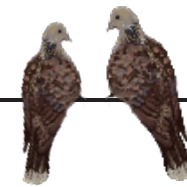




# Ghughuti

A Story of Three Generations



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*Guided by*  
**Prof. Raja Mohanty**



*To that voice in our heart silenced by our everyday hustles  
and a lost piece of self that once brought us joy.*

*To growing and learning together  
and finding that piece back again.*



Inspiration

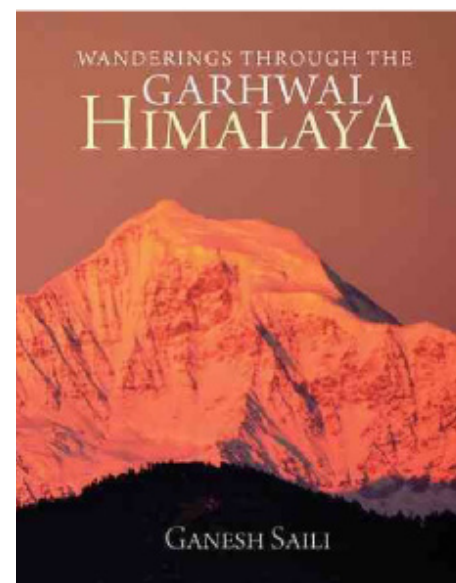
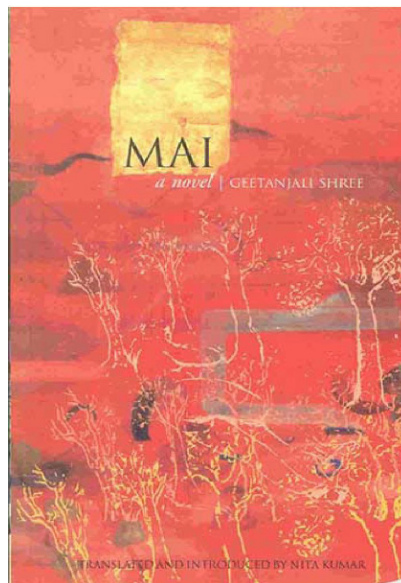
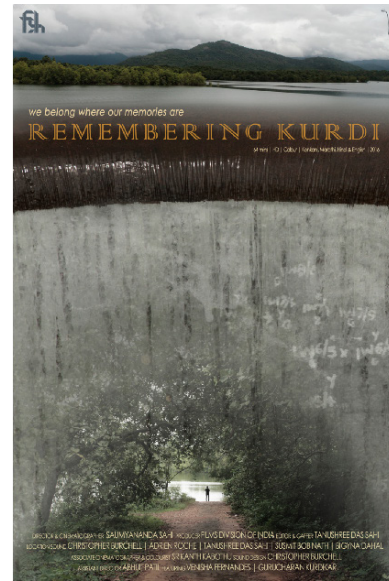




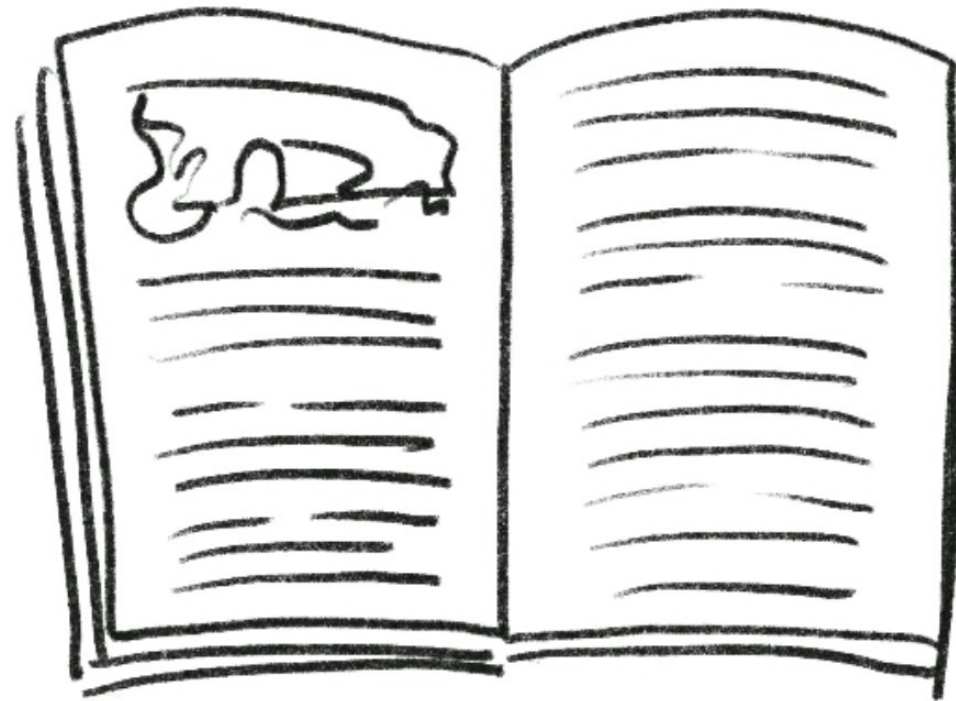












A Slice of Life

"Shh, look closer," she said in a much softer tone of voice, pulling me closer and pointing in the same direction. I squinted my eyes and finally saw it.

It was a bird sitting on a branch of a tree, flaunting all possible shades of brown and spotted with some. It camouflaged with the branch it perched on and I could only spot it because it looked around with sudden, jerky head movements, much like pigeons do. Multiple layers of feathers that dressed its form, frisked along the wind.

"Arrey, Ghughuti," murmured Vicky.

It was the first time I had seen one. I'd grown up listening to my mother recite,

"Ghughuti, tu kya khaandi? Doodh Bhati!

# Kal dechho?

Aa jitbue la!

## Kakun dechho?

# Nanhi Thalun!

Kan khe chho? Gulgulgulgulgulgulgul!"

(Ghughuti, what do you eat? Milk and rice

Who gave it?

Jethi bua gave

In what?

In a small plate.

How did you eat it? Gulgulgulgulgulgulgul!" )

And with that last line, she would hold me up in the air and pretending to be an airplane I would stretch my arms out. But now that I think about it, I'd have liked to be a Ghughuti instead.

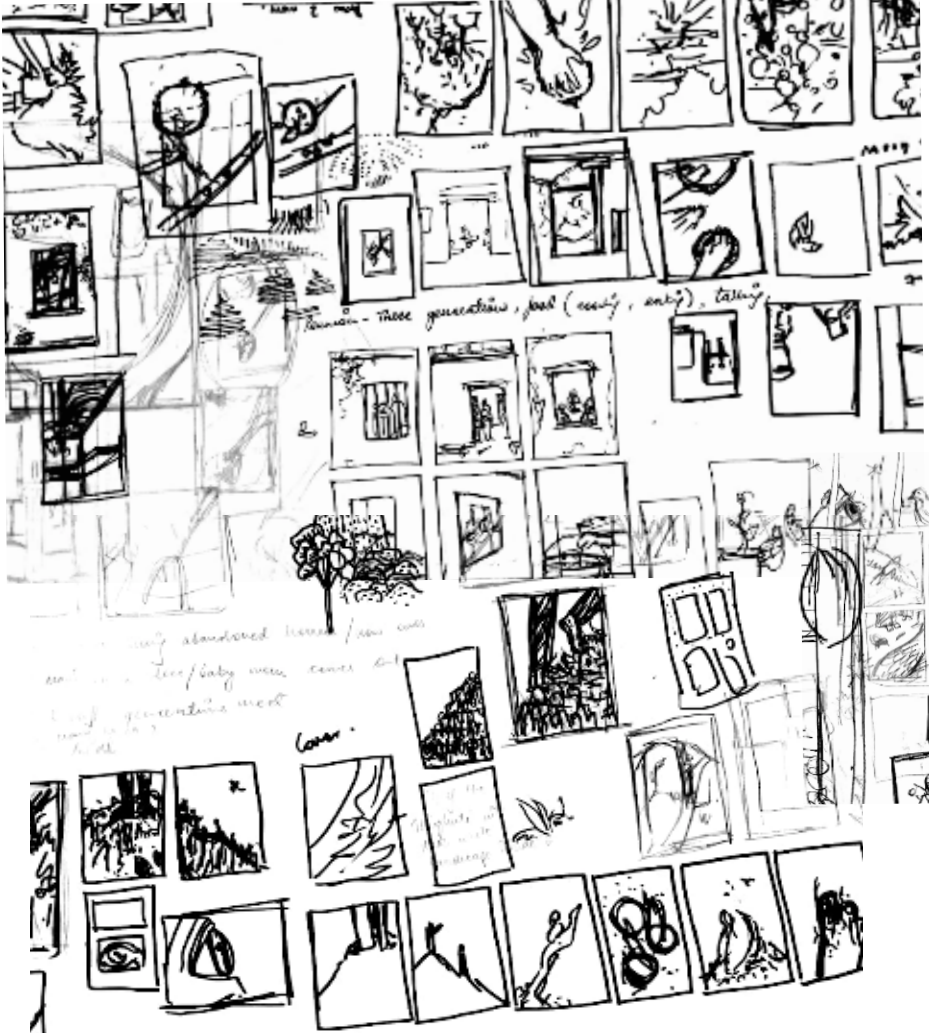
"Ghughuti is a rare sight nowadays," said Vicky.

I hurriedly unzipped my camera bag and pulled out my camera that very instant, but the moment I looked up, it was gone. I hoped I'd have looked at it for longer, to see where it had flown.

Faded memories transformed into vivid ones. As a child I would keep a small

bowl of rice, on the ledge of our balcony, hoping a Ghughuti would come and eat the doodh bhaat and my thirst to know whether 'gulugulugulugulu' was really the sound it made would be quenched, but it never came.

I remember asking my mother, why that was so, and in a voice lower than usual, perhaps tired of longing, she would answer, "Ghughutis don't like cities. They like to fly over the mountains."





**The story  
in a nutshell...**



The story  
in a nutshell...

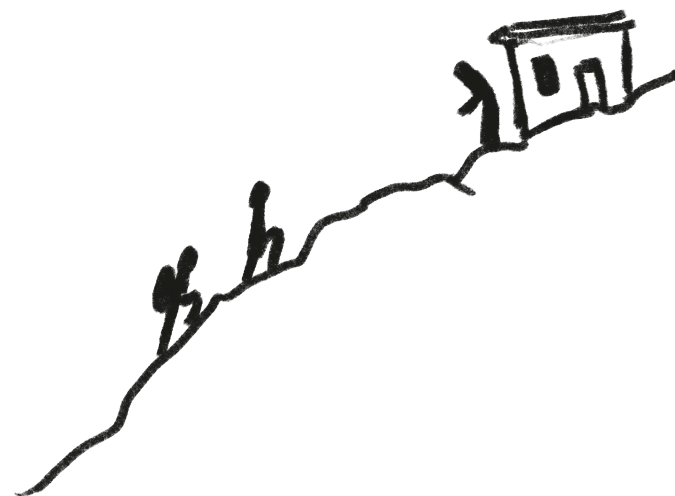




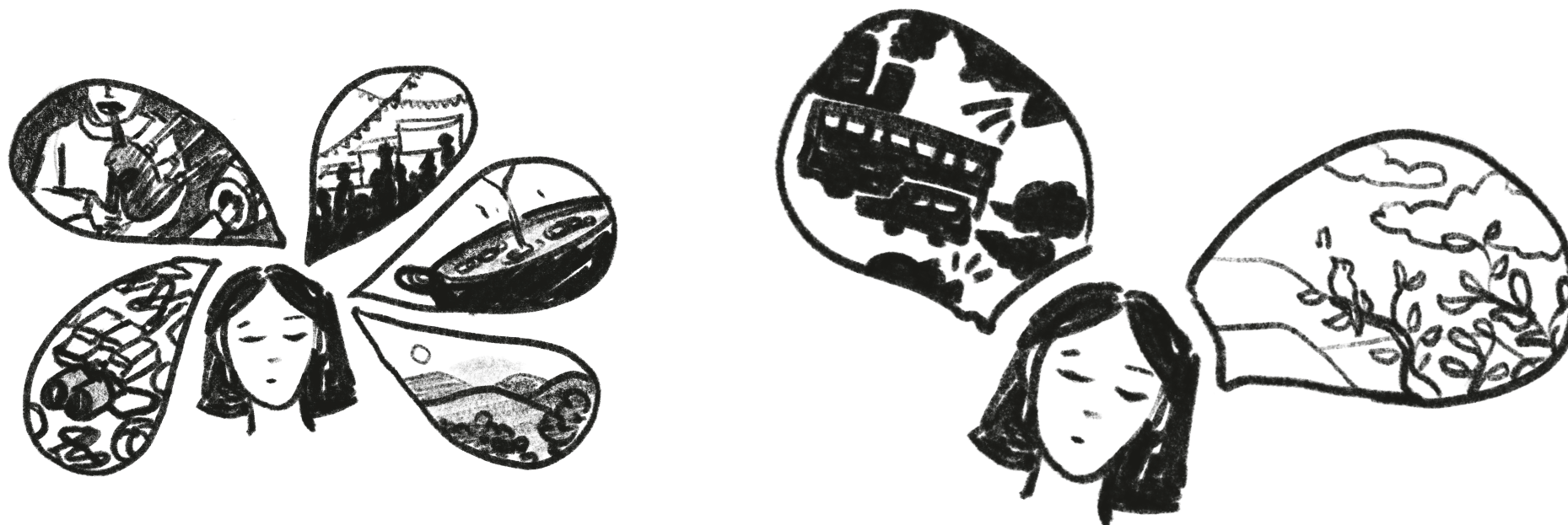
The story  
in a nutshell...



The story  
in a nutshell...







The story  
in a nutshell...





The story  
in a nutshell...



# Main Characters





# Main Characters

**The mother** with a lost identity





# Main Characters

**The grandmother** with a new  
found sense of self and  
freedom

**The mother** with a lost identity



# Main Characters

**The daughter** exploring the idea of a fulfilling life through her conversations, experiences and constant internal dialogue

**The grandmother** with a new found sense of self and freedom

**The mother** with a lost identity





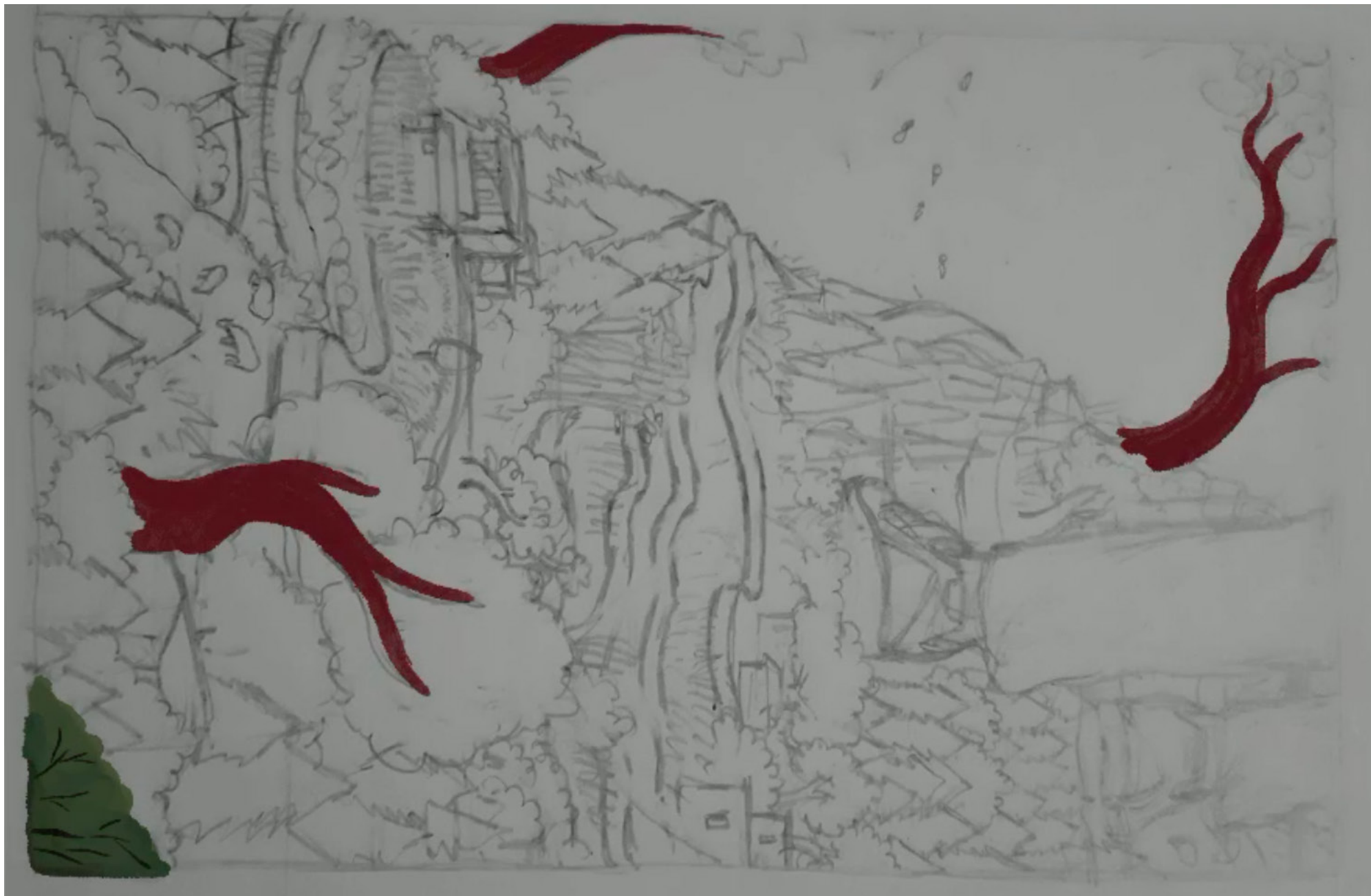
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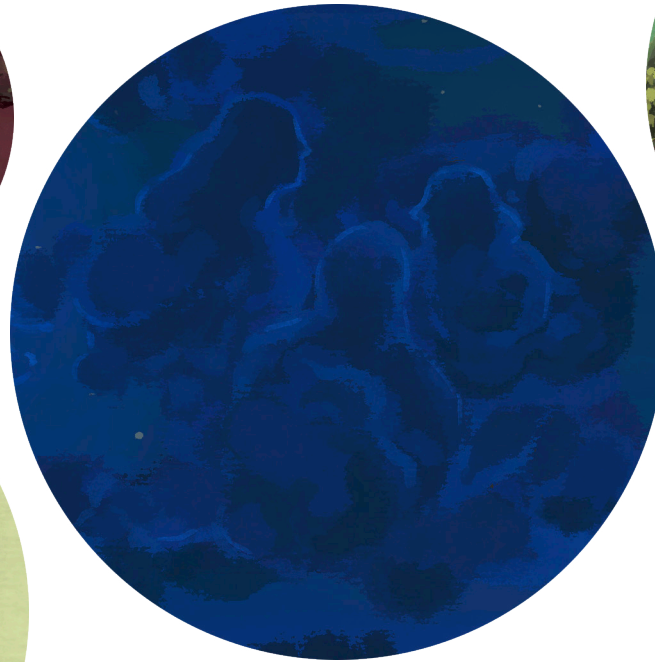
# Ghughuti

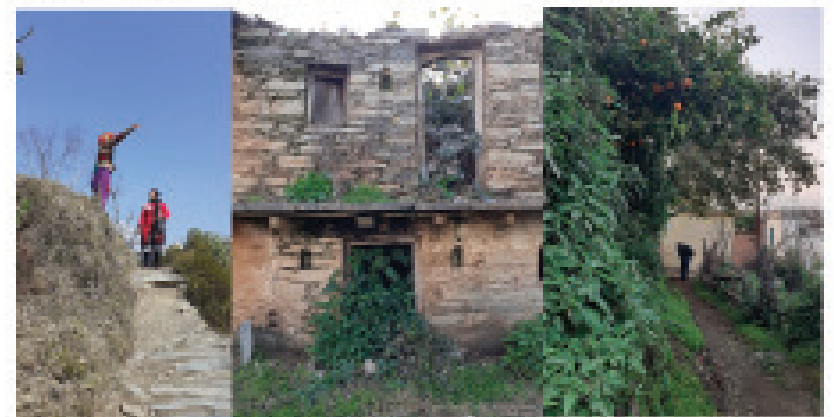
# Major Themes



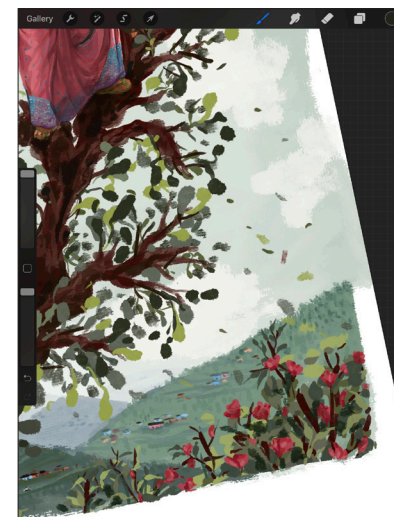
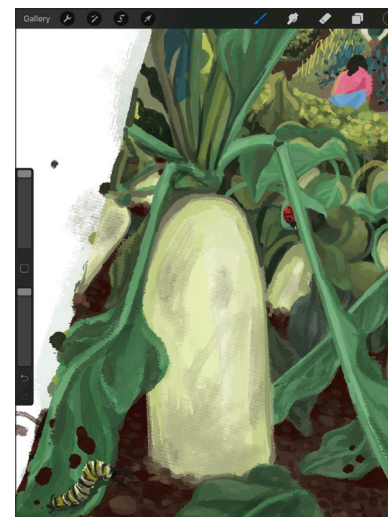
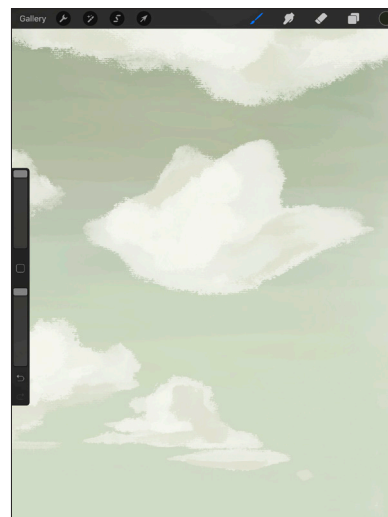
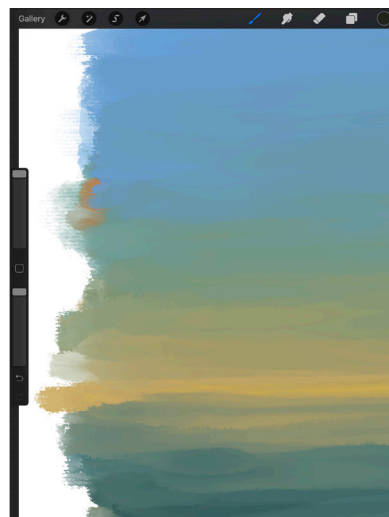
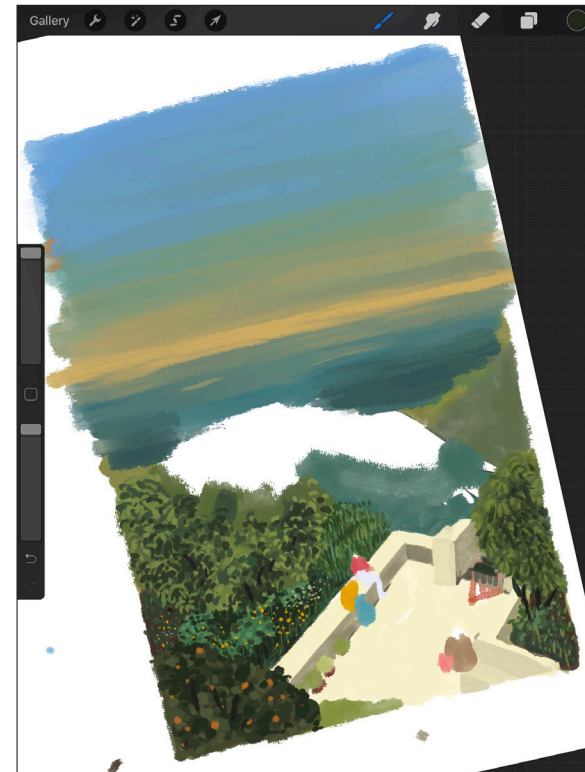
## **Sub-Themes**

















## Homecoming

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“There’s hardly a man in sight”, I said to Vicky.  
“Arrey, It’s always like this here, except during *Kauthik*. That’s the only time when most of the children come to visit this old mother,” replied Vicky, helping us with our luggage.

That was true. Maa too visited Chamali only when *Kauthik* unfolded in its full glory once a year. Almost everyone who had moved to cities would come back to make offerings to the Goddess and relish the fair. There were hawkers selling bangles, toys, slingshots, and cheap binoculars, constantly telling curious kids not to touch or break anything. There were games with prizes such as packs of branded noodles or biscuits that were hard to find on the mountains. Throw the ring onto the object to acquire it and go home with the original ‘Lux’ instead of the locally popular ‘Lax’. To the locals, brands did not matter yet they were well aware they made a difference to us.

I was always intrigued by the cultural gaiety but hardly ever felt like a true participant compared to those who had tended to these mountains with their sweat and blood over the years. This feeling would grow even more when I would struggle to understand what was being said during the rituals and when I couldn’t sing along Garhwali songs while everyone sang and danced. We were merely blue moons that paid a visit once in a while.

Towards the end of the fair, the musicians would play Garhwali folk songs







## Memoirs

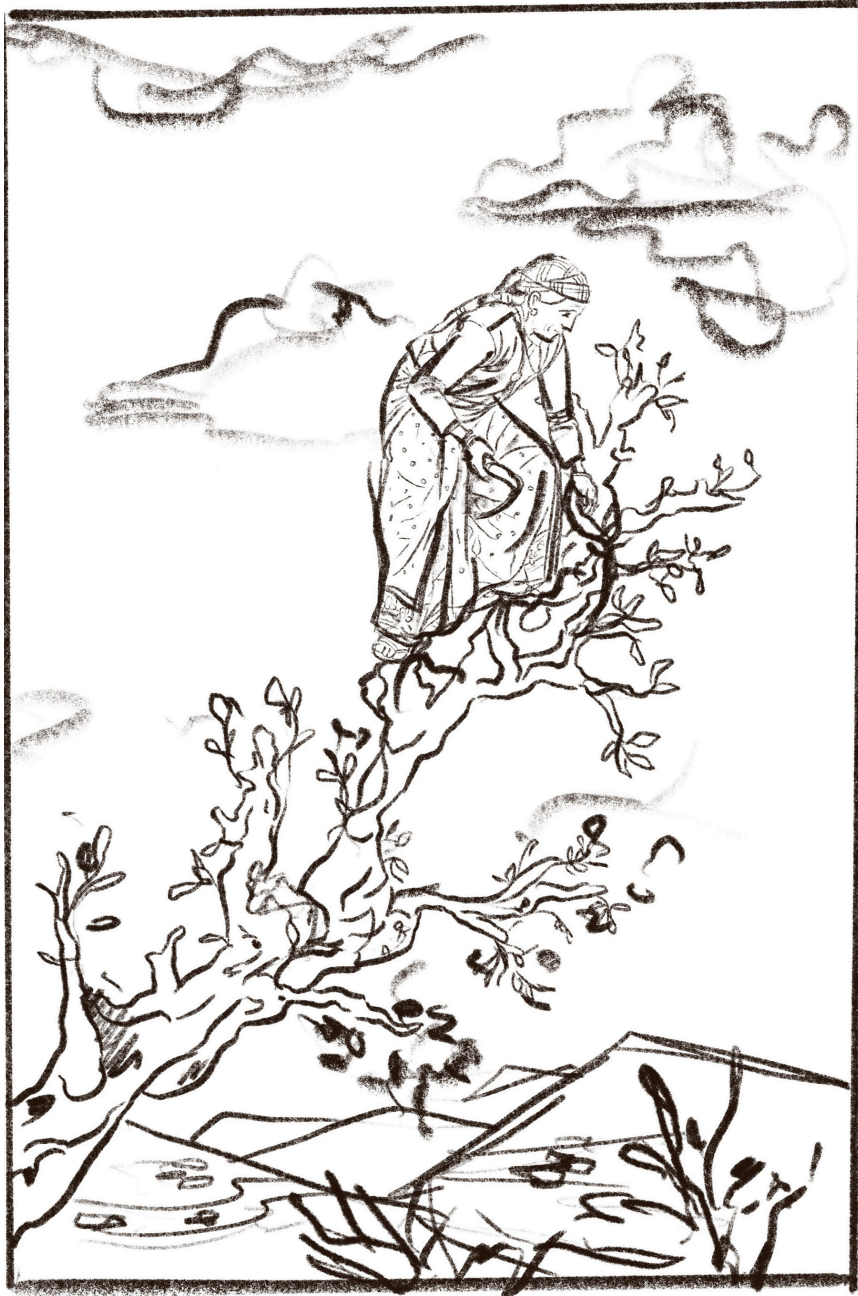
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Faint sounds of annoyed baby goats and yapping puppies joined nature's orchestra and I could tell we were almost there. Flora and houses with wooden pillars sandwiched the meandering stepped trails. The houses were plastered with mud, painted in bright blues, pinks, and yellows. Foliage grew out of the cracks in the muddy walls and stacks of flaked stones created short sturdy walls on either side of the pathway. Every time I walked past a garden, a loud buzzing of bees filled the air with vibrations as they hovered from flower to flower, leaf to leaf, appearing and disappearing.

There were broken fragments of large pillars of wood and flat stones that once stood as a tall house for centuries, heaped next to the new one constructed out of bricks and concrete that had now taken its place. Broken pieces of hard mud were piled up and still held onto color. Those who had migrated to the cities and were doing well had rebuilt their ancestral houses into more urban styled ones, with glass windows and white walls that could hear their laughter only once in a year.

Many houses were abandoned and had disintegrated. Some had no doors or windows, roofs; long tumbled down and many were missing walls. They appeared like ancient ruins, weathered and aged, having witnessed centuries of change and rest, surrounded by an air of stories that were born out of them and still lingered between the broken walls.







## Lost and Found

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*“Eh bue! (Oh mother!) Thoona!”*

The voice came somewhere from above. I looked up and there was a woman who looked old enough to have a sixty-five-year-old offer her their seat on a bus. She was standing on the edge of a branch of a Bhiul tree that seemed at least seventeen feet tall. The tree was right on the edge from where an escarpment falling the length of an adult giraffe began.

Maa once told me she was called Thoona as a child because of the sound her anklets made when she walked. *‘Thun thun thun thun’* is how she described the sound. The name seemed alien to me. It did not sound like it belonged to her. Maa and Nupur did. Thoona was someone I did not know.

“Such a long time! How are you doing? Still in Delhi?” she yelled. The branch she stood on bounced up and down as she chopped down the flimsy stems with leaves and threw them onto the ground to be picked up later.

“I’m good, how have you been?” Maa yelled back, prompting me to greet her. *“Namaste Nani!”* I wished her out aloud.

*“Eh bue! You’ve grown! Blessings, blessings! Wait let me come down,”* she







## Long-Awaited

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“Oh you’re here! *Eh bue*, so long!” she yelled from the garden. She wiped her hands onto her apron and began to walk towards us hurriedly. Her face looked much older than I remembered from around three years ago creased with new wrinkles. Her back had relatively straightened out and she appeared slightly taller. Her eyelids had become heavier and droopier and her lips looked like parched fields. Her enthusiasm though had not changed a bit.

“Naniiii!” I cried out as Maa and I reached out to invite her for a hug. “Ahh Nupur, you’ve started looking a little old huh, *Eh Bue!* Nidhi, finally got time!”, she said, taking me in her arms unable to wrap them around because of my bag belly. “Oh please stop! It’s just a few grey hair,” Maa replied, pushing a strand of grey hair behind her ear. “Arrey Nani, I’ve just been occupied with studies and work, it’s my last semester,” I told her.

“Yes yes, studies are important but take a break once in a while or you’ll lose sight of what’s beyond,” she said as she gently pushed my shoulder leading me inside the house and helping me shed off my turtle shells. I let out a loud sigh of relief as my shoulders got released from the burden. Those were some heavy bags and even if they weren’t, all the trekking and the sun had weighed them down twice their weight.

“You know, when I was your age, I could carry thrice the weight and trek







## Ghughuti

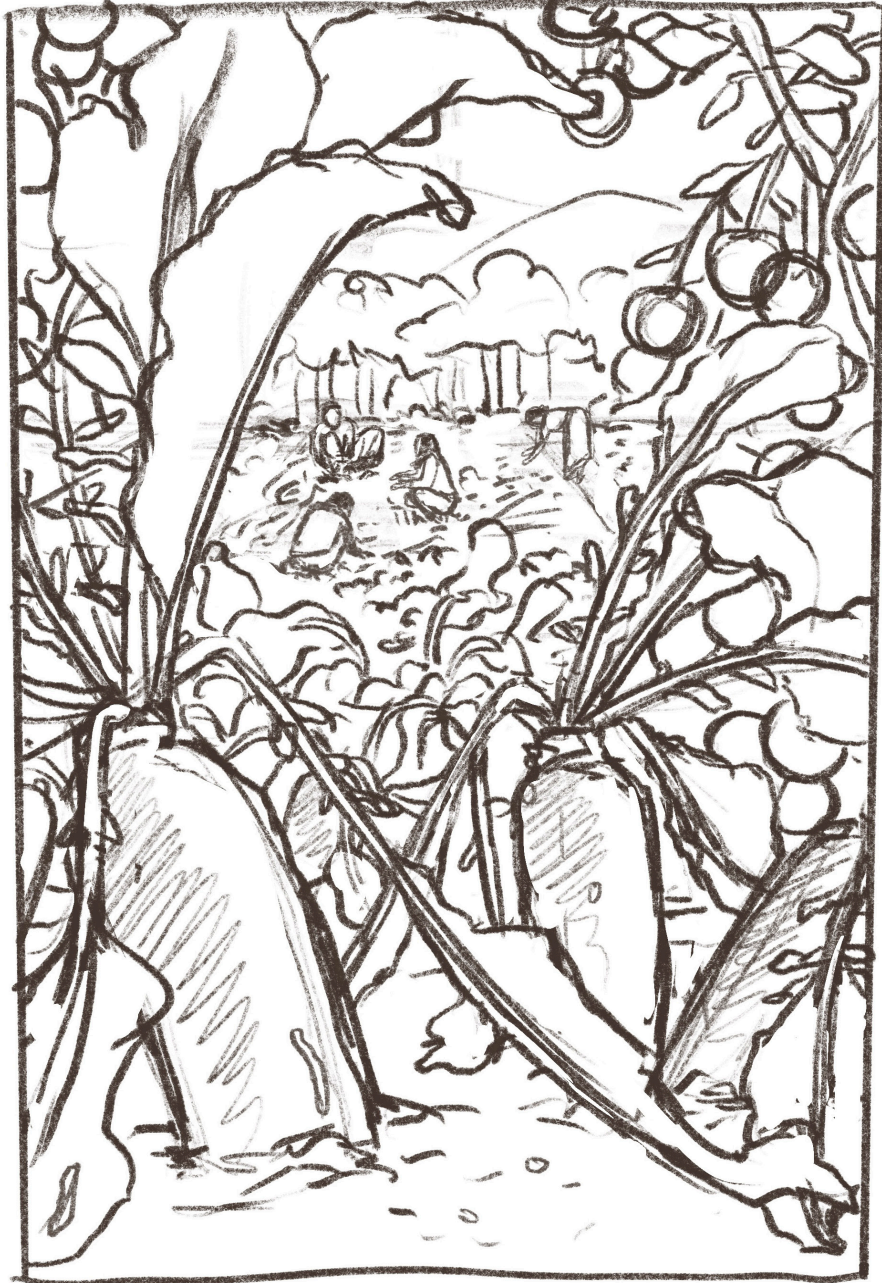
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Everyday, we would sit in the courtyard talking for hours. Sitting there, one could witness both, the sunrise and the sunset. The sky was open and endless. The fluffy white clouds looked like a fleet of ships sailing through the azure sky which had started to change color every passing minute. More than anything it looked like a painting in progress. The longer I watched, the more the abstract forms began to clasp onto a meaning. Clouds began to appear like beings; a diving man, a giant running elephant, a leaping frog among many others, as they moved slowly and steadily towards the farthest of mountains. The Himalayan range could be seen peeking out of the dense haze that dressed the sundry layers of mountains.

My mind was at rest and it did not try to wander into the past or the future; into the missed opportunities or the awaiting competition. It was not distracted by the sound of a notification or the reminder of a deadline. It was in the sky, on one of the clouds, floating at a snail's pace towards nowhere.

I had not felt like this in a long time and naturally, I wanted to bottle up this feeling forever. I wanted to stay. But what would I do if I stayed here? How could I find a new life in a place which was already on the verge of abandonment? And more so how could I step out of the life that constantly revolved around family, friends, work, and ways of life I had developed in the past years of living in a city?







## To Grow

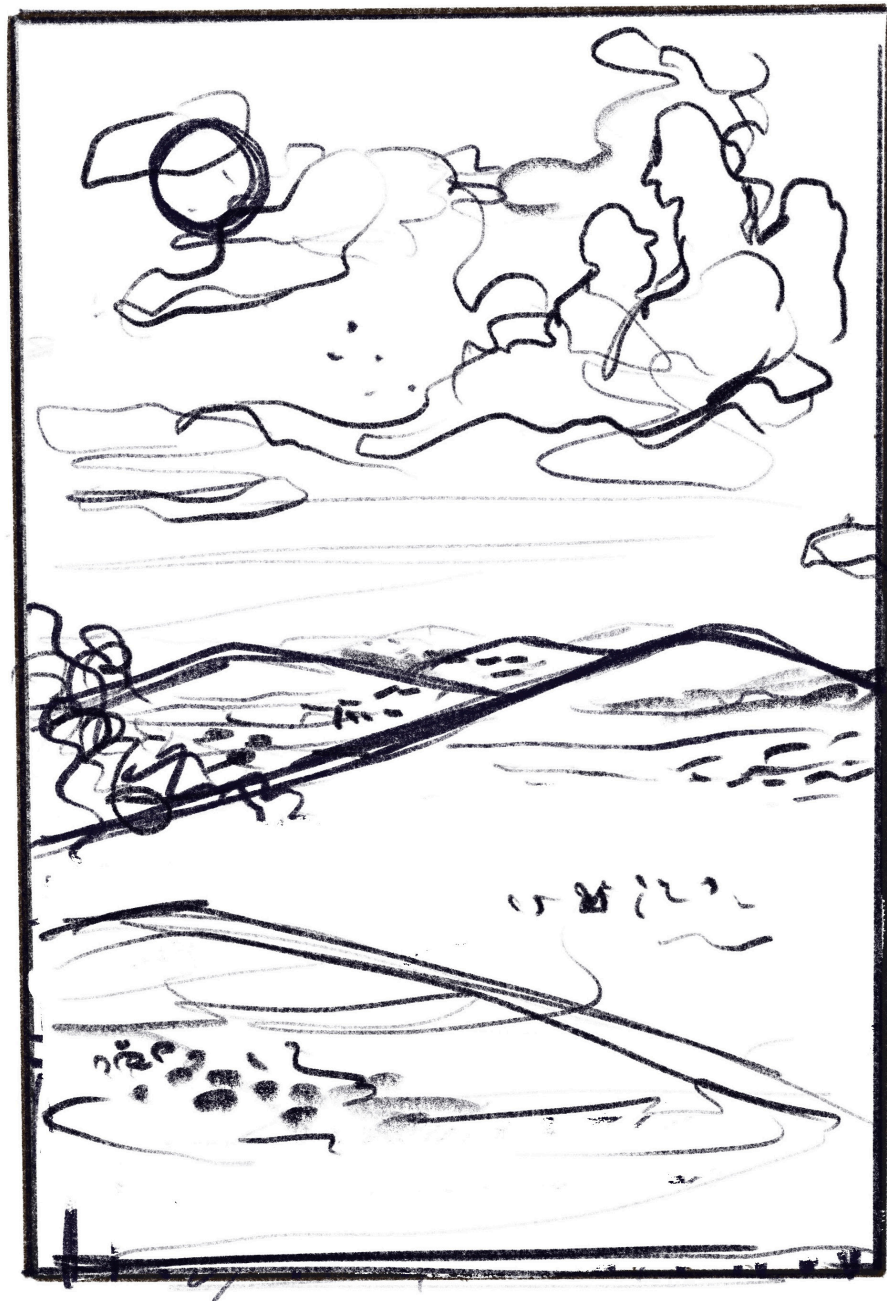
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It was dawn. The sky changed colors every minute yet again. The dim blues had started showing traces of crimson. The vapor from the stream had started to rise and appeared like a river of dense, milky white clouds. Maa and I stood on the terrace admiring the play of nature, my eyes opened up wide in absolute awe. We were way above the cloud river and it felt like we lived in the sky. Not too far away, a naked tree flaunted a flock of red and blue-headed parrots, that proved to be more gorgeous substitutes to leaves as they flew from one branch to the other. I could look down at Nani working in the garden, moving around the green maze checking up on all the plants one by one.

The mist began to dissipate and the sun began to rise, a subtle wave of saffron gradually consumed everything that came along its way. The mountains glistened and everything that blocked the light cast shadows that danced as the sun rose higher and higher. I could see Anandi Nani amble towards our house holding a steel container that oscillated as she walked. We went downstairs and greeted her. She handed the milk container to Maa and went straight to the garden where Nani worked. I went along

“Here, look at these,” said Nani pointing towards damaged plants that looked like they had struggled to stay rooted despite someone’s desperate attempts of pulling them out.









## A Present

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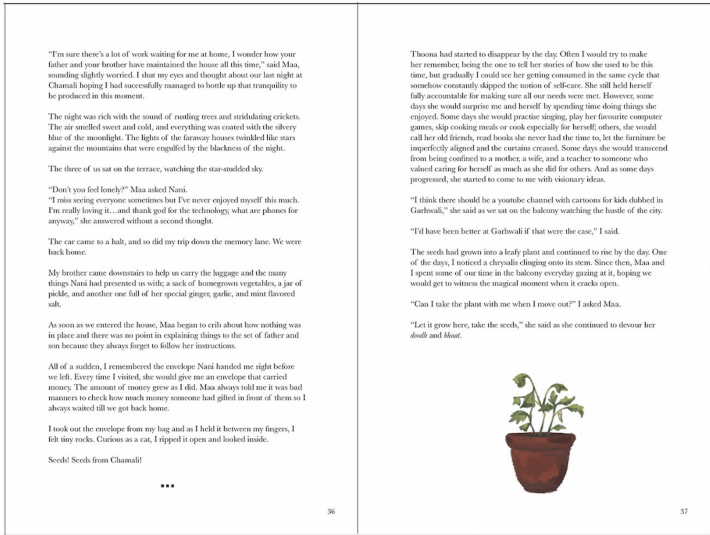
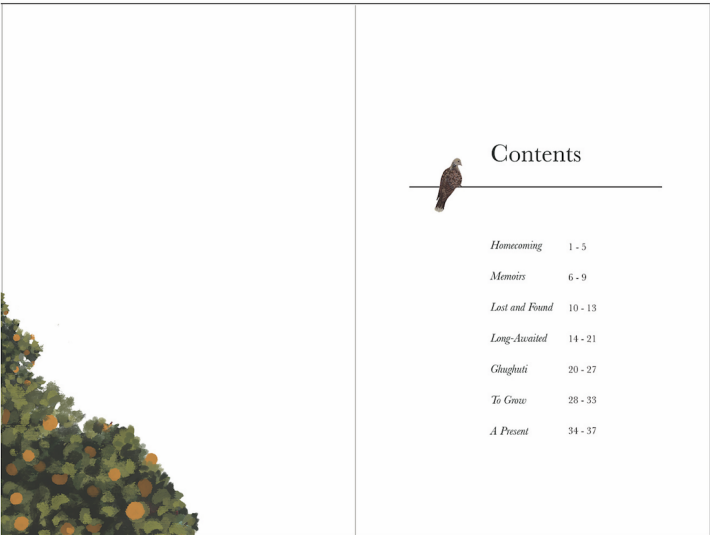
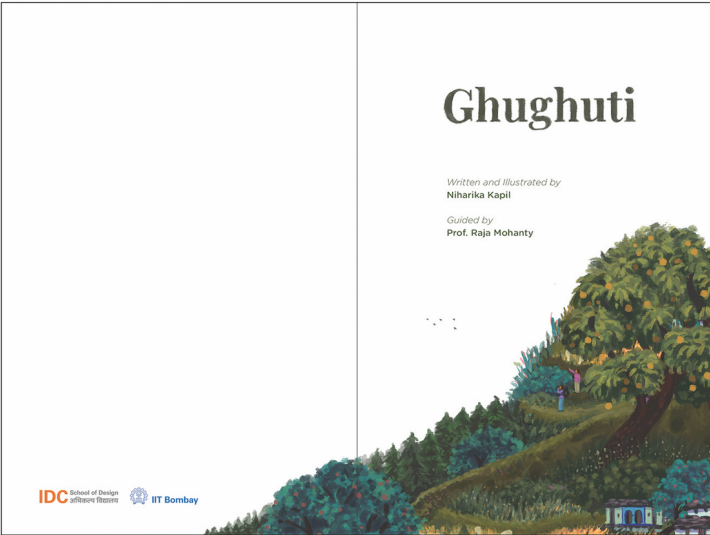
The greens gradually transfigured into greys. The stench of diesel had made its way into the air; the twitter of the birds that bounced to and fro was replaced by cars that constantly honked at each other. Everyone rushed to reach where they were set out for avoiding anything that could cause the slightest of delay.

A supervisor yelled at the laborers asking them to work faster as they carried bricks stacked onto their heads in the scorching sun.

The traffic had not moved an inch owing to a gentleman who wouldn't move his car because someone had honked at him thrice.

On the roadside, a woman clad in expensive brands, standing beside her expensive car bargained with the vegetable vendor asking him why he was selling his tomatoes for the price of rubies. Her teenage son from the car snapped that tomatoes tasted disgusting.

The jam began to clear and a car overtook us from the left. I rolled up the window and took a deep breath.



# Ghughuti

Niharika Kapil

