

November Session Riyaz

21 November 2017

The first day of the session started with students interacting with the mentors on their ongoing work. There were few students in attendance owing to health concerns and exams of some. And so the nine students who were gathered, worked through the day and had personal rounds of interactions with the mentors on their work.

22 November 2017

Chandramohan began the day with a slide show presentation of an illustrated book for children (now out of print) by well known senior Marathi artist Padma Sahastrabudhe. After telling the students how he deeply admires the work of the prolific artist, he explained why he had chosen to show this particular book to the students. This book was an example of a time when there weren't the best options for printing. The only available options were to do block printing (two color block printing process was advised by publishers) or letterpress printing.

With the restrictions and unavailability of an offset printing process, the artist chose to experiment with typography (using daguerreotype). The book was published in a postcard size and the artist was also careful of working with design (even as Devidas Bahul a photographer and designer did the layout of the book) and how the bleed was to be left. The designing of these books were made in keeping with the limited means and rules of the printing process. He wanted the students to look at the book with that perspective as well for a book being printed in the 1970s.

Chandramohan highlighted the formal relationship of the elements of the illustrations in the following points –

1. The illustrations in the book were done with brush and ink. The medium gave them a natural simplicity.
2. He emphasized that the students look at the illustrations and the layout and see the relationship emerging between the text and images.
3. In many spreads he spoke of the problems that were made because of the specific limitations of the process of printing.
4. Two blocks were made, one for the text and the second for the image and the layout was done during the process of printing.
5. Dileep also explained in detail the process of printing using zinc plates in letterpress to Vrushali who was very interested in knowing more about the process.
6. Sagar was intrigued with how the faults (like white marks or spots) in printing those days are recreated today through the drawing tools in Photoshop

After the presentation, students went back to making their work for the rest of the day. Like always they discussed the problems they were facing in their respective projects with the mentors. The mentors through the means of one to one conversations and detailed demonstrations gave them their individual feedbacks.

In the evening, students gathered for viewing a presentation of photographs as part of the Evening Show. In this, Anantjeet started with presenting photos from her Instagram handle which focuses on

architectures of houses in the different cities that she travels to. These included images of fascinating houses documented in Pune, Mysore, Bangalore, and of course Hoshangabad. She also had captions which shed a light on her imagination with regards to the architecture that she was photographing. All photos were taken from her mobile camera and so the editing was also done using limited softwares available on the phone. The show of the photographs as well as her storytelling through them was appreciated.

Amrita also showcased a number of images in the evening show, where all kinds of images found a place. These included images of landscape to close up shots as well as sunsets against monuments. Her skill in composing the photographs and the editing used on her photographs was appreciated by the mentors and the students alike. Most of the images that she had taken were in Bhopal (from where she hails) or Hoshangabad. Some photos from her recent trip to Panchmarhi were also included in this slide show.

23 November 2017

Dileep started the day by addressing the class with some important announcements.

1. The first announcement was with regards to how the session in December was to be the final session for the group to meet in Hoshangabad. This signaled an end of the term and meant that the days were numbered for their final submissions.
2. The second announcement was that the students were expected to travel to Mandu in January. The session in Mandu in the last week of January would mean that the students were to travel to Indore. (the dates were agreed to after a discussion amongst the group).
3. The students were also expected to visit the World Book Fair in January in Delhi (between 6th to 9th). The students were expected to visit for the purpose of viewing and visiting the different stalls as an experience.

After the announcements, the students were given a presentation by Dileep.

He started the presentation on how to imagine to create especially when making works of art for children. This has been a question for the illustrators repeatedly during the sessions and has been addressed by Sushil also very poignantly. Dileep said that as adults we straightjacket and stereotype what it means to be a kid. As a result, when making an illustration, we often contemplate what a kid might find appealing in an illustration. This he said was a problem we would often encounter if we ourselves weren't in touch with our inner childlikeness. He urged the students to think back to their own childhoods and how did they think or perceive the world as a child? Even in a class full of twenty students if they all were to become children, there would be twenty different kinds of children.

He then spoke on the metaphors associated with river and his own life experiences with river as a muse in several instances -

1. He started with his own childhood and how there was not many gadgets in his own household while he was growing up. As an eight-year-old, radio was one of the first gadgets that came to his home. He had graphic memories of his childhood. For example, while learning English language for the first time a word grabbed his attention, vis-a-vis, 'pollution'. As a child he gathered meaning about words through images. He wanted to understand what pollution meant. He made a food bowl of green peas with a slice of butter. The brand of butter available in those days (Polson) when melting on the surface of green peas would mean Pollution is what he comprehended. As he took this bowl of food to his father to explain the meaning of the word. His father encouraged him to work on this meaning making further. The second

word that he had heard in connection with the word pollution was 'Environment'. And so he did an image making with this as well.

2. He recounted how as a child he had acquired a pair of white canvas shoes after requesting his parents repeatedly. But when another child pushed him his feet slipped onto the banks of a river (polluted to the point of being black), and he was distraught to see his white shoes ruined. In an attempt to humor him, his father said that he will scold the river. Looking back at the incident, Dileep said his father's words on addressing the water body as a river even though at that point it was almost a drain (due to the level of pollution in it) deeply impacted his own relationship to river. He respected it as if it were his mother because of his father's carefully chosen words.

3. The rivers in the cities were rarely in a clean state, which makes it difficult to imagine what a river really could be. His father played a game with him in which they spread out a blue *saree* (belonging to his mother) on the floor and across the room to evoke the meaning and form of a river.

4. He was fascinated with the blue lines on the globe running across different countries. He associated these immediately with his mother and so the river always evoked a relationship to his mother.

5. He spoke about the different rivers running across the country. Starting with *Shipra* river which he encountered first, he was overcome with awe to see the contrast with *Ganga* river in terms of their temperament. For while *Shipra* was a serene river, *Ganga* in monsoon was a treacherous river.

6. He spoke of one of his teachers in school who told him how the world came to being and that story fascinated him. The teacher told him that it rained for seven million years continuously for the world to be created.

7. The same teacher also asked the students where water would be available except for on earth. The next planet was the 9 billion km away perhaps on Neptune.

8. The drinking water on the planet is so limited that he started thinking about the value of water. When he was growing up, there wasn't a price on the water which was being supplied to homes. Later, water became a commodity and was supplied at a rate and even later mineral water bottles started to become a commodity.

9. Dileep spoke of the systems through which water is sanitized and also the way different cities (like *Hugli* in Kolkata or *Thames* in London) have put into place a model through which they clean the water.

After the presentation, students resumed their pending work and continued doing that for the rest of the day.

24 November 2017

Dileep started the day with a discussion of how the students had been working always first by reading the text and then responding to the same with illustrations. This remains the commonly used method in the process of illustration. He urged that the illustrator should be able to have questions about the texts that they were illustrating. Within the frame of the sessions in *Riyaaz*, there was a specific assignment of writing and illustrating a story as a book. This proved to be a start to thinking about how to frame a text or a story, but since it was the first attempt by most of the students, the stories had been limited in

exploring the full capabilities of the students. He encouraged the students to write more stories and develop a deeper understanding of written text. He also read out a text that he had written to the students. This text was written as an accompaniment to photographs to be published in a magazine.

After he read out the story, Dileep made an announcement to the students about the dates of their exhibition in March. They said that for this exhibition, the students will be expected to visit Bhopal in March and also that they needed to make a selection of their classroom assignments done so far to be exhibited in this exhibition. Sagar enquired if it was possible that the students create artworks to be exhibited and produce work with the intention to be exhibited. Dileep said that this was possible only if the students were going to work in their spare weeks of the month (outside of the session). The students would also have a stall in the World Book Fair for which they needed to make their decision on the works to be exhibited.

After this, the students started their work for the day and met the mentors for a round of discussions. In the evening they gathered for the 'Evening show' of photographs by Shubhangi, Shailesh and Debarati. But first they were shown two videos that Chandramohan had taken on the Sethani Ghat. Debarati had made a presentation to narrate a story through photographs. She had imagined the story with photos of the students responding in a conversation series. She narrated the humorous presentation and students enjoyed her storytelling.

When Shubhangi showed her works, she detailed how she was showing some photographs from her recent trip to Kochi with some from Hoshangabad as well. She took some pictures of architecture in Kochi which had Portuguese and Dutch influences. She also took a lot of pictures of trees in Kochi, therefore these and some portraits were also included in the series during the slideshow. Shailesh spoke how he was showing pictures that he had taken, and then edited and manipulated in order to have them tell a story. These included videos as well. For instance, he edited pictures of people around him, like his friends and family to express his own view of what they had proximity or affinity with. He had used a lot of drawing onto the pictures through Photoshop.

Dileep also showed a series of photographs to the students as part of the evening show. These mainly consisted of photographs he had taken in Manchester and included all kinds of pictures of indoor and outdoor situations. He narrated the tale of his friend's domesticated cat, Chloe through many pictures. There were portraits and stories in many pictures on the street as well.

25 November 2017

The group was to visit the Salkandpur temple in the evening, and so the day began with Dileep asking them what they knew about the place. He asked the students to always read up on the place that they were about to visit for the purpose of understanding or engaging with the place more deeply. The group listened to his accounts of encountering a tiger (once in Kanha National Park with a photographer and in his own city where a tiger had come in) and how that really is a beautiful and also terrorizing emotion. He encouraged the students to be on the look out for a tiger in their visit to the temple where the tiger was spotted many times. After the light hearted conversation, the students all went on to work on their pending assignments. In the evening the group visited the temple and took many pictures on the journey and the site.

Dileep reminded the students that they still needed to finish their work on their storybooks and this would probably be one of the last working days of the session as they were going to have a guest lecture the

next day and the day after would be the final day of the session.

26 November 2017

The class gathered for a guest lecture by journalist and writer Sopan Joshi. The students introduced themselves to the Sopan. When Sopan started the presentation with a small anecdote (a folk poem in *Bundeli* that his grandmother used to tell him) which he explained was something he would like to read out before the presentation itself.

In this presentation he told the students about his journey and process and how he views storytelling and language in his own life -

1. He started with how he credits his grandmother with enjoying, in essence, the story and that the whole point of language is if it can be enjoyed through stories. He said that before language comes the sound/music. And that before the written word comes the image.

2. Since the students are young and working with images, he said that they should be prepared to work and collaborate with others. Many times, people who don't understand or engage with visual art would be at the helm of decisions that can impact the artists. They would be engaged with language and communicating with words and that their imagination would be in one line. Whereas to be an artist means to simply not follow a rule/line.

3. As a reporter he doesn't work with imagination, he works with reportage of elements that he finds interesting. In the beginning he was covering crime stories, and used to be posted in Maharashtra where policemen upon discovering his name (Sopan) would start to converse with him in Marathi. Since this was a common name in Maharashtra, he was imagined to be hailing from there. This made it clear to him that language doesn't necessarily operate through meaning, but through the emotion it evokes.

4. Within six months he decided to be a sub editor and that reporting was not his cup of tea. In this phase he used to edit the written material of other reporters, which proved to be a *cleaning* exercise as most reporters would write too badly. To this effect, he decided to conduct a workshop on writing, but found out that it made no direct change to anyone's writing. And so he repeated what he had heard somewhere else about acting and which was true for writing as well, 'You can learn it, but can't teach it'.

5. Stephen Jay Gould said that humans are primates who tell stories, and this is what characterizes humans. The will to communicate or tell stories is something innate. How is it that we all generally can't write that well then? It is by learning and the systems of schooling that creates a problem and blocks the innate ways of communicating. Failure is discouraged in these systems and takes away the fun or imagination to fuel unique ways of communication.

6. There have been two poets, Kabirdas and Tulsidas who have had a deep impact on the poetry of India through centuries. Kabirdas who was illiterate, created words and meaningful poetry through observing life around him, whereas Tulsidas worked with crystallizing complex stories of Ramayana for a larger public through poetry.

7. To tell a story, we need to retain an innate urge to communicate and that is only possible if we don't view the systems of schooling as superior to ourselves. In this regard, he gave certain examples - that of a book, Divaswapna (that was given to him by Vishnu Chinchalker when he was 10 years old) and

a Pakistani poet, Ibn e Insha's book 'Urdu ki Akhri Kitaab'. These gave him an understanding of how sometimes education can be a stifling, whereas learning remains wonderful.

8. He gave them an example of the opening lines of two famous novels. The first novel, *Moby Dick* written by south American author Herman Melville, opens with just three words, "Call me Ishmael". The second, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, written by Gabriel Garcia Marquez reads as "Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice". This he said is the wonder of telling a story in two distinct yet impactful ways.

9. He spoke of the origins of the two languages Hindi and English and how they have a use for the tense, in a very different way. Therefore, we would express the same thing in two extremely different ways in Hindi and English. A story is made interesting by having a tension between a protagonist and an antagonist, the known and the unknown.

In the evening, he gave a public lecture on his book, 'Jal Thal Mal' published by Gandhi Peace Foundation, to a group of audience. He told how he came upon the idea of the book starting from a definitive incident on one of his travels in Ladakh. He also narrated a brief summary of the chapters in the book by going over some of the key ideas that they put forward. Students continued to work on their pending assignments during the rest of the day.

27 November 2017

The last day's final session began with Sopan's presentation on the two books that he had authored. Dileep introduced the group to how there is a book in process with comic strips that Sopan is writing and is being illustrated by an artist.

Sopan spoke about the role of art and authorship in this presentation especially with regards to a book that he was now making in the following key points -

1. Editing he said is a very important part of journalism and that is always done best when the photograph/artwork is not pushed away as less important to writing in a newspaper. That is possible only if photojournalists and artists are given an equal voice.

2. While getting an artist to illustrate his first book 'Jal Thal Mal', he decided that he didn't want to go for an illustrator who could draw 'pretty pictures' but not care to think about the text and its requirements. Finding an illustrator was difficult, but the ideal candidate was presented in Somesh. He was not only a good draughtsman but also understood language very well.

3. For an upcoming project on Mahatma Gandhi, he approached the same artist again and spoke how he and the illustrator make decisions on the planning of the book together. The book was for the age group of 9 to 12 year olds. There was to be a book for younger readers as well, which they decided to treat in a different manner. For this book, the treatment of the images and the text was going to be remarkably distinct from the first book.

4. Thus, the form of comic was taken to be a suitable medium. With the comic running on one side of the book, the second side would be dedicated to a story inspired from the alphabets in Hindi. He wanted to keep the story and the language simple and to make the work as appealing as well to an audience of a

child from Bihar. Therefore, the artist had to take care of these details.

5. There were some spreads which were still to be filled in. During the writing process, he takes care of the fact that what he is writing is for the illustrator and not for the children. Therefore, he takes his view and vice versa. This flexibility is vital to have a collaboration intact and comes from a faith in the collaborator.

6. There were many times that the text was written and rewritten. These revisions were done by asking and speaking with the friends and collaborators and including their suggestions. He said that making illustrations is a non linear process in comparison to writing which seems like a linear process. Hence, he tried to keep in mind that the reading too is a non linear process and so what he makes should create both a linearity and a non linearity.

After this discussion, Dileep initiated a feedback discussion with the students and asked them to speak about their final suggestions on the last session. He asked them to also put a final date on the submission of their books on which the students had already worked on since August. Anantjeet said that she needed help in her text for the book, and Dileep told her that it would not be possible to focus a whole session on helping with text since they had been working on writing and understanding the text for a long time during the previous sessions. He also reminded the students to get all of their works in December for their exhibition in January in the book fair. Answering Debarti's query, he also confirmed that they needed to bring only images/visuals for the exhibition forward. On this note, Dileep asked them to finish their work or even make new work depending on the students' discretion for the purpose of this exhibition. This would make their work visible to several publishers in the book fair and also showcase what they have done during the duration of the course. After the discussion students went back to their pending assignments and also wrapped up their desks. With that the second last session of the course came to an end.