

usi

Presents

I AM POSSIBLE



Facilitated by
Siddharth Maskeri

USI “I AM IMPOSSIBLE” Creators

Balaram, Yami, Elishiba, Danish, Mohan, Milad, Partha,
Siddhant, Debjyoti, Saurav, Amrita, Praful, Susan, Lanchenba,
Bebin, Sanyukta, Pavan R, Nilanjan, Kshipra, Dew, Shruti,
Diksha, Pawan A, Ajunesh, Sudipta, Himanshu, Siddharth,
Smriti

About USI

United Students Initiative is a non-profit, open source movement driven by compassion for the health and welfare of students across all ages to unite and inspire them to achieve their dreams. This vision to unite students was conceived by Siddharth Maskeri on 28th October 2012.

USI Philosophy

*“Story Heals, Story Inspires, Story Educates, Story Unites,
Story Humanifies”*

“By Students, Of Students, For Students”

USI Pledge

USI pledge its efforts to unite students through their inspiring heroic tales of tribulations, joys, dreams and success.

Foreword

Collaborative sharing of struggles and successes has the power and potential of problem solving in today's competitive world as it invokes empathy, which is one of the important aspects of design education.

The course titled “CGI Animation” started with the objective to study the animation storytelling using digital 3D medium as a tool. With deliberation and search of the context it was decided to look into the individual journey of the students embedded with their real life stories of struggles, achievements, joys and sorrows and also most importantly fresh contents with their own regional, cultural and personal flavors.

This compilation of students’ life stories will definitely encourage, provoke and motivate upcoming young minds to come forward and express them and contribute in building storytelling community in India.

I compliment my friend and fellow faculty in this course Shri Siddharth Maskeri, for this noble initiative which has added lot of value to the entire discourse of sharing, collaboration and original storytelling.

I AM

Suman Chowdhury

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I

As Ibrahim Russell passed me a plate of Idli and Vada, my saliva glands started overflowing. The smell of Sambar elevated my hunger ten times. I expressed my deep gratitude to Ibrahim while I pushed the food into my mouth. As I did not had anything from morning, I finished the food in seconds. He asked me if I want more. That day evening, in the platform of Uduppi railway station, I felt the presence of magic.

Previous day I came to Ahmedabad railway station with the hope of booking a tatkal ticket to my home at Kochi. My cousin's wedding was happening, so I had no option but to reach home as soon as possible. When I reached the railway station at 5 'O' clock in the morning, there already had formed a long queue. By 7.30 am the officer came and opened the window for tatkal booking. Another half an hour passed by and my turn came. But to my disappointment, there wasn't any seat available. Heart-broken I moved to a corner and stood there staring at the information board. I decided I will travel in the same train but in general compartment. A complete forty hours journey, I thought. Since it was holiday season, Okha express was expected to have double the amount of people she can carry, and I was worried about the important files that I had to carry in my bags. As I was standing there thinking about all sorts of ways to tighten the protection of things that I am carrying, a hand tapped on my shoulder from behind. A short, well-dressed, fair skinned gentleman, stood in front of me with a wide

smile. Centre parted oily hair of his gave him a cute, innocent look. "Looking for a sleeper seat in Okha Express?"

"Yes "I said ambiguously. "I can arrange you one seat. One confirmed seat" So he has been observing me for a while, I thought. "But with two hundred rupees commission."

It is a decent deal, I thought. He must have come to the railway station in the morning and waited till this moment to get a client. I must make use of it. I told myself.

As we moved to his office he explained me the formalities to get the ticket. He handed over an application form to fill and asked me for two thousand rupees,

which included the commission. As I took out the two thousand rupee note, I felt a pain in my heart. The previous day I almost travelled the entire Ahmedabad to get this one note. The note ban had completely wiped out ATMs in the country. The remaining 35 rupees in my wallet smiled at me and wished me a happy journey.

As a huge corporate building approached our way. The agent asked me if I want chai or tea. I did not had anything from morning and I was mad hungry. I said chai without a second thought. He asked me to wait there while he get the chai. There were many hoardings of different travel agencies in the corporate building behind me and I guessed one of them would be the agent's. I couldn't resist but look at the direction from which a pleasant smell was coming . A chai stall to my right side was selling Poha along with some other

morning snacks. I took a step towards the stall, and got stopped by the image of my wallet grinning at me, holding a 35 rupees between its teeth. I waited there, holding nearly 20 kg of luggage. And it took me a while to come to the realization.

The train had started moving from Uduppi station as I described my one day to Ibrahim. He did not feel bad for me. He thought the fake agent was a better animal, and that is why he succeeded in fooling this educated me. After loosing my two thousand, I had no other option but to get into the general compartment of the train, without any ticket. I bought banana with the money I had which hardly satisfied my hunger for one day. Ibrahim somehow realised that I am travelling without any cash, and offered me food and water.

It was just two days of my life, but the duality of the reality was so striking. Yesterday I met a human who pushed me into the swamp of troubles. And I met a human today who pulled me out of the swamp without me asking for it.

I AM

Balaram

II



I AM

Yami

III

From a very young age I have been really shy and reserved person. Never able to talk to anyone unknown, neither was able to communicate. But always enjoyed playing sports felt like free, totally fearless. Always fear of people used to be there, don't know why but it was.

I used to be an average student but sincere if something is told, I will definitely do that. Sometimes I didn't want to do but still I am asked to by my parents, I used to cry for it but still do it. Later on I used to think why I can't say no to the anyone. But during college days an incident happened which brought a big change in me. And I decided that I will not leave anything untried that I have to regret later. It took time but I learned to say my thoughts, what I desire for and I wasn't happy with my course that I was pursuing, though my parents were really happy with my course. It took lot of guts to tell them that I don't want to do it and I want to do something thing else. For quite long time I was like a disappointment for them. But I used to convince them, later they agreed but still from inside they were unhappy. It was bit tough but I have taken the decision so I kept on going. The day I got into NID I thought that I have succeeded but I was wrong, actually it was the start of learning but slowly it changed into survival in college and dealing with hectic schedules. It felt like the situations around is uncontrollable so it's better to go with the flow. Sooner or later I figured out that it's me who is allowing the situations affecting me and my learning. And I know that I have to take stand and not let

the things around me affect me or control me and I have to keep going with the same spirit the way I started earlier.

I AM

Elishiba

IV

I have a B.E. degree in computer engineering, but I am not a computer engineer. I guess I had realized this in subconsciously in my second year of college itself but just refused to accept it. I tried so hard to blend into a world I didn't belong to. To make things worse I joined a coaching for preparation of Common Entrance Test (CAT) which leads you to MBA, only because out of the limited options I saw for the future through the eyes of my peers, CAT appeared to be the closest to what I could do well at. But I sucked, scored really badly in all mock tests. I kept going to that coaching for almost a year, until I finally realized that it was just NOT happening. It was hard for me to accept this though and it was even harder for my family and friends. The simple reason was that I was great at studies since school. So such a downfall now was quite unacceptable. But that was it.

Now I had to find another thing to look forward to, and I was stupid enough to follow my peers again. They were preparing for campus placements. So that was the next thing. I prepared but I was stressed, and with humongous amounts of peer pressure which kept increasing day by day as more of my colleagues kept getting placed in different companies. I used to get rejected in most of the companies' final rounds and it just kept getting worse. Failure after failure... I started questioning if I was good at anything at all. It was my sister who gave me a pep talk then (she still does).

I remember reading a Yoda quote, which said, “If no mistake have you made, yet losing you are...a different game you should play”. I don’t remember exactly why I chose animation but I remember deciding to write CEED and DAT because they were probably the closest to what I wanted at that time. I was more inclined towards CEED because it could give me another opportunity to knock on the doors of IIT-B. But I ultimately ended up in NID, which I am most glad for.

It was the night of 30th May, 2016 when the final results came out. I remember reading that confirmation mail twice and thrice and then once more, staring at my laptop screen. I remember waking up mom and telling her. I remember the look on her face and how I cried. It was that night I realized what it meant to cry in happiness. It was, by far, the greatest achievement of my life.

I AM

Danish

V

I had no idea what to do in life. You need to get good grades to live happily they said. I found drawing and watching cartoons was already giving me happiness. I used to love just drawing any cartoon or comic book characters that I found on my friends' pencil boxes in school. I did not know why I enjoyed it so much then. Eventually, I decided to draw for a living, like those people who inspired me to draw and spread that joy and happiness to others.

Down this road, I learned that I enjoyed drawing these characters and watching cartoons because of the stories they told. So how do I make my own characters and stories? It's not easy. I never drew much out of imagination. I struggled to draw something out of my imagination. So I continued trying, unable to understand why I was not able to tell good stories. As I was exploring different ways of telling stories I realized that the emotions you carry with you as you make an animation film are very important. People enjoyed the something I made when I enjoyed making it. Even a drawing turns out nice when the emotions held in while creating it are pleasant. So if I wanted to tell stories that people can enjoy, I need to enjoy the process of it. And I cannot enjoy the process if I am struggling to draw. I will only create struggle. I need to master the medium first. Only then the emotions will flow through my work. If I don't enjoy creating it, no one will enjoy consuming it.

And when you reach that level of mastery over the medium that the act of creation is pure joy then whatever you create will be an embodiment of that joy which you can share with the world.

I AM

Mohan

VI

Once there lived a boy who loved to draw. He drew on his textbooks and he drew on the walls. Drawing made him happy, his drawings made people happy. They asked him to draw on their textbooks and on their walls. Excitedly he obliged; and as he put his unbounded mind to work through his fingertips, he decorated their possessions with stories of love, comraderie, birth, destruction and death. 'You are special', they would chant.

And in their world, they would use their books to study and pass, while he drew and failed. It didn't matter to him though, unlike the people around- he was too busy to care. He used to care, till some time ago in the past; but the experience of resting on the seabed in a world that wasn't his was something he didn't want to burden himself with again, unconsciously. Looking up from the seabed, he had seen every other being floating up above him; and the heaviness of knowing that this wasn't home chained him to the floor. Then again he hadn't really belonged up there; somehow he found home on the sea floor, unperturbed, undisturbed, left to be fulfilled in his own isolation. He had continued to draw, his head level among his kingdom- acres and acres of paper waiting to be filled.

Then he looked up and realized that they had all walked on, floated away, while he was sitting on the floor surrounded by a slowly growing mountain of freshly drawn on paper.

He called out, running after them, 'What will I do?'

'Live with purpose!' they bellowed. 'Draw walls!'

Interesting, he thought. 'All my life I drew on walls, and now they want me to draw up the very walls I used to draw on! Perhaps someone else will find the joy that I once had, younger, naive and innocent. That is no mere silly line of work, it is worth something – creating something that someone can actually use! It is neither a compromise, nor a sacrifice.' he told himself.

So he started drawing walls. He drew walls day in and day out. Higher and higher they went, slowly cutting off the light, the air. The lights dimmed down along with the subduing pace of the wind. The atmosphere was greasing up with the stench of dying air. The silence grew louder. Sweating, he looked up and saw that the walls had closed in. Then he looked down at his hand to find the tool with which he drew these walls inwards. He observed closely- it was oddly unfamiliar, despite having it held it for so long. Even after all these years the tool dug into his palm, failing to mould with his being. I'm holding what's meant for someone else, he thought.

'Is this mine?' he asked no one in particular. There was no reply. These walls had no holes anymore.

'Am I going to die in here?'

A panic drenched in sadness engulfed him, a claustrophobic suffocation because of what that might mean . He looked at himself, greasy all over, a thick layer of smoky charcoal skin that clouded his body. He slowly moved to the corner and settled in the dark, dank corner, arms across his legs, troubled as the truth set in. The truth that some kind of death was with him, in the same room he was in. Lonely in death.

He sat there miserably as the seconds turned into years, the room growing darker, his eyes still unused to the darkness. He sat there, motionless, and looked on as the fallen light walked over and away from the papers, the colors, the thoughts and dreams.

But then, as the last bit of light was leaving the room, a revelation hit him. Looking again at the tool in his hand, he wondered- 'If I made these walls with my own hands, can I break them too?' He flipped over the tool and noticed the it not only had the power to create, but to destroy as well. How had he not realized this all this time?

Bearing down the tool, he drove it across the walls, erasing with all his might; and they came loose, rupturing, tearing, bleeding lifelike. The vibrating sound felt like it was coming out of something exhausted- unoiled, age old machinery that had been going through the motions for centuries. Dust and sand floated about, settling roughly all over as stones and rocks pelted across the room. Years of darkness had momentarily crippled him; the blinding light bleeding into the

room through the growing cracks seared his retinas dry and hard, with a liberating kind of pain.

All that was left was absolute white.

As his senses returned and the haze cleared away, he realized that he was standing over a glistening pile of rubble, he himself bathed in a slowly peeling skin that until moments ago wasn't his. And from amidst ruins around, he witnessed a hundred more like him emerging from the rubble, dust clad and cloaked in differently decorated layers that he could now swear weren't theirs. They all looked at each other, lost with purpose, holding all sorts of different things. Like him. Worn out, yet with fresh, hopeful faces. Curious eyes, bedazzled at the freshly constructed freedom.

He realized, as he dusted off the remnants of a distant past from his own self, just how new they all actually were.

I AM

Milad

VII

I used to be a very shy kid who would live only among his family and not hang around with anyone else. I got uncomfortable whenever I had to talk to anyone new. I just wanted to get back alone with myself and spend my time drawing and doodling. I spent most of my time alone. This must be the reason I cannot open up very easily to people. I saw a lot of my classmates talking and doing cool things around new people every day and the range of people they knew was very big.

I too wanted to be known by a lot of people but I could never approach anyone as I feared they do not want my company. So, unless the other person approached me first, the chances of me making a new friend were very less. I would often sit alone and just sketch random things.

That is what changed things for me. There were not many people around me who would draw well, and so they would hang around with me just to see me draw. This helped me gain a lot of confidence as I began to make conversations with my friends. I learnt a lot of new things as well and also increased my skills as they began telling about various things related to art which they had heard or read somewhere else. They would show me the works of different people whom I had never heard of. The friendship got better over the years and we became the best of friends, the whole bunch of my class. We started cracking jokes and making up stories and fantasies and songs, anything that would make us laugh and

be happy. Our sense of humour grew a lot and almost all of us could predict what the other would say at a certain time.

I was never sure of what I wanted to do in life but I knew I wanted something related to drawing and that is when one friend of mine told me about the National Institute of Design and made me give the exam with him. Sadly, he did not get through and I did, but that did not bring any differences on our way and we continued to be as good friends as we were before. Even now after I've got into Animation, the discipline I always wanted, I turn to my friends whenever I run out of ideas for anything that I want to work on. I feel they understand my style of humour and also my style of storytelling. They are the ones who knows what I'll enjoy working and which ones I won't. They also act as the perfect audience as they can tell me if anything in my film is wrong or not working at all. They help me with constructive feedback as they can criticise me without having to fear about me feeling bad about it.

All in all, I would say I feel blessed to have such friends around me. From the kid who would just see people from a distance and be left alone to the person who can now depend upon several people for any kind of help, drawing has helped me a long way and it continues to do so. And I may not have as many friends I wanted when I was a shy kid, but I can surely say that the ones I have will stick around for a long time. And just like how drawing helped me be a better version of myself, everyone possesses certain qualities about

themselves that needs to be nurtured in order to move closer towards their goal. No matter how small that goal might be or how many people's lives are affected by that goal, we must always be trying to achieve one and move towards the next one.

I AM

Partha

VIII

Right from my school time, during standard 5th I started playing Cricket for my School team, It was all because of my friends who pushed me to play for the school. After this I was too indulged in cricket, had fully immersed myself in it, I progressed and started playing for other clubs and was making a remarkable progress at that time. When i just joined the team it was really difficult for me to make a position in the team as there was lot of competition to make a permanent position the team. It took me almost 2 years to make a permanent position and i worked hard for it , i got selected for MCA (MUMBAI CRICKET ASSOCIATION) summer camp where i got a chance to play for the zonal team. It was the beginning for my dreams which i was living. I always dreamt of playing for the nation and represent our nation. However the life which I was dreaming of was not that easy. To reach there I had to go through lot of obstacles, and I was ready to give my everything for it. I got into my 9th standard and then my actual struggle started when my parents who were supporting me to play cricket stopped supporting me and asked me to start focusing on my studies rather than playing cricket. I new that the things which I don't want to do are going to come in my way and i m going to get lost somewhere between them. I played for the last year of my school team in standard 9th.As soon as my 10th standard started parents stopped me from practising, they took me out from coaching, and thus I stopped playing for the team. Just when i made my position in the team and my dream was

ready to take off my parents stopped me and the flight never too off. Somehow i managed to pass the 10th Boards with good marks and then as every parents do, i was asked to join science, it something which was never mine, i never enjoyed studying, it was just a burden on me ,11th and 12th were the most confusing and worst experience as I knew whatever I was doing was not that i wanted to do, but after joining college my parents again allowed me to play cricket and i was happy for that. But the college where I was studying had no interest for cricket, there was no coach, didn't had any cricket kits and we used to still practise on our own, we used to buy leather balls from our own money every day. Somehow i got back to it, but i knew my capabilities and where I was that time just told me that I was not on my position and whatever i had gone through during school time to reach a particular level had all gone, and all those people who had asked me to stop playing during my 10th boards again started asking why I stopped playing and that was the most worst thing i had , People who stopped me from doing something were again asking me to start doing that thing and get back at it. Is it so easy that you can get back at it so easily once you have stopped doing that. Again during 12th boards parents didn't allow me to play and that was the point where i gave up .I knew that this cannot continue, but yeah there was something which I used to enjoy , drawing , painting, I appeared For NID entrance and surprisingly I got into it , I never wanted to come to Ahmedabad ,I never wanted to live away from my family , when I got to know that I got into NID , I was really sad ,but my parents were so happy that I got

into NID ,I m enjoying right now whatever I am doing , I am happy but still, My dream of playing for team India will always remain a dream,. If I get a chance to get back at cricket somehow, i will happily go and play.

I AM

Siddhant

IX

We all have those days when we feel so low that we start finding problems in everything we do. I personally have trouble dealing with such days. All you're really looking for is something that would inspire you to focus on the more important things in life, than just a mere facade of creative blockage. While struggling, I soon realised that the way to feeling better about this situation is to stop asking why you're feeling low in the first place; actually you should'nt be thinking about it at all. And when you are struggling to find inspiration, know that it is not at all hard to find some if you're really looking. Inspiration is all around, in the simplest of things; wether its a bird's nest or a cardboard box- No Kidding.

On one of such low tide nights when I could'nt focus on my work, I went out for a stroll after dinner just to ease off. I saw two dogs sitting on top of a grocery store, howling their hearts out. Next, I came across a multi storeyed building under construction. There was a worker standing at every storey, working effortlessly, passing heavy iron rods to the person above him, from below, like a human chain. There was no requirement of any sort of mechanised labour; just some simpletons simplifying a major task. Lastly, I stumbled upon a balloon seller. He was a mid aged man selling balloons on a stick, stuck to his old bicycle. The carrier of the bicycle was covered with a blanket as he walked around with it. After a bit of peeking I saw the little hand of a boy come out of the blanket folds, holding an ice cream. The father bought his son

an ice cream after selling the last balloon of the day.

A fifteen minute long walk not only helped me get my mind off of certain things, but also taught me to focus on the more important things in life. The sights of two dogs sitting and howling, workers working at the building and the man selling balloons on a cycle taught me more about Friendship, Teamwork and Family, than I doubt any book can teach me. I came home feeling good and full of energy. It is true that if you're really looking, Inspiration lies in the simplest of things. What matters is how you're really looking.

I AM

Debjyoti

X

Everyone has faced struggles in life. These struggles teaches us a lesson. I was born in a middle class family and our family was economically stable till I was in 12th standard. When I was in 12th standard I was part of Student Federation Of India and I was doing social services as well. We students were working for the welfare of students and as well as the people near our locality as well.

My father works as a Layout Artist in famous Malayalam newspaper and there was some job issues happening in the lower sector of the company and those people where dismissed from the company. So my father asked the Managing Director and other official regarding these problem and few colleagues of my father was also part of this. My father and his colleagues were fighting for their rights basically and these people had a great support from other people had as well. But company started blocking their salaries. So they decided to resign and start a new firm.

During this period I got into National Institute Of Design and I was supposed to pay 2.25 lakhs as fees. When I told my parents I got into this they where very happy but I saw the tension in my father's face when he saw the fee amount. Even I was blank this was a big amount and I won't be able manage this much amount. My father was trying had to arrange my fees. Somehow he managed to get 1.5 lakhs. That 1.5 lakh was gold loan using my mother's ornaments and father got cash from his friends too. I was in a situation were,

should I use these money to get there or I will join in some college in kerala only. Because I had good marks in 12th standard so I could easily get admissions in government colleges.

So I was discussing this issue with my friends, So they were like I should go to NID we will find some way and they keep on motivating me. just 1 day left for payment of fees my friends called me saying we have arranged some money. when I heard that I was blank and I asked them how did they arranged the cash?. So there was few people who knows me from very long and they always supported me in art competitions and an uncles lives near my house also helped them in arranging that cash. I never expected this and all these happened because of the love, care and respect I gave to them knowingly or unknowingly.

I have helped lot of students in many ways. I was happy that people helped me realising my situation. But I decided from that day I won't ask a single money from my home I have the strength to work and I have the medium of art to make money as well. So from my second semester of first year I started working with my seniors. I never asked them what type of work it's going to be, I helped them after classes and started earning my own pocket money.

One of my senior introduced me into graffiti design, we travelled in different places in India I worked with him and made money for my next year fees. I started learning cinematography as well because I wanted to be filmmaker

and my interest in film was camera. I was not supposed to be an animation student but my jury panel turned my direction to animation and I started learning animation as well. I hated the process of animation it was very complex for me and never let me use the free time for freelancing or any other stuff. But I decided that I will learn animation and will learn whatever I like parallel.

Now I have done of TV commercials and Music Videos and I am an animation student as well. Worked as DOP for many student films and created two music videos of mine.

Whenever we face struggles in life we find heroes in ourselves. Now I am happy with who I am and what I do.

I AM

Saurav

XI

Slow through the door, no creaks heard
Sneaks in the wise and word-ly shard
Who gave it keys or bought it a bus ticket?
No one really knows and no one cares to dig it
That's how it starts!
It breaks into shards
-snipping and slicing and shearing me apart.
Word-shards here and word-shards there
'they can be many things' but can't they be fair?

'No' say the mighty shards and downstairs they go
Babysitting little doubts, as muscular they grow
Lil-hunkies want to play and they want to play with fire
Burn-down my dainty nest as I go haywire
Neighbours, thank god I have, come running fast with water
As they err with sprinklers, things go blur and bitter

'Too late' I tell myself blinded by the smoke
'Prepare to fall, my dear, prepare to choke.'
As I was RIP-ing down, laden and broke
From afar, bizarre! I hear this loud croak!
Was it far or in here? I pause and wonder
Well it croaks, only when it's brewing some thunder..
As soon this thought flashes through the wrinkly grey stuff
The horrid smog crumbs off like snowflakes and dandruff!

Since that troubling time passed monsoons and weekends
But words and I have never been quite the best friends
Images are easier, happier and cosy
Words are too judgemental, critiquing and nosy.
But off late, as I have, laid down my cards
Realised... words are just made up and shards can be bards!

I AM

Amrita

XII

What next? This question has always been a very intimidating question for me. There are times I always feel lost as I think the present never is relevant to what future holds.

Being from a conservative family who only wanted a “safe “ future for me , took the decision on the path I would take and in turn I was shielded from deviating from my path. Eventually i would meet different minds and thoughts wandering in places i nver knew existed.

I learnt about art, music and other “creative “ fields also sports ! the environment was not very encouraging towards making careers out of “hobbies” but something told me this is where I belong .

But time passed and I let things happen and never tried to give a voice to myself . I joined engineering and decided to pursue my dreams after I get my future secured with an engineering degree.

But i realised the environment was completely different and never have i felt so alone and different about myself . this made me change my decision and apply at a design institute and gave my entrance exams just to get out of engineering. This was very evident in the interview round and I had lost all hopes of getting out of engineering. I continued with my engineering classes not knowing if this would ever end.

I felt i was the only person going through this and had no hopes of this pain coming to an end. I felt very irrelevant . whatever i did seemed pointless to me . then one day i made up my mind to give it a try to wiggle my way out of this and to do what i love. I never believed in fate nor destiny but that day i got a call from mom and she just uttered a sentence which was enough for me to walk out and feel happy once again. She said “you got into NID”

I AM

Praful

XIII

Chai served in my dad's favourite blue china cups travel from the kitchen to the front table. Why favourite ? He left to Muscat for work at a very young age and every time he would come back to Kollam, he brings his favourite china cups and plates. He had brought them back with a lot of difficulty. Now, that job is long gone and I came into his life. He stays here with me. I'm the younger daughter and these utensils; precious to him because they hold memories. Every time one breaks, one story is lost.

In his white *lungi* and striped shirt sits Shenoy sir . *Murukku* was falling down from his mouth everytime he taught me an chemistry equation. The fallen *Murukku* would leave oil stains on my notebooks. Now they are memories too. I always wondered why I need to know chemistry in my life.

"You can always teach your children in future, Susa! " Shenoy sir would say. Irritated. Irritated by that statement.

Why should life always end in marriage? Irritating. What's good for me ? Will I achieve my dreams?

Yes, I get jealous of men travel alone and sketch all the monuments of the world! When can I do that? I'm not allowed to do it now.

Like a dog in a cage. Am I caged? When will I be free ?

Shenoy sir, a father of two working women. Two young Brahmin ladies who plays the tabla and married to two Orthodox Christian men.

" Susan, you shouldn't stay under the sun for too long. You'll get darker! " Shenoy sir would always say when I walk out of the gate to bid goodbye to him. But there is Appu waiting for me. I can see him through the grill bars and the front gate bars.

He is free. Keeps wagging. Makes new friends. changes home every day. I ran into the house to fetch some Parle biscuits that lie deep inside the blue dabba. Pappa always buys and keeps Parle biscuits for Appu. But I can never adopt Appu.

He is free.

Shenoy Sir grabs me by the hands and drags me to the bus stop. One our way we met Appu lying underneath a Mohanlal Movie poster. Since then I knew Appu. Appu wanders around houses, he follows the fish mongers. I wonder where he belongs to. I wish I was Appu with a sketchbook.

Wish I could wander like him and sketch these characters I meet. Appu never wants to get adopted. Appu the stray dog.

Shenoy wanders from house to house teaching kids. He smokes too much. He's like a fish but a fish who survives breathing in smoke. He is a Brahmin who eats meat. He favourite was Appam and Mutton stew.

I always wondered if I could travel to ooty alone one day. Drive up the hair-pin bends alone and I wish I could feel the pollution there myself before I read it in the newspapers. Can I smell the Eucalyptus as I go up ?

"You can always travel with your husband. Plus, it's boring to travel alone" Says the person who never travels with his wife! Shenoy Sir is not attached to his family. His wife doesn't know what he does for a living. Not even the temple let him in. To them he wasn't a "Pure Bhramin".

Maybe no one adopted Appu because he wasn't a "Pure breed". Maybe he hates the idea of getting adopted.

Shenoy sir doesn't care about what anyone thinks of him way of living.

"today you live, tomorrow you die."

But he cared for me a lot. He wanted to see me succeed, more than his children. "Susan, you will reach wherever you want to reach. I have faith in you." How will a plant grow if you don't water it ?

I want to see the world. I want to meet people and learn from people whom I meet. Life is not just about getting married and teaching chemistry formula to one's children. At least that not what life is for me.

Frustrated. I'm frustrated.

Appu and Shenoy sir took me to the bus stop every day. Both of them walked along with me. Three of us girls went to Victoria Memorial in Kolkata. I with my sketch book wanted to record all the statues. Later did we know that we were being followed. I couldn't sketch. It was suffocating.

We changed our paths and we lost them. This I can't tell my parents. The garden was vast and the exit door was far. Appu would have jumped over the wall. He's a stray. I wonder how many of us are being followed right now.

Shenoy Sir was a bus conductor. He always wanted to be a mathematics professor. His father died at a very young age and so he had to take up his job as a bus conductor.

I remember, he brought me the sour *Bumblimus* freshly from his home. Delicious chocolates on his birthday and evening vada to compliment Four o' clock chai.

Small things matter the most.

Appu never visits our neighbour. Maybe because he is always drunk. Drunk enough to beat his own wife and child. They left him.

"Life is magical.....life is beautiful" ...he keeps singing.

"Life.....ismagical" ...I sang to him back.

Marriages are magical they say. But what's reality? After a bottle full of brandy, he kills all of his lovebirds one by one with his 'certified' gun.

But he is a caged man. He caged himself in. Shenoy Sir was locked out by the society. Why you ask ?

A Brahmin married a Orthodox Christian! A Brahmin married an orthodox Christian. What's wrong in that?

He was my Tuition teacher. He mattered. I mattered to him. We are all family. Appu was family too.

At the end, Appu and Shenoy sir were hurt. The scent of cigarette surrounded them both. I didn't want them to die. But I have accepted it. One died of heart attack and the other died of being stray.

Sometimes I feel our voices are seldom heard. The ideas and our thought being ignored by ignorant men. I need to strive harder. Work beyond my limitations. In order to achieve my dream. My dream of becoming a story teller.

For Shenoy sir and Appu have become parts of my story.

I AM

Susan

XIV

I hate you. Yes, I hated you from the very first day. With the good hope in my eyes I had arrived to stay with you. But you changed everything. I was happy being in my comfort zone. The food that you served on that day was bad as it is now. It makes me fall sick, sometimes I myself. I wanted to be myself, I don't want to change. Because of you I got bullied. The scars are still in place. That night I can't sleep because of the pain. My Skin colour turns blue-black. That night is the night that I wished would never had come. Next morning was so cold; it felt like all of my ligaments were frozen. I couldn't move myself and yet you made me take a bath in that icy cold water. I even tried to run away from you. I went back to my comfort zone but everything was changed. It didn't work out. I did not enjoy lying down on that soft bed. I couldn't fall asleep; it was the longest night I had experienced in my entire life. My Dad even made me my favourite dish i.e. spicy pork belly but I lost my appetite. It was really hard for me to swallow a piece; it felt like it takes half an hour to travel till my stomach. I was suffering from an unknown disease which I have now realised. Even though I was inside that warm and soft blanket I did not feel any warmth. I cried, I shouted many times but the result was the same. Nothing happened. Next morning I took a bath with warm water but all I felt was coldness in my heart. Now I hated you more and more. I even cursed you for making me feel like I was mentally disabled. Yes, you made me sick, I felt like half of me was taken away by you. When I looked at the mirror I saw you, rather than

my reflection. I was confused and angry. I laughed at myself knowing that I was in rage. At that point I couldn't even control my feelings and emotions. I was hopeless and tired, even in my comfort zone I did not feel happy. I remembered something; I put my hand inside my left pocket and took out my identity card. I was totally shocked to see myself smiling in that photograph even though I was tortured every Saturday night. Few years have passed by now...

No longer do I live in constant fear. No longer do I get injuries on my body... No longer do I feel rage and hatred.

But now I know, the trouble that you gave me was the main reason that I can stand by myself. The hatred inside my heart turns into love. Now I even miss the iron rod which gave me a boost on my bum and the thought makes my whole night warm. I miss the morning cold shower, instead of making me fall sick, it makes me active and fresh. I miss that morning *pulav* even though half of it was pebbles. I was happy playing with the pebble as well as enjoying the food. I love to dive in that *Dal* curry even though half of it was water only. Your morning calls for Physical Training at 4:30 am was helpful even though you made me run the whole ground for 7-8 times till it turns 7 am. Without that now I have got a little tummy which has made me slow. I miss all the activities that we had done together. I bunked the class to hid from you but you never gave up and got me punished by the principal. All of those unwanted feelings have now become memories which I can't forget. Now I miss you even though you are bad and ugly. I know you are strict but also your heart was pure

and clean. Today I feel proud as a *Navodayan* all because of you. Even though at the very end of my life I will not regret the good times that we have spent together. I miss you in many ways... knowing fully that I can never go back to those memorable days again.

I AM

Lanchenba

XV

My life story? How do you tell your life story? Never thought about my life as a whole; the dreams I had, the dreams I have achieved, the dreams that were left behind and the dreams that are yet to be realized.

I grew up in a little town in a small district called Wayanad in Northern Kerala. In my view I had quite an ordinary childhood. I did my studies, played with my friends and tried to be a responsible child to my parents. My parents supported me in all my decisions. Like any other parents, my parents wanted to realize their dreams through me and my brother.

During their youth they had no say in what they want to be. All the decisions were made by their elders. But my parents never tried to force their decisions on us; rather they tried to be as supportive as possible. I never have to be alone while taking a decision.

After my schooling I joined for Fine Arts in applied art. But applied art was mostly about advertising art which was not my cup of tea. Animation and being an animator was a long forgotten dream at that time. Like many other kids I used to watch animation played in television channels in my childhood and I loved it so much that I wanted to do that in future. So that dream was rekindled in my final year of college.

From there on I applied to NID and IDC to join their animation program. I finally got the opportunity to learn animation. But in NID I had to face another challenge. I had to prove to myself as a story teller. I was always doubtful about my story telling ability and because of that I never believed that I could tell a story. But it was my fear of failure that prevented me from doing that and not my lack of ability.

Now I am trying to live my dream rather than living in my fears.

I AM

Bebin

XVI

“Let’s go the classes are cancelled for the day” My friend said to me.

“Cancelled? All three lectures? It’s not even 2pm.” I exclaimed

“Yes and no...this lecture is cancelled, the rest I don’t know”

“But let’s go!”

“Where?”

“The waterfall, idiot!”

Being a sincere student sucks sometimes, your conscience itself doesn’t allow deviation.

“Are you coming or not?” I could see my silence was getting on her nerves. “It’s a huge waterfall! Our seniors went there, it’s safe I promise. Everyone goes there...”

“Okay”

“Come on. Wait, did you just say okay...?”

Smiling I stood up and started packing my bag. I really wanted to go see this waterfall, the one which people from around the district come to visit. My conscience was nagging me but I had decided to rebel against it today. Chatting and laughing we started walking. With no navigation to follow other than a general direction and no signals to our mobile phones, we just asked people. It was drizzling slightly, the cool breeze was flowing, the sun peeking through the clouds and the lush green carpet of the rice fields, everything was

rejuvenating. We just kept walking straight along the road. I was pretty sure that we were lost but I was not worried, the journey was strangely assuring. Finally we saw a board with the direction for the waterfall. It took us off the main road and into another village, twisting and winding around the rice fields and other farms. There were very few people around, the foliage was getting dense and it felt like we were climbing up a hill.

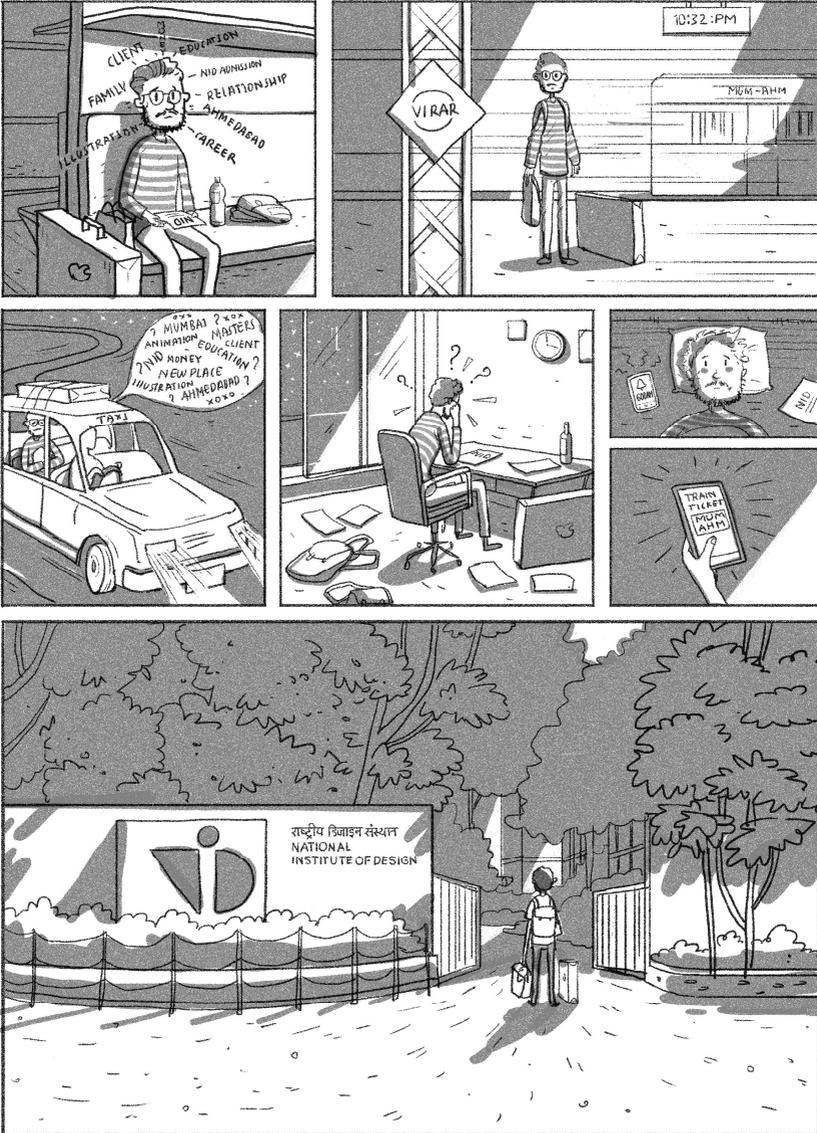
“Did you hear that?” my friend asked and I nodded.

The sound of gushing water was faint but still could be heard. Delighted with the discovery of our destination we continued with a renewed determination. Finally we saw it, the waterfall. It wasn't a huge one, it was small surrounded by trees but it was magical nonetheless. The clear water flowed through the rocks making way for itself. Splitting and reuniting many times. We rushed towards it. Playing and enjoying as time flew by. The sun had started its descent. Happy and exhausted we sat there on rocks, looking at the changing colours and trying to absorb the experience. My friend said “I think this is not the waterfall people were talking about.”

“I know” I replied smiling.

I AM

Sanyukta



I AM

Pavan R

XVIII

Since my childhood I was a very stubborn yet much disciplined; disciplined in studies, sports, music lessons etc. and stubborn in behavioral style like habits concerning food and friends to name a few. I never really dreamt of becoming something, though in primary schooling years I use to fantasize becoming a pilot, then a cricketer etc. But as grew I never really considered becoming anything but dreamt of making animated films that I fondly grew watching in my school days. I used to write small stories & tried to tell those using flipbooks and PowerPoint animations. Yet I was not so serious about it as I didn't knew that it could be a profession to undertake. Drawing stories in my drawing book was my passion and my passion was my pastime activity.

Two of my elder cousin brothers were both IITians, so as the next child in the family I was always expected to follow their footsteps. I knew from the early age that getting into IIT's are very difficult and only the brightest & the most intelligent of the intelligents in the country get through JEE and make a mark in top 1000 Rank. Having all these in my mind, I put everything aside, my passion, my friends, and my family and gathered all my focus on my discipline. For 2 years in exile, spending 15 hrs a day in meditation, I knocked my competitors out of the league to blast into IIT Kanpur. Now, the real part begins to be an engineer.

Since my childhood I had always focused on one problem; one task at a time & won't go on next until that's done. It's very rare for me to do multi-tasking. Now, this habit of mine

had a consequence for years to come. As I was focused on clearing JEE, I never really thought of what's after that, to be more accurate I never really had an opinion of what it's like being an engineer. I was always an easy going happy-go-lucky child who never thought of future & enjoyed living in the present with family, friends, passion and discipline off-course. And my passion and discipline were different entities; before coming to IIT, I was never bothered being them different but now slowly I was becoming independent from my father, that compelled me to think about my future. For the 1st time my passion clashed with my discipline, as they were steadily converging more and more. I spent majority time of my 2nd year, struggling through this clash yet unable to come to any resolution that will make sure going where I was going. I soon found out that clash was inevitable and it was bound to happen someday as my passion and discipline were not same and I had to decide to choose between the two.

My 2nd year concluded with disastrous results; for the 1st time in my life I failed in multiple courses. I was not able to tolerate and went into depression in my early months of 3rd year. Slowly, the academics grew unbearably tough and I had to sacrifice my spare time for making stories to go full steam ahead. But my inner battle was not yet over, and was growing unresolvable. During, the end of my 3rd year, one of my professor's went through my inner concerns and remarked that – "Path of satisfaction comes (though one never gets satisfied if he/she is stubborn) if he/she makes his discipline his passion or his passion his discipline". I thought

of his reflections for months to come and decided to drop after 3rd year and join an animation film course. The decision shook my family, the elder IITian cousins came to visit me frequently, the sister cousins insisted me to continue what I am doing as in most of their view it was very undignified to go in a film industry. Maa supported my decision but she also insisted me to atleast complete what I started and get the degree as it will do good if I were to venture into unknown. So, I returned IIT, this time clear what I had done, was doing and what needed to be done. And completed my graduation in 2015 and secured a well-paid position in a shipping company in Hong Kong as an Off-shore marine engineer.

After getting the job I was going through the complex emotions – happy to get a high paid position; not happy as my dream is hanging in the middle. I was also getting more aware of the fact, what the life would be like being a marine engineer. Well, I was all okay barring the fact that to live I had to sacrifice my passion. There was one more thought that took birth after getting the job, that after achieving so much that may be I did not expected to achieve, I had to loose and give up everything to venture into the unknown world of animation, and again a new battle started. Engineering, it's not like I hated that but I never thought of becoming that and the future forecasting after the job made it certain what it's like to be that and I was certain that I may not live like if I burn my dream. Since my childhood, I thought of my friends, my family, my parents, my discipline but never of my dream& my passion and for the 1st time in 22 years I was in a position to at least give it a try. I was well aware of

my consequences, my engineering friends would be furious, my family would get disappointed and may be initially the people in animation wouldn't accept me . It was a tough path to go through, I had earlier gone through path like these but never felt the pain as my family and friends were there to share the pain but this time I was all alone. But at last I was able to convince my father and my parents were with me, without them I would not be where I am now.

Finally, I came to know about NID animation & decided to give my dream a chance to try if I can turn my passion into discipline, and applied for the same, not thinking further more about future, being the old me living in the present where I never expected anything from future; also if you love something you don't think you just jump, if you hesitate or think then it's not love. Well, I am grateful I jumped for the love, I entered as a Masters student in NID Animation Film Design right where I wanted to be. For the 1st time in life I achieved something that I dreamt.

Being at NID animation, I feel very lucky to be part of an awesome team of 15 animators from varying backgrounds and get a chance to try the passion as a discipline; think how many people get that chance, the very chance that can neither be separated from passion nor from discipline.

I AM

Nilanjan

XIX

I am a work of fiction. Any resemblance to any one, dead or alive is not intended and is purely coincidental. Tell me something about yourself is a very vague question, I believe. So every time I'm asked this question, I answer it vaguely. Isn't it difficult to paint a self-portrait without using a mirror or a picture?

I had a wonderful childhood playing outdoors for hours. I used to put stray puppies in my pink Lady Bird's basket and take them on a bumpy ride on the roads of my hometown. It used to make me feel very proud about myself. Needless to mention, how those puppies might have felt! Then time fast forwarded its track and I found myself in a college. Here, I wasn't very proud of myself. I barely made few friends to roam around with and ever fewer to talk with. The world became a little bigger. I saw myself very differently here. Nice or not nice? I don't know. But I was in awe of how one's perception about oneself can change over a period of time. Today, I choose not to play my playlist loud in a studio full of students. I avoid talking about myself. It makes me feel naked. I fail to define myself. My vocabulary isn't good enough I'm guessing.

I have one theory though! Everyone you meet takes some part of you with them and leaves. So if I really want to define myself, I'll have to go and meet everyone who has met me.

I AM

Kshipra

XX

I'm sure as a child almost everyone has watched cartoons. They were always full of fun and wonder. You could think of anything. For me however I not only wanted to see them but also draw them. I would create my own characters and stories. So I grew up drawing only cartoons. It was a safe haven for me.

I remember there was a time in fifth standard when I got horrible grades because I would draw. Heck, I even drew some random characters on the question paper which went for correction. But as 11th grade was approaching so was a dreadful reality. My art had always been focused on cartoons, If I wanted a job anywhere then I had to make my foundations strong...

I had been ignorant for a while, Just doing what I liked but this time there was a block. "You cant just draw whatever you like. Even in art there are standards. If dont know human proportions how will you survive in college?" Ooh well that was surely a bummer.

For me, who had drawn cartoon for 16 years had been so used to it that I didnt know how to draw a real-looking human being. Every style originates from reality, and if I didnt know how to draw reality, Then how could I alter it ? I decided to set up a daily draw routine. Bought a sketchbook just to draw Figures of people.

I remember it was summer break and I started my routine. I would draw my parents, neighbors, Kids, etc. And when they

all werent around, I'd draw from the internet. Since It would be very inappropriate for me to draw nude figures of my parents and friends I would search quick references of Models online and practice. But no matter how much I drew they were still terrible in my eyes. After a week it was no good. fiveweeks,Still no good. I got frustrated. I hoped to see at least maybe 3 percent of improvement?? So I stopped.

I decided not to draw. But it didnt last long, Because the next day I was cleaning my room and found art from over a year ago. I realized that it was much worse than what I was doing right now. Quietly I opened my Art routine sketchbook. The doodles were rough and hard. There was a lot of frustration so then I thought of taking it slow.

What happened in the next week was really incredible. I wasnt just drawing from life but I was learning. The muscles,the bones, hair, all of it was looking much better. I didnt care about the outcome, But I knew if I wanted to get better, I need to focus on what im doing in the present.

After a month or so I had improved so much that I couldnt believe it. My humans looked like humans and not deformed aliens. I was capable of drawing the real and the cartoony. The satisfaction of it all was sweet.

I AM

Dew

XXI

After completing my 12th exam, I decided to opt for a design college, fortunately, my family supported me.

After few months in my design college, I felt there is nothing new in what I am doing; I can't stand out from the crowd. I looked around and saw everyone around me has the same set of skills.

That's when I doubted my decision and my skills. I wondered what if I had taken another subject for my studies?

I felt the passion dying slowly. I couldn't achieve what I aimed for myself. I lost the confidence to show my work to others, criticizing it, telling myself there are so many other artists/designers who are doing so good. It was the lowest point in my life.

I discussed it with my friend, who listened to me and she told me if I am the one who is going to doubt myself then how are other people going to enjoy my work? I thought about it and realized she was right.

I took this as my career option because it was the only thing which I enjoyed doing since my childhood and made me feel good. If I enjoy my work, I will have the confidence to show it to others, and I just need to work little harder.

There are times when you doubt your work, and at that time you should just sit back, relax and tell yourself you are learning and growing from every work you do.

Not everything is perfect. It is important to critique not criticize your work.

I AM

Shruti

XXII

As a kid, I used to be 24 x 7 (not technically) in front of the T.V. Whatever was shown on the T.V., even if it didn't make any sense to me, I still used to watch it happily. I used to recite all the ad songs that used to be shown on the TV those days. That was my favorite pass – time.

It was just another day in my awesome kid life, and I was watching T.V. as usual. My parents had decided to take me with them, to some showroom as they were planning to buy a new scooter. But I wanted to not leave my favorite spot, but you know who rules.

And, we get into an auto and reach the Bajaj showroom. It was a huge showroom with all kinds of vehicles with a B on them. A man dressed in a blue uniform starts talking to my parents as soon as we step into the showroom. I get bored and start to roam around the showroom promising my Mom that I won't get lost.

Oh! I spot a TV. It was playing the Bajaj ad in a loop. I always used to love that Bajaj ad song. "Gaadi bula rahi hai, Seeti baja rahi hai. Chalna hi zindagi hai, Chalti hi ja rahi hai." The song was playing on a loop with the volume up. How I loved that song! I walked around the showroom for some more time. My legs hurt now. I see a scooter and try to sit on it, when my mother calls me and says that it's time to go home.

Were we buying our new scooter? I don't know! And I didn't care! So I didn't bother to ask. We stepped out of the

showroom. My Dad had already called for an auto. We were about to get into the auto when suddenly the lady from the showroom comes running to us. My Mom gets worried and asks her if anything is wrong. The lady points at me. My mom looks at me with her patent stern look and asks if I had done any mischief while in the showroom. I nod my head. The lady then hands me with a gift (I don't remember what it was exactly) She says, "You sang so well up there! Keep it up!!" Oh! I had not even realized that I was singing the song so loud all this while, while roaming around the showroom.

My parents were so proud. The lady smiles at me, pats my head and returns back. We get into the auto and go home.

I AM

Diksha

XXIII

2+2=5

For me, being aware of what I want to do in life is probably an achievement in itself. I have mostly followed the trails laid by other people and tried to find out my way of doing things. This journey has had its own ups and downs, which might not have always resulted positively, but has definitely helped me in becoming a better person. There were no wrong decisions as such, as everything I did eventually contributed in making me what I am. I try to keep myself open to new things and follow my heart, but like many others I too get stuck somewhere between head and heart. The struggle between the two continues till date and maybe it's never going to end but I keep moving.

I AM

Pawan A

XXIV

I was looking for work in the field of filming, that is when this opportunity to work for an ad came up. I had to travel around Gujarat looking for locations for the shoot. Dhivyesh took me around the places, I was really bad at planning. We were looking for a river with enough water so it will look like a river on screen, you get the idea, film uses lies to tell the truth. But it's got more influence than I ever realized. All the places turned out to be not cooperating with the script. But there was this one last place in the list. With no hopes we reached Polo forest.

As it turned out it had more than what we needed. With much over excitement we decided to explore the place. It took me a while to realize I was wearing slippers and we were already too deep into the forest. We got back to college late that night with a few scars in the foot. We fixed the location and the shoot was fixed for the day after. Woke up the next morning feeling a bit uneasy, we had the interior shots planned for the day. The whole day was restless by the evening I was unable to walk properly, my left foot had swollen up. I tied a bandage around so I could put my feet on the ground. I thought I would make it for shooting the next day. By the time I got around to sleep I felt the body temperature going the wrong way on the scale. Couldn't sleep that night, got up around four in the morning, it was a long trip to Polo. I could hardly manage to stay awake in the car, had a terrible headache. When we reached the place I had reached my limits, something really wasn't right. They had

me taken back to the college and friends took me to the hospital .I was there for two days unable to sleep and the fever kept going up. My cousin had come over to stay the night and Dhivyesh stayed the day. By then the foot had swollen up to head size turning red first then to blue slowly spreading through the leg. Some virus has infected the wounds.I wondered if the doctors had plans to chop it off and I also made plans to run if they tried. Since the condition was only getting worse they recommended to have me transported back home.I remember a few moments when I was half asleep being inside an ambulance, people trying hard to get me into the wheel chair and the hours spend with all the pain in the airport almost felt like dying.

They finally got me home and straight to the hospital,saw my parents and at that moment all I wanted was to stay alive.I remember my foot hitting quite a few people on the way while I was being rushed to the ICU. The place was really nice unlike the scenes usually seen outside the ICU. I had this oxygen mask which helped me to sleep that night.I had an operation the next day so they had to put me to sleep.I was awake though,when they started to cut holes in my foot. Apart from the sensation that my skin was moving there was no pain.The situation was much more complicated than I realized. The doctors had my parents warned that nothing about my condition can be said until the following day , for my parents that meant i'm not making it alive.

When I described the experiences I had while in the ICU, experts told me such experiences are quite 'normal'.But if I

trust my senses then I was at places I have never been to,sometimes in ships out in the Ocean and at times on Mountains,all the while aware that I am still in a room inside the hospital.But the thing is I lived through.Got out of the ICU,I needed a 4 week rest.Took two good week rest and headed back to college.It took a long time for the wounds to heal.When I was going through all of this I realized that everything I saw when I was in that room,now I have a chance to actually do it.I wanted to travel again but I had this fear 'what if all this ,happens all over again'.

I decided to go back to Polo forest.There my perception about the place changed I started to notice things I failed to see the first time I was there.The whole journey, to and back felt Divine. Didn't stop there went to every place I could on weekends and come back early on Monday before class starts .I made it a practice and I couldn't stop for a while.Every place gave me something. People had me run out of streets for ending up at places I shouldn't have been,got wet just one side because in Somnath it rains horizontally that you can just lean against any wall to get out of the rain,and the walls around the temple were huge.

There was an angry mob that tried to get me down from one of those walls,I was just trying to get a good photo of the temple.Got caught by the police,got fined multiple times in the train,ended up in cities unplanned and broke ,learned quite a few facts in Dwarka,lived in a river island full of temples ,forgot the passage of time, didn't want to come back but had to,had the best ever camp in Dawki,ended up

on a beach unplanned on a clear star night taking long exposure shots of the sky and there was a meteor shower as well. Never saw that many number of stars , and I look forward to the things yet to come.

I AM

Ajunesh

XXV

When I was kid I never had this problem of waking up early. Every morning around 6:30 , 4 MiG21 would fly by my house . they made a loud sound , sometimes it felt our house going to collapse. My parents, people in the neighbour never entertained this thing , but I felt it very different , I found this awful thundering sound to be the most soothing sound on this planet. When I was kid I wonder where these came from soon I came to know there was an Air base of IAF near our area , and it was the home for these magnificent War Birds .

When I was 10 yr old I got my first cycle and from then onwards there was nothing to stop me . I used to roam around the city whenever I used to find free time . one fine day I reached a place where I could see tough concrete walls stretching miles as far I could see , I was curious to find out what was behind the wall ,at that very moment I could feel some vibrations in my body before I could understand what was really happening a Mig21 appeared behind the wall and it felt like it almost touched my head and passed over me. This incident made me so curious to find out what actually going behind these wall . I never saw an airport so close, but the problem was the walls were high and I'm unable to find any place to look into it . I kept my search on until I Found a Sewage opening cut out from the wall .It was covered with net but it was providing enough room to look inside the airport . I was amazed to see so many different kind of airplanes helicopters then for the first time I saw how a plane taxi and takesoff . All these fascinating moments glued me

that place . Now it was my routine to cycle here before leaving for school .

One day a passer by saw me and warned me that this is matter of defence , So if any official found me doing this they would put me in jail . Ignoring what he was saying just asked ‘ who are they officials?’ . he pointed me toward few men who were on their cycles they were wearing well ironed sky blue colour shirt,navy blue coloured Nehru caps and lots of batches pinned on their shirts. This warning didn’t stop me to go that place but still I used be cautious about the officers ; every day I used to notice A sturdy well groomed officer used to take notice of me while he used to cycle towards the airport, but I tried ignoring him hoping he won’t do anything to me.

It was a very special day for me because I saw my first 4 engine powered airplane it was IL76 , totally engaged in the joy of seeing it and waiting for it to taxi,. A heavy hand landed on my shoulder , I turned back it was the officer , I got nervous and frightened I Started seeking apology “please Don’t take me to the jail”. He didn’t say anything and after few moments he did burst in laughter, ”Do you want to enter the airplane” he asked , I was completely surprised but somehow I managed to say “YES”. Then the best thing happened to my life he took inside the airplane , The first time I was inside an airplane and airport and there is nothing to compare joy with. It was the time for take off So had to deboard and leave the area , “Now I’ll take you to most place to sit and watch aircraft” he took me to a tower and believe

it or not it was an AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER one of the most restricted area in any airport.

“SUperIL76 wind 20 16knots cleared for takeoff” ,with full thrust the beast took off and I locked each and every moment of it in my mind and heart.

I AM

Sudipta

XXVI

The history period was going on and I was in middle of writing notes as it was one of the subjects I like. I was sitting on the farthest seat from my teacher as I liked to sleep in class, I was writing and in the middle, I had to pee. So, I was thinking that the period will end in 10 minutes, after that I will go and pee so I kept on working. In about 10 minutes bell rang and I see children coming out teachers going but why my history teacher isn't going. It's about 10 minutes in the next period. No one came and even my teacher kept on teaching. Then I realized it was a continuous period, I am like shit man "why? Why?" and kept on taking notes while the pressure was increasing inside my body. Now I can't concentrate on my notes and I must go to toilet. I thought that I will stand up and go straight to my teacher and asked for it.

As I was standing, she saw me and asked, "What is it Himanshu??" Now that I haven't planned of this, my plan has failed miserably I am just standing with all my classmates looking at me. I gestured to her, can I come there she says "what? Speak up". My heart was racing as I stammer a lot, so with deep breaths I started "ma'am", then "ma'am, ma'am". And continued this for around 40seconds reaching no more than ma'am. I looked down, heard all my classmates giggling, at that time it didn't mattered to me as I wanted to go to toilet and looked up so that I can ask her, then I saw my teacher is also giggling and smiling. That was moment which struck hard and made me feel low, lower than anyone in the

class, so I quietly went to her and said “toilet, Can I go”. She said “oh yeah go ahead”. That would be the longest time for me standing in front of an urinal, thinking about what is wrong with me, why can’t I speak fluently, frustrated with myself I went back to the class, while walking I just realized I had to ask to come in also. I was standing at the door of the class looking at my teacher and classmates for like 10 seconds, everyone saw me standing except my teacher, so they knew what was coming, I quickly turned towards her and said “ma’am”. She saw me and realized that he will get stuck again so quickly said “come in come in”. while going to my seat, my classmates were still laughing at me. After that I didn’t think I had talked to anyone on that day, I was just thinking about my problem.

After that incident I had to be extremely cautious about asking, speaking in class, answering back to questions my teacher’s asked, I chose punishment over me answering back to the teachers because I thought that would be less embarrassing than stammering, huge pressure on my brain. I still remember almost 2 weeks after that incident happened auditions for a play were happening in our school which was going to be performed at our Annual Day. I think I must have thought about auditioning over 100 times in my head because it was a nice opportunity to get over my fear or problem as I would be performing in front of a huge crowd which is way bigger than my class. I gave the audition and Somehow qualified for the play. To me that was huge, but still my classmates were mocking me, which made me even

more committed to the play, but in the back of my head I still had the fear that I will perform in front of a huge crowd and by mistake if I get stuck I will become a joke, So I practiced my lines properly, in school, at home.

Anywhere I went the lines were in the back of my head, kept on repeating them in my mind, talked to the director of our play. Talking about this to our director was another challenge for me because I had to talk about a weakness of me in an activity where it should be my strength. He was supportive told me “not to worry and to keep on repeating your lines, make them familiar to your tongue”, even I searched about it, found ways to help me, even though I had a part less than 5 minutes in a play which was an hour long didn't make me less committed to it. Because I think my challenge was not to perform well in front of a crowd, it was to lift me back up. The play happened, I performed average but without stammering which made me feel good and even made my history teacher said “in class you can't speak but on stage you spoke all your lines fine. Well Done !!”

I AM

Himanshu

XXVII

I am a Microbiology graduate. I knew at the bottom of my heart that I wanted to spend the rest of my life inspiring my audience with my stories through the medium of animation.

1999, my parents were oblivious to the scope of animation as a career. So was I. However, I have seen that whenever I've taken decisions to walk against the tide to achieve my dreams, positive energies have aligned and come to my guidance. And so was then. I discovered Mr Ram Mohan – The pioneer of Indian animation at our community youth gathering. I was delighted to know a person from my community – Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmins has ventured and excelled in the field of animation. And as soon as I met him I discovered that he too was a graduate in Molecular Biology.

Along with learning the techniques of animation and surviving, I pursued my dream to write stories. For several years I shared my stories with various animation studio owners. Though most shied from investing in original content.

Finally in 2005, I sold my original story The Flying Rani to Branwave Productions. The film was then produced and directed by Mr Vikram Pradhan and was released in 2011.

In 2012, I was sponsored by the French Embassy and Animation Xpress to visit the acclaimed animation festival Annecy to share my story – The Pickle Jar Adventure with the international animation creators. I failed at getting a film financier, but I succeeded in telling my story to every single

soul in the picturesque town of Annecy, France. I learnt that even though my story was about Indian characters, it had potential to captivate listeners from every corner of the globe.

Enko The Eskimo – a kids’ animated series co-developing with Emmy Nominated Writer Mike Blum has been under development with a leading broadcaster in the USA. After two years of development, the broadcaster stopped investing any further and returned the property back to us.

I have been also co-developing an animated series along with Toonz Media Group since 2 years. We are still in the process of finding a buyer.

I have directed interactive experiences for The Bihar’s museum, designed characters for Get My Goat - a Dreamworks YouTube animated series. I have been a show creator Maya Digital. And my most recent association as a Creative Director has been with the eminent producer of Indian cinema – Mr Bobby Bedi.

My journey as a storyteller and experience creator in museums has provided a new dimension to my thought process and body of work. I live by the philosophy that animation is the highest level of creativity where one has the power to give birth to universes of characters, their worlds and journeys that have meaning and purpose and expression of such immense power must be relevant to the issues of our generation and responsible for their evolution. Unreal from the real, by the real and for the real.

I love for sharing the art of storytelling through animation has provided a healthy ground for students across several animation schools across India.

To walk on the path of my dreams, I have had to quarrel to convince with my loved ones and moreover with my own conditioned logic of survival.

In 2013, I went bankrupt and I had no words to justify my madness. But then in the lowest points of my life, I have also seen that the same loved ones who were my resistance earlier have adjusted and supported me when they saw me continue to walk on my path. I'm blessed to have such a wonderful wife - Smriti and son - Advait who play a vital role in my creativity and enthusiasm.

Since more than a decade that I have known Manjul Bhardwaj and his philosophy of Theatre of Relevance, he has always been there to guide me out of my hopelessness and set me back on my path as a creator and achieve my dreams.

I love my students who have supported my dream to unite them with their inspiring stories.

“My dreams shape my reality.”

My struggle continues.

I AM

Siddharth Maskeri

We acknowledge our families and friends who have
contributed to our journeys.

- *USI Creators*