

Thithya- Fulfillment of sacred rituals.
(A film Based on a Himachali Folk tale)

Project 2 Report

Submitted by:

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Animation & Film Design (2009-11)

IDC, IIT Bombay.

Project Guide:

Prof. Nina Sabnani

Declaration sheet

I declare that this written submission represents my idea in my own words and where other's idea or words have been included, 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 misrepresented or fabricated or falsified 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 properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

Signature *Naveen*

Name of the student *Naveen Kisan*

Roll No. *09634007*

Date *31st Dec 2010*

Approval sheet

The Project II titled "Thithya- Fulfillment of sacred rituals" by Naveen Kiran is approved in Partial fulfillment of the requirement for M.Des. Degree In Animation & Film Design.

Guide

Nina Sabu

Ext. Examiner

[Signature]

Internal Examiner

T. Phani

Chairman

K. Rev. S.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my project guide, Prof Nina Sabnani for her guidance and support throughout the project. I am grateful to her for believing in me and my abilities. Her suggestions from time to time have made this project evolve with more maturity and richness.

I also thank to my faculty, Prof. Phani Tetali, Prof. Sumant Rao, Prof. Shilpa Ranade, and Prof. C.P. Narayan for their support and guidance.

I would specially like to thank to Mr. Ajay Kumar and my family for their help and support during the research and data collections for this project. I am truly thankful to Mr. Prakash Murthi whose valuable suggestions helped me to make my film better.

In addition, I thank my seniors, Somnath Pal, Vajra Panchariya, Kunal Parida and my friends K. Abhilash, Sumeet Kalindi, Anindya Kundu, Hemali Vadaliya and Vivek Bhalekar who helped me considerably at various stages of the film.

I am thankful to all the people at IDC, students, faculty, and staff who have helped me to fulfill the requirement for my project by lending their support and facilities every time I needed.

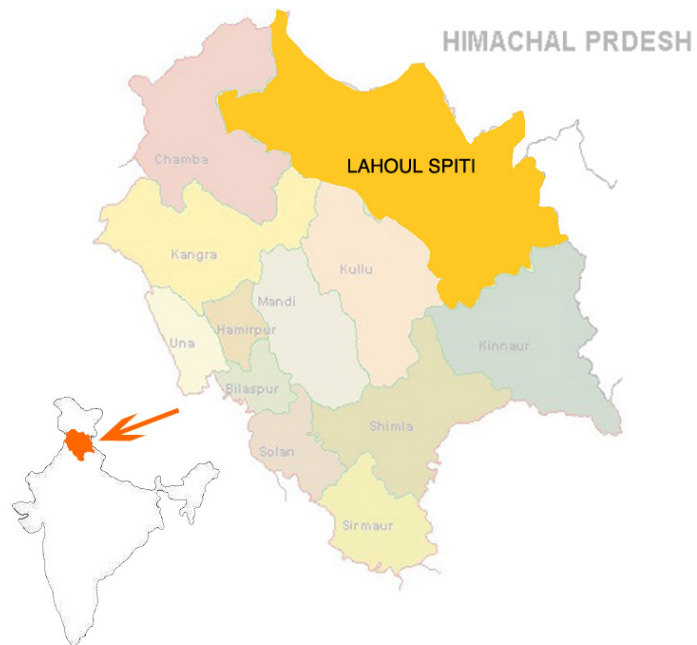
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Abstract

My Project 2 film is an attempt to visualize the folktales of Himachal Pradesh, which are integral part of my childhood memories.

It is a film about a group of hunters who accidentally disturb a ritual performed by spirits. Now they have to complete the ritual to avoid the consequences.



Introduction

Folklore forms the major source of entertainment during the severe winters in Lahoul Spiti, a region in the upper reaches of Himachal Pradesh, when people are confined to their houses due to heavy snowfall.

These folk tales often deal with historical incidents, ghosts and magical creatures, Gods and Goddesses, fairytales, and mythology. They consist of simple stories, but every element has strong relation with the indigenous culture. Much more than just serving the purpose of entertainment, folk tales are a reflection of the culture, society, traditions, and the environment.

Being born and brought up in the heart of Himalayas, listening to such stories remain to be among my most cherished childhood memories. However with the advent of television, the interest in traditional stories is declining among the new generation.

In my project I wish to explore and find my own interpretation of the wide canvas of Himachali folk tales.

Aims and Objectives

Traditionally folktales have been existing through the oral medium. The aim of this project is to explore the possibilities of a new medium to add visual experience to the viewer.

In addition to make a good film my objectives of doing this project are as following.

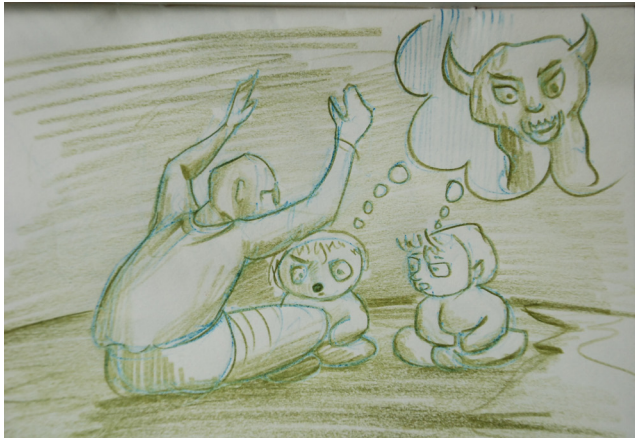
1. Understand how to narrate a story through film as a medium.
2. Learn time and spacing in animation. Achieve smooth motion in a moving body by correct placement of key frames.
- 3 Learn the overall process of an animation film making. Understanding the step by step process of pre production, production and post production by going through them.

Inspiration & Motivation

The idea of making a film on a folktale is largely based on my childhood memories. During my childhood, I was surrounded by stories of ghosts, spirits, talking animals. And for a long period of time, I strongly believed that they existed.

I believed that a family of spirits lived in my house and made noises in the nights by playing a local dice game called '*Cholo*'. I believed that the snowfall was created by an old couple their son and daughter in law. Project 2 was an opportunity for me to translate my innocent childhood imagination into a film.

The films that have inspired me to make a film based on folktales are 'Hedgehog in the Fog' and 'Tale of the Tales' by Russian animator Yuri Norstein. 'Hedgehog in the Fog' simply tells us about the adventure of a small hedgehog in a foggy evening whose friend a bear cub is waiting for him with the raspberry jam. The grey wolf in 'The Tale of the Tales', is basically a common character in many Russian folktales. These stories and characters connect the audience to the region and culture from where they have emerged.



Bedtime stories are narrated by the elderly to the young



Legendary stories based on myths

Background Study

Folklore is the greatest inherited treasure for the inhabitants of any region. And in case of Himachal, it gives a unique cultural identity and belonging to its people. Contemplating on the various forms of folklore I have personally witnessed, I could divide them into four different forms upon their intent and grounding.

One of these forms can be categorized as the bedtime stories. These beautiful tales are usually narrated by the elderly to the young. They form a source of entertainment and also impart practical knowledge to the listeners. For example, similar to the universal tale of the rabbit and tortoise there is a popular tale about a flea and lice who race to the forest for firewood.

Another major form is the collection of folk songs. These are usually performed during public gathering and festivals. They tell about past incidents like the tragedy of an avalanche that took place long ago. They keep the history alive and pay homage to the ancestors.

Other stories have a strong ritual base and are supported by festivals and age old rituals that unify people in their celebration.

Legendary stories based on myths also form a major part of Himachali folklore. The heroes inspire generations to be brave and just; to build a constructive society. The mountain close to my home has a pattern of a snake made by the streams. There is also a rock formation which resembles a meditating monk. Legends tell us a tale of how a monk with flying boots defeated a snake who was plundering a village.



Images from 'Yor festival'



My story for the film '*Thithya*' is based upon a folk tale and the festival of *Yor* related to the tale. This is a major festival of villages around my home, Lahoul Spiti. It takes place in winter and marks the beginning of the New Year according to the traditional calendar. People gather to celebrate and perform many rituals as a prayer for prosperity for the upcoming year. A special dance is performed by selected priests wearing masks and costumes. These masks are called '*Mohras*', and they represent the spirits of nature.

There is historical perspective to this. The region in Himachal that I come from was inhabited by indigenous tribes in many villages. There was an influx of *Rajputs* and *Ranas* who arrived in these lands and integrated into the culture. There are clues to suggest that the festival and the masks were introduced by the incoming people to bring religious influences.

The Story of 'Yor' Festival

In Lahaul Spiti in Himachal Pradesh, the festival 'Yor' is celebrated at the start of the New Year according to the traditional calendar. Many rituals are performed for ensuring prosperity in the upcoming year. A special dance is performed by a group of people, wearing unique masks and dresses called Mohras. This dance is actually a prayer for the well-being of the people, for good crop and healthy children. There is a folktale which explains the origin of this festival.

Long ago a group of hunters led by their chief went on a hunting expedition to a mountainous jungle. On their way they came across a water body. They were surprised to find some magical spirits dancing to the beats of '*Nagaras*' there. Somehow they disturbed the ceremony. The spirits warned the men that they had interrupted an important ritual for natural harmony in future. The humans realized their grave mistake and felt it was their duty to continue this ritual for balance in nature. But their problem was that their music and dance did not match that of the spirits.

The chief had a pet pigeon. In this time of crisis the pigeon volunteered to complete the ceremony. Amazingly the bird's call and flapping of wings matched accurately with the spirits' dance.

Ever since the local people have maintained a tradition of performing the dance dressed as the spirits in winter celebrating the New Year.

Story Development

It started with recollection of all my childhood stories and also some other stories with which I was not familiar. I found some stories which have strong influences upon people's social life. The story of Yor festival is one of such stories on which people of the region strongly believe and practice till date.

The basic story is very abstract and it does not have details of the event necessary for a short film. I tried to detail out the story, events, and characters keeping in mind that the soul of the story should not be disturbed. I could not find any details about the character of the spirits, who they were and what exactly they were doing.

During my research, I came across another mythical character, the winter god with the body of ice who lives in the glacier. As he leaves his home towards the valley, the winter follows him. In the coldest days he spends his time in the confluence of two Rivers Chandra and Bhaga. As he returns, winter recedes and the spring blossoms in the valley.

The purpose of the festival is to pray for good crops and good health for newly born children. Crops are associated with the spring season and it also represents the beginning of new life.

With these two ideas I developed the spirit who controls the cycle of seasons and an occasion when winter is about to end and spring season is on its way.

Another problem was in the event when the hunters found the spirits and disturb their activity. There was not any clear hint how they disturbed them. Initial idea that I developed was that because of fear or curiosity or an urge to overcome a stronger power, the hunters try to capture the spirits. But it did not work out because capturing the spirits does not seem acceptable.

Then second idea came that they accidently hit the spirits by their arrow while hunting an ibex.

the event of pigeon's dancing and singing also needed refinement. This character suddenly appear in the original story. In my version of the story, the pigeon already knew about the spirits and their activities.

Pre-Production

Script

Fade in

A dark room. The light is coming from a small window.

Someone is tying the laces of his shoes. A leather overcoat is being taken from the hook and worn. Gloves are being tightened up on the hands. A bundle of rope is being taken from the wall and tied around the waist. Bow and arrow is being taken from the wall. A spear is being lifted. A dagger is being put into its sheath.

Three men appear outside a small house made of stones and timber. They are wearing woolen and leather cloths. The man on the right side is a tall young guy carrying a bow and arrows. The middle man is 40-45 years old with a spear in his hand. The last man in the left is a short guy in his 30s with a rope tied in his waist and a dagger. A pigeon flies down and sits on the shoulder of the middle man. They start walking. The pigeon flies up in the sky.

Fade out.

The space is filled with fog. Snow covered mountains are not clearly visible. Sloppy land is filled with full of big and small rocks covered with snow. A small creature is moving on a rock. It's a pigeon. It is staring at something with a continuous movement in its head. A reflection of some colorful light is visible in its eyes. It turns its head and sees something. It comes to attention and flies off.

The pigeon is flying in a snow covered valley. Clouds are getting dark. Snow fall is about to start. We can see some snowflakes falling in the air. A river is flowing down in the valley. A small village establishment is visible now. There is a bridge across the river. The pigeon crosses over the river.

On the other side of the river we can see some creatures moving. The pigeon starts flying down.

One of the people notices the pigeon and whistles. The pigeon replies back in its voice.

Heavy snow fall starts and the wind is flowing very fast. The animal is an ibex and is running very fast. The three men are the hunters and they are chasing the ibex. The man with bow and arrow is the shooter and is trying to aim the ibex. He fails in his first attempt. He chases it for few more steps. The second man is the leader of the group and is following the shooter. He is giving instructions to the shooter.

The third short man is a carrier. He looks tired and lazy and is trying to follow them.

The ibex is reaching a small cliff. The shooter aims it. Ibex starts jumping and climbing the cliff. Shooter releases the arrow but it misses the ibex. It is now at the top of the cliff and it jumps to the other side. Another arrow hits a stone nearby. Three men stand together. They are looking towards the cliff.

Fade out.

Fade in

At the top of the cliff. Hands appear and hold the rock. The shooter is climbing up followed by other two men. They all reach the top of the cliff and anticipate moving ahead. But all of them get stunned. They are staring at something.

Some huge mysterious figures are on the bank of the river. They are spirits. Two of them are dancing around a giant lamp (DEEYA) with the music of instruments Nagara and Shehnai, played by other three spirits. One spirit appears to be related with the winters and the other one with spring. Rest of the three looks similar. The winter spirit is standing on a small platform on the ground. There is a glow around him. Spring spirit is standing in front of him below on the ground.

Aurora and rainbow colors are generated with their dancing steps and moves. The hunters move forward and hide themselves behind a small snow mound.

The pigeon lands and sits on the leader's shoulder. It looks towards the spirits, his eyes widen up and smiles. It spreads its wings and starts dancing. Aurora appears around him. The carrier sees it. He grabs the pigeon and ties its wings. The pigeon starts singing and moves its head. Auroras start appearing. The man ties its beak. Pigeon starts moving its tail. The man makes it stuck in the snow. The other two fellows don't notice this. Now the spirits are holding each other's hand. The glow of winter spirit is disappearing and spring season starts glowing. They exchange their positions.

Suddenly the snow fall stops. The sky gets clear and warm and pleasant sunlight hits the ground. Water droplets start dripping from the icicles hanging from the tree branches.

The three men and pigeon are watching all this surprisingly. Suddenly the man with bow and arrow notices the ibex on the other side hiding behind a bush. He quickly puts an arrow on his bow and aims it. Seeing this, the man beside him gets shocked and tries to stop him; he holds his hand but fails to stop him to release the arrow. All this leads to an accident. Arrow hits the giant lamp and blows off its light.

Everything stops. The auroras and lights vanish. Clouds are coming back. This time more darker. Water dripping from icicles starts freezing.

The spirits stop dancing. Suddenly their size reduces and become of human size. They are quite and calm. They look at the hunters. The hunters get up. The shooter is silent but ready for any moment. The leader comes two steps forward. His face looks worried. The carrier is trembling with fear.

The spirits speak together. They tell them they are the spirits who control the cycle of seasons. It is the time when winter ends and spring season starts, and they were performing the ritual for this change in the seasons. Now the hunters have interrupted the ritual and failed the spirits to complete the process, they can't continue it further. If humans want smooth functioning of the system they have to continue the whole rituals by their own. After this the spirits disappear.

Now the hunters are tensed. They all look around and at each other's face. The leader looks at the shooter's face who is looking eagerly at the musical instruments. Nagara and Shehnai are lying on the ground. He rushes to them and picks the sticks of Nagara. He sits there and hits it once. As the sound of the Nagara echoes, a small amount of aurora appears. Shooter's eyes shine with excitement. Seeing this, the carrier also rushes towards him and stands beside him. The shooter starts playing. The aurora starts generating around him. Suddenly some electric sparks appear in between the aurora. Sounds of the clouds. A huge sound and a strong lightning hits the ground near him. Everyone is frightened.

The carrier takes the Shehnai and starts playing. Again aurora starts appearing. The leader is watching and observing them. Sound of glasses comes. The leader looks above. A large number of sharp icicles are coming down. They hit the ground. The three hunters struggle to save themselves from getting injured. They are moving their body parts and icicles are hitting the spot.

Icicles stop falling. Everyone is lying on the ground. The leader lifts his head and looks around. His eyes widen up. The pigeon got stuck in between two icicles. It is struggling as its body is been tied. The leader gets up and rushes towards it. He releases from the icicles and untie his body and beak.

rushes towards it. He releases from the icicles and untie his body and beak. Its shakes its feather and flies to a rock. As it flies the aurora appear around it. Seeing this, the leader's eyes wide open with a shine. He turns back. He sees the instruments, and the giant lamp which was put off. He runs towards the lamp. He takes two pieces of stone from his pocket and strikes them. A spark is generated and the lamp starts lighting.

He goes to the other two fellows gives them some instructions and comes back to the pigeon. He smiles to the pigeon. The pigeon makes disgusting face. It is upset.

The leader extends his hand towards the pigeon. The pigeon still looks annoyed. Then it slowly its face and expression changes to a smile. It hops on to the leader's arm. The leader carries the bird to the spot of the ritual. The leader moves its other hand in a gesture. The pigeon flies and starts dancing and singing. Aurora appears around him and the other two men start playing the instruments following the bird's sounds and movement. The magical light spreads around and the snowflakes start dancing. The nature begins to flourish in beauty.

Story Board



Someone is tying the laces of his shoes



A leather overcoat is being taken from the hook and worn



Gloves are being tightened up on the hands.



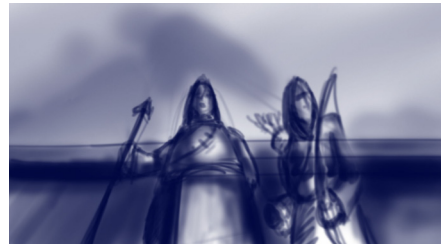
A bundle of rope is being taken from the wall



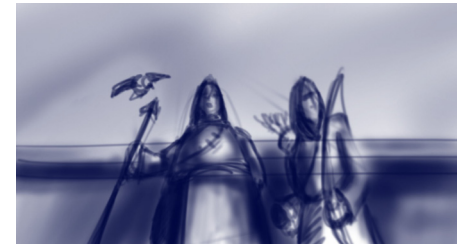
Bow and arrow is being taken from the wall



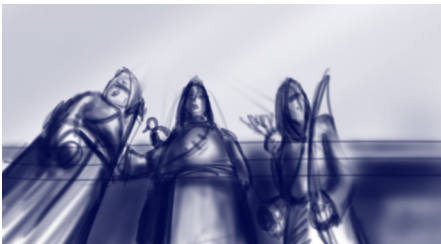
A spear is being lifted



two men appear outside a small house made of stones and timber



A pigeon joins them



a third man comes.



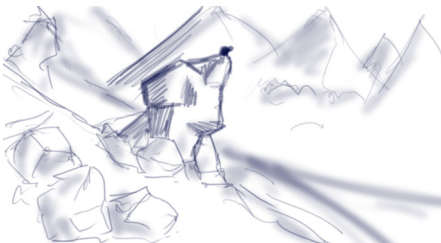
They start walking



The pigeon flies up in the sky.



Title



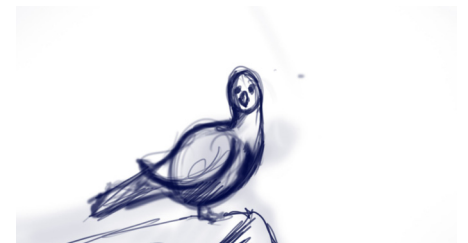
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It's a pigeon. It is staring at something with a continuous movement in its head



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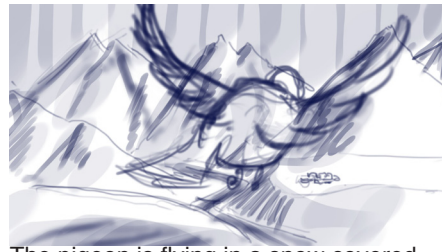


It turns its head and sees something. It

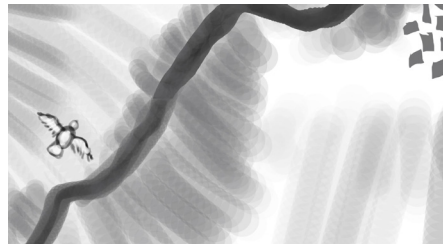
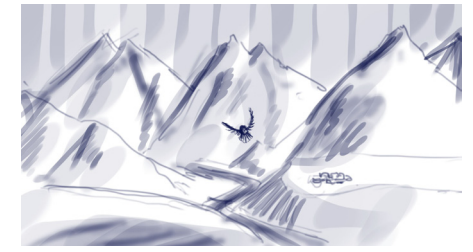
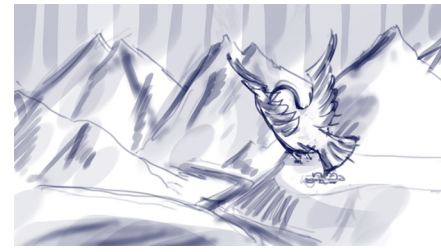
Story Board



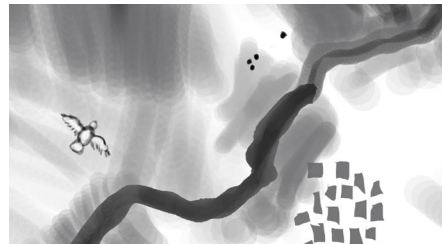
It comes to attention and flies off



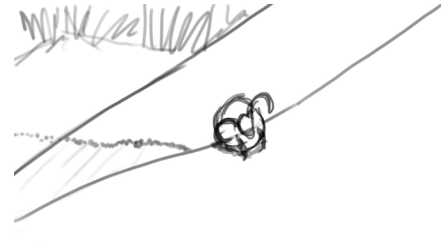
The pigeon is flying in a snow covered valley



. A river is flowing down in the valley. A small village establishment is visible now



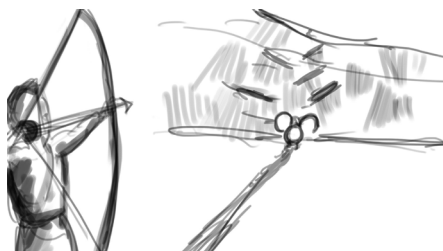
On the other side of the river we can see some creatures moving. The pigeon starts flying down.



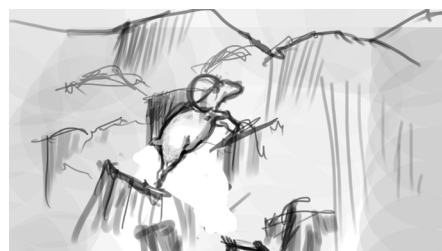
ibex and is running very fast.



The three men are the hunters and they are chasing the ibex



The ibex is reaching a small cliff. The shooter aims it.



Ibex starts jumping and climbing the cliff. Shooter releases the arrow but it misses the ibex.



It is now at the top of the cliff and it jumps to the other side.



Three men stand together. They are looking towards the cliff.



At the top of the cliff



Hands appear and hold the rock. The shooter is climbing up followed by other two men

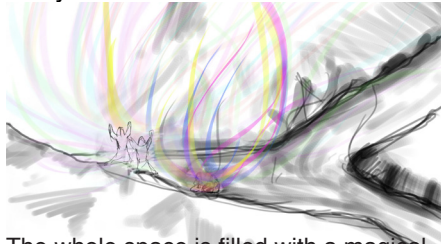


They all reach the top of the cliff and anticipate moving ahead



But all of them get stunned. They are staring at something.

Story Board



The whole space is filled with a magical rainbow colored light, aurora. Some huge mysterious figures are on the bank of the river.



The pigeon lands and sits on the leader's shoulder



It looks towards the spirits, his eyes widen up and smiles



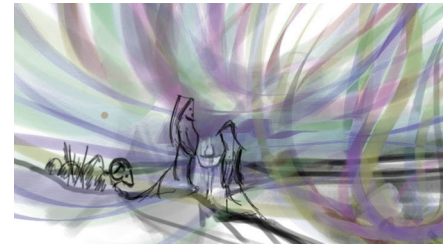
It spreads its wings and starts dancing. Aurora appears around him. The carrier sees it.



He grabs the pigeon and makes it stuck in the snow.



Ibex starts jumping and climbing the cliff. Shooter releases the arrow but it misses the ibex.



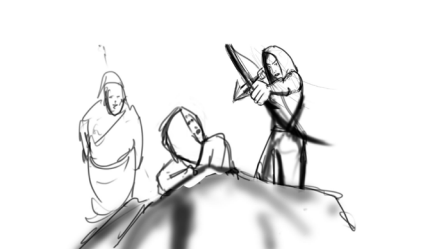
Now the spirits are holding each other's hand. The glow of winter spirit is disappearing and spring season starts



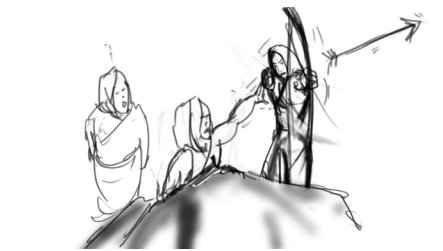
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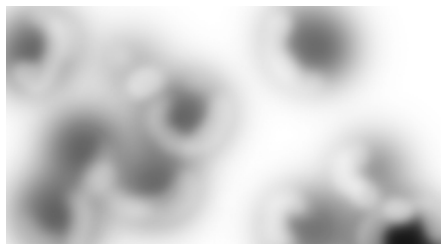
Seeing this, the man beside him gets shocked and tries to stop him



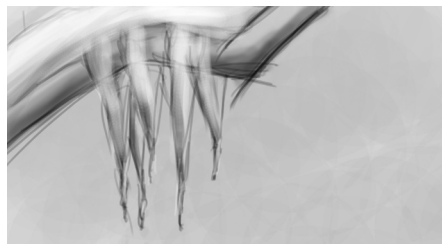
He holds his hand but fails to stop him to release the arrow. All this leads to an accident.



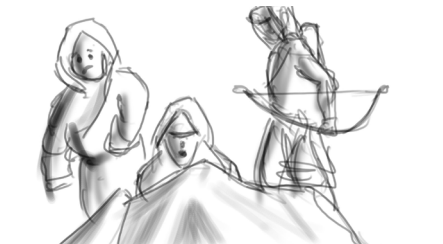
Arrow hits the giant lamp and blows off its light.



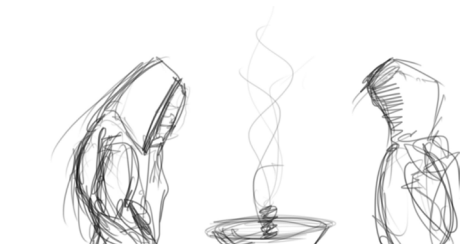
Everything stops. Clouds are coming back. This time more darker.



Water dripping from icicles starts freezing.



The hunters get up. The shooter is silent but ready for any moment. The leader comes two steps forward.



They are the spirits who control the cycle 22 of seasons.

Story Board



He rushes to them and picks the sticks of Nagara. he sits there and hits it once. v



The shooter starts playing. The aurora starts generating around him.



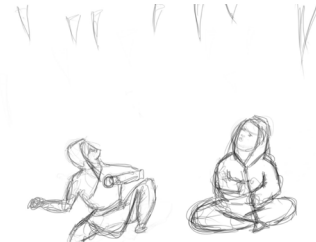
Suddenly Sounds of the clouds. A huge sound and a strong lightning hits the ground near him.



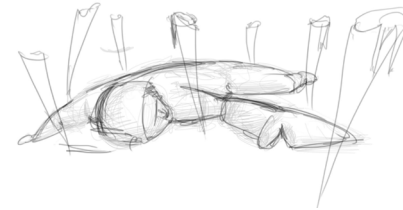
The carrier takes the Shehnai and starts playing.



Again aurora starts appearing.



A large number of sharp icicles are coming down. They hit the ground. Hunters struggle to save themselves from getting injured



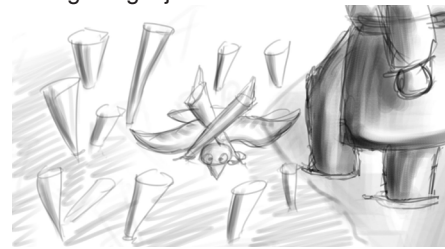
They are moving their body parts and icicles are hitting the spot.



. The pigeon got stuck in between two icicles. It is struggling as its body is been tied.



The leader gets up and rushes towards it.



He releases from the icicles and



untie his body and beak



It shakes its feather and flies to a rock.



As it flies the aurora appear around it.



Seeing this, the leader's eyes wide open with a shine. He turns back.



He runs towards the lamp.



He takes two pieces of stone from his pocket and strikes them. A spark is generated and the lamp starts lighting. v

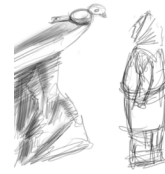
Story Board



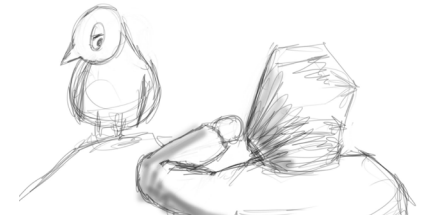
He goes to the other two fellows



gives them some instructions



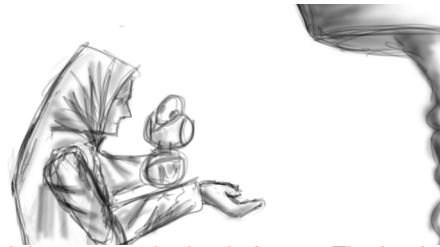
and comes back to the pigeon. The pigeon makes disgusting face. It is upset.



The leader extends his hand towards the pigeon. The pigeon still looks annoyed.



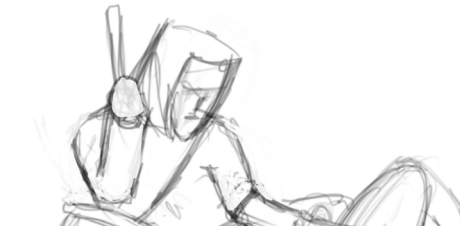
Then it slowly its face and expression changes to a smile..



It hops on to the leader's arm. The leader carries the bird to the spot of the ritual. The leader moves its other hand in a gesture.



The pigeon flies and starts dancing and singing.



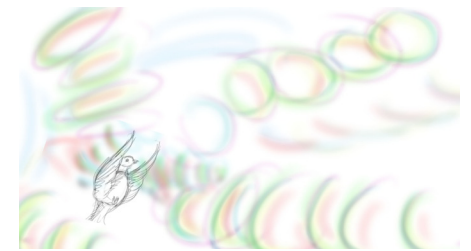
Aurora appears around him and the other two men start playing the instruments



following the bird's sounds and movement.



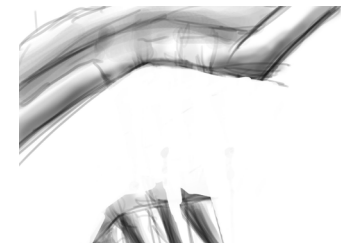
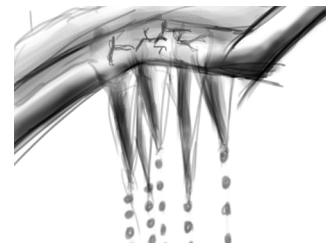
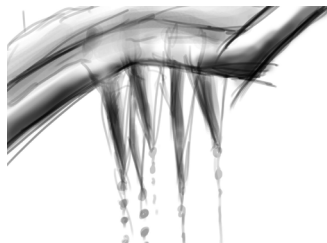
The magical light spreads around



snowflakes start dancing. The nature begins to flourish in beauty.



The nature begins to flourish in beauty.



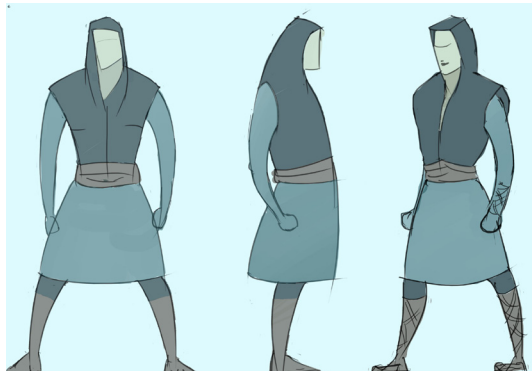
Character Design & Conceptual Layout



Three hunters are of different nature.

The leader is very intelligent and mature person who always thinks before taking any action.

The Leader



The shooter is a young hot blooded aggressive guy whose impatience and hyperactive nature created all the problem.

The Shooter

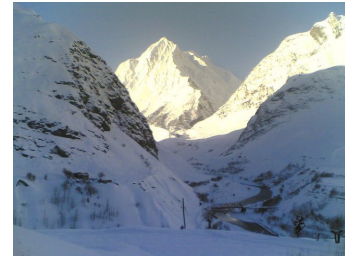
And the third guy is a stupid fellow who always adds upon the mess already created.



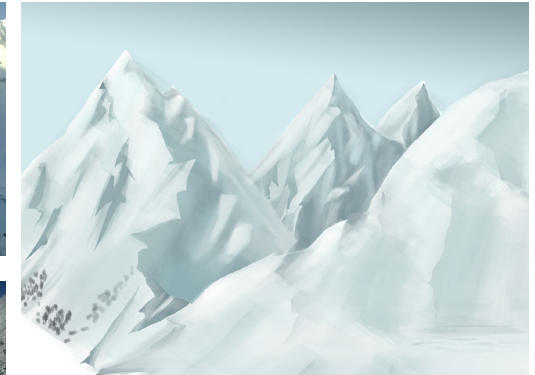
The Helper



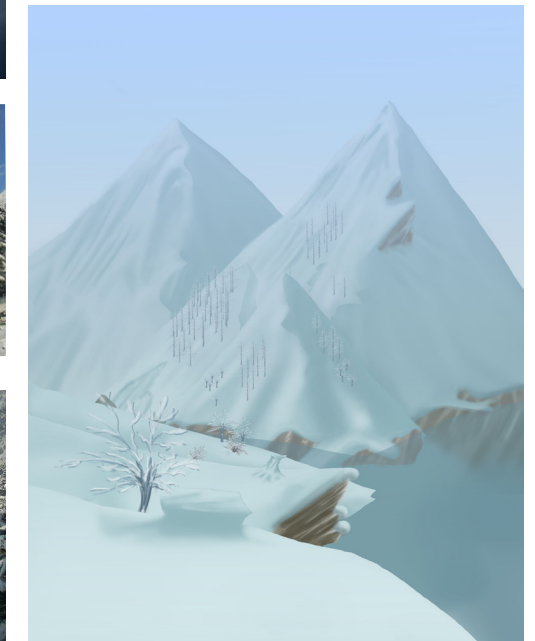
The spirit and the magical effects



Reference images of the Himalayas in *Lahoul Spiti*



conceptual back ground of mountains



Production, Post Production

Once the story was finalized and story board was developed, I lined up the story board on a time line and prepared a rough animatic.

The biggest challenges in the process of Production and Post Production were:

- To get smooth movement and motion in the characters,
- to visualize and create some magical effects in the film.

I chose paperless animation method by using Adobe Flash software. Through this software I could get quick preview of the animation and also saved a lot of time of line testing and scanning the drawings.

Back grounds were created in Photoshop and composited with the characters in After Effects.

I followed lot of tutorials for After Effects and created the special effects required for the film.

Finally the film was edited in Adobe Premiere along with the sound track.

Conclusion

The process of development of the idea into a film was an enriching experience. The folktale that was chosen had a lot of meanings embedded in it. It was a pleasant experience attempting to interpret the folktale in my own way and creating a visual narrative for it.

The process of making a film gave me a good evaluation of my strengths and weaknesses. It also gave a boost of confidence. Having gone through the process of making a film, I can now see films in a new perspective hitherto not experienced.

The kind of film that I ventured to make at the outset was very ambitious. I was not able to achieve the initial style of the visuals that I had intended. I managed to do a more practically achievable visual style. The principles and nuances of animation that I got to learn in the process of making the film was phenomenal. I got to improve a lot in terms of animation considering the stage I was at the beginning of the film. There is still a long way to go but the initial improvements encourage me to go further in learning more.

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