essence of what Vijayan has left behind with Mohana. Vijayan and Mohana are a couple of tea shop owners from Kochi, Kerala. Until their late 60s, they traveled the world to around 26 countries. The story attempts to portray the influence their journeys had on them, their family and also the people around them.

The narrative tells the story from Mohana's point of view to show how the journeys changed her as a person who had never traveled until she met Vijayan.



Still from Invisible Wings

Introduction



Context & Objective

Being in my mid-20s I have come across a lot of people my age and older who have settled into living life without actually following their passion. When I came across the story of Vijayan and Mohana, they instantly amazed me. Their story of following their madness for traveling by any means is a different outlook on life than the typical way. People often have a habit of becoming comfortable in their niche and settling their roots before thinking about going for what they truly want. Vijayan and Mohana take each journey as it comes and keeps it going like a cycle.

Their small tea shop gathers more stories than one could imagine. They serve their chai with a small bite and a whole lot of stories. The journeys started with him and little by little he shared them with his

wife and their family. The reason for taking this story for my narrative is because this year Vijayan passed away. As a way of paying respects and spreading the story of their joyous journeys, I had taken up this medium.

The Objective is to capture the essence of what Vijayan has left behind to the world as a simple man who wanted to see places and the lengths he went to. The novel focuses on portraying their transition as people through their journeys.

Story Development



Process

The storyline of the graphic narrative was initiated with a research process that included gathering details from newspapers, magazines, and interviews at first. Further, a study of their autobiography and short film was studied. Key points of their storyline are extracted to form a narrative.

The storyline is framed in different ways to see what brings out the most emotion. To structure this different points of view from different characters are explored. This helped to understand who amongst them was most impacted by their journeys.

Once the storyline was formed, the script with the dialogues and frames was put down together with a storyboard. The type of layout and elements to bring out in

the graphics experimented.

When the storyline was getting finalized, simultaneously research for style and layout was focused on. Medium, color palette, layout, and style were derived from collecting several references and brainstorming with the idea. Once the references have collected a concept was formed on how to convey the story more effectively.

The ideation of the concept took several tries to arrive at the final form. Once the concept was concrete a final storyboarding was done to gain more clarity. Moving forward, Character design, color palette, and visual style were developed from the references. Fixing these bases lead to a smoother execution of the final work.



Mangalam newspaper

Research

1. Articles

Several articles told the story of Vijayan and Mohana on online platforms, magazine articles, newspapers, interviews, and talks. The articles mainly focused on their journeys and how they both play a balancing role to execute their trip. They talk about how Mohana manages the finances and Vijayan looks after planning the whole trip. The couple has got media attention in Kerala. This has also given them opportunities where their trips have been sponsored by Amitabh Bachchan and Anupam Kher for their international trips. But fame never impacted the simplicity of this couple. They still go forward with their down-to-earth thinking and goes ahead with life.

In the interviews that follow, I could see how much they both are invested in

travelling. For them, especially Vijayan, it's the most natural thing he can do. It is what he was supposed to fulfill. It showed me how passion matters, if it matters enough to you, then you will fulfill it no matter what.





2. Autobiography

An autobiography titled ചായ വിറ്റ് വിജയന്റെയും മോഹനയുടെയും ലോക സഞ്ചാരങ്ങൾ (Tea sellers Vijayan and Mohana's world tours) elaborates on their journey of becoming the people they are. The autobiography quotes both of their narratives but Vijayan's are the most while Mohana's are very few. Vijayan talks about how mad he is about traveling. This book is what pulled me more into their story. This man talks about how he has stolen rice and fees to pay for his travels as a young boy. For him, that is what mattered. They expand on what their lives were like before getting married and after. They talk about how these journeys they took together impacted them and their relationship with each other. The storyline developed is based on their experiences from this book.

എന്നാൽ കല്യാണത്തിന്റെ പുതുമോടി മാറുംമുമ്പ് എന്റെ മാലയും വിറ്റ് നാടുവിട്ടെന്നറിഞ്ഞപ്പോൾ എനിക്ക് എന്റെ ഭർത്താവിന്റെ സ്വഭാവം മനസ്സിലായിത്തുടങ്ങി.

"Even before 2 moths got over after marriage, when he sold my gold chain and ran away, i realized what kind of a man my husband is."

-Mohana, excerpt from ചായ വിറ്റ് വിജയനായനും മഹോഹനയുടെയും ലഭാക സഞ്ചാരങ്ങൾ

പ്രായം കൂടുന്നതിനനുസരിച്ച് എന്റെ ഒളിച്ചോട്ടങ്ങളുടെ ദൂരവും സമയവും വർദ്ധിച്ചുവന്നു.

"As my age increased, the distances of my runaways increased too with time"

-Vijayan, excerpt from ചായ വിറ്റ് വിജയനായനും മഹോഹനയുടെയും ലഭാക സഞ്ചാരങ്ങൾ

ഇപ്പോൾതോന്നുന്നു യാത്ര ചെയ്ത ചെയാണി ഞങ്ങളുടെ സ്നേഹം കൂടിയതെന്ന്.

"I now feel we liked each other more because of the journeys"

-Mohana, excerpt from ചായ വിറ്റ് വിജയനായനും മഹോഹനയുടെയും ലഭാക സഞ്ചാരങ്ങൾ

ഉദയം കാണാനായി മാത്രം കന്യാകുമാരിക്ക് പോകുന്നവർ വേറെ ആരുണ്ട്? മാത്രമല്ല ജൂബയും തോൾസഞ്ചിയുമൊക്കെയായി അന്ന് എനിക്കുണ്ടാൽ ഒരു ബുദ്ധിജീവി ലുക്കുമുണ്ടായിരുന്നു.

"Who else is out there who goes all the way to Kanyakumari to see just the sunrise? And by the way i was dressed in Jubba and cloth sack bag i looked like a brainiac"

-Vijayan, excerpt from ചായ വിറ്റ് വിജയനായനും മഹോഹനയുടെയും ലഭാക സഞ്ചാരങ്ങൾ



2. Invisible wings

Invisible wings is a short film directed by Hari. M. Mohanan to capture the essence of one following their passion and it is possible if they put their mind into it. The narrative is from Vijayan's side and the the director tries to find the philosophy behind it. This movie captures Vijayan in his true form and inspires one to go for what they really want.



"I wanted to explore that element and do a film. I want people to see the film and evoke their dreams and inspire them to achieve it. I also want to dub the film to regional languages in India and show it in villages so that the people outside the world of internet also watch it,"

- Hari. M. Mohanan



4. Encounter

The Balaji shop did not stand out from the long line of shops on the roadside. It was one of many. But the shop held more stories than I thought. There was a small glass shelf in front. Not so clean, more chaotic. In that, there were books and drawings of them that others have gifted. Even some trophies and awards. Including their autobiography. The walls were adorned with frames of several newspaper articles and their photographs. A photo album of their trip to Niagara Falls hung on the wall. So many clocks also hung above different time zones. There were around 18 of them. The shop was small and narrow.

On the right side, there were several customers seated on a line of benches. And on the left was a small kitchen counter with big baskets and bowls of snacks and chai glasses. In the middle of all that was Mohana with her sweet smile. I watched her for a while as I ordered a coffee. My friend ordered tea. She fried the vadas



so keenly without any fuss. In between, she stared into the void as the vadas were crisping up. she was very silent, as I expected. Her daughter and son-in-law were managing the customers, serving chai and bite, and taking orders. I got up and went over to the wall of frames. I read through the articles. there were so many. I asked her son-in-law if she was not going on any more trips. He got so surprised. "Of course!! She's going to Japan this March!"

I asked about Vijayan to them. How he passed away when he passed away. I asked her about her japan trip, she said she has to go. I asked if she was going alone, and she said she will never go alone. she said she's going with her niece who is studying in college. she followed up by saying that she's actually not into traveling now that he's not here, but this is the only way to keep him alive, through the journeys. It was his wish that she keeps traveling and seeing places. and she wanted to keep that up. I followed up on some more topics like how it was after he left. and their last trip to Russia. She said it was always him who talked the most. he was always excited to share the stories of where they went and what they saw. she was just a passenger along with his journey. Many people come and go to their shop and Vijayan always served chai with a bite of his stories.

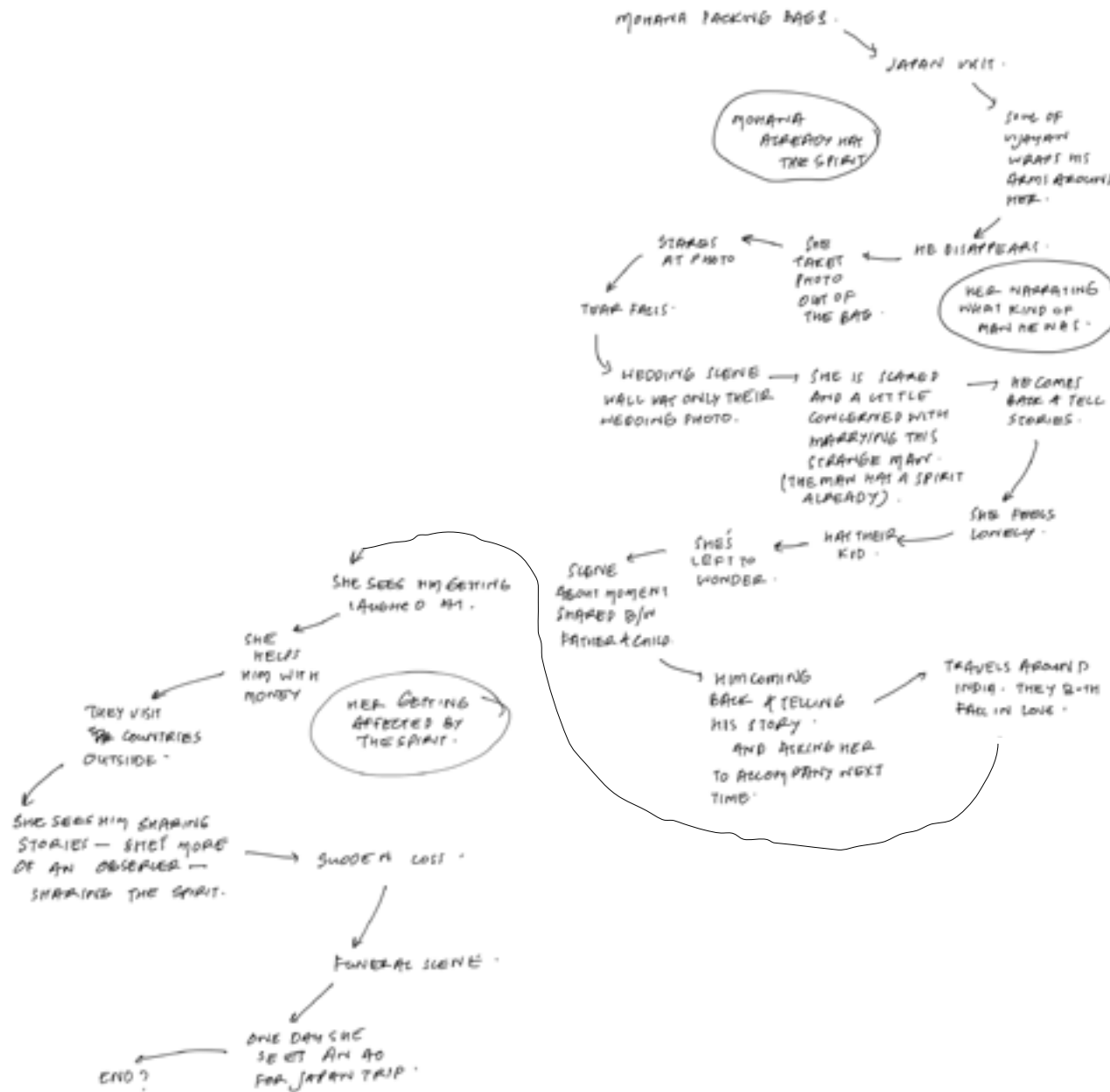
Narrative

The storyline is structured such that each chapter reflects a part of who Vijayan and Mohana are. The chapters show how their characters are developed through their journeys. Each chapter captures how the relationship between them has grown and how he has influenced other people to travel. How he started his journey all alone and how taking his kid as a companion for the first time made him want to share his experiences. How his lousy runaway attitude grows into a man with compassion and consideration for his family. The narrative must capture not just a documentation of his passion for his journeys, but also how they helped him grow. The chapters could capture different stages of his life, through different ages. Young teen boy (18 years), time after the marriage (20's), time with his kid (30s), when he started his international travels (50s), Old age (70s).

Several narrative directions were explored during the development stage. Different points of view were explored to capture this emotion of growth in a better way.

The first direction focused on a third-person perspective. A little girl was introduced in this scenario as an outsider who gets influenced by his stories. It focuses on how his journeys inspired her and created an impact on her to follow her dreams as she grows up.

In this narrative, the character of the girl felt forced and was removed as she was only coming in the beginning and the end of the story, and did not make into effective storytelling of their emotion.



The third and final perspective of the narration was done from Mohana's side. This approach after discussion seemed apt as it tells the story of a woman who has not discovered her spark at first, further Vijayan, this man mad for his journeys lights a fire in her. The visuals are supported by narration from Mohana's point of view.

Change : Final Story

Change is the story of a woman whose whole life changes when she gets married to a man who is mad about traveling. Inspired by real events, this story captures the transformation of this husband and wife as their journeys take off.

Someone to Remember

The story opens with the journey of the woman to Japan. While there she picks up a photograph from her handbag of her husband. The story unfolds with her talking about how her husband came into her life.

Who is this man?

The woman tells the story of her husband from his childhood. How he is the man he is and about his journeys before he came into her life.

Sharing journey

The woman goes on expanding on her experiences with her husband after marriage in their tea shop and understanding his nature. She is left alone while he carries on his journeys alone. The chapter focuses on her loneliness when he keeps running away from home. The story takes a turn when their daughter is born and he shares his journeys for the first time. This impacts their marriage when he asks her to accompany her going forward. They

Who is this man?

Sharing Journeys

Passing the Fire

start going on journeys together until they eventually fall in love with each other while traveling.

Passing the fire

The woman watches as her husband turns their tea shop into a house of stories. He lights the fire in people who come to have chai and leaves with a heart inspired.

When her husband passes away she feels completely alone as if the fire in her is about to die, when she comes across an advertisement to travel to Japan. Believing that it's the only way for her husband to keep living through her journeys she packs her bags to go on a journey of her own.

Reference Study + case studies



1. The Arrival by Shaun Tan

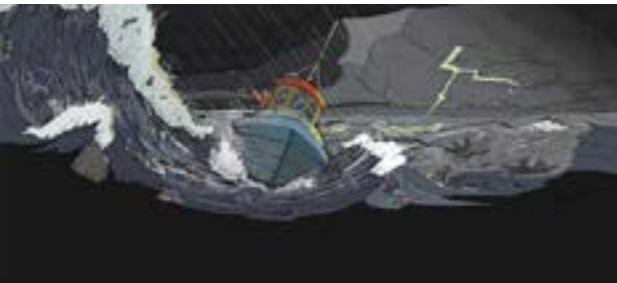
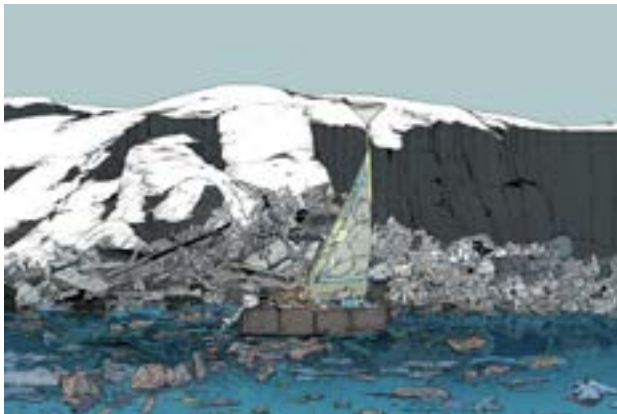
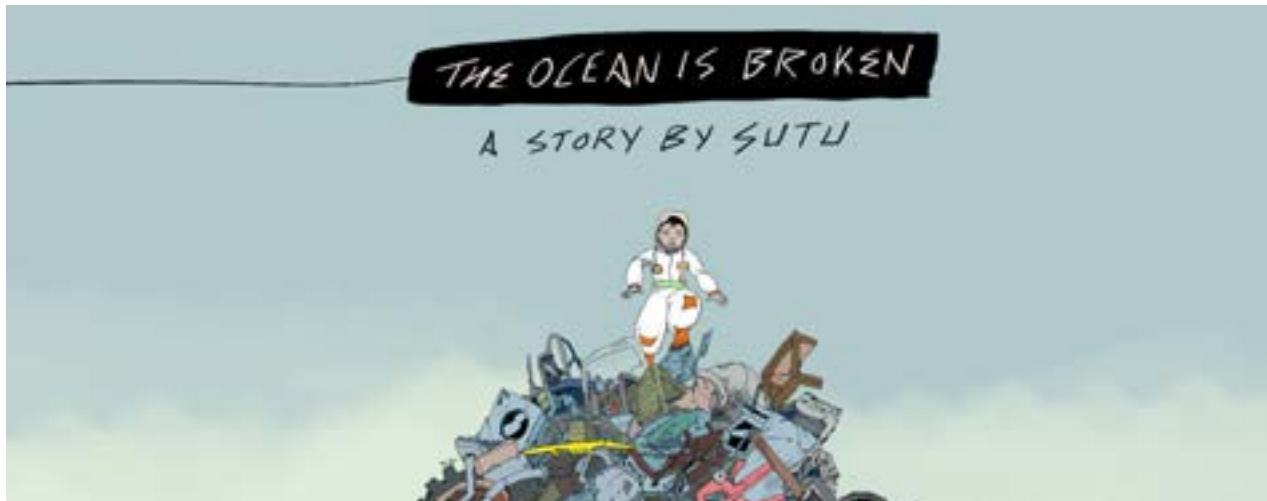
Shaun Tan's books came to my attention first while visiting the bookstore Kahani Tree with my guide. The whole story was expressed so clearly without any supporting text and only with visuals. The detailed sequences in visuals make text redundant. The landscapes of the places he travels are so elaborately done, such that when one reads the book is stunned by each page.



2. These memories won't last by Sutu eat flies

This is a short and sweet story that caught my eye while researching digital comics. The story is about an aging grandfather who deals with dementia. The visuals focus on all memories he is losing and what is left for him to remember which is about the war.

A simple line drawing becomes effective when the storyline is said from his grandson's point of view. The vertical scroll layout is tied all together with a string which symbolizes his thin mind.



3. The Ocean is broken by Sutur eat flies

The ocean is broken is a captivating story about 2 brothers who are trying to survive in the wasteland floated in Greenland when the icecaps melted.

Through the busy details of the wastelands, the characters and their boat stands out with the effect of parallax. When the scroll comes into motion the boat for example can be seen moving through the wasteland. This creates a feeling of focus on these characters and also captures the attention of the readers.



4. Phallania by Marietta Ren

The execution of this book is done in a simple black-and-white format but the composition create captures the readers into the book strongly. This is the first scrolling graphic novel and the layers overlap with the effect of parallax when one scroll.

The book follows the story of a young girl who deals with increasing hallucinations. The parallax effect comes into action while she is experiencing hallucinations and starts seeing whales.

The simplicity of this project is what caught my eye with subtle audio to support the visuals.

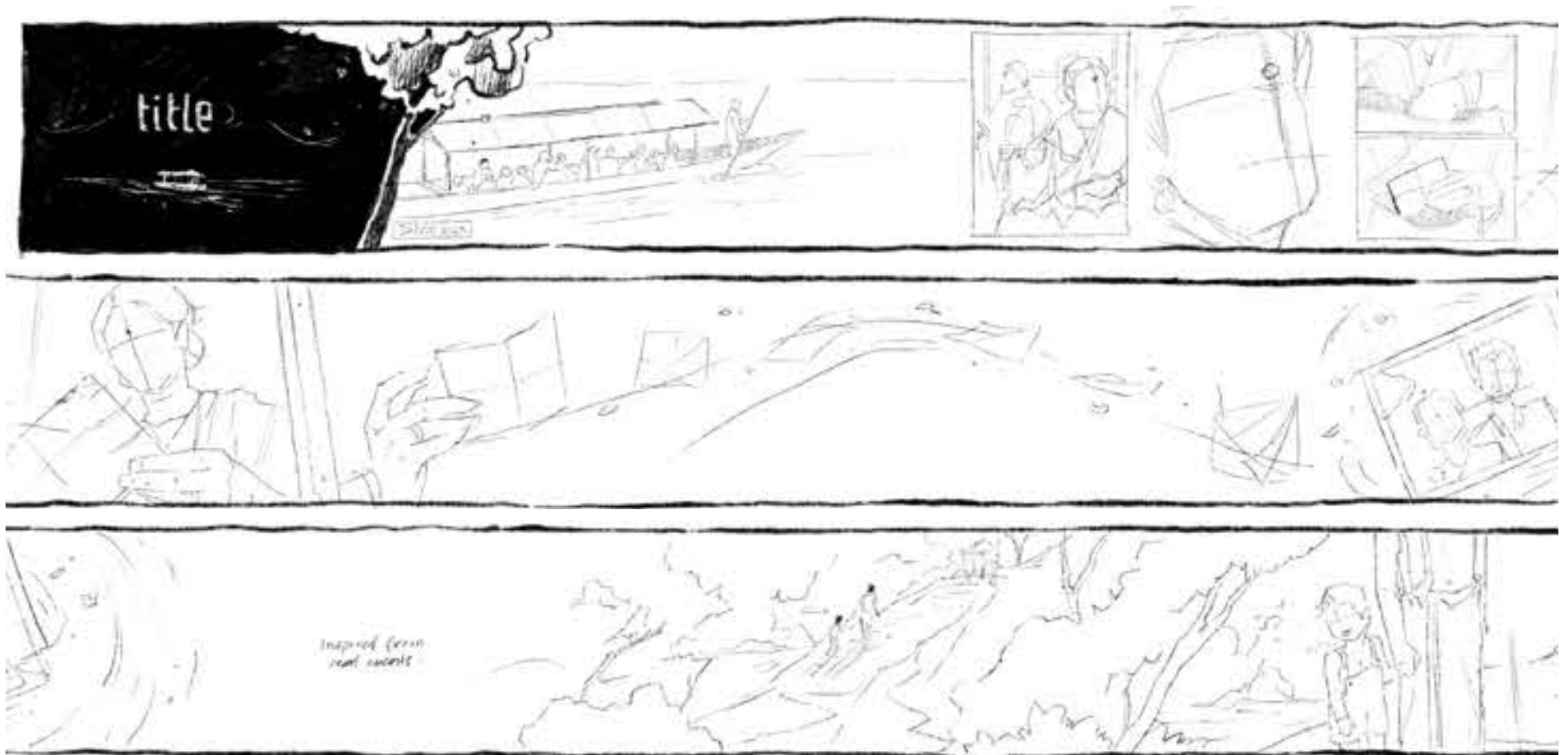
Concept

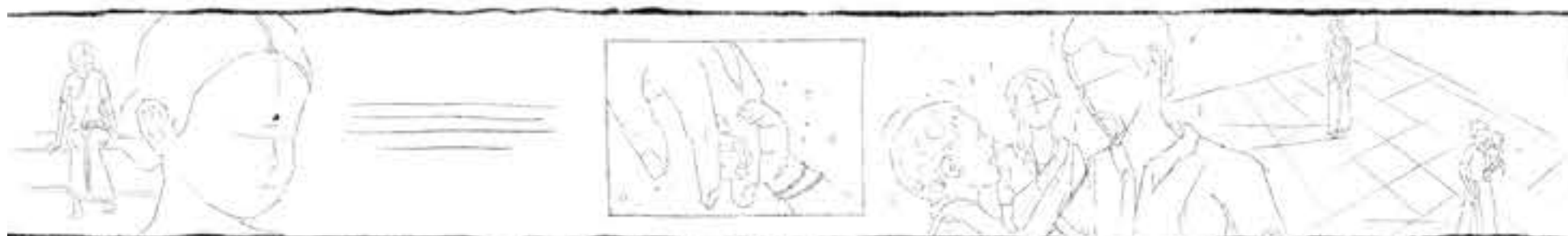
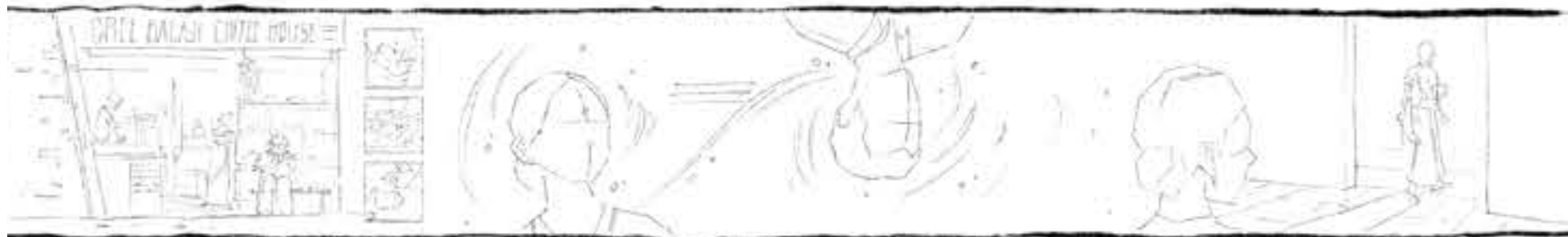
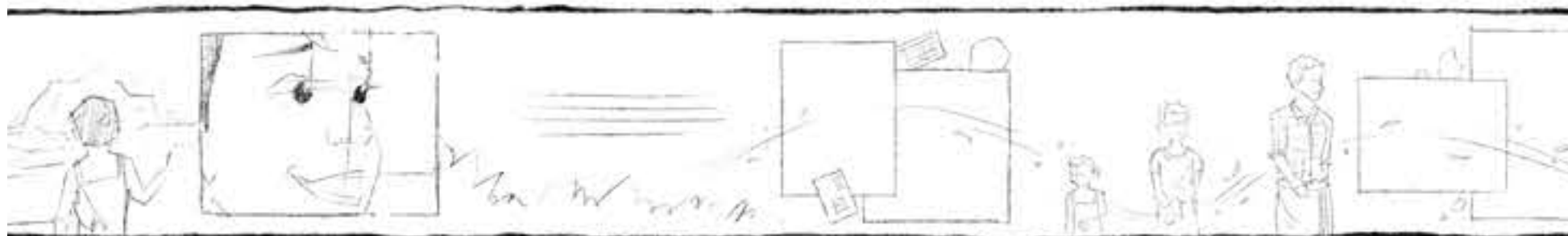
The medium of storytelling shifted from print to digital during the process of writing the story. Rather than print media, I realized during discussions that through the digital medium I'll be able to enhance the visuals with a light motion. Therefore a horizontal way of reading the comic was fixed with a parallax effect between the layers to bring life into it.

The theme behind the storyline was to show how the journeys impacted the life of Vijayan and Mohana and the people around them. The idea was that Vijayan had a spark in him that he eventually passed it on to the other. From this idea of spark evolved a concept that this spark could be evolving as one reads the panels. At first, this concept was represented as a line or a string that emerges from his heart and it grows and changes colors and becomes wider as it goes. The first trial did not capture readers as expected and the idea was not as clear to them as I wanted.

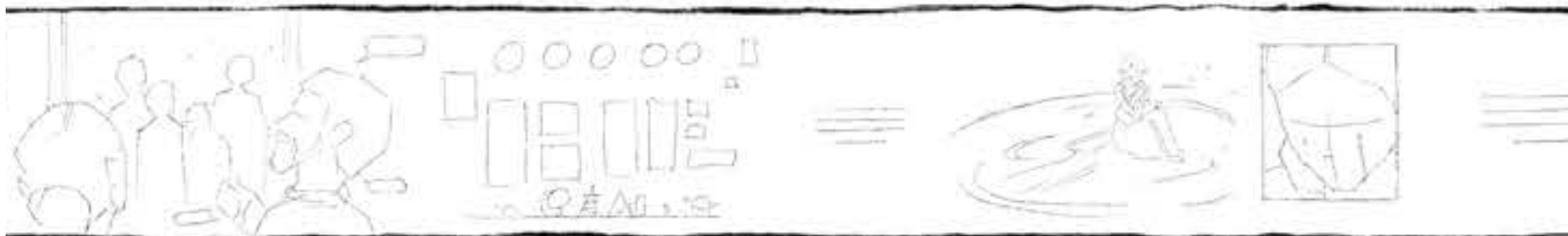
Another method of executing was to use colors to show his spark. So initially the visuals will be in black and white and when the spark is struck and spreads across the characters, they will be represented in color. So when the story begins the visuals will be black and white and by the end, the visuals will be colored.

Layouting









Visual Style



Learnings

Being an illustrator I have executed several graphic novels and books in the medium of print. This project helped me to explore the digital medium and also provided an opportunity how to enhance the digital comic with motion such as the parallax effect. Learning new software and figuring out the execution of it was one of the key learning. Another opportunity presented

itself when it came to the writing of the story itself. Several explorations and writing and rewriting helped me to understand how to write a more effective narrative. Although I personally feel I could have developed it further, I personally feel that I have improved on the way of storytelling and narrating it through a different point of view.