

Threshold

Short animation film Degree Project II report

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Guide

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Approval Sheet

This Animation Project entitled under the theme 'Threshold' is approved in partial fulfilment of the Masters Degree in Animation and Film Design.

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Chairman:

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Acknowledgement

I would like to sincerely thank my project guide Prof. Phani Tetali for his guidance and support throughout the project. I am grateful for his constant faith in me in spite of all my shortcomings. Without his guidance this project would have never reached to its successful completion. He always helped me understand and correct my mistakes in planning and execution; and lead me towards the right track.

I owe my thanks to my faculty, Prof. Nina Sabnani, Prof. Shilpa Ranade, Prof. Sumant Rao and Prof. Narayan Parashuram for their invaluable feedback, suggestions and encouragement.

I am also deeply thankful to all my IDC batchmates and friends Sumeet, Naveen, Hemali, Abhishek, Geetanjali, Manish, Samidha, Abhilash, Piyush, my seniors Sushmita, Somnath, Vajra, Kunal, Rakesh and Arun for their moral support and help throughout and even beyond the project.

Declaration

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where others' ideas 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.

Anindya Kundu
(Signature)

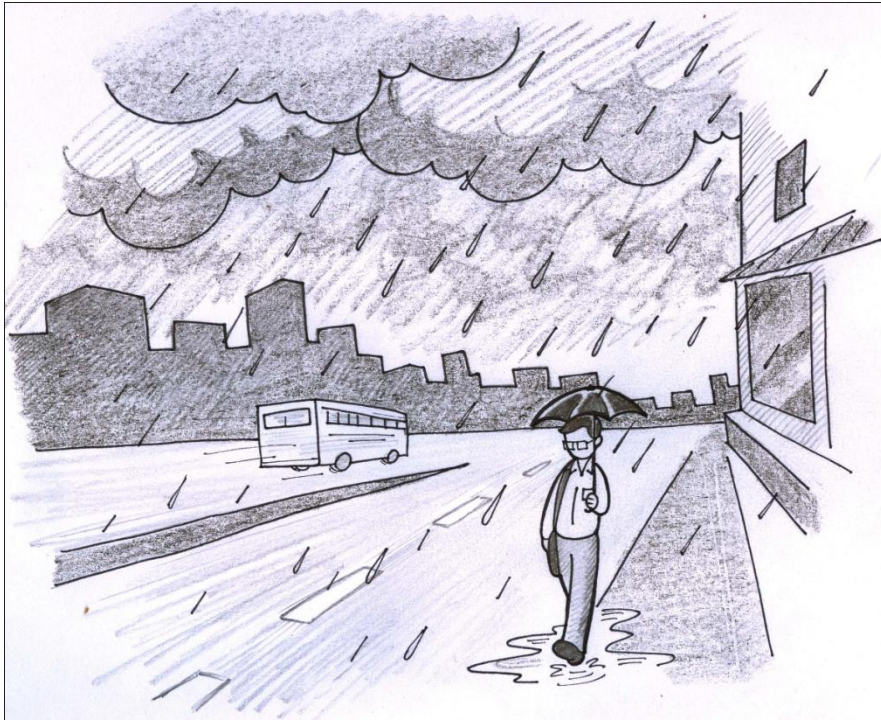
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Date: 31.12.2010

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Synopsis

In my Project 2, my purpose is to make a short film dealing with the concept of 'Threshold'.

Threshold is the entrance, or starting point for a new state or experience. It is the turning point which is the passage to the next level. Although it is often accompanied with difficulty and pain, it always brings a profound change in our lives.

The story deals with a young man works as a trainee in a start-up company. His pay is low due to lack of experience. Coming from a peaceful town he has to endure impossible traffic, makeshift meals, an offensive boss, and loneliness. He survives, but loses his self-esteem. The change from a loving home to the harshness of the real world is just too abrupt. He finds solace in looking back into his past. Finally he comes to terms with situation when he realizes that the only way overcome loss is sharing joy with others.

Introduction

‘Threshold’ is an animation short film project which aims to capture the essence of being in a state of change and the difficulties one has to face in such a situation.

Change is inevitable. One such paradigm shift takes place when one moves from the nurturing cocoon of home and campus, to face the harsh reality of making a living.

Based upon some of my own experiences, I wish to tell the story of an individual trying to overcome intimidation by his circumstances, and his struggle to find harmony in life.



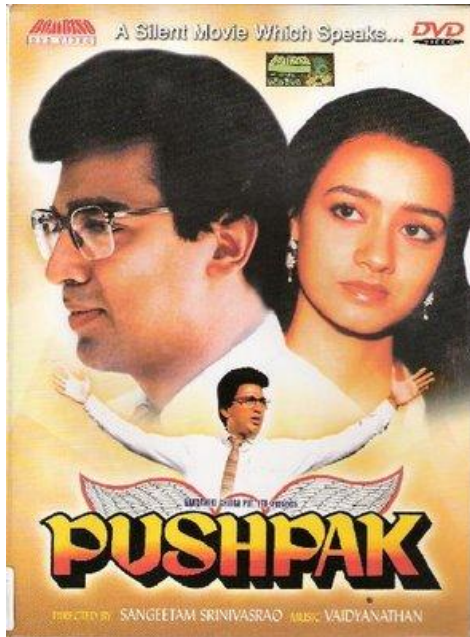
About Threshold

Personal Experience

The concept came to my mind while I during my internship at an animation studio at Mumbai. I was staying in our campus hostel and commuted to work in public buses. The internship provided me valuable experience about the animation industry.

But all my hostel-mates had gone home for the vacation. Having no friends around me, and being far from my family made me feel very isolated. Being a fresher meant there was huge pressure to learn speedily. I also had to bear the cynicism and criticism from seniors. Deep within, I felt insecure and jaded. Under such circumstances the concept of the story emerged in my mind. I wished to capture the ordeal of a youth in similar circumstances.

Initially I based my story emphasizing the long bus journey that I took to my internship office. I took photographs of the bus ride and gathered images for reference study.



[1]

Inspiration

One of the major sources of inspiration for my project in terms of theme and treatment is the film 'Pushpak'. It tells the endearing tale of a struggling unemployed youth.

Ruskin Bond has always been my favourite author. All his stories deal with ordinary people. I wish to endeavour to bring the sensitivity and humanism that is customary with the great writer into my film.



[2]

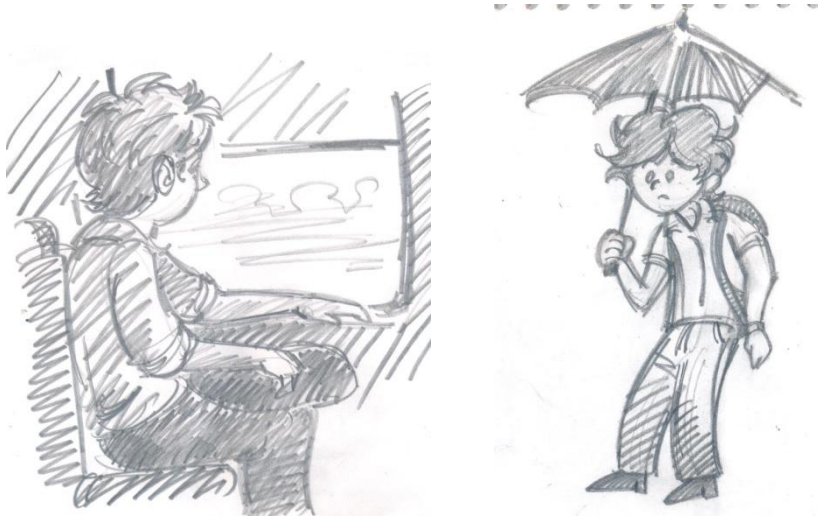


Exploration

Story 1 – Washed Ashore

In my first story I attempted to depict the concept of alienation in an abstract way, using a fairy tale setup.

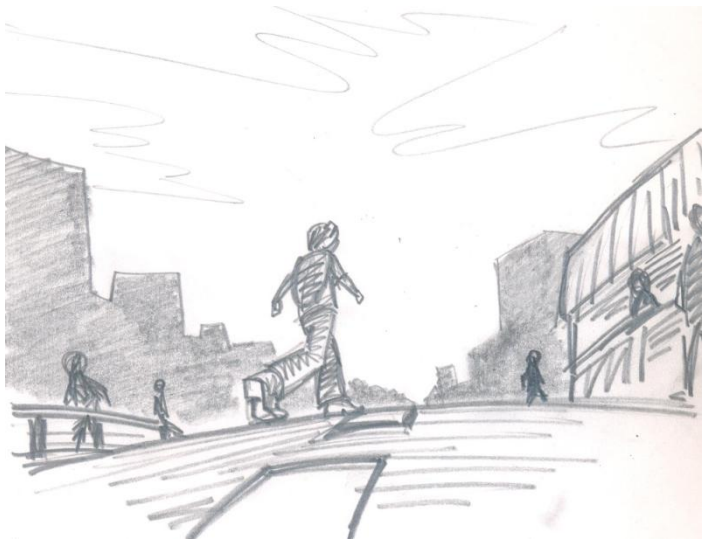
A young Prince sets sail in a boat upon the sea in search of undiscovered territory. A storm comes and destroys his vessel. He is washed ashore on an unknown island. When he regains consciousness, he starts to explore the vicinity. He is distressed to find the inhabitants exploited by their selfish ruler. With the sweat and blood of the common folk, plants are cultivated bearing delicious fruits. But instead relieving the hunger of the poor, the produce is used for making wine for the indulgence of the autocracy. The Prince feels despondent observing the situation. But soon he finds children playing joyfully nearby. Then he recovers hope for the future. He spends time with them, shares his knowledge and gives them the jewels he brought with him. With their help he constructs a small boat and sails back home.

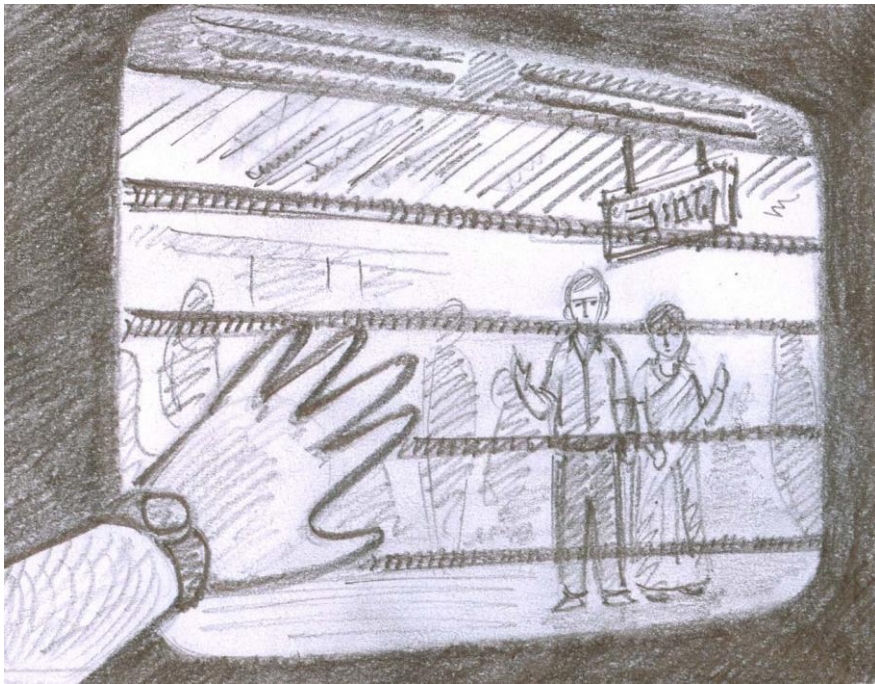


Story 2 – The Journey

In my second story depicts the experience of a young college graduate who has moved to a cosmopolitan city for his job.

Lost under the burden of work and daily chores he hardly finds time for himself. The hour long bus journey to his office is his only respite. He finds solace in observing the struggle, joys and sorrow of fellow passengers. The world outside the bus window looks bleak. The luxury cars and swank malls cannot conceal the poverty and pollution that plagues the big city. Yet the sky above is blue. His thoughts drift along with the fluffy clouds. In his vivid daydreams he rediscovers his hopes and aspirations. Faith returns to him and he finds the will to cross the threshold of maturity and build a beautiful future.





Final Story – Threshold

The final story that I choose to make my animation short film upon takes the basic ideas from the previous two stories. The protagonist is a young college graduate who is a fresher at his job. He has moved from his home to bustling big city. He suffers from loneliness and isolation. His work is monotonous and he finds respite in looking back to his past. He carries with himself a sea shell which he found as a child as a memento. Fed up with his daily routine he takes a break from office and goes to a tea stall. He suddenly notices a child working as an errand boy there. The child reminds him of his own lost childhood. He hands the child his beloved sea shell and disappears.

Why

I realized that the first story is a bit lengthy for making an animation short film within the limited time span. The next story had potential, but the ending was slightly difficult to narrate. Thus taking the strengths of both the stories, the third story emerged; and became the final choice.

Execution

Script

SEQUENCE 1

A window is half open in a messed up room. It is dawn and raining heavily. Close to the window, a youth Abhijit is seen curled up in sleep. He tosses and turns in bed. He is dreaming. He is carrying a heavy suitcase in a railway platform. He stops near the compartment door and touches his mother's feet. He waves his parents goodbye, as he watches them recede from the train window.

SEQUENCE 2

The glass panes of the window in the room are splattered with rain. The mobile alarm rings. Abhijit reluctantly opens one eye, turns and covers his head. Then he finally reaches for it. Its 8:30am!

“Oh no!” he exclaims. He grabs the towel hanging from a rope and rushes to the bathroom with his brush.

SEQUENCE 3

“So another day began.”

Abhijit is seen walking towards the bus stop. He clutches a folder in his arms and carries an old black umbrella in the rain. He waits as the vehicles pass by. A bus comes and splashes a puddle next to him. Abhijit is infuriated. He takes out an object from his pocket and looks keenly at it. It is a sea shell. His thoughts drift away and he hears the waves of the ocean.

A bus horn wakes him from his day dream. He gets up on the crowded bus. He is pushed inside as the bus roars away.

SEQUENCE 4

Lost in his thoughts he pushes through the crowd inside the bus. Someone stamps his feet. *“Ouch!”*, then he narrowly misses being hit by someone’s elbow. Meanwhile a woman is quarrelling with the bus conductor.

Abhijit stands near a seat and looks out of the window. Buildings, pavement dwellings and overflowing drains are visible. A person gets up to leave.

Abhijit heaves a sigh of relief and sits down. As the bus stops he notices a schoolboy holding his mother's arm. His closes his eyes.

SEQUENCE 5

Waves splash on the beach. A little boy is making a sand castle. Another child, a girl is collecting seashells near him. She gives him a seashell and then they move away. As he turns back he notices the waves crashing and breaking the castle. The boy looks at the seashell in his hands.

SEQUENCE 6

Abhijit opens his eyes. He puts his hand inside his bag pocket. He takes out a seashell from it. Meanwhile the bus comes to the last stop. Conductor alerts him and Abhijit gets down. Abhijit walks towards his workplace dreamily.

SEQUENCE 7

Abhijit spends a dull day at office. His boss fires at him for being inattentive towards his work. He looks wearily at the pile of work. He takes a break and moves out of the building.

SEQUENCE 7

He watches a tea stall on the way. A child is washing cups.
He looks up to Abhijit with a smile.

“Chai Bhaisahab?”

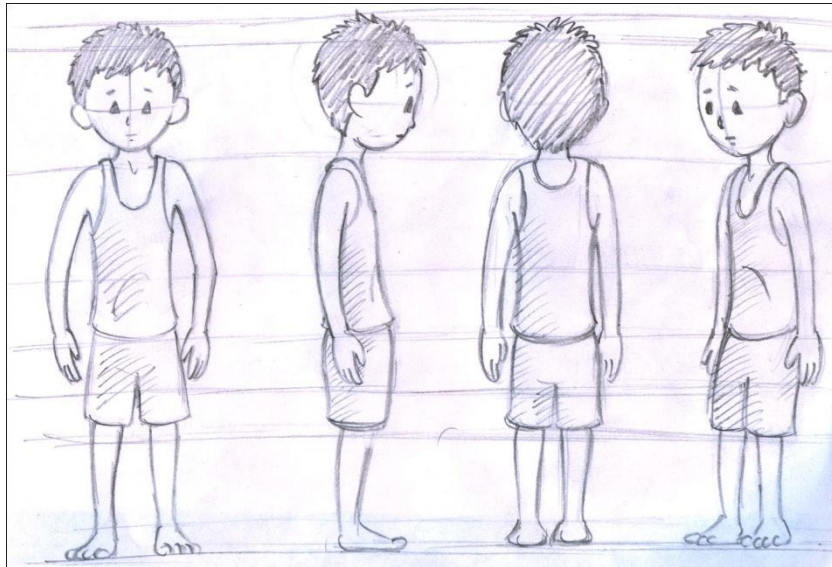
There is a brief pause. Abhijit gives him the sea shell. The boy is puzzled. The tea stall owner yells at him to get back to work. Abhijit moves on. The blue sky is seen above.

The End



Character Design

The film is majorly centred on the protagonist Abhijit. He is normal youth of around twenty five years of age, going through a low phase in his life. He feels intimidated by his circumstances. His loneliness and isolation makes him morose about life. His lack of motivation is evident from his slouching posture.



The other important character is the tea stall errand boy. He is a child of seven years of age. He is being exploited as child labour, but yet is full of life and gives inspiration to our protagonist.

Storyboard

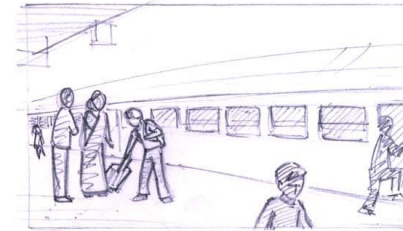
SEQ 1



Camera pans down. The protagonist's room can be seen.



The protagonist is sleeping and dreaming.



The protagonist is dreaming of leaving his parents.

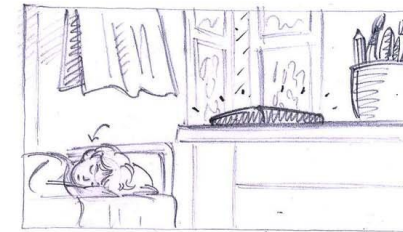
SEQ 2



He touches his parent's feet in deep regard.



His parents recede away as he looks from the train window.



Meanwhile the alarm clock rings.



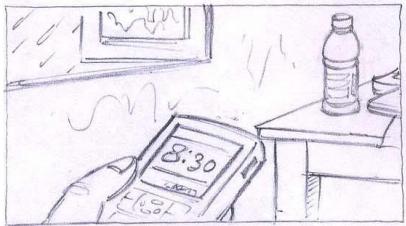
Protagonist notices the ringing.



But goes back to sleep.



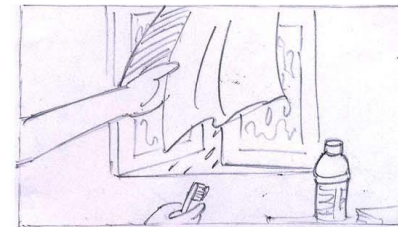
Finally he picks up the phone.



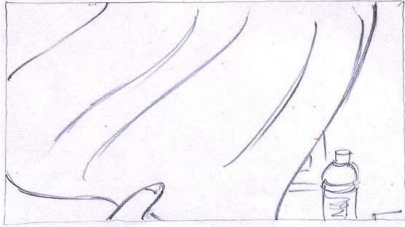
He notices the time on the display.



He is shaken to find that he is getting late



He pulls his towel to rush for a bath.



The towel is taken off the wire.

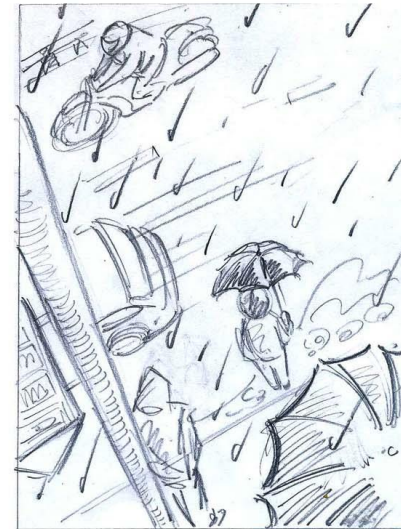
SEQ 3



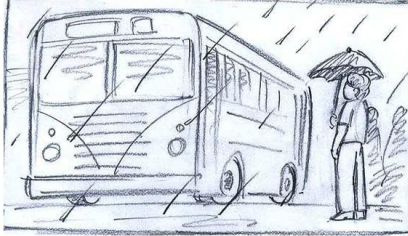
The protagonist walks to the bus stop.



He walks over the rainwater puddles.



He waits for his bus in the bus stop.



A bus arrives to the stop.



It splashes mud on him.



The mud stains his shirt.



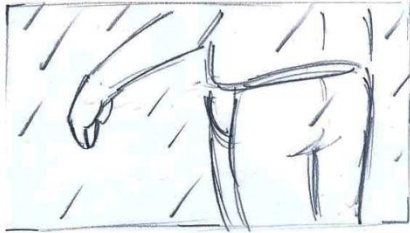
Protagonist looks downwards.



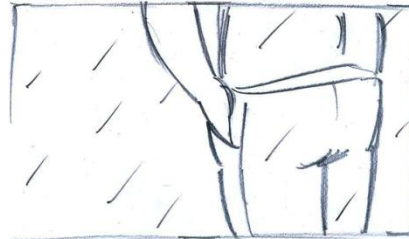
The clothes are badly stained.



He feels annoyed at his situation and clenches his fists.



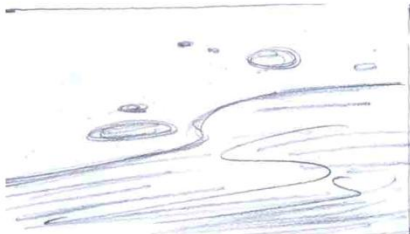
He puts hand in his trouser pocket.



He looks for something in his pocket.



He takes out a sea shell in his palm.



He looks at the puddles on the road.



He falls into a reverie and slowly regains his nerves.



He hears the sound of the arrival of a bus.

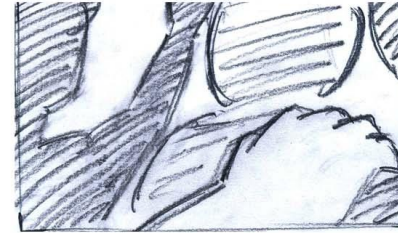
SEQ 4



He gets up the bus at the bus stop.



He gets lost in the crowd inside the bus.

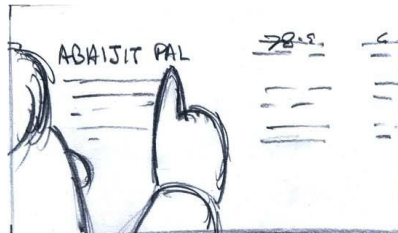


There is a flashback into the past.

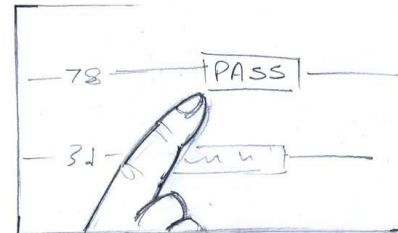
SEQ 5



He goes back to the time of his board exam results.



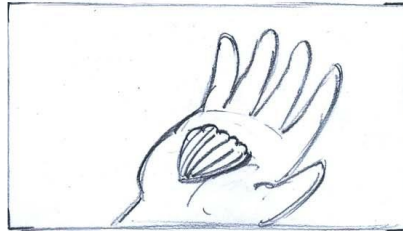
He looks at the notice board and finds his name in the list.



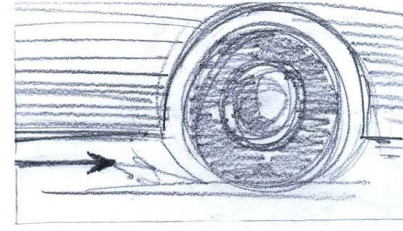
He looks at his grades.



He is overjoyed at his success.



He looks at the sea shell in his palm.



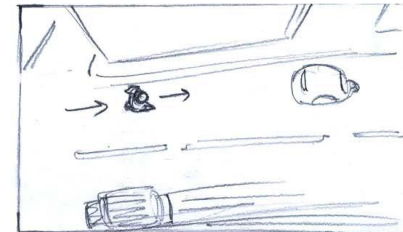
The bus screeches to a halt.



The protagonist is woken from his daydream.



He gets down the bus.



He walks towards his office.

SEQ 6



He opens the door of his office.



He walks through the corridor.



He reaches his cubicle.



He sits on his chair.



He gets the message that his boss is calling him.



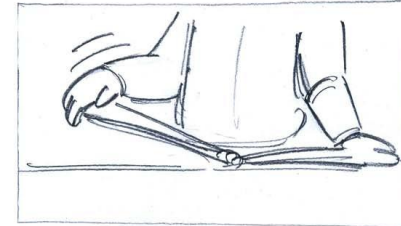
He gets alarmed at the prospect.



He knocks the door of his boss' cabin .



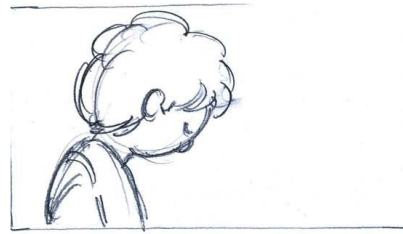
The door is slowly opened.



The boss looks at a few files.



The boss gets annoyed at him.



He looks down in disappointment.



He leaves the cabin with drooping shoulders.



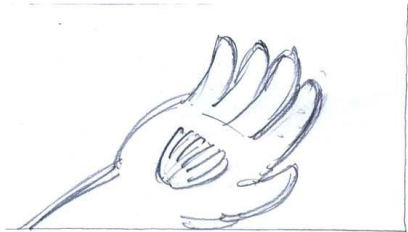
He sits on his cubicle in office.



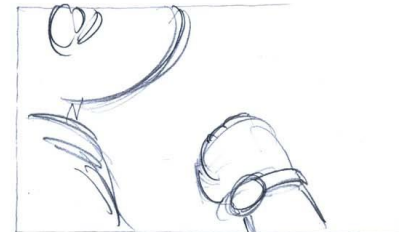
He gets bored looking at the computer screen.



He puts his hand in his pocket.



He stares at the sea shell in his palm.



He checks out the time.



He gets up to take a tea break.

SEQ 7



He walks out of office.



He notices a tea stall at a distance.



A young boy can be seen washing tea glasses.



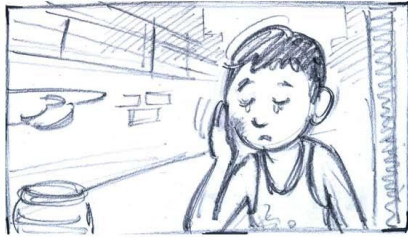
The protagonist drinks tea at the stall.



There's a sharp noise and he turns around.



There is a broken glass at the ground.



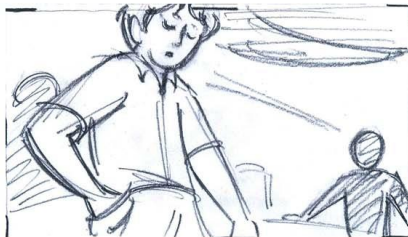
The tea boy gets slapped and his face hurts.



The tea boy cleans the table.



The tea boy asks for money.



The protagonist looks for money in his pockets.



He looks at the tea stall errand boy.



The boy looks miserable.



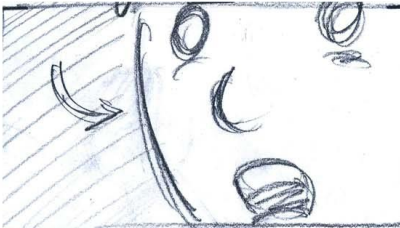
He faces the little boy.



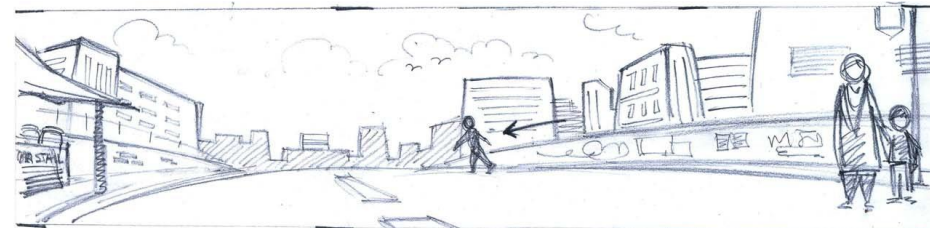
He hands the boy the money.



The little boy discovers the sea shell along with the money.



The boy turns around and asks for the owner.



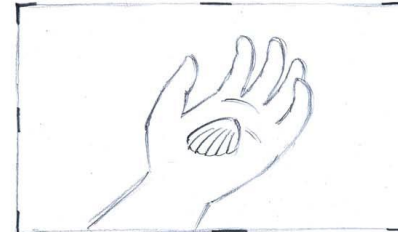
The protagonist has already gone away.



The boy is startled.



Then he accepts the situation and smiles.



The he looks at the shell.



The boy grabs the shell in his hands.



The boy gets back to his life joyfully.

Production

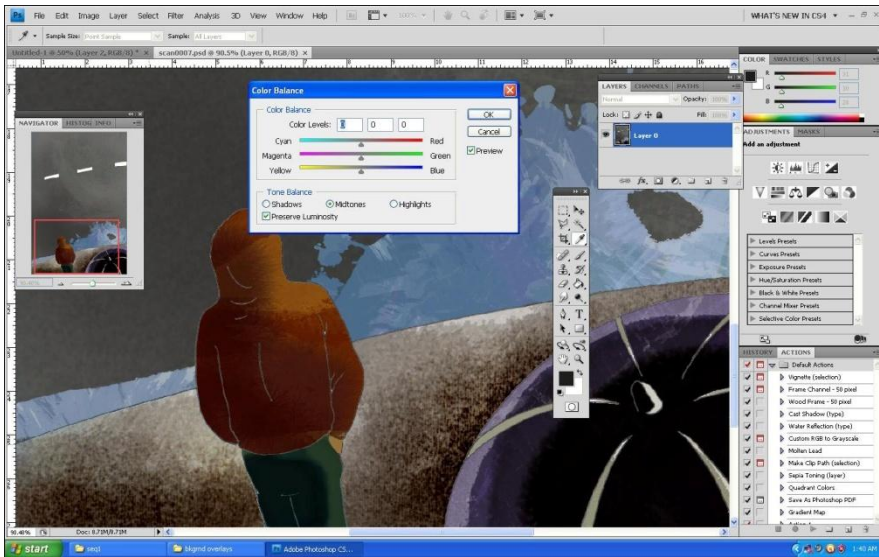
Based upon the nature of the story and my personal inclination, the film is made using classical 2D animation.

Layout, Backgrounds and Overlays

The layout, backgrounds and overlays have been drawn on paper using pencils. The drawings have been scanned and coloured as required using Adobe Photoshop CS4.

Animation

The animated characters and elements are drawn frame by frame with pencil on paper using a light box. The individual drawings have been scanned and similarly coloured using Adobe Photoshop CS4.





Compositing

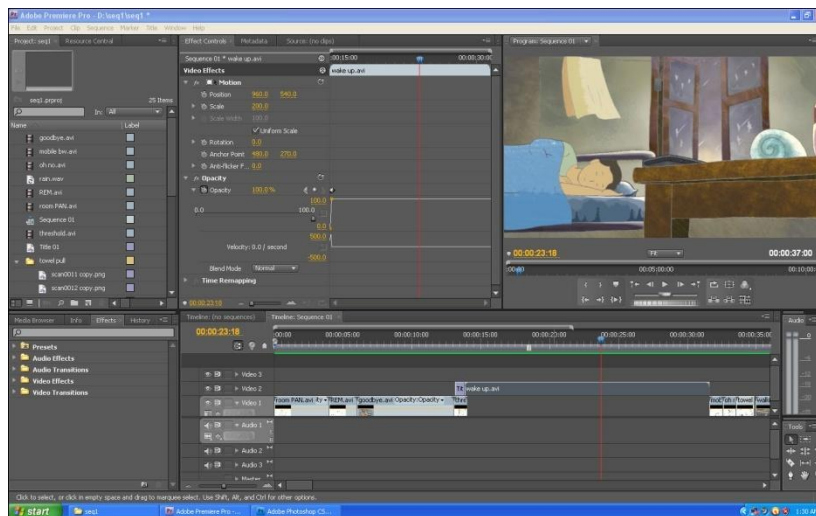
The animated elements have been composited with their respective backgrounds and overlays using Adobe After Effects CS4.

Effects/Editing/Sound Design

The specific visual style of the film required very few extra effects to enhance the look. The cloudy sky has been created in certain scenes using the Fractal Noise effect provided by Adobe After Effects CS4.

The various shots, scenes and sequences have been edited and put together using Adobe Premiere CS4.

The film required extensive use of ambient sounds. Royalty free sounds have been downloaded from internet^[3]. Some guitar sounds have been recorded with Adobe Soundbooth CS4. The audio tracks have been edited and assembled using Adobe Premiere CS4.



Final look and feel



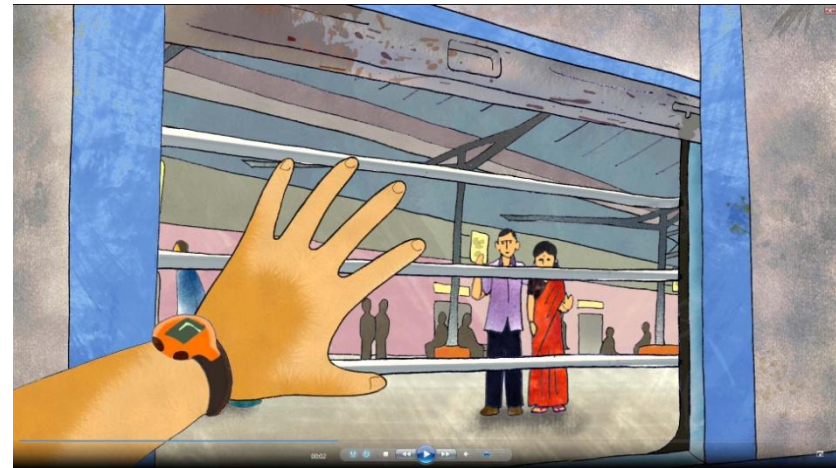
The protagonist is walking towards his bus stop.



His last meeting with parents back at railway station.



The protagonist sleeps in his PG room.



He waves to his parents from his train compartment.

Conclusion

In this project I got to learn the various steps involved in the process of animation. Being my first film it was a valuable experience in planning and execution of a film.

Initially I had many ideas regarding the story and its stylistic treatment. But gradually as the project progressed it evolved and took a specific direction. I realized the various methods to overcome the limitations and learnt ways to enhance the film both in terms of content and the look.

This project has indeed been a milestone in my endeavour to learn the nuances of being animator. With the completion of this project I intend to look forward, learn from my mistakes and progress to be a better artist and an individual.

References

1. Ruskin Bond Book Covers - My photos used on Ruskin Bond's books published by Penguin Novels of India (Photo was taken on June 24, 2009) – <http://www.flickr.com/photos/tommyoshima/3653818158/>
2. Pushpak – legendary movie still lives on
Posted on January 24, 2010 (by Shashank and Shravan)
<http://the2transformers.wordpress.com/2010/01/24/pushpak-legendary-movie-still-lives-on/>
3. Sound references and online library - The Freesound Project is a collaborative database of Creative Commons licensed sounds.
<http://www.freesound.org/>