



CLOUD EXPLORATIONS

Project 2



ABSTRACT

The appearance of clouds in the sky has been a long time fascination for me. Their constantly changing shape, forms, color, pattern and qualities have struck the imagination of man from ages. From mythology, religion, poetry, painting and music, man has expressed his relationship with clouds by attributing its qualities to supreme powers, mutual relationships, romantic imagination and just beauty alone.

The objective of this project is to build an animated narrative with research based on the clouds' visual nature, science and its representation in visual arts, literature, religion and music to interpret in a voice trying to identify with people's and personal experiences with the cloud.



EXPERIENCING CLOUDS



-  Clouds create visual depth to flat sky.
-  Huge and high rising clouds creates the dramatic difference in scale between ourselves and the sky.
-  Our identification with the cloud brings out the feeling of lightness, joy and heavenly glory.
-  Their constant changing forms reminds of the transient nature of our life.
-  Their colours set out a range of moods.
-  The rain clouds are symbol of hope on one side and destruction on the other.
-  The clouds being the seat for thunder and lightning strikes the sense of awe!
-  A sense of the roof of the world is turned down during a flight when they appear as foamy continuous layer extending across the horizon



RESOURCES & GENESIS

 SCIENCE

 LITERATURE

 RELIGION & MYTHOLOGY

 VISUAL ARTS

 MUSIC



Science

The study of Clouds is called Nephology. "Nepho" for Clouds in Greek.

Clouds are defined as the visible aggregate of water or ice particles, or both in free air.

They are formed when warm air picks water vapor and rises high to cool and condense to form clouds.

The appearance of clouds is determined by their dimension, shape, structure, texture, luminance, color and distribution.

The color of clouds is determined by the light it receives, the relative position of observer and the phenomenon of Mie Scattering.

Classification of Clouds

Clouds are classified into Genera, Species and Varieties based on their characteristic forms.

Genera of Clouds

1. Cirrus
2. Cirrocumulus
3. Cirrostratus
4. Altostratus
5. Altocumulus
6. Stratus
7. Stratocumulous
8. Nimbostartus
9. Cumulus
10. Cumulonimbus



CIRRUS

Latin word 'Cirrus' means lock of hair, tuft of horse hair.

Thin, frail like tuft of hair, at high altitudes.





Cirrocumulus.

Thin white sheet composed of small elements arranged regularly.





Cirrostratus - Transparent whitish veil with halo phenomenon partly or totally covering the sky.



Altostratus - they are larger than Cirrostratus, dark uniform layer covering the sky with no halo.

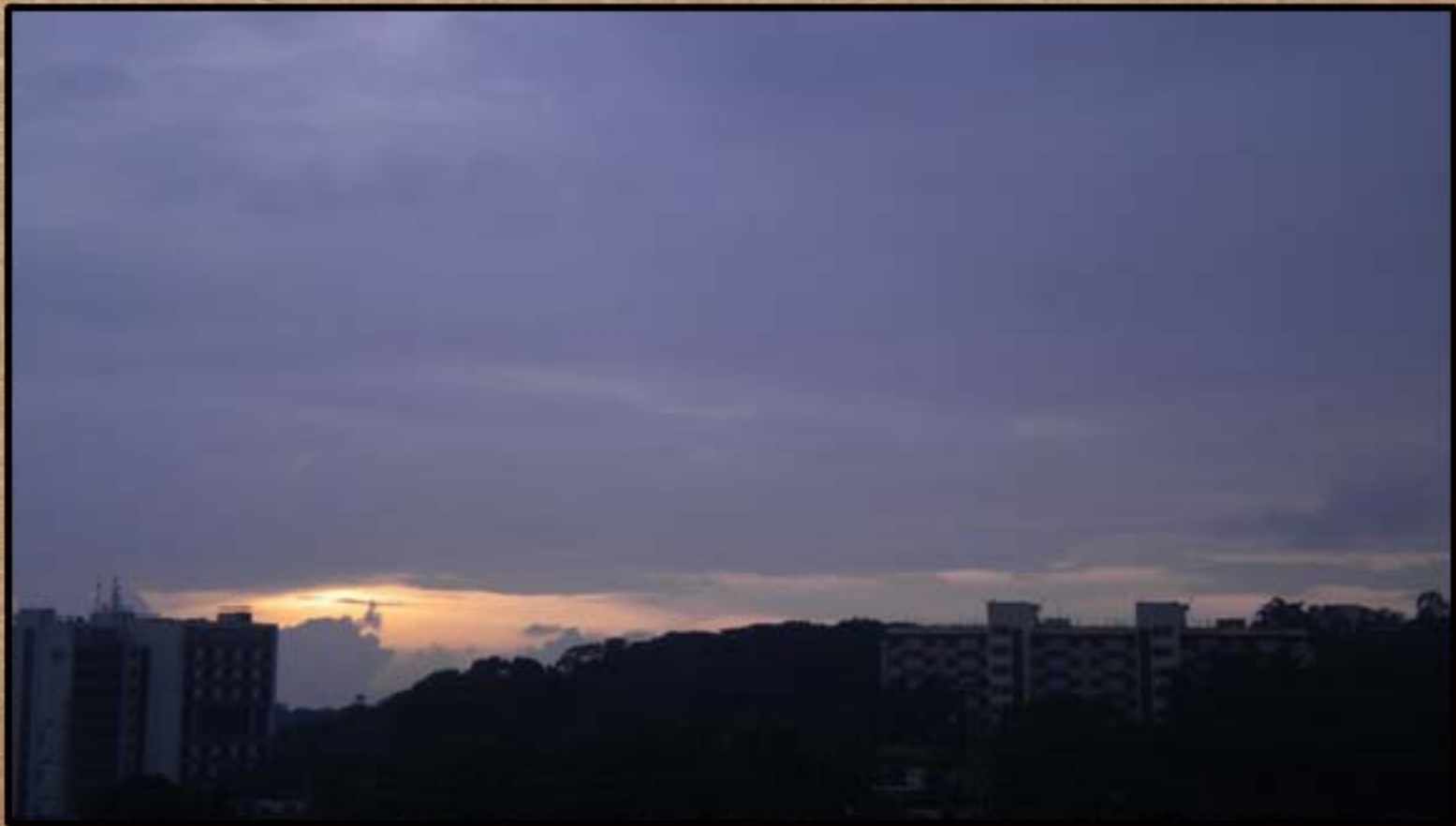


Alto cumulus - they are larger and darker than Cirrocumulus.



Stratus

Grey cloud layer, flat hazy and featureless with uniform base appearing at low altitudes. From Latin "stratus", past participle of verb sternere, which means to extend, to spread out, to flatten out, to cover with a layer.





Nimbostartus

These are rain clouds. The word "Nimbus" in Latin means rain.





Cumulus - detached, dense, sharp outlined with vertical extent appearing brilliant white in sunlight.





Cumulonimbus

Heavy and dense cloud with great vertical extent in the form of mountain or tower.



 *Alto cumulus* - they are larger and darker than *Cirrocumulus*.





ETYMOLOGY

The word 'Cloud' comes from the word 'Clud' meaning masses of rock based on similarity of cumulus clouds and rock masses.

SANSKRIT

Cloud- 'Abhra', 'Megha', 'Payoda'

'Ghata'- container or earthen pot.



Literature

Indian Poetry

"Meghadutam"- by Kalidasa

'Meghadhutam' means the cloud messenger. Its a poem of the message through a cloud of the lovelorn husband of the 'Yakshas' (nature spirits or demigods) to his wife as he was banished to the hills by his master for his flaws in duty.

The poem has 121 stanzas and divided into two parts

1. **Purvamegha** - In this portion of the poem the poet vividly describes the route of the clouds journey.

2. **Uttaramegha** - describes the location of his house and the nature of his lovelorn wife and the way the cloud has to deliver the message to her and bring back her message to him.

-  The poem is a wonderful blend of the abundant nature and human emotions.
-  Geography and vegetation of the places in the journey of the clouds, the nature of birds and animals and human occupations are vividly described.
-  "...a cloud resting on the peak, and looking as attractive as an elephant stooping down in his butting sport against a bank"
-  "... a favorable breeze very gently impels you on and this chataka here full of hilarity, is sweetly singing on your left, assuredly the female cranes arranged in rows from their experience of pleasure of conception, will attend upon you, so charming to the eyes, in the skies"



Western Literature

Cloud

- Percy Bysshe Shelley - One of the greatest Romantic English poets

" I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
And the nursling of the Sky;
I pass through the pores, of the ocean and shores;
I change, but I cannot die
For after the rain, when with never a stain
The pavillion of Heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams, with their convex gleams,
Build up the blue dome of Air
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise, and unbuild it again."

The last stanza of the poem is most striking to me as it gives a wonderful analogy from the origin of the clouds, its life in the sky and the hope and dismay it brings to the earthly beings.



Clouds

-Mikhail Lermontov

"What drives you on? Is it envy that covertly
Prods you or malice, whose shafts strikes you openly?
Destiny is it? A crime hanging over you?
Or, dripping venom of friendship the calumny?"

"Nay! O'er yon barren wastes spiritless journeying,
Know you not passion, or anguish, or punishment
Feeling you lack you are free - free eternally
There is no home for you, nor is there banishment."

The poets questions of wonder relating the nature of clouds to dark human nature and the subsequent negation of these qualities as if in realization of the true and free spirit of the nature of the clouds brings out the strong analogy of freedom



RELIGION & MYTHOLOGY

Religion and Mythology give an account of association of clouds to divine nature representing its glory, power, purity and the seat or abode of the gods. They also represent the dark demoniac forces and some with scientific reasoning by the way of representing them as deeds of the Lord



CHRISTIANITY

The Transfiguration of Christ is associated with a heavenly voice from the clouds and Jesus's ascension on the clouds.

After the Resurrection Jesus is recieved by the Clouds to the heavens.

Jesus declares that the Son of God will appear on a white cloud with a golden crown and a sickel in hand.





ISLAM

Islam gives a scientific view-point of the generation of rain and lightning from the clouds.

"Have you not seen how God makes the clouds move gently, then joins them together, then makes them into a stack, and then you see the rain come out of it And He sends down hail from mountains (clouds) in the sky, and He strikes with it whomever He wills, and turns it from whomever He wills. The vivid flash of its lightning nearly blinds the sight."(Quran 24:43)

This refers to the Thunder storms produced by the Cumulonimbus Clouds.

Science has discovered that hail plays an important role in the release of thunder and lightning.



BUDDHISM

Mahayana Buddhism in Japan has an account of celestial beings on clouds called Bosatsu. They adore the Amida Buddha who is the Buddha of Life beyond and after life.

“Bosatsu” are celestial beings like Apsaras in Hinduism. They sacrifice the heavens in order to save the mundane beings.





GREEK MYTHOLOGY



THE NEPHELAI were Nymphs of clouds. They were depicted as beautiful, young women pouring water from pitchers, like their sisters, the Naiades of the springs, or as women flitting across the sky with billowing robes.



HINDUISM

Lord Indra is the God of War and thunder storms.

Highly regarded during the Vedic period.

He travels on a White elephant called the Airavata which can be given the analogy of a large white cloud as he is also called "Megha-vahana"

Vritrasura takes away the rain clouds and there is severe drought. With the Vajrayudha Indra defeats him and releases the rain clouds.



Ramayana

In the Sundarakhanda of Ramayana the sight of the mighty demon king Ravana as seen by the monkey god Hanuman is being described as the heavy dark reddish cloud.

Ravana's son was named after the grumble he produced after his birth as "Meghanada" means Thunder.





MAHABHARATA

The Demon son of Bhima is Ghatotkacha who was named after his pot like hairless round head.

When invoked during the great battle by the Pandavas he takes the form of giant red cloud spitting fire, blazing meteors, thunder and fierce weapons on Karna.





Inspired by the vast amount of literature and visual experience of the clouds the main concepts that arose are

-  Cloud as a messenger
-  Cloud's journey
-  Clouds as a visual narrative

KEYWORDS

-  Origin of clouds- "Ghata"
-  Hunter of clouds- "Hunt to bring rain"
-  Surrealistic expression- Visuals of impossible
-  Blend with music.

THE PILGRIMAGE OF THE CLOUDS

A story of a cloud on pilgrimage to the great cloud which turns into a rock struck by lightning and thunder and falls on the ground. With the music played by the lonely survivor, washed ashore by the floods, the rock returns to the sky back as a cloud and reaches the destiny.



High above from the Kingdom of the skies came the flock of clouds on a Pilgrimage to the Great Cloud.



Enamoured by the beauty of the earth below one of the clouds fly past down away from the flock and gets caught among the dark clouds passing below.



Struck by the thunder and lightining the cloud transfroms into a rock and falls down to the earth unable to return to the skies for ages.



The storm and flash floods brings a lonely survivor on a boat washed ashore.



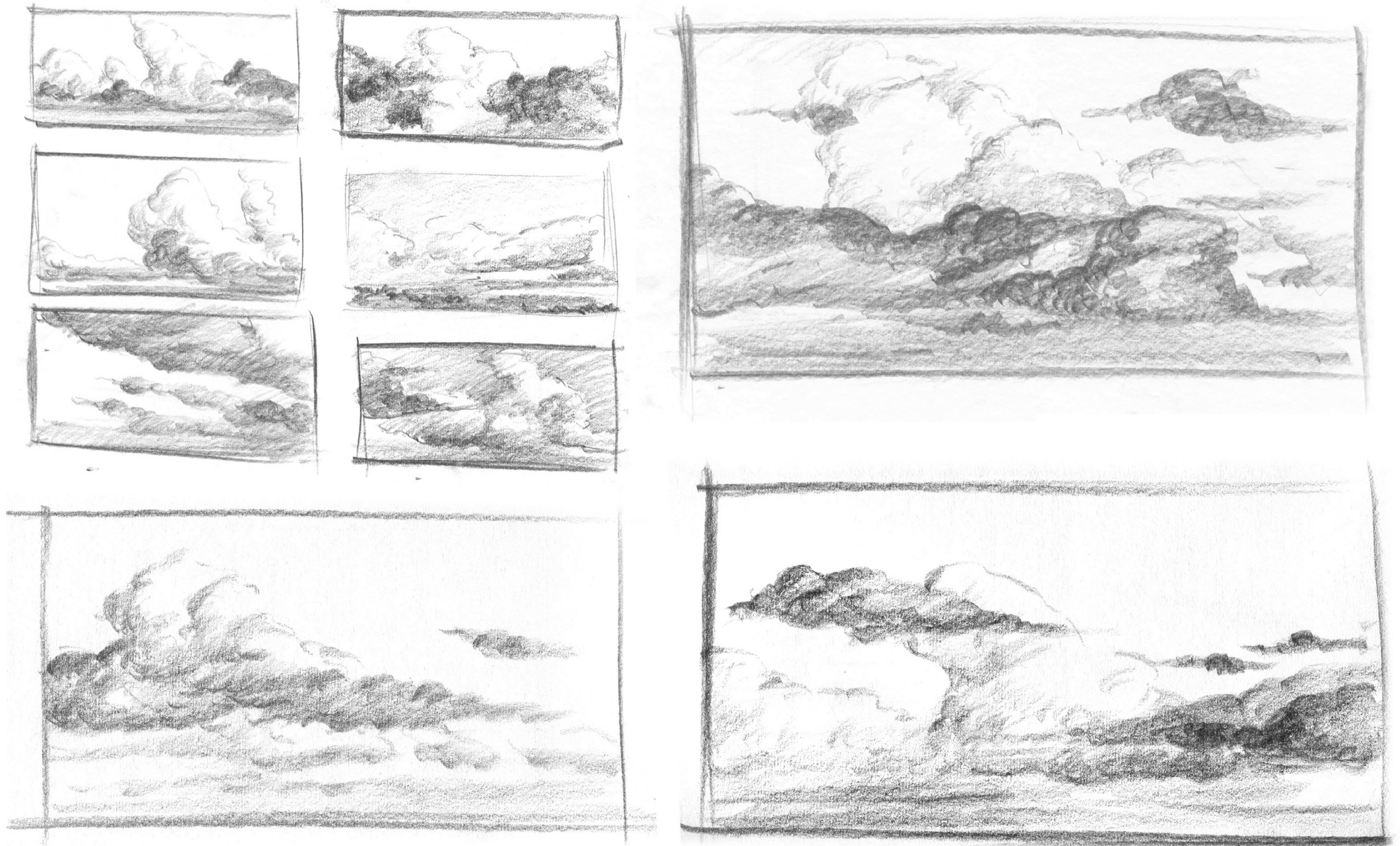
The boy shares his sorrow to no other than the stranded strange rocks by playing his flute.



To the bliss of his tune the rocks break ground and along with the boy returns back to the sky as clouds again and reach the their destiny - THE GREAT CLOUD.



QUICK SKETCHES FROM LIFE



THE POEM

MEGHAYANA The Pilgrimage of a Cloud

*Out of the shores and oceans born,
To the kingdom of the sky they are gone
On a pilgrimage together they flock
To behold the glory of the Great one and dock.*

*Cranes fly past quick and dive
To the beautiful valley down alive
The marvel below drives the young cloud low.*

*It flies down fast away from the flock
Unaware it is caught, among the rumbles of the dark
Lightning strikes in powerful wonder
And roars to the peak in thunder*

*As an army of the dark they march past
Throwing out to the hard,
The young lad hits the ground harsh
Cursed to become a rock
It finds itself among another flock.*

*Seasons and ages pass
A shrine grows to the wonder of the men bypass.
Still and cold but with a hope
They wait for their destined fate.*

*Then came again grumbling in pain
Flashing rain and storms in twisting veil
Washed ashore in a boat alone is a boy in pain
To the rock he walks, climbs up to the shrine, he stops
Picks his flute and sings to the Lord
“Oh! Take me along”*

*To the tune of his song, the rocks break ground
Lifting to the sky to the pilgrimage left long.
With a blissful note stops the song
Back to the kingdom of the sky, the rocks rose along
To be the cloud among the flock
Along with the boy to the Great cloud they dock.*



Camera panning over the shores



Clouds moving by the beach



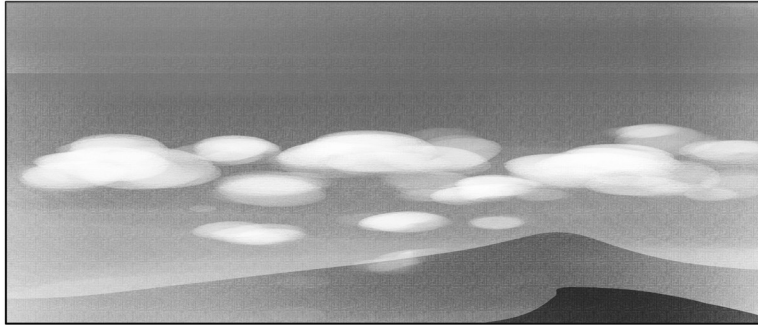
Clouds enter into the woods



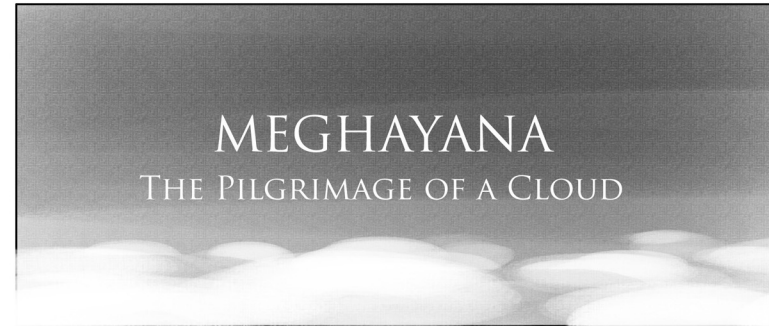
Clouds rise between the cliffs



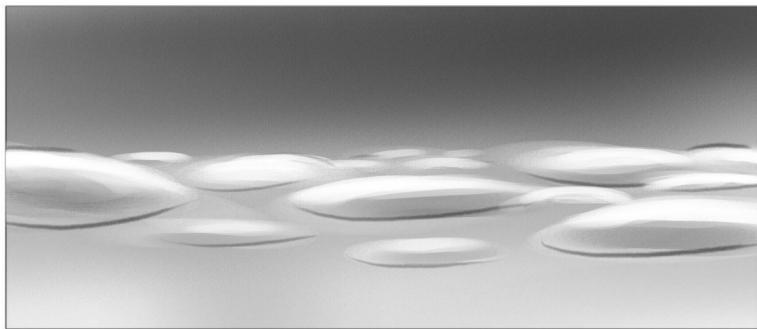
Clouds rise above the cliffs



Clouds rise above the mountains



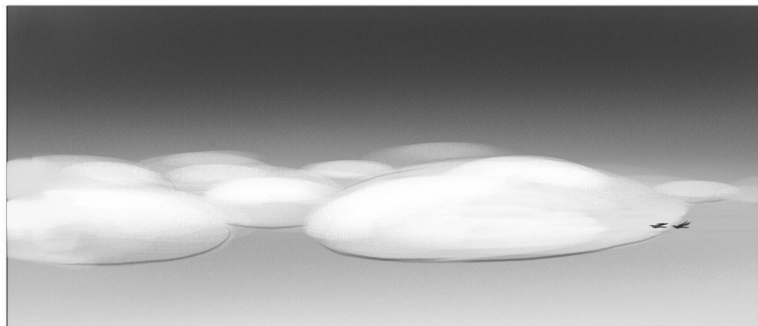
Clouds settle in the sky and the title appears



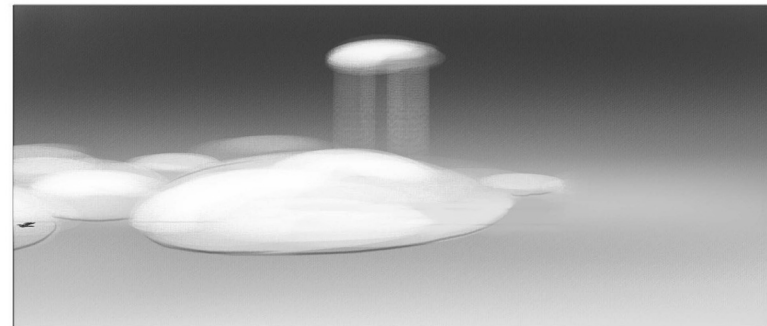
Clouds move on the pilgrimage



Birds enter



The birds get past the clouds



One of the clouds rises

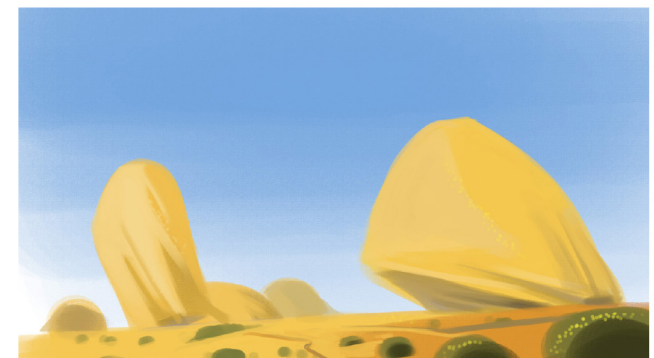
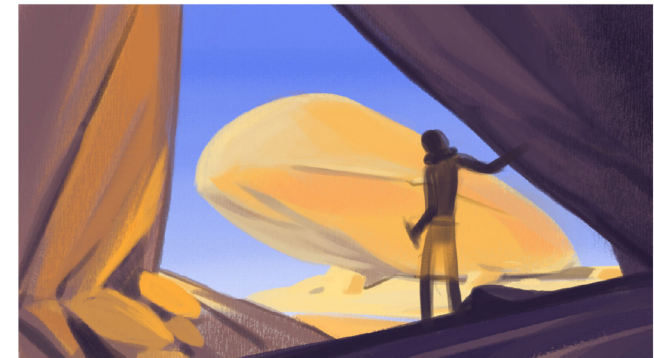
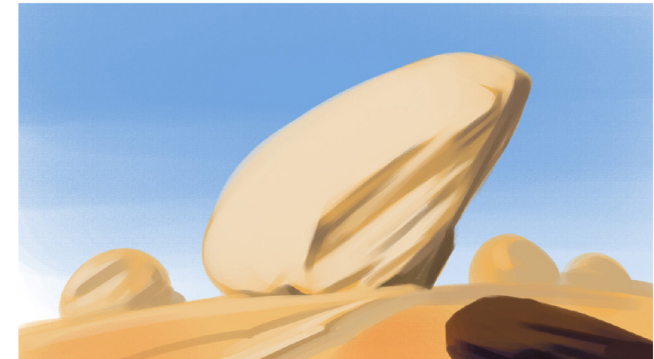
STORYBOARD

ENVIRONMENT DESIGN

The common feature which led through the environments is to exhibit a wider scale and expanse.

The entry over the islands, the mountains with the river flowing around them, the sight of the waterfalls, the chase between the cliffs and the entry into a barren land studded with boulders reveal a wide - angle view point.

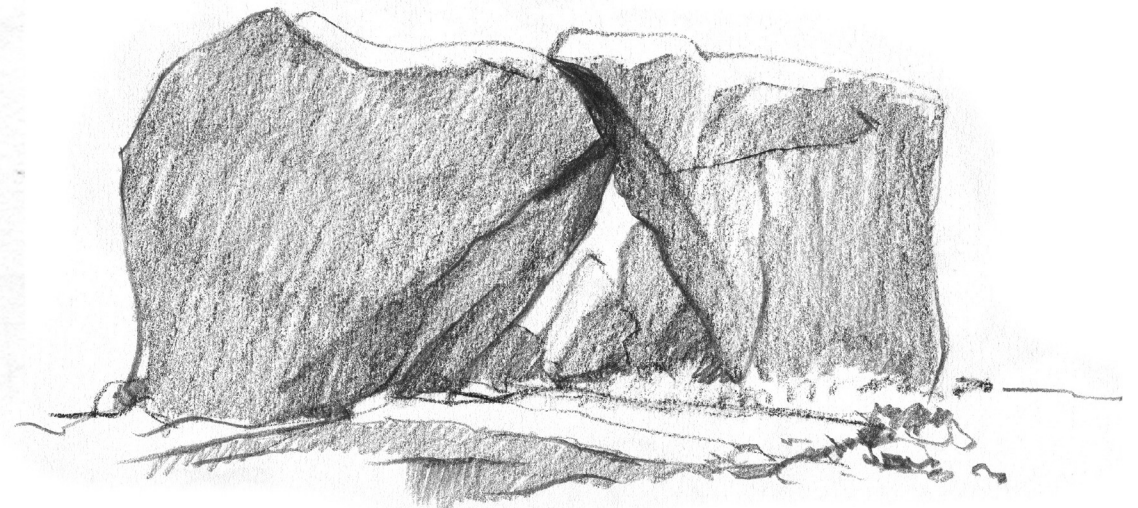
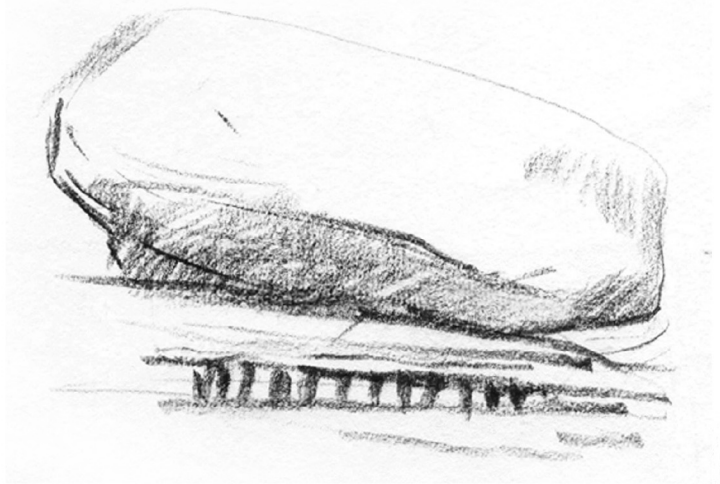
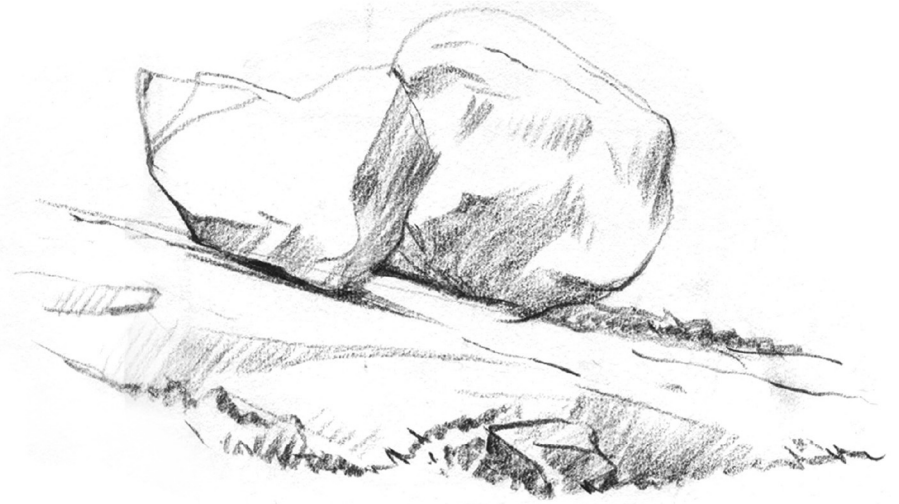
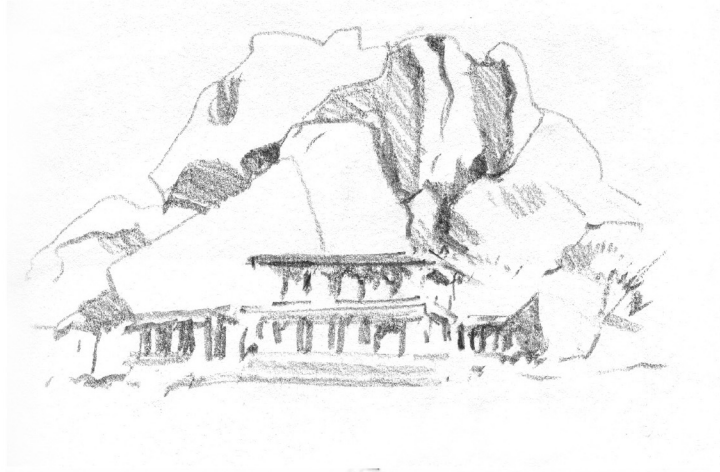
The landscape studded with boulders is a direct inspiration from that of a place called Hampi, the historical capital of the Vijayanagara Empire of South India. My visit to Hampi as part of an educational tour while as a student of fine arts, had a prominent visual impact. Even though the largest river of the Deccan plateau flows through his land, it is quite dry and different from a typical tropical climate. The landscape is studded with boulders. One can also find massive boulders standing at tip-off its balance. This gives a feeling of almost being on a different planet. The peculiar forms of the boulders reveal different forms within itself as if in a cloud. Though the clouds are constantly changing, we can recognize various forms in them. This resemblance of the clouds to the rocks had the potential to effectively communicate one of the crucial turns in the storyline - the transformation of the cloud into a rock.



Exploration of a rocky landscape

HAMPI BOULDERS

Sketches from photographic references.

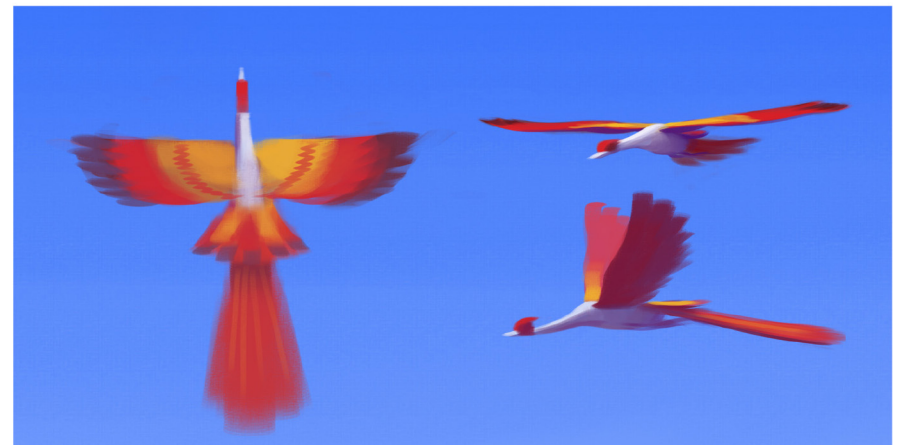


The Birds

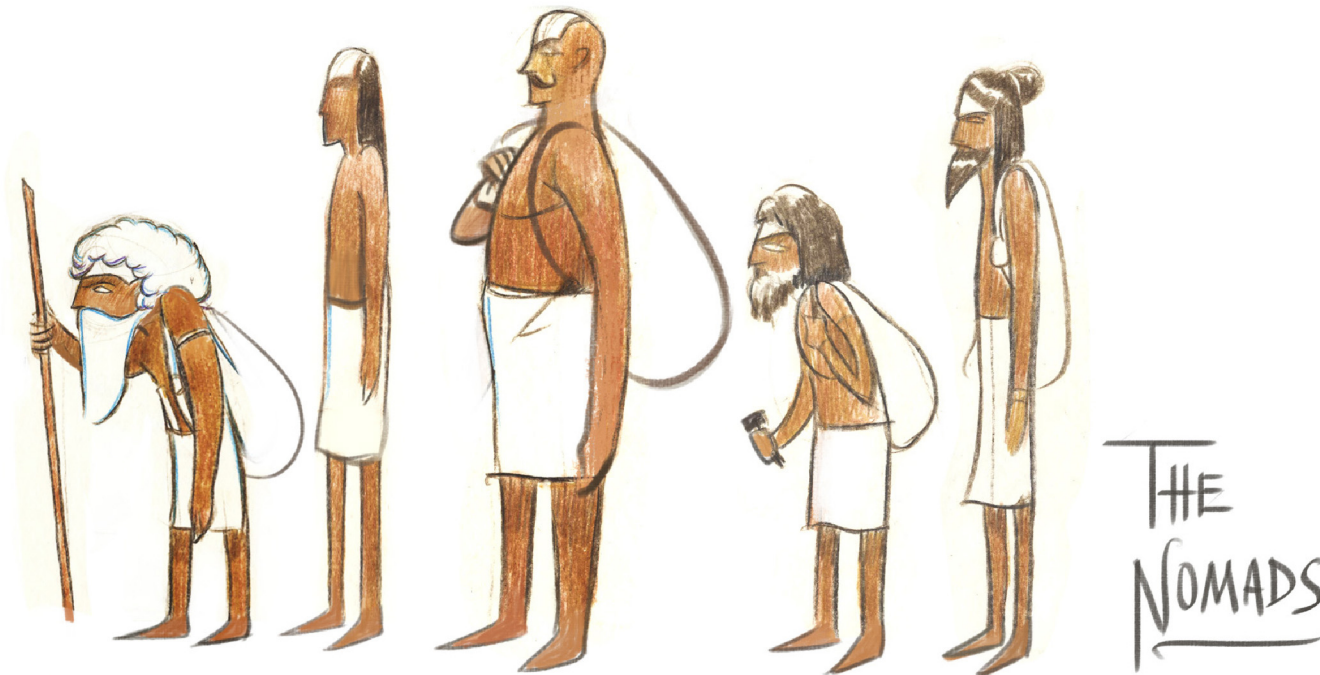
The birds play the considerable role of distracting the cloud and tempting it to follow them away from the pilgrimage. The intention was to make a fantasy bird with the features of a migratory species and the long tail feathers. With reference to flamingo, the sarus crane and the peacock a new bird was designed.



Exploratory sketches



Bird - final design



THE NOMADS

The nomads are a wandering tribe. They all bear the sacred ash mark on their forehead, wearing a cloth tied around their waist typical of the south Indian "*Mundu*". They are led by a short and bearded leader with a staff in his hand.

The Flute player

The flute player is a boy in his early teens. He belongs to the tribe of the nomads with the same costume and bears the sacred mark on the forehead. His introduction into the storyline reflects a mysterious nature. He is introduced after the floods. I wanted in him the characteristics of a lonely survivor of the disaster who is remorseful of his survival and yearns to go back to wherever his beloved people are. On the other hand his merging into the light along with cloud gives a sense of a lost soul who is destined to liberate the cloud to its original nature.

The sculptures of Buddha came in handy to imbibe the subtle and divine and mysteriousness into the nature of the boy. The curly locks of hair are derived from the Buddha sculptures.



Character explorations.

FLUTE PLAYER - MODEL SHEET



THE COLOUR SCRIPT

The colour scripts help to maintain consistency in the use of colours under the changing circumstances of the storyline. It also adds character to the animation style.



Transformation of cloud into rock

CONCLUSION

“Meghayana” conveys through animation the story of a cloud that is distracted from its purpose and its journey back to its intended destination aided by natural and divine occurrences. The nature of the small cloud directly reveals normal human nature and its pilgrimage demonstrates the innate human tendency to move towards the larger cosmic goal. The pilgrimage of the cloud expresses the ultimate assurance of the help offered by the divine forces in reaching our intended destination.

“Meghayana” is my first ever animation film. Visual development has been my longtime interest and this project has not only given me the opportunity to design visuals for a purpose but also extended my abilities in producing animation as a whole from the developing the story and animating.

As a learning experience, the project has revealed my strengths and weaknesses not only in terms of producing the work but also as a evolving self. A team work in the production of music has come a long way in understanding the nature of getting connected with different minds and talents under a common cause to produce better results. Overall it has been an adventure and the adventure continues!