

## Project 3

# Baccha Chor

(Baby Thief)

- an animated short film

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## Introduction

Urbanisation may be a blessing for our country's economy, but the silent sufferers of it are the wildlife who are losing their habitats to it. Whether it be due to habitat loss or easy availability of food, many animals choose to stay in or near human cities despite the risk.

In Kolkata, some of the animals which commonly stay in the proximity of human settlements are Common Palm civet cat, Small Indian Civet cat, Golden Jackal, Jungle Cat, Indian grey mongoose etc.. In recent years, due to easy connectivity and the efforts of NGOs and the Forest Department, rehabilitation of such wild animals, if found in a human settlement has become common. However, due to irrational fear, a sense of achievement and mythical stories passed down generations these animals are often harmed for simply existing.

This project revolves around the Common Palm civet - a nocturnal animal of the Viverridae family who frequents semi urban and rural places in West Bengal. Civet cats are small carnivores with short legs, pointed noses and a long thick tail. Their diet consists of small rodents like rats, squirrels, amphibians like frogs, insects and even small birds and their eggs. They also eat fruits like bananas, pineapple, roots, grass and even honey. There are majorly two types of civet cats found in and near Kolkata : Common/Asian Palm civet (which is seen more commonly) and the Small Indian Civet (whose sightings are rare). For the past few years, the Wildlife Wing of the Forest Department, West Bengal, has experienced a rise in the number of calls and mails regarding civet depredation. (Mallick, 2019, 48) It is reported that at least 20 civets, which have strayed into people's homes, are being brought to the rescue centre every

Kolkata has a history and its rich culture and heritage is apparent as one walks through the streets.

Due to their nocturnal and shy nature and their traditionally non-aesthetic appearance, civet cats are often villainized in bedside stories and rumours passed down generations.

This film aims to tackle the age old wives' tales about civets which have been passed down generations to create a strong dislike and mistrust of the otherwise harmless creature. Its pseudo bad reputation is the civet's greatest enemy. The objective of this film is to re-introduce the civet in its true form so people can learn to empathize and understand the animal.

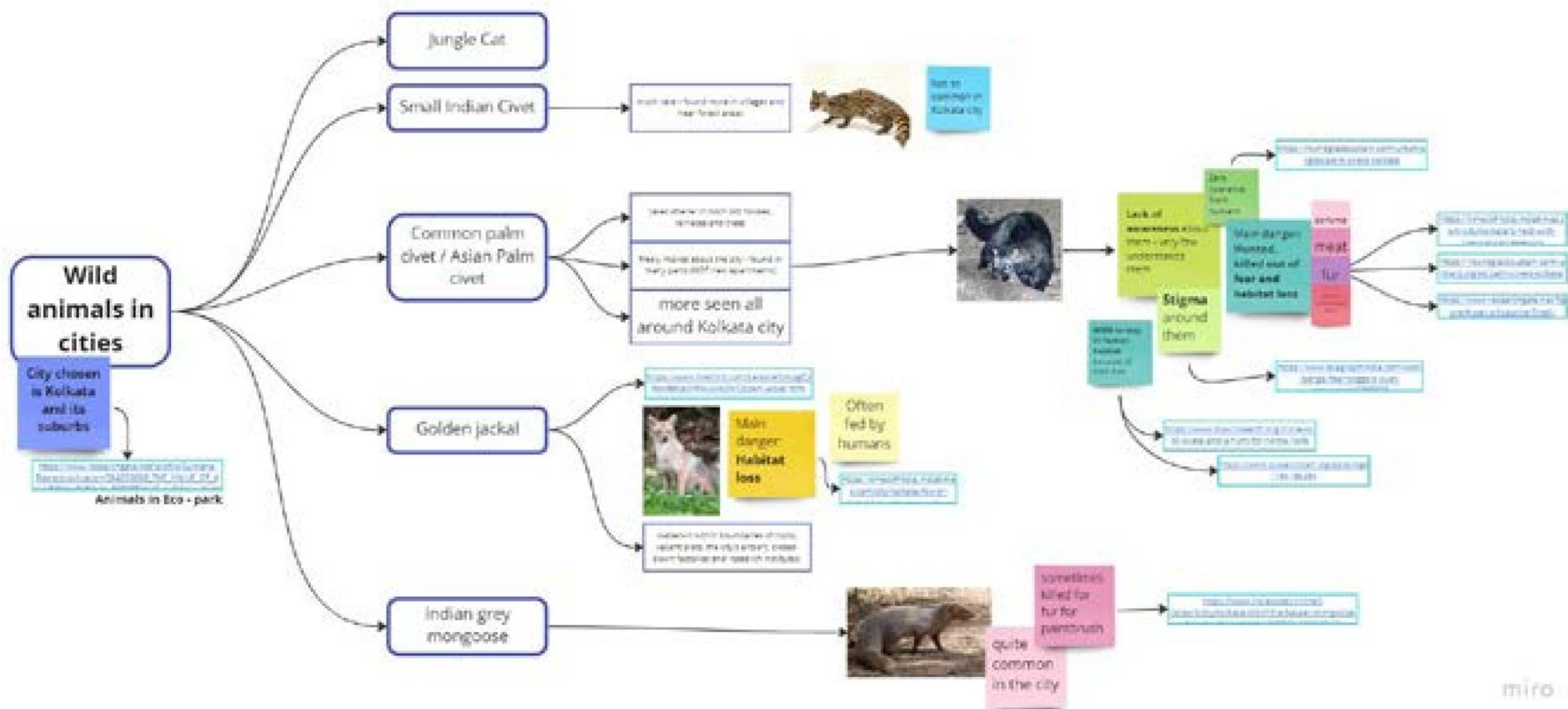


# Research

## Secondary Research

The starting point of the research was to find out the wild animals routinely frequenting Kolkata and its outskirts. Among these are the

Jungle cat, the Small Indian Civet, the Indian Grey Mongoose, the Golden Jackal and the Asian Palm Civet. The later three are more commonly found in the city. In general, the residents of the busy city have low tolerance for these animals out of fear for their safety and fear of transmission of diseases.



Wild animals found in and around Kolkata

## Golden Jackal

Golden Jackals are found in multiple areas around the outskirts of the city. One place they take shelter in is the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International airport. Owing to the distance of the airport from the main urban areas, the jackals seek refuge in the spacious empty plots of land around aerodromes. (Singh, 2020) They are also found wandering in the developing townships of Rajarhat and Newton, where a lot of apartment buildings are still under construction.

Unfortunately, there is another place where these Golden Jackals have found themselves trapped. In a study done by the Zoological Survey of India, 43 jackals were found living inside the sprawling walled compound of the Tollygunge Club in Kolkata. (Sanyal et al., 2011, 41). These jackals are unable to get out of the confined space of the golf club as it is surrounded by the bustling city of Kolkata on all sides. Though they have come to accept the presence of humans, they still possess a threat to them on occasion of being wild animals by nature. These jackals, however, are often attacked and chased away by packs of stray dogs which also reside inside the compound. (Sanyal et al., 2011, 44)



Jackals inside Tolly Club. Source: Sanyal et al., 2011, 39

## Asian Palm Civet

The Asian Palm Civet is a nocturnal and shy creature which mainly eats fruits, flowers and small animals like lizards, frogs, rodents and insects. It is found in many parts of Bengal, including inside the city of Kolkata. In Bengali, they are referred to as '*bham biral*' or '*khat-tash*' (owing to the sound they make) or '*gondhu goku*' (this is due to a gland of the civet which releases a pleasant smell).



Source: Soumen Das, Pran Prohori

They live in the dark attics, ceilings and wooden rafters of old colonial buildings in the city and as these old buildings are replaced by new infrastructure, the habitat of the civet further decreases. (Raj, 2021) Owing to habitat loss and reduced green pockets in the city, the civets of Kolkata wander into houses in search of food. They are regarded as pests as they leave behind a mess, including their droppings. As it is only active during the night, not many sightings of the civet are recorded. When seen in the dark, the civet has a dark and unpleasant appearance with glowing eyes.

All these factors combined have put this harmless creature in a bad spotlight. Furthermore, as we go a bit farther away from the city, rumours, superstitions and stories passed down generations also instil fear into people. One such myth being that the bham biral steals human babies. (Raj, 2021)



## Primary Research

### My personal fascination with the civet.

As a child, I would hear tales about a mysterious animal called '*sorel*' or '*bham biral*'. No one had ever seen it properly. My grandmother would tell to close the windows at night, otherwise the *sorel* would come and steal babies. When I tried asking how the animal looked, I only got horrifying details. For a long time in my life, I was curious about this animal and wanted to find what it was.

The first time I saw a civet was when I came upon the carcass of one. Surprisingly, there were similarities to the description I had grown up hearing. A few years later, while I was sitting outside a office, a large black cat-like creature ran past me on the adjacent wall. It was only the glimpse of the long bushy tail which made me realize that it was no cat I had seen, but rather a live civet.

All of this leads to why I chose to make this project about the civet? I realized that the mythical creature I had grown up wondering about was a simple wild animal which lived in the underbelly of my city. It dawned upon me that there must be others who do not know the civet in its true nature as well. So, through my film, I hope to bring the reputation of the civet to some justice.

### In conversation with people

After conducting my own research, I sat down to ask different people from Kolkata if they had heard of the civet. My questions were:

- Have you ever heard of an animal called *bham biral* or civet?
- When and how did you see it?
- How did you react to it?

To the first question, most people answered no. Upon hearing the description of its physical characteristics people did recognize it and

admitted to seeing it. In most scenarios, they did not know what it was. In the cases that people were aware of the civet, some replied to chasing it away, while others maintained their distance warily. It was obvious people did not trust this animal unfamiliar to them.

### NGO Pran Prohori

I came across an NGO Pran Prohori which rescues snakes, civets and other reptiles from in and around Kolkata. I got in contact with Mr. Soumen Das, who maintains a YouTube channel online to record their rescue missions. From my conversation with them, I got a wide idea about the plight of civets in Bengal. Misinformation, lack of awareness and fear combined together has turned these harmless creatures into the subject of hatred for everyone.

A brief summary of our conversation is documented below:

Why do people harm the civet cat?

- They are shy animals and do not interact with humans. Civets are terrified of humans and hence rarely have any bonding with humans.
- They are visually unpleasant to look at. Their rodent-like features, large teeth and black beady eyes often do not garner a lot of sympathy for them.
- If approached by humans, their self defence approach can be seen as vicious by humans. They make a 'khat khat' sound while opening their mouth to warn away danger. That, combined with the sight of their teeth, scare people.



Pran Prohori. Source: Pran Prohori Facebook page



Source: Sukanya Dutta, Projectnoah



- They are nocturnal animals, hence the general fear of the unknown which causes the stigma around their existence.
- Civets are seen as pests by many as they often steal fruits from homes, leave their droppings and sometimes knock over furniture.
- Often many inexperienced rescuers take a mother civet and release it into the wild, far away from the place where she gave birth. This way the abandoned baby civets die as the mother civet cannot find her way back. The mother civet, separated from her babies, often dies trying to search for them.
- People are also scared of getting bit and contracting rabies from them.
- Rumours and old bedside stories to scare children give them a bad and false reputation. A story commonly told about them is that they steal human babies.
- Civets are also killed for their civet oil, which is derived from a small gland near their anus which releases an odorous substance when the civet feels threatened. The oil derived from civets are used for developing fragrance, medicinal products and flavouring agents for food. (What Does Civet Cat Taste Like?, 2004)
- Many tribes from villages often kill the civet for meat consumption.
- Lastly the civet is also killed for its fur, which are used in the production of paint brushes.



Source: Soumen Das

## So how can we help or save civets?

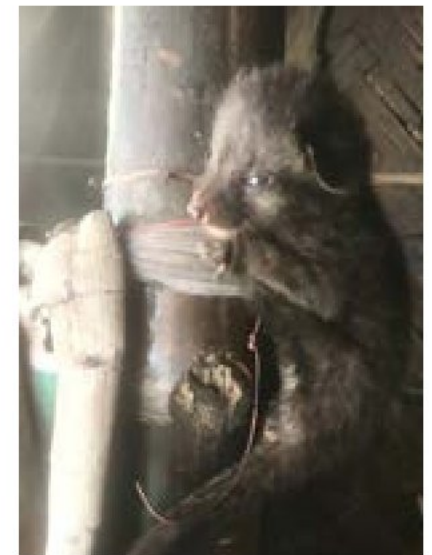
This is the question I posed to Soumen Das of Pran Prohori. What is the correct steps to take regarding civets in our cities? Following is a summary of the answer:

- Leave them alone.
- Don't try to engage with them.
- Don't hurt them.
- They are wild animals so we should respect that.

The primary solution, according to the NGO, is to educate and raise awareness among people of the true nature of civets and break the myths that have already caused so much harm to the species. Beside rescuing, the NGO also holds awareness campaigns in rural areas, .



Source: Soumen Das



Source: Soumen Das

## Analysis

### **Lack of awareness and education**

- Most people have not heard of a civet or only know it by its physical appearance or a passing glimpse they have caught.

### **Lack of Sympathy towards the civet**

- The Asian Palm civet has a notorious reputation among the residents of Kolkata mainly due to the stigma and fear from the animals' unfriendly demeanor. It is seen as a pest.

### **Pre-existing myths that distort reality**

- Myths that have been passed down generations have created a pre-existing belief about the animal, not allowing people to accept it in reality.

## Aim

Animation is a tool which is often effectively used to portray serious messages or topics in a visually pleasant and light hearted way. When being introduced to a new way of thinking people often resist changing their old beliefs. To fight the case for the civet, this project needs to raise empathy in people. The story, visual language and dialogues are designed keeping this in mind. So the aim of the film is:

- Raise awareness on HOW to safely interact with civets.
- Create content to tackle to myths around them - what they eat, why they break into people's homes and how they look.
- To encourage peaceful coexistence with wild animals in cities

## Initial concepts and sketches

### Name of my film

I toyed with the myth I was focusing on debunking in my film - civets are thieves who steal human babies. That is how I derived the name of my film 'Baccha Chor'. It translates to 'Baby thief'. The way to break a pre-existing notion is to accept it first. Hence the film is divided into two parts - it starts with introducing the animal as it is known and heard about and it ends with the stark contrast of how scared, hungry and harmless the animal actually is. The idea behind timing such rapid viewpoints immediately after the other is to draw comparison between the absurdity of the rumors and the reality of the civet.

Here are some conceptual sketches I made, while embracing the bad light people see it in.







# Genesis

## The myth behind the story

Prior to writing the story of the film, the backstory was explored to create context. In an exaggerated way, the genesis explores the origin of the myth of the civet as the 'thief of human babies'. Following is the origin story or the genesis of my project:

Before the tall buildings of glass and steel came up, Kolkata's pride were the rajbaris and other traditional houses. Surrounded by ample trees and greenery, those houses stood with their wooden rafters and many niches and corners - perfect for little animals to take shelter. In those days, humans and many small animals co-existed in the city. As the sun set, the elders would tell the children to come indoors and not wander out to the trees. And when night fell, the howl of jackals and foxes would fill the night air. Civet cats scurried from connecting terraces and trees in search of fruits and small rodents like rats. Hooting owls and bats with flapping wings would make the city their hunting ground. Packs of jackals would run through fields, not venturing close to the houses with tightly shut doors and windows.

Inside their homes, people would often sleep safely in their beds. Though the occasional insomniac would catch a glimpse of glowing eyes or be disturbed by howls, humans, in general, were never hurt by these wild nocturnal citizens. However, fear is the demon that takes over the human rationale. And fear of the unknown, fear of glowing eyes in the darkness brought

forth terrible stories. These stories, passed down through generations, had no origin. Whispered by grandparents or mothers, the purpose of these stories was to instil fear and caution in children and the youth. These stories were tools to protect one's loved ones.

One such story was of the civet cat. The civet cat was as black as the night it loved and its eyes were dark unblinking orbs. It wasn't nature's prettiest, but it was harmless. But its nocturnal nature gave it a infamous reputation - that of a baby stealer. No one knows who first bestowed this title on the unsuspecting animal, but for years to come the stories of the civet cat stealing babies would earn it a lot of fatal hate and fear from humans.

This is the story which Dida heard when she was a little girl: Long ago there was a house which was beside a pond, which was further beside a dense patch of trees and bushes stretching quite far. In the house, lived a large family and one new addition to the family was a 3 week old baby with soft black hair. One night, as the elders of the family ate dinner together and the children were going to sleep with full bellies, the baby with the soft hair slept alone on a cot. The room was dark except for the splash of moonlight entering from the window and the slightly ajar door. As an owl hooted somewhere in the forest beyond the pond, a black shape darted across the window. The door creaked open and the Sorel entered silently. Its curled rat-like claws made no sound on the mud flooring. With its sharp crooked nose, it sniffed the air, its gnarly whiskers picking up the scent of the helpless baby.

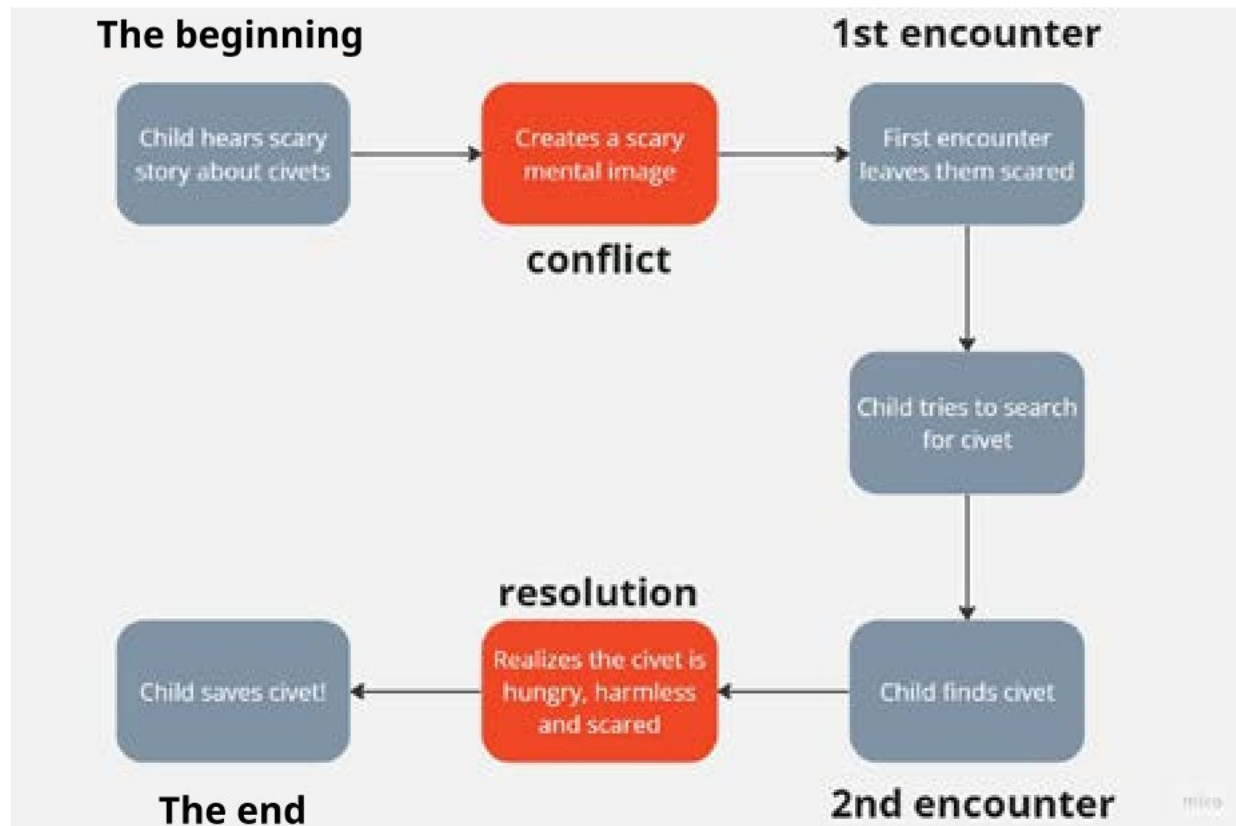


The lean and hunched body of the Sorel climbed up the cot for it was a master climber. The spiky black bristle-like fur brushed across the baby's soft skin and the newborn trembled in her sleep. Very slyly, the thick spiky tail of the Sorel wrapped itself around the baby securing her tightly in its deathly embrace. As the baby started to wake up, with unparalleled swiftness the Sorel bit the cloth the baby was wrapped in, with its rat-like teeth and ran out of the door. The baby cry made the mother come running. For a moment, the new mother who would spend the rest of her life regretting this moment, stood frozen a few feet away from the Sorel. She only saw its crooked and spiky body wrapped around her baby. But the worst were its eyes. Its normally black soulless eyes were just two glowing orbs staring. They were the eyes of a wild animal, the eyes of a monster! Three heartbeats later the Sorel turned and scaled up the walls to the tile roof. Cries and shouts rang out from the house below as the helpless and crying mother watched the monster, the Sorel, the stealer of babies, disappear into the dark forest with her baby with soft black hair.

The next morning, the men of the house went to the forest to search for their baby. A long and exhausting search later, the father came upon a sight which made him sick. The half eaten carcass of a baby lay on the ground, in some places the meat had been picked clean off the bones. A patch of skin remained on the skull. To it was attached a tuft of soft black hair. Sorel, the stealer of babies, had his feast.

## Story structure

The story was divided into two parts: one is setting up the context of the civet in the role of a monster, followed by revealing its true image and nature. The story is portrayed through the eyes of a child as children are more susceptible to such stories. Children are also better at breaking away from pre-existing beliefs and embracing new concepts like empathizing with civets.



Early sketches of the initial stories

## Initial story ideas

### Story Idea 1

After hearing scary story about civets from his grandmother one night, a little boy raises alarm when he sees one. Later he is heartbroken to find how his parents hunted down and killed the civet which raises the question in his heart, 'who is the real monster?'.

#### Why was this idea rejected?

This story was had too violent of an ending which painted the humans in a villainized role. This would not spark sympathy in the viewers. Rather, it would deepen the aversion to civets as they will be seen as the enemy. It could also be interpreted as conforming to the practice of harming and killing civets.

### Story Idea 2

A little boy hears the frightening allegations against civets and decides to hunt down the one terrorizing his neighbourhood. But he soon realizes how civets are harmless as he finds the civet and sees it is a mother nursing a cub. He proceeds to build them a safehouse to protect the mother civet and her cub.

#### Why was this idea rejected?

After proposing this idea to the NGO, they helped me see the faults in the ending of this story. In the end, the little boy is seen interacting with the civets and tries to help them in his own way which is a dangerous message to portay. Civets are wild animals and they best solution is to leave them alone. In case of a nursing mother, the civet

and her cub would empty the nest on their own once the cub is grown up. Plus this story tried to raise empathy through the use of a mother figure. I want the people to empathize with civets in their true form, not by humanizing them as caring mothers or helpless cubs.

### Story Idea 3

A little boy hears the frightening allegations against civets and decides to hunt down the one terrorizing his neighbourhood. But he soon realizes how civets are harmless and misleads a mob of angry people, saving a civet after realizing how harmless civets are.

This was the story idea which was selected. While the beginning is the same as idea 2, the ending teaches people to leave the civet to go on its own way.



Early sketches of the initial stories

## Final story

**Story name : Baccha Chor (Baby thief)**

### First Encounter

Place: Khoka's neighbourhood at night, around 10pm

Night time city Kolkata - a peaceful neighbourhood.

Sound of a plate falling, followed by a commotion and a woman and baby crying. People gathered in front of a house. A woman is crying, "*Ami na dekle, bodhay aaj Babai ke tene niye chole jeto.*" She is holding her baby and looks disturbed.

A man exclaims, "*Sotti roj ei bham tar uptat!*" (Seriously! Every this civet is terrorizing us) Another man in the crowd replies, "*Haa! Ki jala bolo toh!*" (Exactly! Such a nuisance!)

Three kids, Khoka, Mittu and Tiya were peeping out of the window in Khoka's house, at the ruckus outside in the street.

Khoka: "*Ei bham abar ki?*" ("What is this civet?")

Mittu: "*Dida bole je ora bari te ashe baccha churi korte.*" ("My grandmother says that they come to people's houses to steal babies")

Tiya: "*Ami dekechi! Joljol e chokh and boro boro nok. Puro chuchor moton dekte!*" (I have seen one! They have glowing eyes and large claws. They look like giant rats!)

Khoka: "*Dhus ki bhitu! Oisob abar hoy naki*" ("You guys are such cowards! As if those are real.")

That night, while closing his window before going to bed, Khoka notices some of the leaves rustling in the tree beside his window. As he looks, a dark blur jumps out of the tree and into the neighbour's

terrace. He cannot see it, but can only see the monstrous shadow it is casting on the wall. Suddenly it jumps up on the wall. In an attempt to catch it, Khoka throws a stone at it. It screeches and runs away, scaring Khoka. Hearing his shout, Khoka's mother comes up asking, "*Khoka ki holo?*" ("What happened?")

Khoka, left shocked by the encounter, just replies that he saw the civet.

### The Search

From that day on, Khoka becomes determined to catch the civet.

Khoka draws a scary mask to scare and catch the civet. Khoka spends the entire morning, searching in different places.

Narration:

*"Khoka or mukhos niye saradin bham ke khuje beray. Kokhono bichanar niche, kokhono sei boro tetul gaach e. Kokhono para er dokane dokane giye missing bham poster lokder dey abar kokhono emon jayga jekhane or jawa baron. Kintu bham er kono khoj o payna."* (Khoka wore his mask and searched for the civet the entire day. Sometimes under a bed, sometimes on the branches of the large tamarind tree. Sometimes he searched in a shop and sometimes he searched in places he wasn't supposed to. But he found no trace of the civet.)

### Second encounter

Night falls:

Khoka was on the way to the kitchen, sleepily, for a glass of water. He sees the kitchen door slightly ajar and some muddy footsteps



leading to it. He can see the same shadow again coming from under the open kitchen door. He quickly grabs his mask and picks up a broom and crouches beside the door, clutching the broom and breathing heavily.

He quickly grabs his mask and picks up a broom and stands beside the door, clutching the broom and breathing heavily.

Taking a deep breath, he bursts in the room and confronts the animal, expecting a monster. As his eyes fall on the slightly larger than a cat animal at a corner, in the process of eating a banana. The fruit drops from his mouth and the animal is panting and breathing heavily in the corner looking at him in fear.

As Khoka lowers his broom, the animal darts outside from the window in panic. It jumps down to the wall, and leaps to the dilapidated tin shed below. But he is clumsy and his jumping makes a loud noise on the tin shed. Some pieces of loose metal sheets clamour down and make a ruckus. Dogs start barking, lights switch on in houses and two people come out to the street. The civet looks around in panic. Just then somebody shouts out, “Oi toh bham ta!” (There is the civet!). People start gathering and start chasing and searching for the civet. In the ruckus, the civet runs and escapes into an old garage through a hole in the roof.

Khoka grabs the banana and runs down to the street. People are already gathered around with torches and sticks and nets. The civet hides in panic, panting - only her head and eyes popping out as the voices and banging grow louder. Just then the door opens to the place she is hiding and light pools in. The civet's eyes grow big in fear and she starts trembling. Only Khoka walks in with his boyish mask. He

sees the civet and realises she is just scared. He places the banana near his feet and hides behind some boxes. The civet came out to eat the food. The civet is injured and looks too thin and weak. Just then a car passes by with loud sound and headlights and the civet runs away in fear leaving the banana. Khoka comes out, sees the banana near his feet and removes his mask, throws it away and walks away. Outside a man catches hold of his shoulder and asks, “*Khoka bham ta ke dekli?*” (Khoka, did you find the civet?) Khoka points in the opposite direction. He sees the men running away towards the direction he pointed. Khoka looks back and sees the civet peeping from the shed behind.

Their eyes meet and Khoka smiles at the civet. Without disturbing it, Khoka walks away, knowing he saved the civet. After he leaves, the civet runs away.

## Storyboard



Night shot of Kolkata



A woman is crying, spooked by an animal which tried to "steal her baby"



Three children peep from a window at the crowd gathered



As Khoka, the main character, asks what is a civet, his friend tells him of a scary tale of how civets come to homes to steal babies.



Bhola tells how they have long claws and glowing eyes.



Khoka refuses to believe them, so his friends laugh at him.



While closing window, Khoka hears rustling in a nearby tree



A blur jumps into the terrace in front of his house and he sees a monstrous shadow on the wall



The first encounter with the mysterious civet leaves Khoka scared



After that night, Khoka becomes determined to catch the civet.



He makes a mask to scare the civet



He spends the entire day searching everywhere : under beds





He searched in trees



He distributed 'MISSING' posters



He even searched inside water tanks. But to no avail.



That night as he woke up to get a glass of water, he hears noises from the kitchen.



Realizing it could be the civet, he wears his mask and gets a stick



He barges in with the stick





2nd encounter with the civet : the true form and shape of the harmless civet is revealed



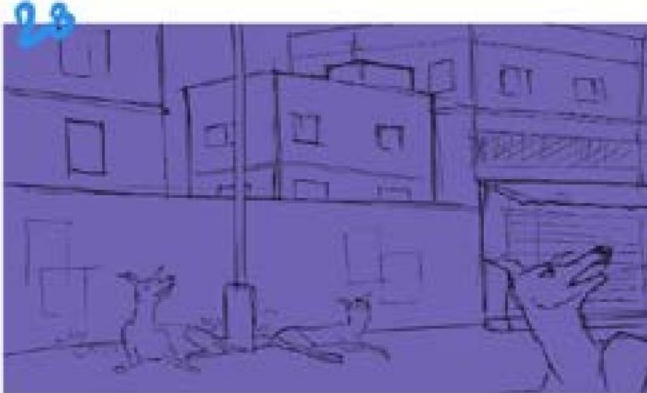
Khoka is surprised as the civet does not match his imagination



The civet runs away scared



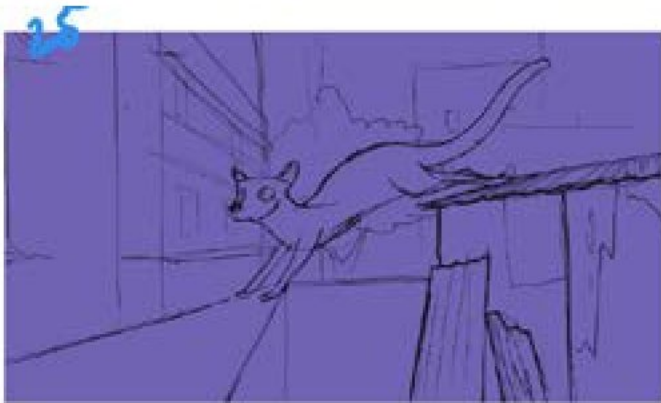
The civet lands on a roof of an old shed. Some tiles fall off.



Hearing the sound of tiles falling, dogs wake up and start barking



People gather as they spot the poor civet.



The scared civet runs away



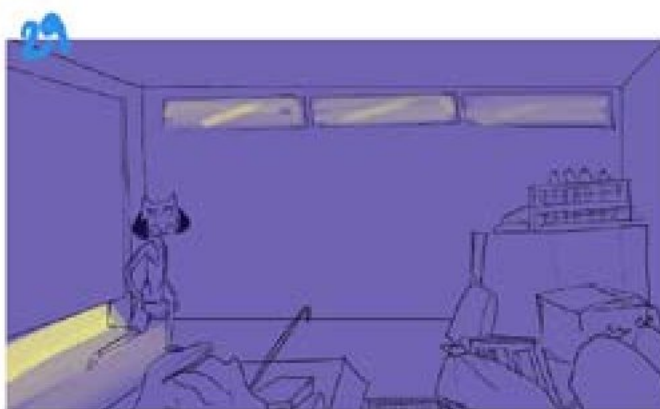
Khoka runs after the civet, picking up the banana the civet was eating, on the way.



The civet slips through a hole in the garage



The civet hides in the garage, scared.



Khoka comes in.



He places the banana to help the poor, hungry civet and hides, waiting.



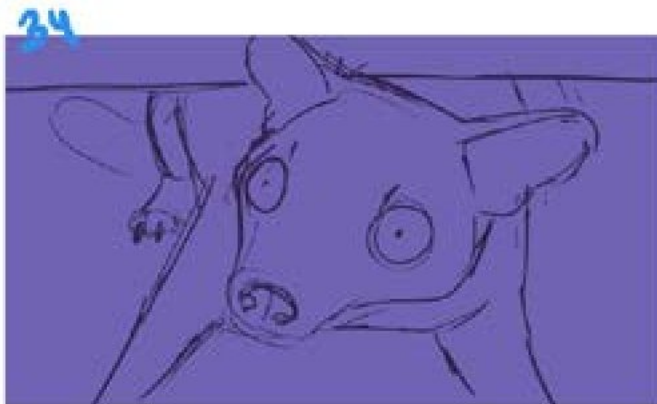
As the hungry civet comes to eat the banana, it gets scared by a loud passing car.



Khoka realizes that the civet is just a scared, poor animal. He drops his mask and leaves the garage, disturbed.



As one of the angry mob ask him if he has seen the civet, he misleads them by pointing in another direction.



The civet comes out and looks at Khoka with trusting eyes



Khoka smiles at the animal and walks away, knowing he saved its life.



The civet escapes safely.



## Context studies

### Interior

For this project, I dived back deep into my past and childhood. So my story is set in a middle class Bengali house. Such houses are usually visually chaotic - every open surface on a table or on top of the fridge will be covered with items like containers, bottles, medicines. The houses look worn and used, with stained walls and overly decorative curtains. Items will also overflow from the furniture surfaces to sometimes, just arranged or stacked on the floor.

I was fascinated with the unique appearance of these Bengali homes and wanted to capture the visual clutter of human existence to as much precision I could. Here are some images of such middle class Bengali households. Some are screenshots of my grandmother's house on a videocall.



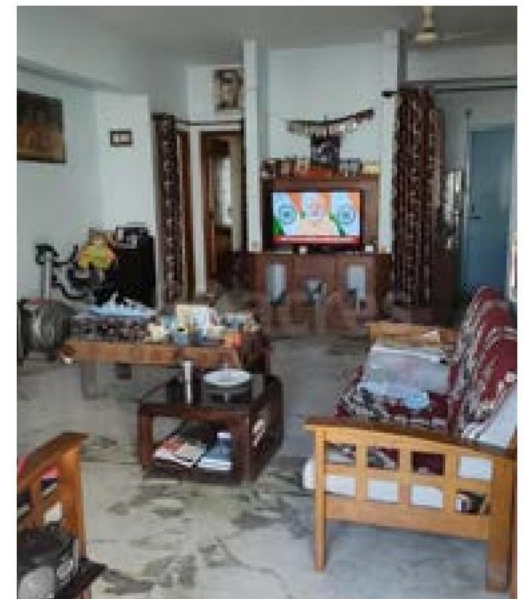
Source: Videocall with my grandmother



Source: Videocall with my grandmother



Source: settlein.com



Source: 99acres.com



## Exterior

My story is set in a middle class neighbourhood in South Kolkata. There are lot of localities in that area. Each locality is called a '*para*'. These *paras* have mostly two storied or three storied houses with terraces, built very closely to each other. There is also abundance of tree cover between the houses and narrow winding roads. Some *paras* also have ponds and little parks for children. Due to the absence of large roads and heavy vehicles, these suburban areas in the outskirts of the city are the perfect place for civets to live.

Our story is set in such a neighbourhood or *para*. Below, I have shared some images of how such neighbourhoods look like.



The *para* I grew up in



The *para* I grew up in



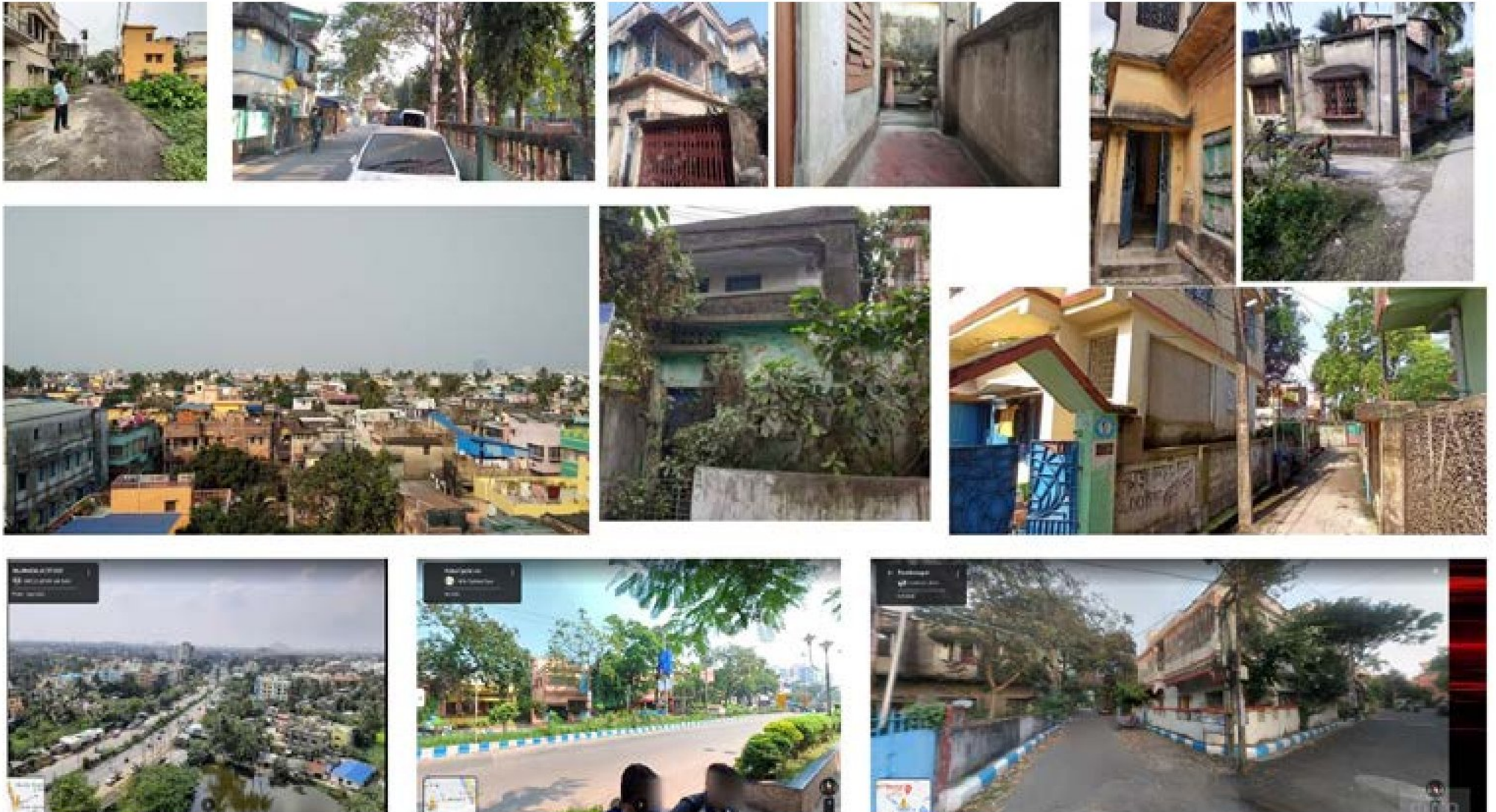
Source: Magicbricks.com



Source: Google street view image

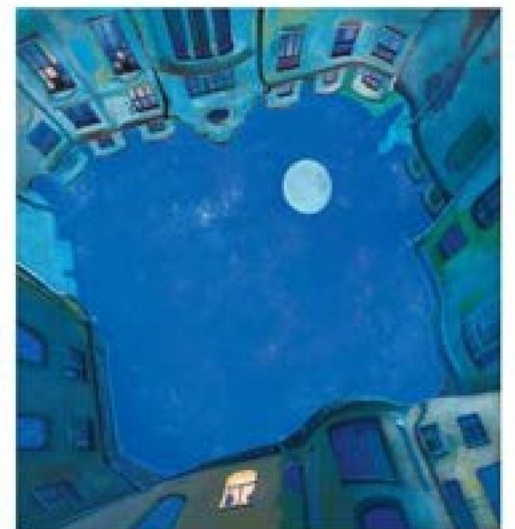


## Context moodboard





## Visual Moodboard



## Concept Art

Concept Art 1







Concept Art 2





Concept Art 3

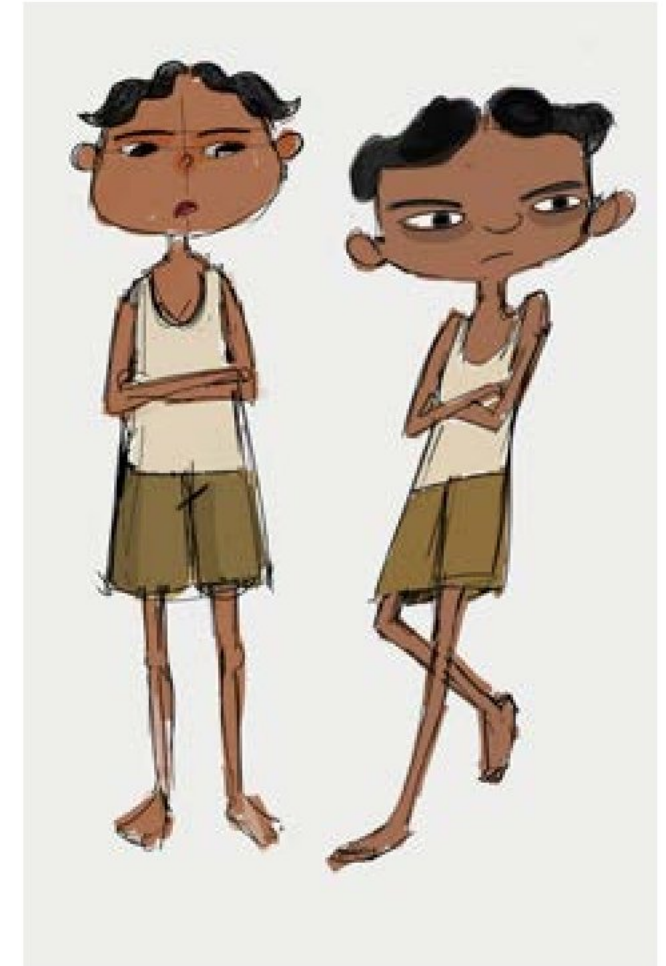
## Character Design

### Khoka

Khoka is the main character of the film. The name '*Khoka*' literally translates to 'little boy' and is a common '*dak naam*' or nickname used in Bengal.

Khoka is a curious and mischeveous 10 year old boy, belonging to a middle class neighbourhood in South Kolkata. He lives in a two storey house with his mother (shown in the film), father and younger sister (later two are not shown in the film).

Khoka has two best friends, Bhola and Mishti, both of whom live in the same neighbourhood. His weapon of choice is a home-made *gulati*.



Exploration drawings of Khoka





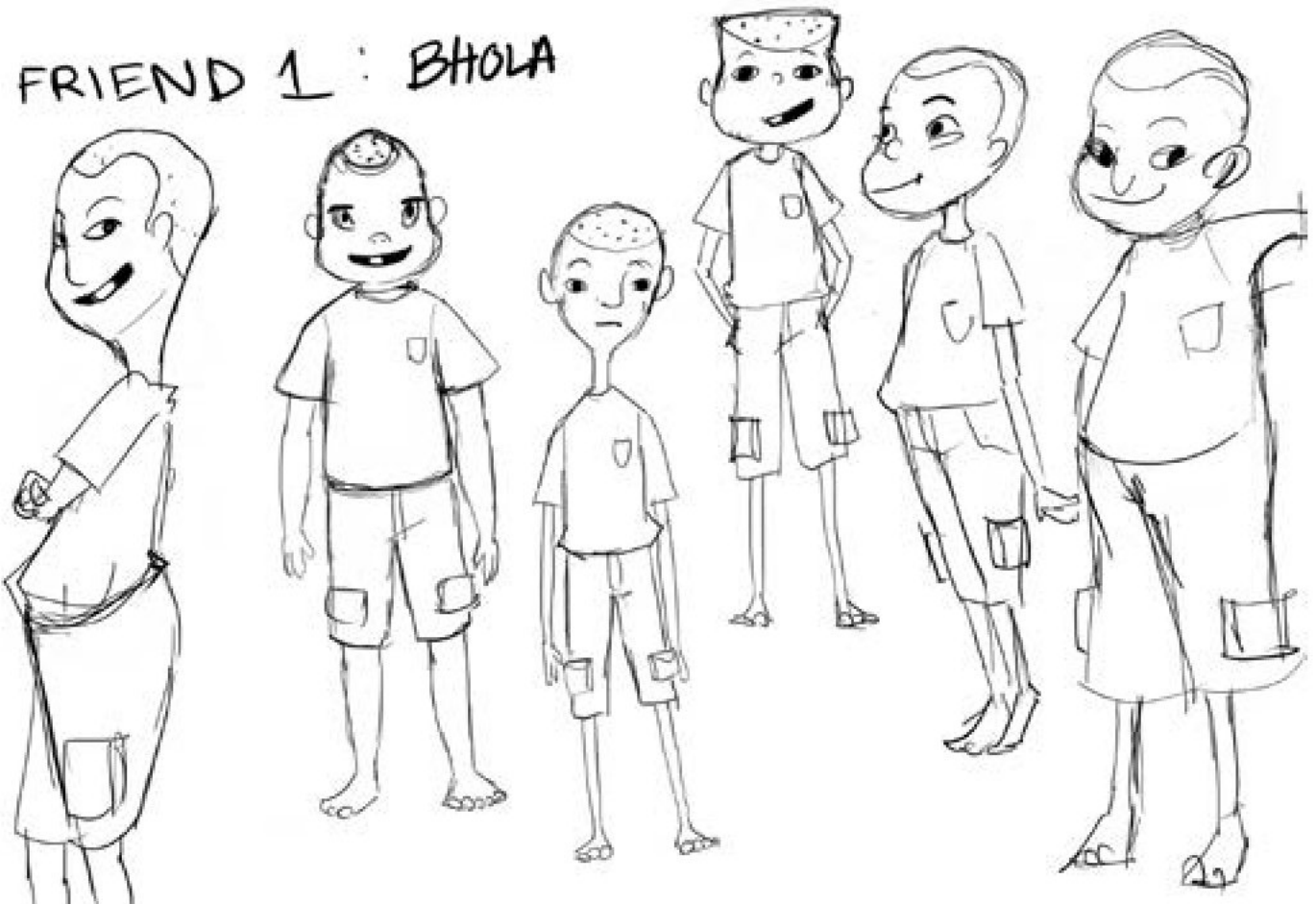
Khoka poses character sheet

## Bhola

Khoka is a friend of Khoka and is featured once in the film. The name '*Bhola*' literally translates to '*naive*' and is also a common '*dak naam*' or nickname used to address Bengali boys.

Bhola is 10 years old and lives three houses beside Khoka's. He is an imaginative and eager little boy who claims he once saw a civet on his terrace. However, due to his creative knack for makinh up stories, he remembers the civet in a much more exaggerated and notorious form.

He has a younger sister called, Mishti.



Exploration drawings of Bhola

## Mishti

Mishti is a friend of Khoka and is also the younger sister of Bhola. The name '*Mishti*' literally translates to '*sweet*' and is also a common '*dak naam*' or nickname used to address Bengali girls.

Mishti is 8 years old and lives three houses beside Khoka's with her brother, Bhola. Although, she is younger than the boys, she often tags along and hangs out with them. Mishti is more matured and cautious than her big brother Bhola.

## FRIEND 2: MISHTI



Exploration drawings of Mishti

## The Civet

Creating the civet character was not easy. I initially started exploring stylized character designs of the civet to fit with the graphic narrative of the film and other characters. However, I soon realized that this decision was going against the purpose of my project.

To raise awareness and break myths, I had to uphold the actual animal in front of my audience. Stylized or cute designs of the civet will create a wrong visual identity of the animal in people's head and also make them empathize with the animal due to its aesthetic and adorable features.

At the end, I decided to go with a realistic character design for the civet while ensuring it would blend in with the other prominent stylized visual treatment.

The initial character explorations of the civet are found in the next page.



Final character design of the Civet



## Initial Explorations of the Civet

Khattash





## Initial Explorations of the Civet



# Production Process

## Final backgrounds

The final backgrounds were of two types- the interior backgrounds and the exterior backgrounds. The exterior backgrounds revolved around Khoka's neighbourhood, so hence had a homogeneous visual language. The interior backgrounds were divided into four major spaces i.e, the bedroom, the foyer, the kitchen and the garage. Since there were multiple shots from the same interior space in different angles, the challenge was to create a production system which would make drawing multiple interior backgrounds easy. So I decided to model the four interior spaces in blender to maintain consistency in room dimensions and basic furniture perspectives. The camera renders of different angles of the blender model served as the base for the backgrounds. The step is as follows:



Blender model of bedroom

## Step 1

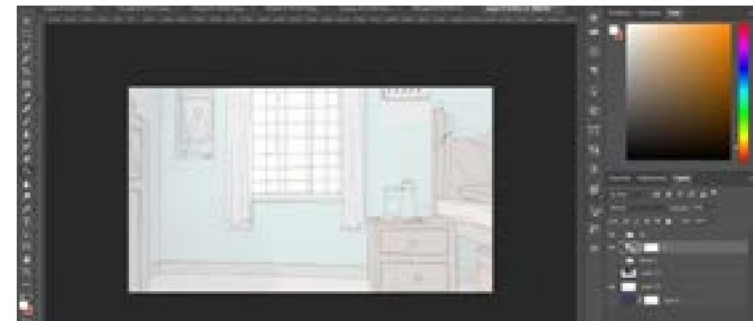
Make a basic blender model with minimal details. The aim is to maintain consistency in room dimensions and perspectives. Large furnitures are also modeled. One of the other key aspects of the block model is the lighting. To understand realistic light and shadow, realistic light fixtures and sources were used.



Blender model of the bedroom

## Step 2

Keeping the blender render as reference, objects, furniture and decor were added. After the lining is done, colors were added along with texturing using different brushes. After that, lighting was traced with respect to the rendered lighting to achieve realism.



Photoshop rendering of the bedroom

**1. Blender model**



**3. Flat color**



**2. Line drawing**



**4. Final texturing**





**Before**



Scene 5: Bedroom night shot

**After**



Scene 5: Bedroom night shot

**Before**



Scene 6: Kitchen reveal scene

**After**



Scene 6: Kitchen reveal scene

### Exterior lit shots



Scene 4: Shopkeeper scene

### Interior lit shots



Scene 6: Kitchen reveal scene

### Exterior dark shots



Scene 7: Civet on the shed scene

### Interior dark shots



Scene 5: Foyer scene



# Production Process

## Sound

Sound recording was done in the IDC recording studio. Following are the voice actors and the characters they played.

## Voice credits:

### Character

- Khoka
- Mishti  
(Khoka's female friend)
- Bhoka  
(Khoka's male friend)
- Crying Mother
- Narrator
- Khoka's mother
- Concerned Man
- Crowd person 1
- Crowd person 3
- Rickshawala

### Played By

Aurinko Chowdhary  
Pritisha Bhaumik  
Anagh Banerjee  
Sagarika Dam  
Sagarika Dam  
Alivia Chaudhari  
Susovan Gupta  
Arnesh Kundu  
Pankaj Murmu  
Parijat Das



Aurinko, the main voice actor and I



Recording Anagha, who plays Bhola

SusovaArne sh	Played By	Dialogue	Recording	Number	Placed
Crying mother (30 years)	Sagarika Dam	Crying Ami na dekho biddhey ajhe amar Babu ta ke tare naye jeto Biddhey		Folider 5 Zoom 10 part 2	
Concerned man (30 years)		Seto raj ei bham tar upar Ei bham ta ki na		zoom 7 zoom 11	
Khoka (10 years)		Ei bham atar kut  Chuk ki kinku, rodo atar hoy naki Fam Gruat Gruat Bham ta ke dokam		zoom 3 try 1 zoom 4 okolo atari hoy naki zoom 5 okolo ki kinku zoom 8 zoom 9 zoom 11 zoom 7 zoom 10 last try draw breath, zoom 10 first try release	
		Deep breath and release Hooooon... HAAHAKAA! man? Gasp Awe! Oi de e dokam		zoom 11 first try zoom 12 first try zoom 13 2nd try zoom 13 2nd try zoom 13 last try	
Mishti (8 years)	Pritisha Bhaumik	Chuk ki boro jama, ora ban bhi dehe bakhra chuk karta		Folider 5 zoom 10, 10p	
Bhoka (10 years)		Ami dekho, jai jai e chuk sar ei boro naki hoy Furo chukar moten dehe take		Folider 5, zoom 10	
Khoka's mother (40 years)	Alivia Chaudhari	Khoka, ki hoto?		Folider 5, zoom 7 or 8	
Narrator	Sagarika Dam	Sei din theke Khoka bham dhopai bode jai kore boro. Eka mukhech oi kareli hoy parashor jama Khoka oi ei mukhech naye karadi bham ta khuge bany Kochono bakhari roche, kochono sei boro talai gach e Kochono para ei dokan e dokan e gye mising bham poster korden na dey Aber kochono anam jogyai jaye jekina oi jake baram Kintu bham ei kore khor o payna		Folider 5, zoom 28 or zoom 23	
Crowd person 1 (40 years)		Ami! Ami oi tot bham ta! Ha atar atar dharai toke kinku! Seto ki anand heyechhe eia		Folider 5 zoom 3 (2nd try) Folider 5 zoom 4 (last try) Folider 5 zoom 6 (first try) Folider 5, zoom 7 (first try)	
Crowd person 2 (40 years)	Arnesh	Manush aar kothay jai sapal... chad!			
Crowd person 3 (40 years)	Pankaj Murmu	Ha ta jara bode toh! Ha baba take dhopai hobe!		Folider 5 zoom 2 Folider 5 zoom 10	
Crowd person 4 (40 years)	Pankaj Murmu	Kothay kothay? Ake dharai hobe!		Folider 5 zoom 28 Folider 5 zoom 40 or 41	
	Pankaj Murmu	bachu shure			
Crowd person 4 (40 years)	Alivia C.	Ha ha ekum ekum		Folider 5, zoom 6	

Character dialogue sheet



# Production Process

## Animation and compositing

Character animation was done in Toon Boom Harmony.  
Compositing was done in Adobe After Effects and Premiere Pro.



Animation, Scene 9



Compositing, Scene 9

Scene	Shot	Description	Duration (sec)	Difficulty level	Background no.	Animation				Editor	Background artist
						Background rough animation	Storyboard of background	Storyboard of characters	Storyboard of elements		
1	0.1	Intro night scene			1						
	0.2	Window looking through			2						
	0.3	Character in doorway			3						
	0.4	Character in doorway			4						
2	1.1	Character in doorway			5						
	1.2	Character in doorway			6						
	1.3	Character in doorway			7						
	1.4	Character in doorway			8						
3	2.1	Character in doorway			9						
	2.2	Character in doorway			10						
	2.3	Character in doorway			11						
	2.4	Character in doorway			12						
4	3.1	Character in doorway			13						
	3.2	Character in doorway			14						
	3.3	Character in doorway			15						
	3.4	Character in doorway			16						
5	4.1	Character in doorway			17						
	4.2	Character in doorway			18						
	4.3	Character in doorway			19						
	4.4	Character in doorway			20						
6	5.1	Character in doorway			21						
	5.2	Character in doorway			22						
	5.3	Character in doorway			23						
	5.4	Character in doorway			24						
7	6.1	Character in doorway			25						
	6.2	Character in doorway			26						
	6.3	Character in doorway			27						
	6.4	Character in doorway			28						
8	7.1	Character in doorway			29						
	7.2	Character in doorway			30						
	7.3	Character in doorway			31						
	7.4	Character in doorway			32						
9	8.1	Character in doorway			33						
	8.2	Character in doorway			34						
	8.3	Character in doorway			35						
	8.4	Character in doorway			36						
10	9.1	Character in doorway			37						
	9.2	Character in doorway			38						
	9.3	Character in doorway			39						
	9.4	Character in doorway			40						

Shot breakdown

## Conclusion

In conclusion, humans should prioritize peacefully coexisting with the wild life in their cities. This can only be achieved by debunking the myths surrounding these creatures, accepting their presence and choosing not to harm them. By embracing a harmonious relationship with civets, we can take a few long strides to foster a healthy ecosystem and biodiversity in our living spaces. Raising awareness and respecting their natural behaviours and space, respecting them as equally deserving of living in our cities is crucial. Humans should not attempt to domesticate them or interfere in their natural habitats as that can have damaging effects on their well-being. After all, they are wild animals.

Public education and awareness is a vital tool for fostering empathy towards civets. Distribution of accurate information about their behaviours, eating habits and the potential risks in interfering with wild civets is the major step we need to actively take.

We should not claim that the space we live in, belongs only to us. Instead of mistreating the animals that seek refuge in our cities, we should try to peacefully coexist with them.

These animals are not our pets. But neither are our enemies. So they shouldn't be treated as either.

## Link to Final film

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7ImNyJ8pvA&feature=youtu.be>

# Inference

## Challenges faced

- I struggled with the forming a story, which is based in reality and reliable, yet should encourage my audiences to empathize with and break their pre-existing myths about a creature they don't understand.
- I struggled with the character design of the civet. I wanted to portray it realistically. The aim was not to raise empathy by making it look cute, but reveal the actual creature behind the myth.
- Finally I struggled with the style. My backgrounds were done in Photoshop with lots of texturing and shadows, whereas my animation was done in flat color. However, I found that the contrast in style is actually aiding in bringing out the characters and animation into focus.



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