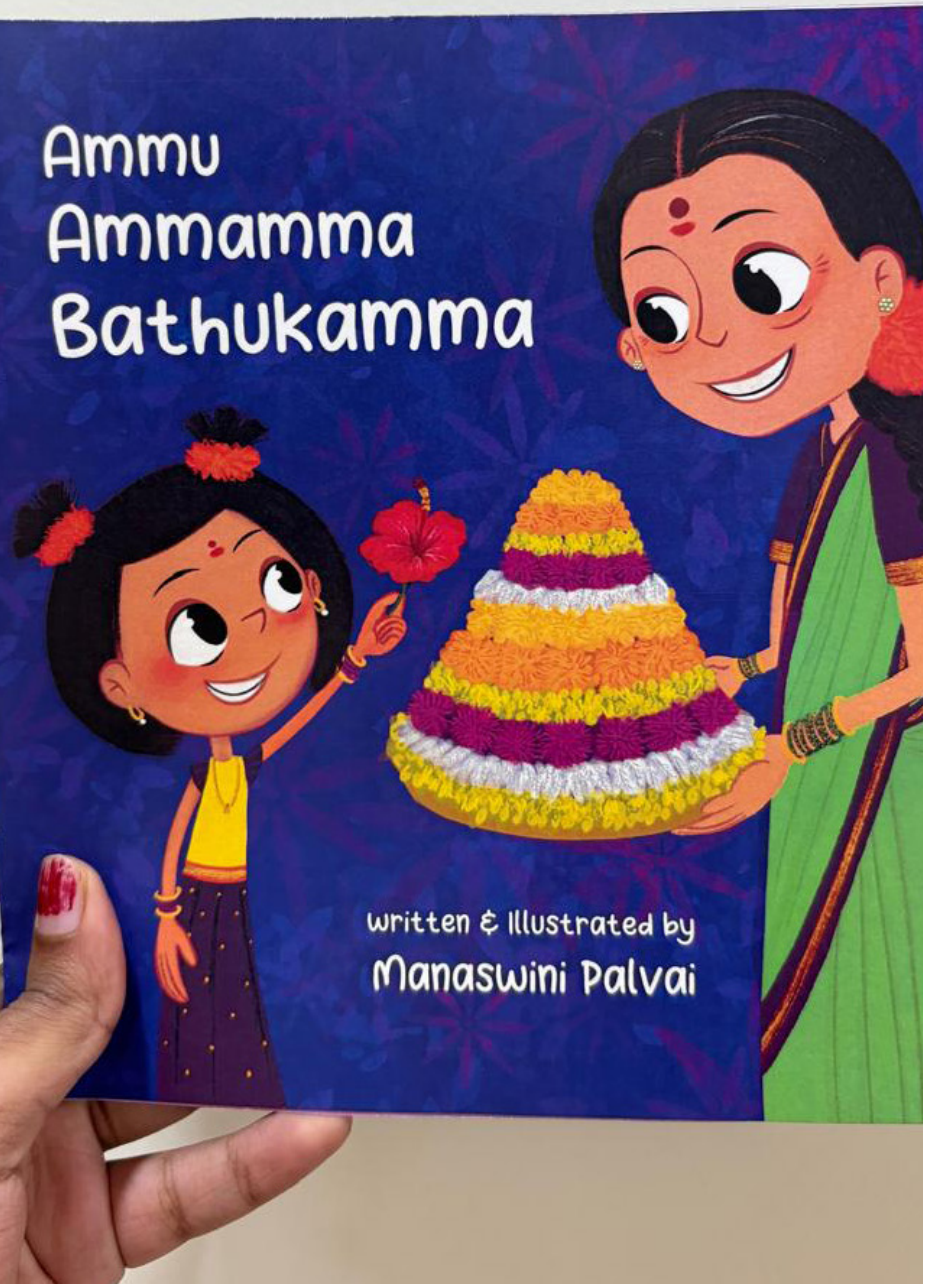


JK LAKSHMIPAT UNIVERSITY
Institute of Design
NAAC 'A' Grade Accredited

Ammu Ammamma Bathukamma:
Picturebook Graduation Project for fostering cultural awareness among children

VOL. 1

Student : **Manaswini Reddy Palvai**

Sponsor : **Self**

Mentor : **Yash Raizada**

Consultant : **NA**

Programme :
Bachelor of Design (B.Des)
Integrated Communication Design

THE GRADUATION PROJECT 2025

The Evaluation Jury has recommended **Manaswini Reddy Palvai**
for graduation from **Institute of Design, JK LAKSHMIPAT UNIVERSITY**
with specialization in **Integrated Communication Design**

Herewith, for the project titled "**Ammu Ammamma Bathukamma: Picturebook Graduation Project**"

Jury Chairman _____ _____

Jury Member _____ _____

Jury Member _____ _____

Subsequent remarks regarding fulfillment of requirements

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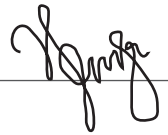
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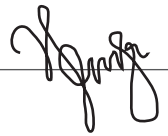
Date: 10th June 2025

Place Hyderabad

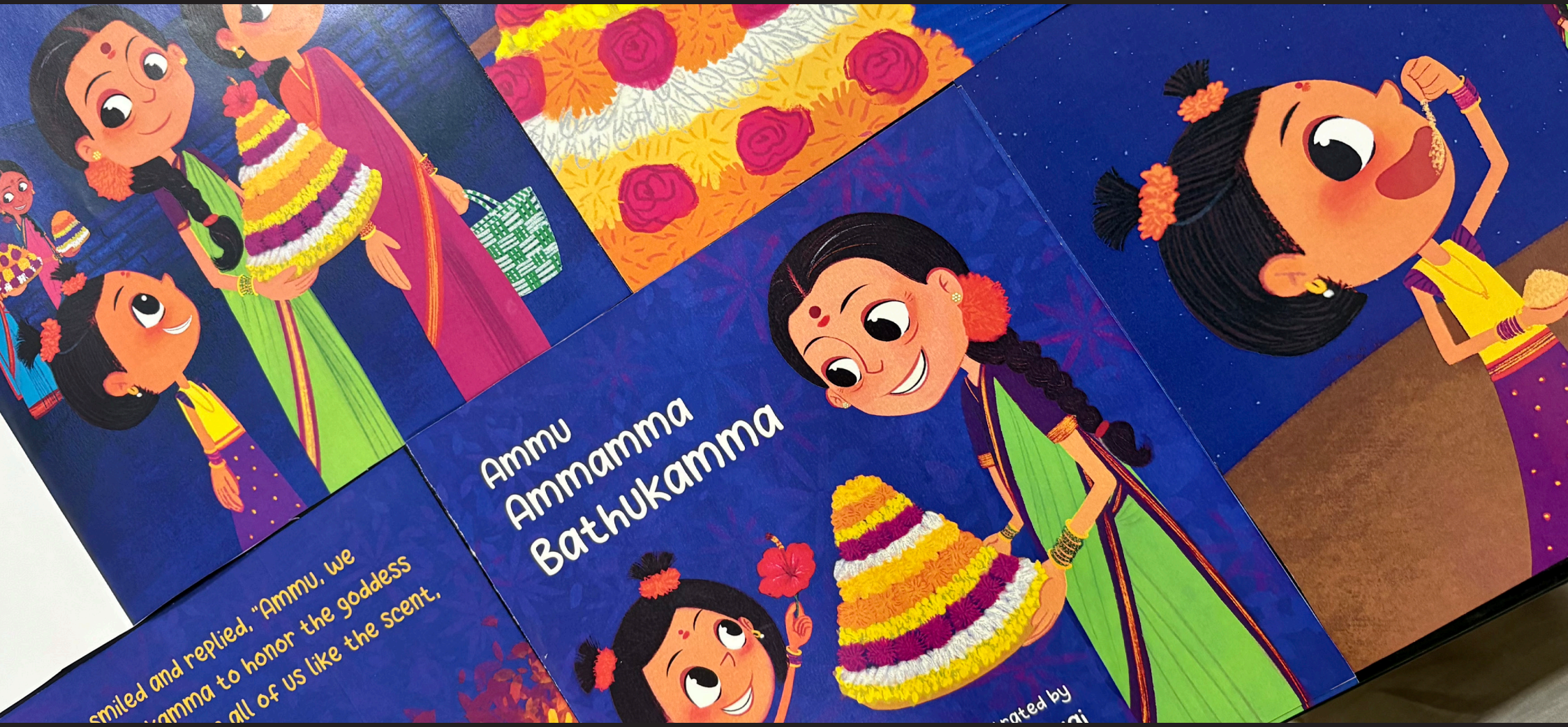
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Date: 10th June 2025



The Making of

Ammu, Ammamma, Bathukamma

by Manaswini Palvai

The Making of

Ammu, Ammamma, Bathukamma

by Manaswini Palvai

Statement of Originality:

I, Manaswini Reddy Palvai, a student of the B.Des ICD Batch of 2021, hereby declare that this submission and the work contained within it is my original creation, developed during the 8th semester of my degree. It has not been previously submitted or published by any organization or individual. Any material referenced or cited that is not my own has been clearly identified and appropriately credited to the individual/organization it belongs to. I affirm that this project adheres to the ethical standards of academic integrity and has been completed in accordance with the guidelines provided by my department and institution.

Manaswini Reddy Palvai
1st June 2025

Preface:

Bathukamma has been my muse for a large part of my college journey in various assignments cause it is a festival that defines my culture. And writing a picturebook and illustrating it has also been a life long dream. Merging these two has for my graduation project been an incredible experience that made my values as a designer, a storyteller and a human being even stronger.

I stumbled a lot along the way but have learnt to keep the momentum going by believing in myself and this beautiful festival Bathukamma. This is the story of my life afterall, my childhood, my relationship with my grandmother and I was fortunate to be able to bring the warmth I shared to the rest of the world through this book. I hope to inspire positivity and warmth in a gloomy world, that has now become my mission in life, which I hope to fulfill through this book. Peace!

Acknowledgements:

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who supported me throughout the journey of this graduation project. First and foremost, I am deeply thankful to my guide, Yash Raizada, for their kind guidance, encouragement, and feedback, which shaped the direction and depth of this work.

I sincerely thank the Publishing Director of Karadi Tales, Ms. Shobha Vishwanath, Industry experts Mr. Pratyush Gupta, Ms. Nandita Da Cunha, Ms. Geeta Ramanujam, and Dr. P Vijay Kumar of Department of Language and Culture of Telangana for giving me their valuable time and their incredible insights.

Finally, I am forever grateful to my family and friends for their unwavering love and patience during times of stress. I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Prof. Devanuj Kanta Balkishan for being a pillar of strength in my academic journey. They all gave me the power to endure and come out stronger.

Contents

1

Introduction:
1.1 Synopsis
1.2 Objective

2

Market Research:
2.1 Pictorebooks, their role in early childhood education
2.2 Books that inspire me
2.3 Book Festivals and their trends
2.4 Insights from Authors/Illustrators
2.5 Insights from Publishers
2.6 Taking a writing course by Karadi Tales

3

User Research:
3.1 Mapping children's modes of entertainment
3.2 Challenges of parents in managing their child's screentime
3.3 Busy Lives/Lack of commitment to existing interventions
3.4 Cultural shift, challanges to cope with it
3.5 Findings

4

Bathukamma, my muse:
4.1 Bathukamma history and it's relavence in modern times
4.2 Bathukamma's focus on the feminine
4.3 A child's perspective on Bathukamma

5

Writing Process:
5.1 Writing my first darft, why it failed?
5.2 Autobiographical approach, writing in Telugu
5.3 Middle Ground

6

Visual Development:
6.1 Moodboard
6.2 Character explorations
6.3 Character design
6.4 Cover Illustration
6.5 Storyboarding
6.6 Illustration process
6.7 Typesetting in two languages
6.8 Test Printing

7

Interactive Elements:
7.1 The Inland letter
7.2 Bathukamma puzzle

8

Challenges:
8.1 Consistency in Visuals
8.2 The challange of doing everything on my own

9

Reflections:
9.1 My process and how it evolved
9.2 Final thoughts

“Cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature.”

-UNESCO (2001)

1.Introduction

Bathukamma is a cultural repository of the people of Telangana. It is a festival dedicated to Devi Gauri and perhaps the only one in the country where flowers become the goddess itself. During it's nine day period, parallel to Navratri, women visit their maternal homes, create beautiful, cone-shaped flower arrangements using seasonal blossoms. They gather in groups to sing songs, dance in circles around the Bathukamma, and offer prayers. The festival not only reflects gratitude for nature, but also makes space for women to express their joys and sorrows and provides them the time to relax, unwind and enjoy the festivities.



Photo Credit: Matcha Sowmya

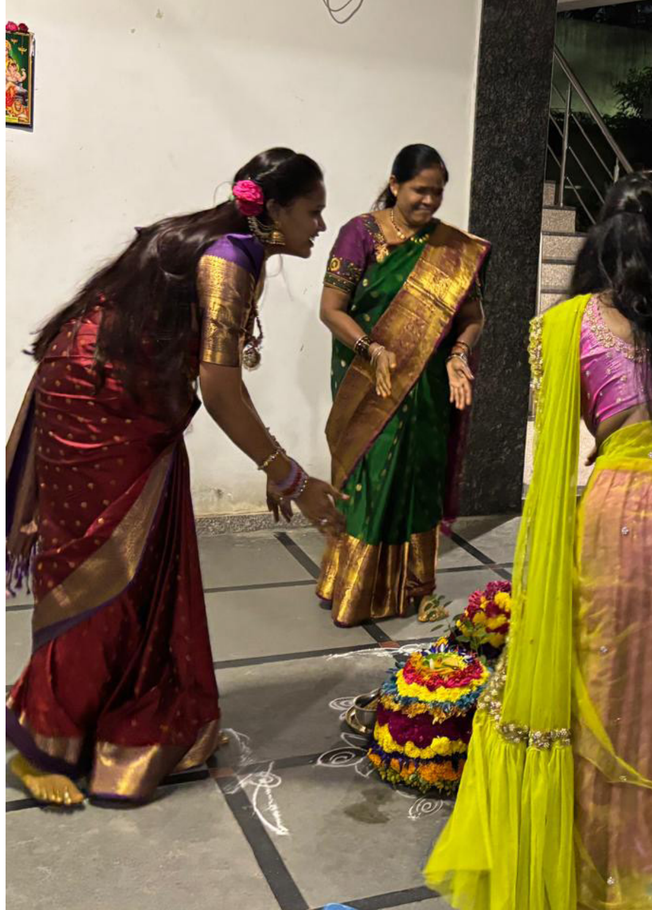
1.1 Synopsis:

This project explores picture book design as a medium to introduce children to their cultural practices and fostering appreciation for their roots. It investigates both the market and the user, employs the design process to create an engaging picture book that explains the themes mentioned above, in simple language to the target user group, children of ages 3-8. The final artifact also uses tactile interactive elements to create a richer user experience.

1.2 Objective:

To explore how storytelling and design can foster empathy and cultural understanding among children in today's urban, middle class, multicultural settings.

I chose Bathukamma as the theme for my graduation project in picture book design because it beautifully weaves together culture, nature, and feminine strength—values I deeply resonate with. As a storyteller and designer, I found that there is oversaturation of books on festivals that are generic and celebrated for their mainstream popularituy. I found little to no emphasis on region specific practices and wanted to introduce children to such festivals that are often overlooked in mainstream narratives. Bathukamma's vibrant visuals, songs, and community spirit offered rich storytelling potential. ebrate the understanding of life that Bathukamma offers, as *"Bathuku"* in Telugu means life, and *"Bathukamma"* is the goddess of life .



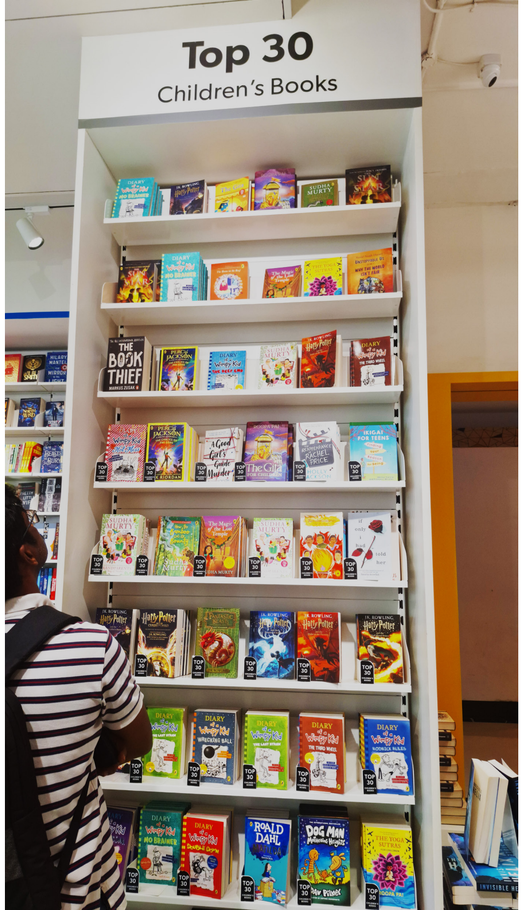
2. Market Research

Visiting Crossword:

As a part of my market research I visited the store of Crossword in GVK Mall, Hyderabad to see their selection of books and also interact with the staff and customers there to see what truly sells. Since Crossword is a big multi-city store chain, the quantity of titles and the store's design was well planned to cater to the target audience. Their bestsellers contained popular series like the Wimpy Kid, Roald Dalh, Harry Potter, Percy Jackson and they also contained Sudha Murthy's stories. It was surprising to see their bestsellers section not only filled older franchises like Harry Potter but also with chapterbooks and YA novels, which are aimed at older children.

Indian VS International Books:

One reason for that could be the popularity of these books among both children aswell as adults. I found a person who would probably be in his late twenties or early thirties taking interest in these titles. I also noticed an interesting pattern in these titles; the International books focused on eccentric storytelling with sci-fi/fantasy characters whereas the Indian books focused on mythology and cultural values majorly. Also I noticed a slight terminology difference where they reffered to picturebooks as storybooks, and maintained a seperate section for that.



Difference in cultural values:

There is a similar trend in picturebooks aswell. Indian picture books often focus on mythology and cultural heritage, reflecting the country's deep-rooted traditions and emphasis on values. In contrast, international books frequently explore fantasy, sci-fi characters shaped by technological revolutions and imaginative freedom in the West. Yet, both are products of their environments—mythology and fantasy often overlap in themes of magic, heroism, and morality. Sci-fi's curiosity mirrors India's philosophical depth, while Indian stories emphasize collective values over individualism. Ultimately, both systems nurture imagination and empathy, differing in form but similar in function—offering children stories that reflect who they are, where they come from, and who they can become.





Peppa pig, a popular character with it's own universe of books, merchendise, tv shows and games offers a wider user experience that engages sensorially in more ways than one. This method also has a recall value hence promotes repeat purchasing of the character specific items.



“and what is the use of a book” thought Alice, “without pictures or conversations?” -Alice in the wonderland, Lewis Caroll

2.1 Picturebooks and their role in early childhood

The Importance of Being Ficticious:

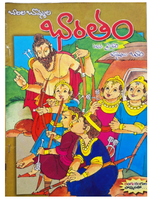
I remember having read Alice in the wonderland in my 5th class, and I staunchly resonated with Alice’s sentiment of how boring pictureless books are. That is what fiction does to a child’s brain-it builds incredible empathy. Culturally, picture books play a key role in introducing children to their own heritage and the diversity of the world around them. They show lives and experiences different from their own. Children are shown a mirror of themselves even in the most fictional and bizzare of settings and learn to identify and express feelings, relate to different characters, and explore various social situations in a safe and imaginative space. Themes such as friendship, courage, kindness, and curiosity are gently introduced, allowing children to absorb important life values in age-appropriate ways.

Picturebooks-tools for empathy:

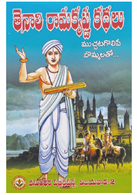
Additionally, shared reading with parents or caregivers strengthens emotional bonds and creates a comforting routine that promotes a lifelong love for reading. In essence, picture books are not just stepping stones to literacy–they are tools for shaping how children think, feel, and relate to the world. They lay the foundation for confident, thoughtful, and imaginative individuals.

2.2 Books that Inspire me

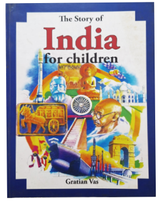
(Images: Self, Amazon, Goodreads)



1.Balala Bommala Bharatam
by Vaishali, Illustrations by Bali



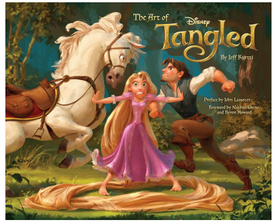
2. Tenali Ramakrishna Kathalu
by Sri Sheethamraju,
Illustrations by V Sai Ram



3. The story of India for children
by Gratian Vas, Illustrations by



4. The Witches by Roald Dalh,
Illustrations by Quentin Blake



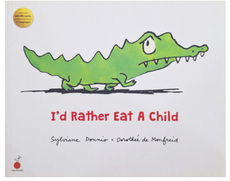
5. The Art of Tangled by Glen Keane,
Various Artists



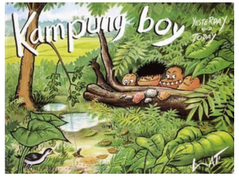
6. The Lion the witch and the wardrobe
by CS Lewis, Illustrated by Pauline Baynes



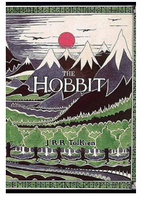
7. The Tale of two bad mice
by Beatrix Potter



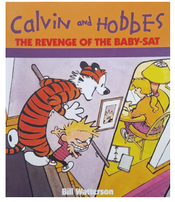
8. I'd rather eat a child by Sylviane Donnio,
Illustrations by Dorothee de Monfreid



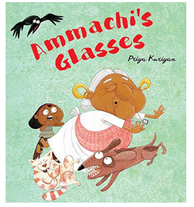
9. Kampung Boy yesterday and today
by LAT



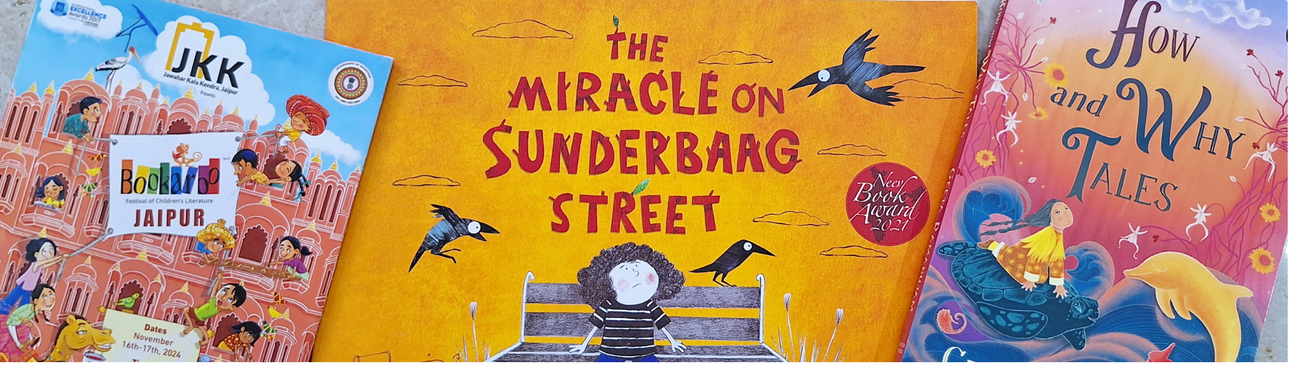
10. The Hobbit by JRR Tolkien



11. Calvin and Hobbes
by Bill Watterson



12. Ammachi's glasses
by Priya Kurian



2.3 Book Festivals and their trends

Bookaroo Jaipur:

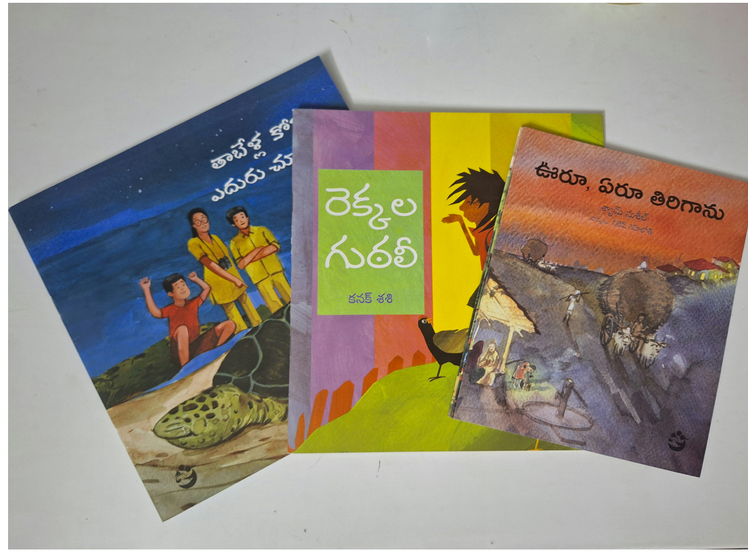
During the research process, I have had the opportunity to visit two major book festivals in India, Bookaroo in Jaipur dedicated exclusively to children's picture books and the Hyderabad Book Fair that covers regional, national and international books. The Bookaroo festival was held in Jawahar Kala Kendra and featured many authors, illustrators and designers. They also organised workshops, book readings, and author/illustrator fan interactions-an opportunity I made good use of. The atmosphere was alive with activity corners, storytelling sessions, puppet shows etc made the experience immersive and joyful. The selection of books was also unique and well curated, something you wouldn't find at a lot of mainstream retail stores. The books featured themes of diversity, eco-consciousness, mental health, cultural heritage, connection with family and character driven stories and giving parents meaningful options for their children. They also featured English translated books of European creators and their selection had minimal, unconventional and interactive design elements. It was also good to see the design trends of Europe.

I have also purchased titles like "The Miracle on Sunderbaag street" and "How and why tales" and have had the opportunity to speak with both it's authors. They were kind enough to share their journies, tips on writing for children and industry insights with me. This experience gave a lot of inspiration, courage to create, a look at what a author/illustrator's life looks like and a headstart into what to expect in the process of creating the picturebook. It was also a good networking opportunity interms of meeting publishers.

The Hyderabad Book Fair:

At recent Hyderabad book fair, I struggled to find good children's books beyond the mainstream due to it's lack of emphasis on it. But it was a good opportunity to see region titles and also interact with authors and publishers alike. I also discovered that major picturebooks by Indian authors written in English were translated in Telugu. This pointed to two things, while there is a universalness to stories and especially in the context of India since the socio-cultural environment is majorly simiral despite the diversity, there is also a lack of innovation in Telugu children's literature.

I was actually suprised that there is no telugu picturebook on bathukamma, barring a few illustrated poems in telugu textbooks. Also the design and user experience of Telugu language books can offer more to it's readers. Telugu artists and calligraphers have had their renaisannce in the pre-digital era but the there is a visi-



2.4 Insights of Authors/Illustrators

Advice on Authentic Storytelling:

I have gotten some great advice regarding what to keep in mind while starting a picture book. Each creator shared their individual process. I have been told that writing is only part of the experience, you have to think in terms of storytelling as full package. I was told not forcefit themes like diversity, feminism, environmental conservation as that would be forcing the politics of an adult onto a child. I was told by some writers to keep a target audience in mind while others felt that would only limit the story. One is a more pragmatic approach but one accounts for the spontainity of the creative process. I was also adviced to experiment a lot with various mediums and to give a sensorily rich experience.

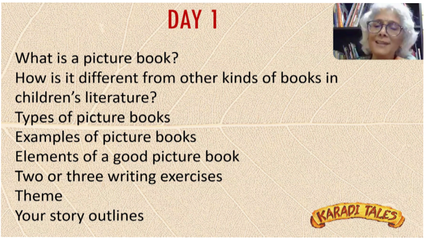
Above all I was told to embrace my own process and have confidence in myself and my story to be able to pitch to publishers. The enterprising attitude has to always be there inorder to not just create but reap the right benfits of what you create. I was also adviced to be rooted in my culture and bring out themes from my city and my state as those would be topics would be in my immediate environment for which i would have inbuilt sensitivity. This is a phenomena we see in films aswell interms of regional cinema /themes going big and across borders. Perhaps this is the anatomy of authentic storytelling.

2.5 Insights of Publishers

Parents as Interfaces:

Several publishers I met at book fairs offered a valuable perspective: “think of parents as the primary interface through which children experience picture books”. While the story is ultimately for the child, it’s often the parent who makes the decision to pick up the book, read it aloud, and revisit it night after night. Therefore, a picture book must first resonate with the adult—emotionally, aesthetically, or intellectually—for it to make its way into a child’s hands and heart. Publishers encouraged me to consider what would make a parent pause at a bookstall: a meaningful theme, beautiful artwork, something funny or a value that deeply resonates with them.

This doesn’t mean compromising a child’s voice or imagination for the adult’s preference. Rather, it’s about creating layered experiences: simple and joyful enough for a child to enjoy, yet thoughtful and engaging enough for a parent to return to. This insight shifted the way I view picture books—not just as stories for children, but as moments of connection between parent and child. It reminded me that the book must invite the adult in, offering something they too can feel, reflect on, or delight in. When a book speaks to both generations, it becomes more than a story—it becomes a ritual, a part of their life, something that adds meaning.













2.6 Taking a writing course by Karadi Tales

Limitless thinking, limitless writing!

Taking the picture book writing course with Karadi Tales was like eye opening which showed a limitless world to me. We began by exploring the elements that make a picture book truly good. Through the lens of classics like "The Very Hungry Caterpillar", we studied how simplicity, rhythm, and visual storytelling can create magic. The course emphasized that picture books are not just for children—they're for anyone willing to feel wonder. We delved into Karadi Tales' collection of titles like "Falgu the Farmer", "Pati's Rasam", "The Homework", and many more. Each of these titles showed how cultural specificity, humor, warmth, and everyday moments can become extraordinary in the hands of the right storyteller.

One of the most liberating insights I received was about the infinite possibilities for characters. A character in a picture book doesn't have to be a child. It can be an adult, an animal, an object, a bird—or something completely bizarre. There are no limits. This reminded me to keep my stories open to surprise. As someone who also illustrates, drawing is my first language and it's through visuals that I often unlock ideas I didn't know I had. I was also encouraged to explore "wordless picture books"—where the story unfolds through imagery alone. Some stories begin with words, others with doodles or a feeling. What matters is to stay playful, observant, and open.

"Writing for children is like writing War and Peace in haiku" -Mem Fox

3.User Research

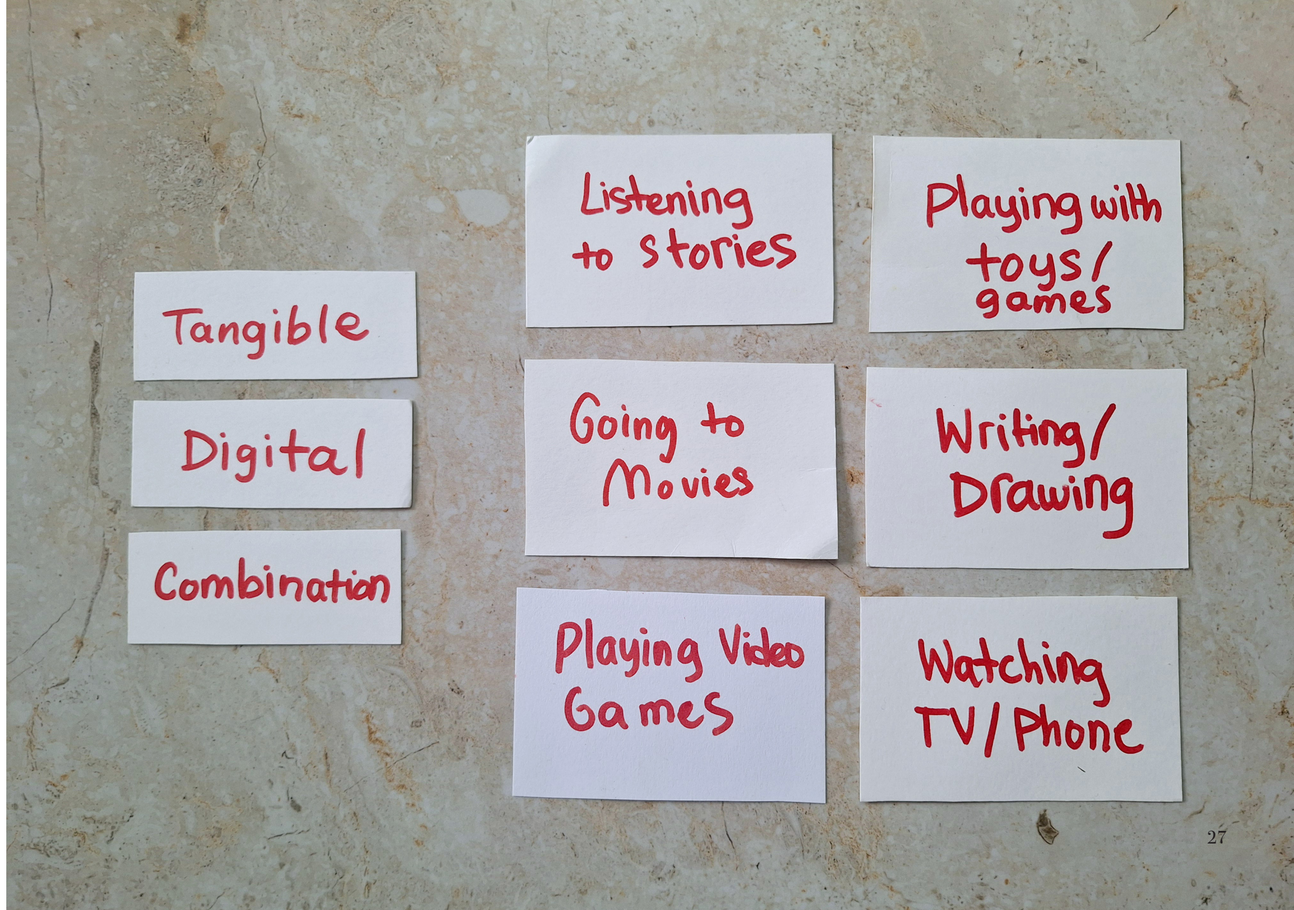
3.1 Mapping children's modes of entertainment

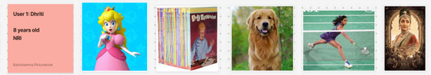
Methodology:

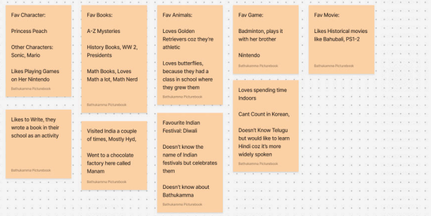
To understand media consumption patterns among children aged 3–8, I approched a user pool of majority of Telugu children from Hyderabad and two NRI children of Telugu origin. I used a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods. This included ethnographic observations in home settings, interviews with children and their caregivers, and short surveys to capture a broader snapshot of behaviors. I also developed personas to reflect varying needs and habits. A key activity was a card-sorting exercise where children categorized activities under three modes of interaction: "Tangible", "Digital", and "Combo".

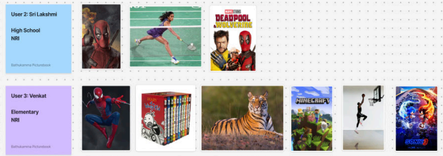
Card Sorting:

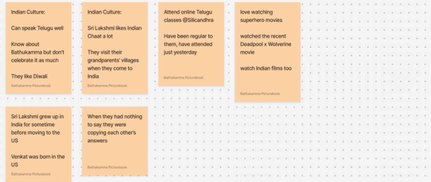
The findings revealed a strong presence of digital media in children's daily lives—TV shows, mobile videos, and video games were especially prominent due to their accessibility and entertainment value. However, tactile experiences remained meaningful. Children still gravitated toward drawing, playing with toys, and imaginative offline games. In the card sort of 10 users, while 60% of responses leaned toward "Digital", a significant 40% favored "Tangible" interactions, with "Combo" options (like augmented books or physical toys connected to apps) showing up as hybrids rather than replacements.The 6:4 split highlights that children's preferences are not binary—they enjoy screens, but still deeply connect with materials they can touch, build, or create with. Future design strategies should consider this balance, understand that tangible interaction is still a major part of childhood and the learning process and it should work in harmony with the digital while still holding it's place.

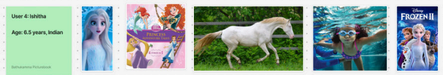


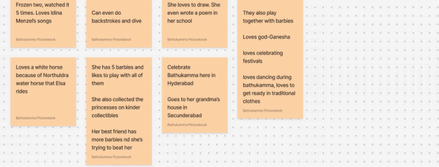


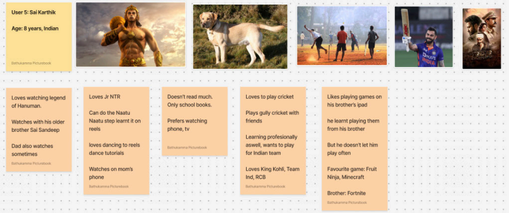


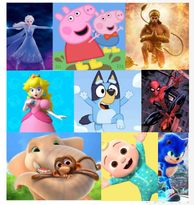












Screen time of children:

The landscape of content consumption is no longer limited to traditional television—children are now surrounded by an ecosystem of competing media forms: YouTube, streaming platforms, gaming apps, social media clips, and movies. These platforms are not only competing for attention but are shaping the way childhood is being experienced in the digital age.

For younger children, especially those around age 3, cartoons dominate their screen time. Interestingly, this often begins as a coping mechanism—parents use screens to calm crying children or make them eat. As a result, passive screen habits form early. Despite the recommended screen time being around one hour for toddlers, many exceed this by a shocking 3 to 4 hours daily. In contrast, older children in the 6–8 age range average 2–3 hours of screen time on weekdays, increasing to 4 hours on weekends. This moderation is often due to school schedules, playtime with friends, or participation in extracurricular activities.

Their content preferences:

Content preferences are notably divided by age. Younger children gravitate toward animated franchises such as “Frozen”, “Bluey”, “Peppa Pig”, and “Munki and Trunk”. Even superhero films like “Spiderman” have found fans in this age bracket. Many children identified their favorite characters from games or films, highlighting how animated content is no longer the first preferance. Meanwhile, reading seems to gain traction among older children. Titles like “Diary of a Wimpy Kid” and mystery novels were frequently mentioned, suggesting that age, school culture, and parental influence play a key role in cultivating reading/screen free play habits.

3.2 Challenges of parents in managing their child's screentime

Screen-the necessary evil:

In my conversations with parents, one of the most recurring challenges they shared was the sheer difficulty of managing their child's screen time without constant resistance. Many of them admitted that screens have become an unavoidable part of everyday routines—especially when they need a moment of quiet to cook, work from home, or run errands. Screen time often becomes the "easy button" in a fast-paced, multitasking household. However, this convenience often comes with guilt. Parents expressed worry over the long-term effects of excessive screen exposure.

Another major challenge is that a lot children consume content while eating and it becomes the only way to distract them and feed them. This passive consumption pattern frustrated many, who said it was difficult to set boundaries without conflict. A few parents shared that once screen time is over, their children often become irritable or restless. These emotional pushbacks make screen regulation feel like a daily battle, especially when the content is designed to be endlessly engaging.



"Children are not addicted to phones. They are addicted to the absence of connection, and the phone fills that void."

- Ralph Smart, Psychologist



Photo Credits: Amin Zabar

3.3 Busy Lives/ Lack of commitment to existing interventions

I also noticed a recurring theme around parents' limited awareness—or sometimes lack of commitment—to existing screen-free interventions designed for children aged 3 to 8. Many were unfamiliar with the variety of interactive books, games, and toys already available in the market that could meaningfully engage their children.There is a significant gap in connecting parents to the right screen free alternatives.A large part of this seems to stem from the time and energy required to finding these alternatives. That leaves a huge scope for making these alternatives accessible.





Photo Credits: Left-Surinder Pal Singh Right-Anntara Zevich

3.4 Cultural shift, challanges to cope with it

Socio-Economic changes:

This disconnect is further deepened by a larger cultural shift that many parents are still trying to make sense of. Parents I spoke to often reflected on their own childhoods in the 90s, contrasting them sharply with their children's present-day reality. Many grew up in joint families or small-town environments where screens were a luxury, not a daily presence. Their memories were filled with outdoor play, storytelling from grandparents, shared meals, and simple games with cousins and neighbors. One parent said, "We never needed toys or cartoons. We just made up games with whatever we had around us." Several parents expressed a kind of grief that their children may never experience that same grounded, unstructured, and emotionally rich version of childhood.

Cultural changes:

What has replaced it is a fast-paced, urbanized lifestyle driven by technology, nuclear family structures, and academic competition. Many parents admitted feeling overwhelmed by the speed at which things have changed—both socially and economically. They feel the pressure to keep up with modern norms—enrolling kids in the right programs, keeping them entertained, and ensuring they don't "fall behind"—while also carrying nostalgia for a slower, more connected past. The challenge, then, is not just managing screen time, but also reconciling the emotional and cultural dissonance between two very different eras of growing up.

3.5 Findings:

1. Though children preffered digital interactions, it was not by a large majority.
They still showed interest in tangible interactions which opens a scope for intervention.

2. Many parents were unfamiliar with the variety of interactive books, games, and toys already available in the market. A large part of this seems to stem from the time and energy required to finding these alternatives. That leaves a huge scope for making these alternatives accessible.

3. Parents experience a cultural gap with their kids. The challenge, then, is not just managing screen time,
but also reconciling the emotional and cultural dissonance between two very different eras of growing up.



"for the elders, *uyyalo,*
it's the night of the new moon, *uyyalo*
for the children, *uyyalo,*
it's the festival of bathukamma, *uyyalo*"

(This is a Bathukamma song translated into English,
"Uyyalo" means "Swing" in Telugu, used to add rhythm.)

4. Bathukamma, my muse:

4.1 Bathukamma's History and its relevance:

Bathukamma is a said to have started in time of Chalukyas of Vemulawada and is a revered folk deity in Telangana culture. During the Telangana statehood movement, Bathukamma emerged as a powerful cultural symbol uniting people in their demand for identity and autonomy. As political protests intensified, Bathukamma was reimagined as a grassroots celebration of Telangana's distinct language, traditions, and rural ethos. Songs and gatherings around Bathukamma turned into peaceful protests, weaving together cultural pride and political aspiration. The song tradition of Bathukamma explains the struggles of females in everyday life, their joys, sorrows and aspirations and gives a profound meaning to this festival. It has become a symbol of Telangana's unique cultural identity, inspiring both urban and rural communities to reconnect with traditional practices while adapting them into contemporary lifestyles.







Photo Credits: top left: lucidclick, top right: Matcha Sowmya, bottom right: Sai Ravali K

"Bathukamma is akin to Telangana as it represent's the saga of a woman's voice against oppression like Telangana's collective voice against injustice."

-Gaddar, a prominent Telangana poet, singer, revolutionary



4.2 Bathukamma's focus on the feminine:

Naturally, Cuturally, Spiritually Feminine:

Bathukamma is a profound expression of the feminine in its most sacred and life-affirming form. At the heart of Bathukamma lies the worship of nature—not just as a backdrop to human life, but as a living embodiment of the feminine divine. The carefully arranged flowers in concentric layers symbolize more than beauty; they evoke the cyclical rhythm of life. Each blossom—Tangedu, Gunuka, Banthi, and others—is native, seasonal, and medicinal, mirroring how the feminine is rooted in the natural order, healing, and nurturing life in quiet strength.

Culturally, Bathukamma is a festival of women, by women, and for women—an assertion of their presence in the sacred space. The circular formation of dancing women around the Bathukamma is not only a metaphor for unity but also represents spiritual oneness of the feminine. In a world where rituals often center male deities and priesthoods, Bathukamma stands out as a tradition where the woman is the celebrant, the creator, and the bearer of culture.

Spiritually, Bathukamma reveres Goddess Gauri, not merely as a celestial figure, but as Shakti—the primordial feminine energy that creates, protects, and dissolves the universe. The festival coincides with Navaratri, further deepening its ties to the feminine divine. Yet, Bathukamma's strength lies not just in mythic grandeur but in everyday resilience—the strength of mothers, daughters, and sisters who carry traditions, till the soil, care for communities, and heal with song and laughter. In celebrating Bathukamma, one honors not only the goddess in the sky but also the goddess in every woman, in every flower, and in the earth herself.

Photo Credits: Sri Lakshmi

4.3 A Child's Perspective of Bathukamma:

Festivals are fun and only fun!

When I was speaking to my parents, cousins and other relatives, they expressed how different Bathukamma was for them when they were children. For a child, Bathukamma is about fun, song and dance, meeting friends, eating good food. All this deep philosophy about culture, femininity doesn't make sense then. My neighbour mentioned how she used to race around with her friends during Bathukamma and how they used to fight over the prasadam offered. Bathukamma is about going to your grandmother's house-a place of care and nuture for both the mother and the child. It is an escape from the mundane realities for the world.



As a child grows, they begin to connect nature with divinity and understands that women are central not only to the festival but to its deeper meanings. The ritual of immersing the Bathukamma in water can leave a strong impression, marking the end of the celebration and reinforcing the interconnected themes passed down through lived experience.

Photo Credit: Sai Ravali K

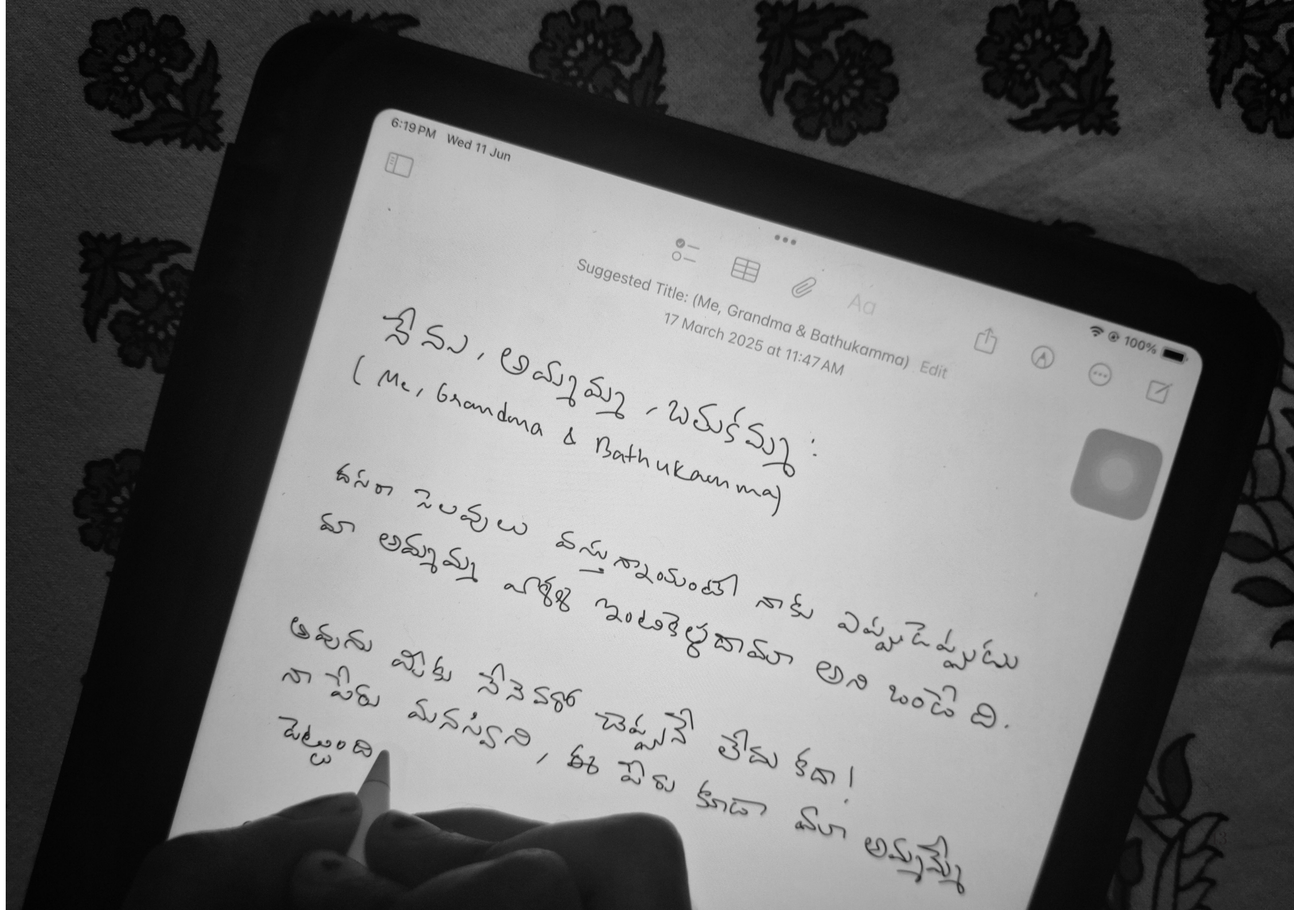
5. Writing Process:

5.1 First Draft-Trying to be ″cool″:

When I first began writing my picture book about ″Bathukamma″, I was excited by the idea of exploring the festival through the eyes of a child from Jharkhand who moves to Telangana. The plot followed a girl who initially feels like an outsider but finds comfort and belonging in the vibrant celebration of Bathukamma. I was especially drawn to the natural beauty of the festival–the flowers, the water, the songs–and I wanted the story to reflect how it reconnected her (and me) to nature. At the time, I thought it was a powerful way to weave together themes of migration, identity, and environment. I was quite pleased with the concept and thought it was ″cool″ to approach a cultural story through this poetic, nature-based lens.

5.2 An Autobiographical approach:

However, when I shared the first draft and received feedback, I realised that I had unintentionally forced the themes a bit too much. I hadn't noticed it while writing, but the critique pointed out that the story seemed more focused on delivering a message than allowing the characters and setting to breathe on their own. Taking that feedback seriously, I decided to rewrite the story entirely in Telugu. This version was deeply autobiographical, and something shifted in the process–it felt more grounded, more intimate. Writing in my mother tongue helped me access a different voice, one that was truer to the emotions I wanted to convey, and the result was a much stronger and more sincere draft.



5.3 Middle Ground:

Eventually, I found a middle path. I settled on a semi-autobiographical approach, allowing the story to draw from my own experiences without being confined by them. This version gave the characters room to grow beyond me and become their own people, with their own feelings and choices. It no longer had to reflect exactly what happened in my life—it could be inspired by it, but still be a story in its own right. Letting go of strict autobiography gave the narrative a new kind of freedom, and I learned that a story doesn't have to be true to be real. It just has to be honest.

"Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up."

-Pablo Picasso

6. Visual Development

6.1 Moodboard

I made this moodboard using my own photographs from my childhood, a few of my niece, and photographs of Chandrasekhar Singh, a renowned photographer from Hyderabad. I'm collecting Bathukamma pictures from people I know and photographers because I lived for four years in Jaipur and was never able to attened Bathukamma back home. But making this moodboard definitely brought back alot of memories.

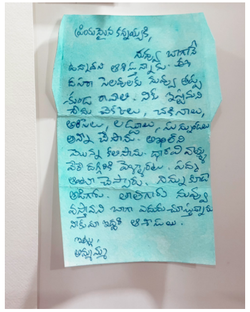
Anoosha Syed, a picturebook artist I admire once said that if your character looks like an actual kid, it makes twice the impact it would make otherwise. That is what authenticity is all about, taking aspects of real experiences and weaving them into your story. This book is a humble attempt at that. There are several pictures of my grandmother here aswell. I always remember her wearing a lot of cotton sarees from Venkatagiri. She also wrote me letters, inland to be specific. I made small miniatures of things from my grandmother's house. At this point, I wan't really planning anything. The process was quite raw, iterative and intuitive.

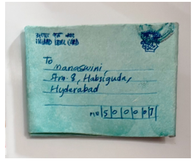
















6.2 Character explorations

I first began my exploration by drawing like a child. I really love the process of Ema Malyauka, a Dutch illustrator, who doesn't let convention get in the way of expression. Here I start with Ammu.

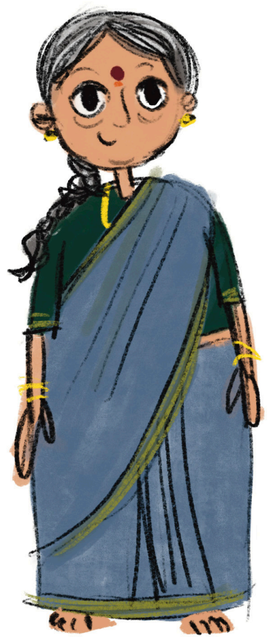




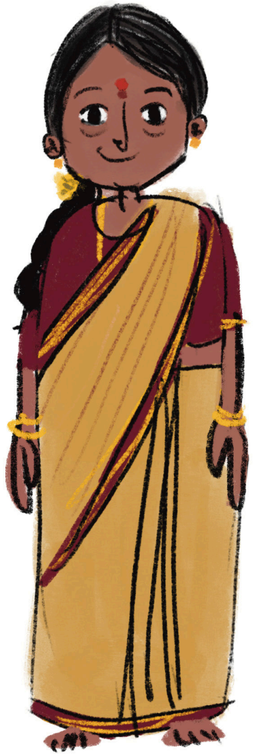
If Ammu were a word, she would be vibrant. I gave her the charcteristics of being so full of life and a curiosity and kidness to her. Ammu is a metaphor for every child's energy.

Ammamma was hard to choose though. There are so many grandmas and so little time! But the choice was between a greyhaired grandma and a young looking grandma-I think that's an oxymoron. I really liked the idea of a very Sudha Murthy looking grandma with a head full of white hair. But most grandmas dye their hair thesedays. So it was really a hard choice. I ultimately picked the grandma in green as she resembled Ammu. I really liked the idea of Ammu, her mom and her grandma looking alike. So I went along.

P.S. The third and fourth grandmas became the neighbours with some modifications.





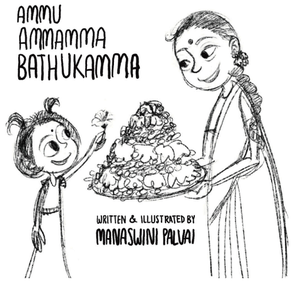


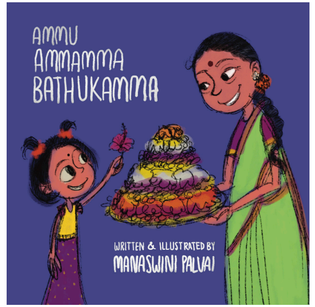


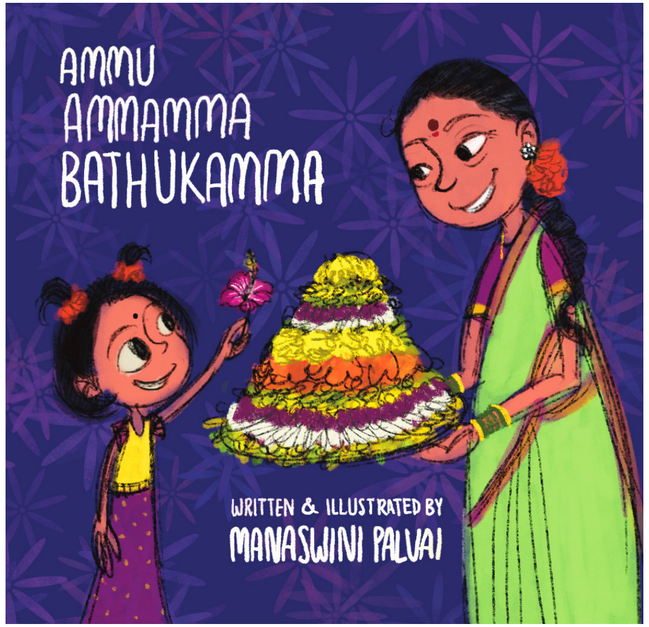
6.3 Character Design











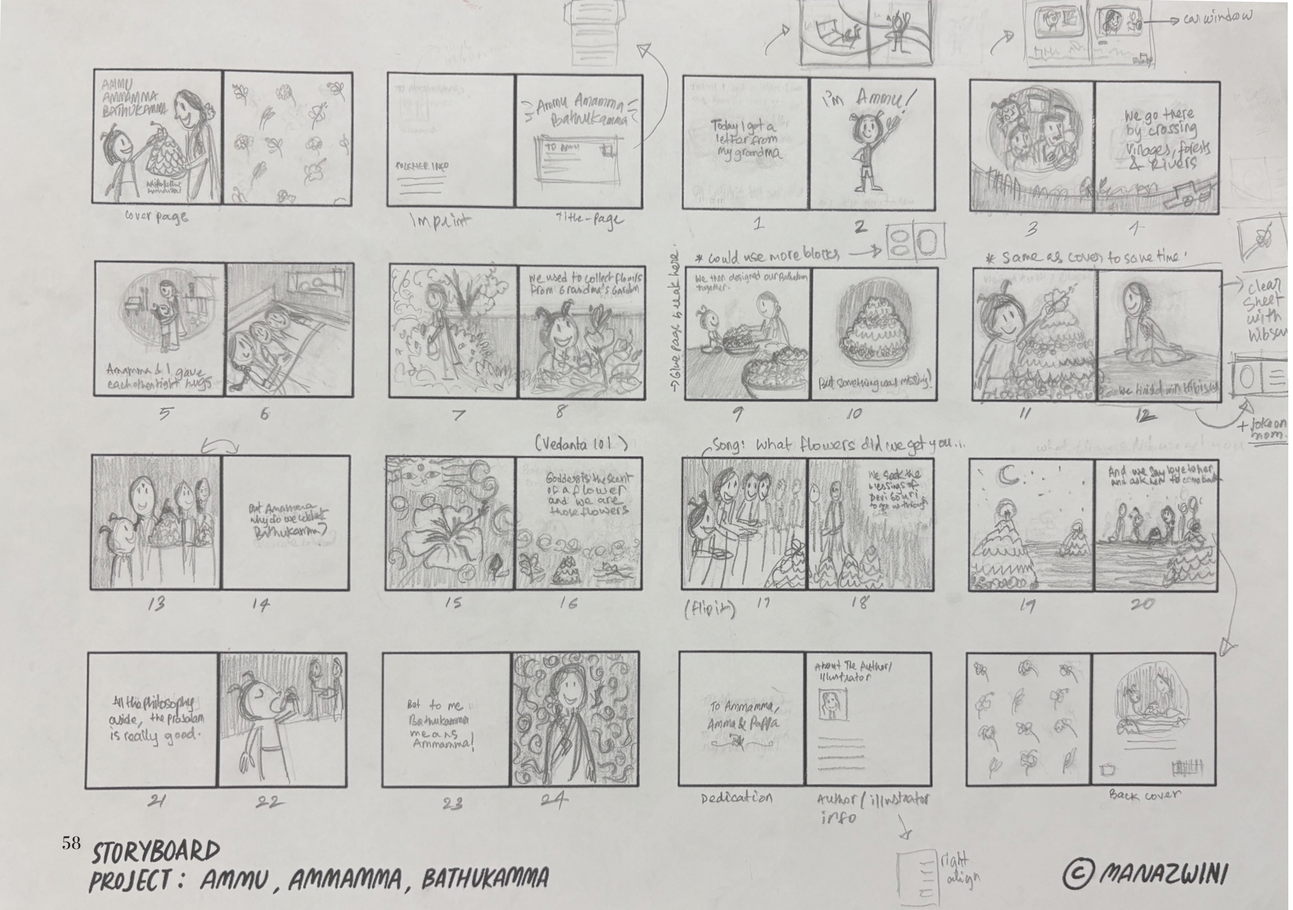


6.4 Cover Illustration

One of the first things I did after making my character designs was designing the cover. I had this idea about what if Ammamma's Bathukamma had something missing and ammu offered a flower to her, as it's topper-a red one. A hibiscus?-why not?

Also I drew these thumbnails before locking the detailed characters in. So the style difference is expected. But the thumbnails were also like ideas of Ammu and Ammamma and the final version of them is what is simplified and pragmatic.

The medium I chose to do this in is digital gouache. I really like the depth it adds to the illustration and also it adds a movement to even the solid colours.



58 STORYBOARD
PROJECT : AMMU , AMMAMMA , BATHUKAMMA







6.5 Storyboarding

Storyboarding was what I took the most time for . It was all about trying different thumbnails and seeing not just what fits the concept better but also what works as part of the whole. I had many ideas but I practiced not being too attached to them and prioritizing harmony over novelty.

6.5 Illustration process

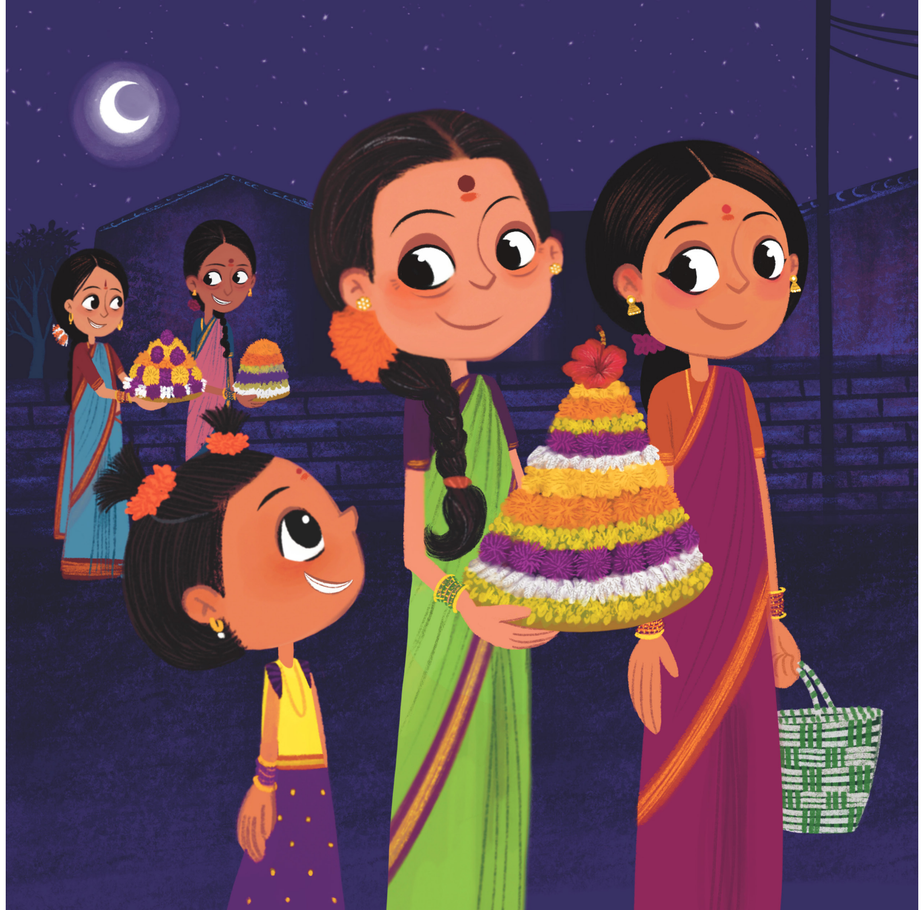
My Illustration process is simple, I make as many changes in the sketch as possible before I finilaze the look/position of everything. After I do it, I move forward with colouring it. I learnt no matter how much you plan, there would be changes that deviate from the original concept. I wanted a pop of colour behind this particular illustration. I decided it was to be green early on but the patterns were tricky. I first tried to put flowers everywhere but it was too busy. But I finally went with this swoop pattern over some flowers . It was visually pleasing and aswell as complimented the theme.







This illustration initially had a plain road and nothing else. Slowly, I added a big tree on one side and then a lake in the background. I kept working on it till it fel complete. And sometimes it's better not to stick to what you had originally planned.







It is a similar story with this illustration aswell. I initially planned for four people to be in the foreground but that meant taking away the spotlight from Ammu's family. So I decided Ammu's family would be in focus and shifted the rest behind.

6.6 Typesetting, Translating:

Typesetting the story in both English and Telugu was unexpectedly intricate. The two languages have different spatial rhythms–Telugu script is rounder, more ornate, and often expands horizontally, while English tends to flow more linearly and can be visually lighter. There are also more options in English interms of choosing a typeface. I wanted a bold text that would stand out even in brightly illustrated pages. I finally went with "Delight Snowy" in English and "Telugu Sangam" in Telugu(as shown in the next pages)

But translating had the opposite challenge. Since I had originally written in Telugu, the meanings of a lot sentences didn't make quite the sense in English. It demanded almost writing 2 sets of stories one that suited Telugu and English speakers respectively. Finally I had two complementary versions of the story suiting the users appropriately.




We sing "What flowers did we get you, Gauramma, what fruits did we get you, Gauramma".
We share our joys and sorrows with her and ask for her blessing.


ఈ ప్రయాణానికి ఒక ముగింపు చెప్పడానికి బతుకమ్మను
నిమజ్జనం చేస్తాము. కానీ జీవితం ఒక చక్రం లాంటిది
కదా! కాబట్టి ఆమె మన దగ్గరికి మళ్ళీ వస్తుంది

6.7 Test Printing

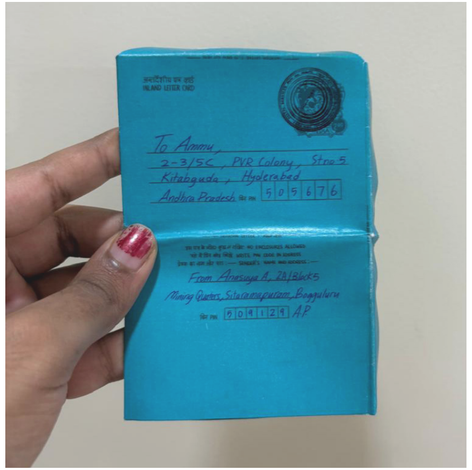


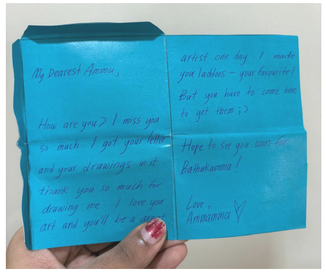


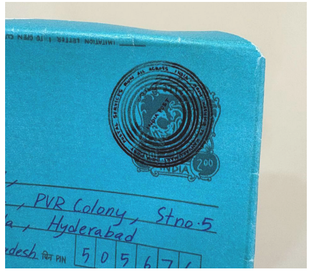


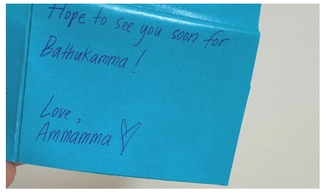


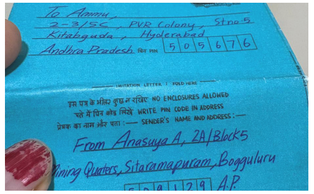
7. Interactive Elements











7.1 The Inland Letter

For my picture book project, I designed an inland letter as an interactive element—something readers could unfold, read, and emotionally engage with. I wanted to recreate the nostalgic, tactile joy of receiving a handwritten letter, a feeling many in today's digital generation haven't experienced. There's something deeply personal and intimate about a letter—it travels, it waits to be opened, and it holds emotion in every fold and smudge.

To create this, I first crafted a believable—but fictional—address, choosing names like "Kitabguda" and "Bogguluru." These don't exist on the map, but they echo the familiar linguistic rhythms of Telangana, borrowing "guda" (settlement) and "uru" (village) from Telugu place names. For the stamp and handwritten details, I experimented with various digital ink brushes to mimic the bleeding and irregularity of real ink on thin paper. The stamp was especially fun—I used dry-brush effects to give it a slightly faded, hand-pressed look, like something found in an old drawer. The entire process felt like a quiet collaboration between memory, material, and imagination.









7.2 Bathukamma Puzzle

A key interactive element in my picture book is a Bathukamma puzzle woven into the storyline. Ammu and Ammamma forget their smaller Bathukamma at home, and young readers are invited to help by assembling it. Each puzzle piece represents a floral layer arranged in ascending order, visually teaching children about the festival's structure. On the reverse side of each piece, I included Telugu riddles (podupu kathalu) that hint at the corresponding flower. This adds a playful, linguistic twist—encouraging kids to guess, explore, and even ask elders for help. The puzzle becomes a hands-on celebration of culture, storytelling, and shared discovery. laboration between memory, material, and imagination.

8. Challenges

8.1 Consistency in Visuals

As a multidisciplinary designer and storyteller, maintaining visual consistency across a project can become a tightrope walk, especially when balancing narrative nuance with design clarity. Achieving this harmony has no fool proof method. It requires constant self-checking—not just in colors and forms, but in emotional texture, so the visuals evolve alongside the story without jarring transitions.

8.2 Doing Everything Alone

Perhaps the deepest challenge is the solitude of doing it all yourself—writing, designing, editing, and reflecting. While this autonomy gives you creative freedom, it can also lead to fatigue, second-guessing, and a slower pace. There's no one to pass the baton to when you're creatively stuck, and no fresh pair of eyes to spot what you might be missing. Yet, this challenge also becomes a path to self-trust. Each decision, though solitary, becomes an act of alignment—between your vision, your craft, and your values. It's hard, yes, but deeply rewarding when you look back and realize that what you've built is fully, undeniably yours.

9. Reflections

9.1 My Process, it's limitations and evolution

My creative process has always been spotaneous, intuitive and emotion based. For me thought always came later. While this may be benificial in the iterative process, it needs to be complemented with structure. Through my academic journey I have learnt to balance both these sides, especially when doing a project of this scale. Slowly I have warmed up to structures, planning and following a process. But I still keep the door open for a unexpected knock of spontanity.

9.2 Final Thoughts

Doing this project has been everything. While it was exciting in the start, it sometimes became mundame, sometimes overwhelming, sometimes just the right challenge and sometimes a mammoth task. I feel proud of my academic journey so far, and I take it as a win just to be able to finish this project. I am in awe that I finished a dream project. It is a little bittersweet to think that this brings me to end of my academic journey. I learnt a lot skillwise and otherwise in these four years. I now look forward to keep learning from more journeys and grow through them and become a better person who happens to design art.

thanks for reading!



-To the five year olds in all of us