

4* N OF THE EQUATOR

Proposal for an animation film



Prashant Miranda
www.prashant.blogspot.com
2008

Introduction

I have spent most of my life living in India. It is during my periodic visits back to India in the last eight years of my life in Canada, that my deep seated roots have surfaced once again. Between 1994 and 1999, I studied animation film design at the National Institute of design in Ahmedabad, India. There, I was introduced to a lot of NFB films, which brings me to the reason why I would like to propose my idea for an animation film with you.

I love trees, they have occurred in my dreams, they give me solace when my mind is muddled, I did my homework as a kid on trees, my best naps happen under them, and ofcourse I have spent many a wonderful moment with them in the old growth forests of Temagami, in Algonquin, or camping alone in Moosonee.

Last year, while I spent the winter in Varanasi, India, I came across what seemed like the trunk of a single old tree, which housed two kinds of leaves. I then realized that they were the Neem and Pipal tree entwined as one. The Neem tree and the Pipal tree are very sacred trees in India, they are worshipped, revered and have medicinal properties used in traditional healing systems. From time immemorial there is a ritual of marrying these two trees.....Pipal a form of Lord Vishnu (The Preserver), and Neem, the aspect of Goddess Laxmi (The goddess of abundance/prosperity). This has intrigued me to tell their story, as 'People' trees. Two inherently wild people, doing their own thing, meet, entwine and grow as one.

My trip to Sri Lanka, further enhanced the story.....a wonderful tropically rich island 4* N of the equator, where every full moon was a national holiday! This space triggered off my creative juices to form the subject of this film.

In our day and age, when ancient trees are being cut down to make toilet paper, I think it relevant to shed some light on these beautiful beings who silently witness the changes going on in our planet.



The Story

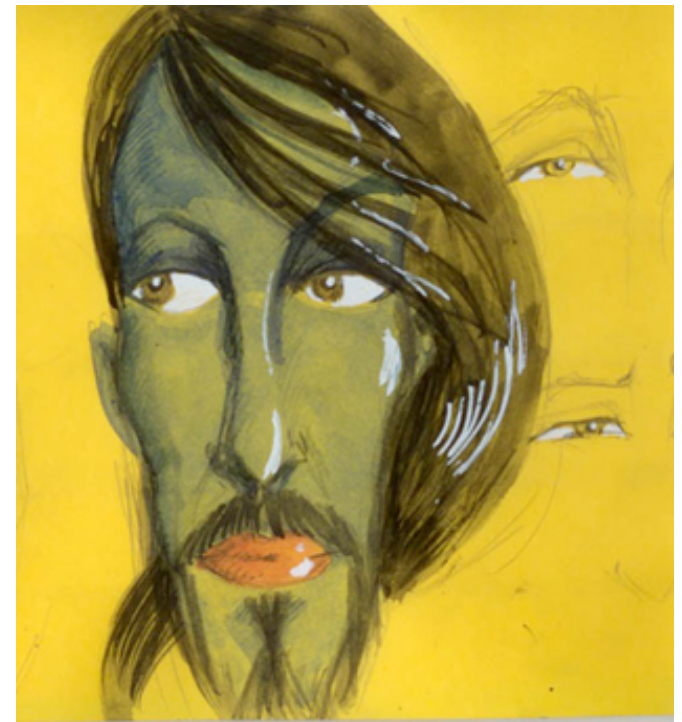
4* N of the Equator

This is a story of two trees, characterised as people, pursuing their individual lives, who meet, entwine and grow as one.

The realm which I talk about is a magical realm. An island of utmost grace, with colours so lush and vibrant, and so intrinsically connected with the earth that life shoots out from the soil with no extraneous activity. Flowers fall from the sky gently swaying while they emit the sweetest fragrance and triggers the subtle sensibilities of tropical life. The ocean so rich with the wonders of nature, surrounds this island and connects the land with all the waters of the world. To breathe this air, to feel it's goodness, is to breathe life itself which nourishes my inert instincts and awakens the dormant recesses of my mind.

He was wild, let loose on the glimmering hot sands of wide empty beaches. He swam with the waves, succumbing to the eternal force of deep waters. He ran through thick jungles whose moisture seeped within his pores and intermingled with the sweat that came out of them. He grabbed onto trees and hugged them, and let the textured bark touch every fold of his body. He was a lunatic. He embraced the moon with passionate might and let her juices trickle down his insides to quench his thirst with the nectar of the gods. He slept on bare rocks, exploring their crevasses and the inhabitants that lived within them, absorbing the heat on which he lay, till it throbbed in his veins and danced a silent dance of hidden ecstasy.

He listened to the slow unfurling of moonflowers and translated their secrets into plaintive songs. He basked under the full moon on tranquil shores and let the silica that clung to his skin gleam and sparkle as he rose to celebrate the pinnacle of a circle deemed complete. Such awakenings which altered the consciousness of his being atuned him to the cosmic hum and helped him understand the intricacies of the mysteries of a life unknown.



She was a beauty, that woman four-degrees north of the equator. Stunning in her simplicity, gorgeously garbed in greens. Leaves were her best friends, they clung to her, ever ready to aid her in her endeavours. She laughed a cosmic laugh, glorious in it's eccentricity, and sublime as a church bell from afar. She washed under thundering waterfalls, letting their powerful water droplets pound her back and cleanse her daily acquisitions from every strand of her hair. Having let the jasmine flowers soak overnight under a radiant moon, she drank the precious brew at the break of dawn. It was under these circumstances that she succumbed to the dew drops that hung ever so delicately from the leaves that swooped from her earlobes which caught a beam of sunlight and transformed it into the rainbow of her eyes.

If one has to imagine this magical place elsewhere, and it's inhabitants. I should have to describe to you in detail the points of wonder that adds mystery to daily life. The shades of green that enveloped one square inch of space had so mystified each of our characters that the word 'green' itself had taken on new connotations. Colours had sounds, sounds had tastes, and they all emitted a feeling of utter grace that sensations intermingled with one another and did a jig of cosmic fantasy.

It was in this simple fashion that our characters of this strange plot, first communicated with each other. They sent out signals of emotions in colour, transcending time and space, out into the universe, enveloping the senses causing one to be immersed in the substance of bliss. The slow gradient of colours, the subtle transference of forms, the natural changes of mood, instilled a quality of light that they initially could not fathom.



The Sacred love of Neem and Pipal:

If you were wondering about the sacred union of Neem and Pipal, it originated deep in a gloriously lush forest in that land 4°N of the equator. Upstream, on a plateau of rocks with a gushing waterfall in close proximity, under a dazzling full moon – was when they first met. Basking there unaware of each other in the concave recesses of eroded stone that connected in a labyrinthian cave like maze, they gazed at the stars and proclaimed their beauty. But having surfaced from under those dark tombs, drawn by the pull of the moon, they caught a glimpse of each other, left eye to left eye. It didn't alarm them, they were perfectly comfortable in each other's presence as they stood there under a cosmic moon, entranced by the endless lunar reflections in the watery pools of their eyes. It was here that they exchanged moon rings and entered the blissful state of cosmic union.



An Interesting News Article

Wednesday August 08, 2007

COIMBATORE: As part of their efforts to protect forests and to maintain World Peace, the residents of a village near Sirumuga in the district performed a wedding between 'Neem' and 'Pipal' trees.

The marriage was solemnised by the priest of Balamuniyappa temple in Elakampalayam, amidst chanting of hymns and Nadaswaram recital, similar to a typical south Indian marriage.

The priest tied the nuptial knot on the Neem tree on behalf of the 'bridegroom' Pipal.

Both the trees were adorned with flowers. Neem tree was given a bridal look by draping a yellow silk saree over it while pipal was covered with a golden-silk saree, according to the villagers, who attended the 'marriage function',.

The function was organised as part of the 21st anniversary celebrations of the temple.

After the marriage, around 100 villagers who had assembled there, blessed the 'couple' by throwing the 'sacred rice' mixed with vermilion and sandal, on them, the villagers said.

The marriage was part of the efforts to convey the message of maintaining World Peace, protecting forest cover and keeping the environment pollution-free, they claimed.



Treatment

I would like to explore the characterization of two trees, as two distinct, individual people, and tell their story in a poetic lyrical manner.

Since trees have been depicted in various art forms in India, personified in temple sculptures, and brought to life in miniature paintings, it would be interesting to further my study into those styles.

Magical realism is a major part of the story, and it would be worthwhile to explore sound and music, and bring myself as the storyteller as part of communicating the ideas in this film.

I am naturally inclined to watercolours and have animated several films in the past, where I have drawn and coloured every frame. Pushing the boundaries within the context of the single frame and integrating the moving image could be explored.

Here are some studies and sketches from my sketchbooks while the idea for the film was in it's conception.



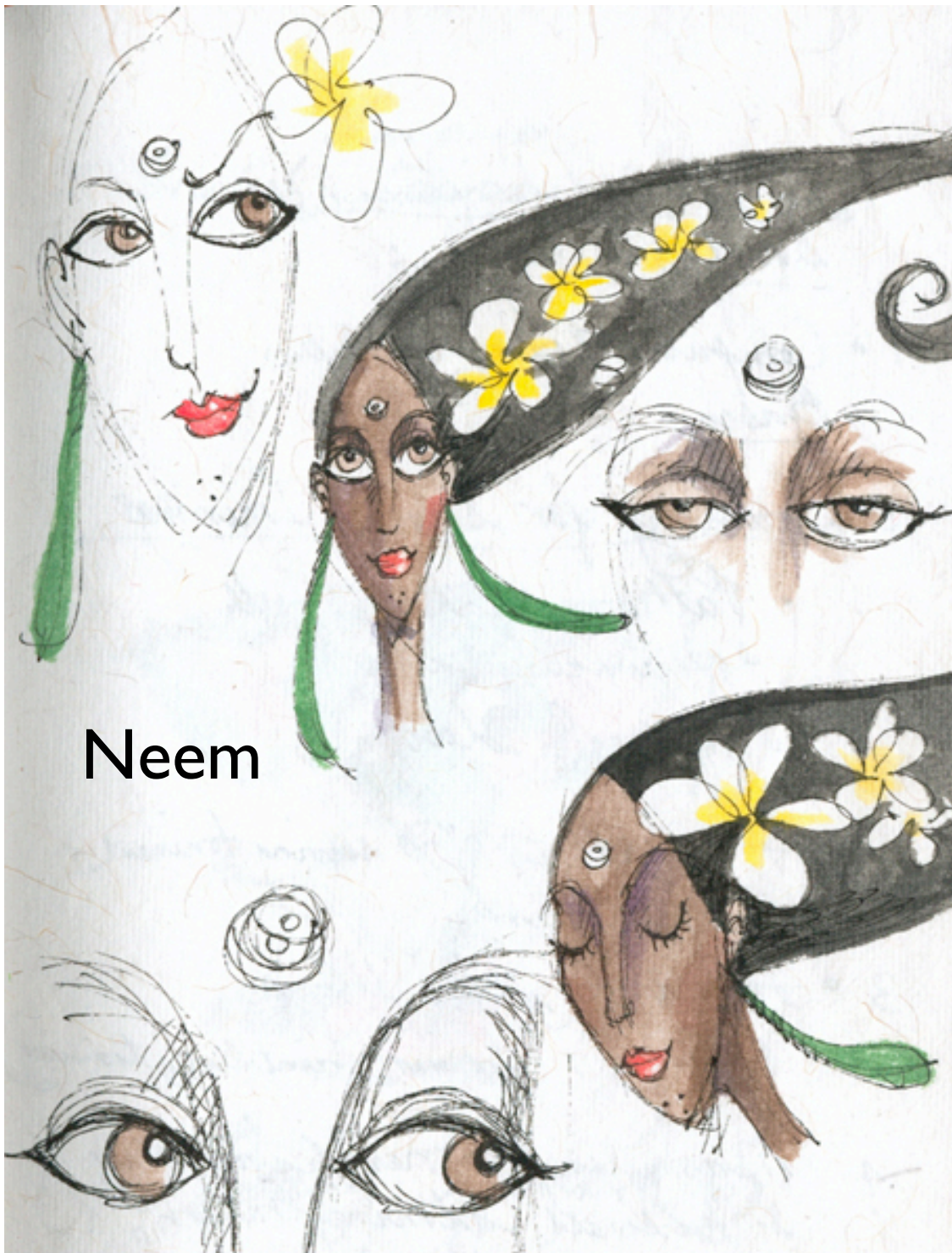


Pipal





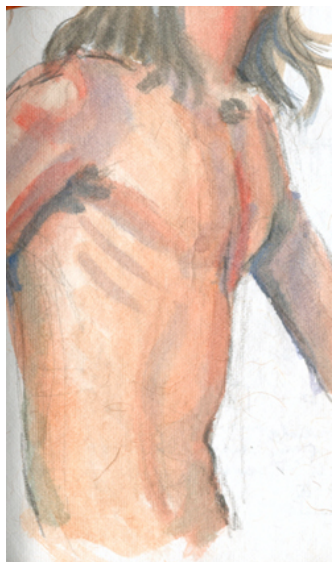
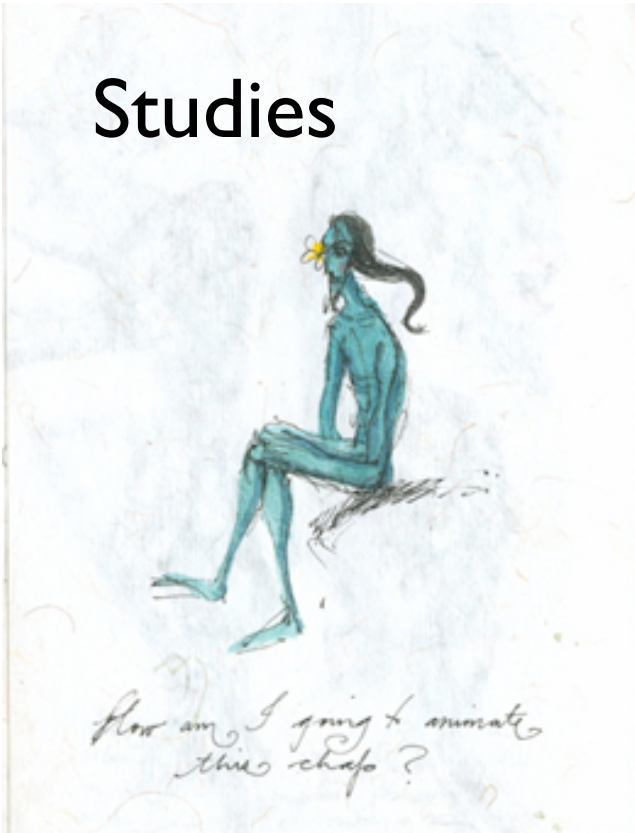
Pipal expressions



Neem



Studies



What does he do on this island? What thoughts cross his mind? The medical meeting with her. The moon meeting.



The union



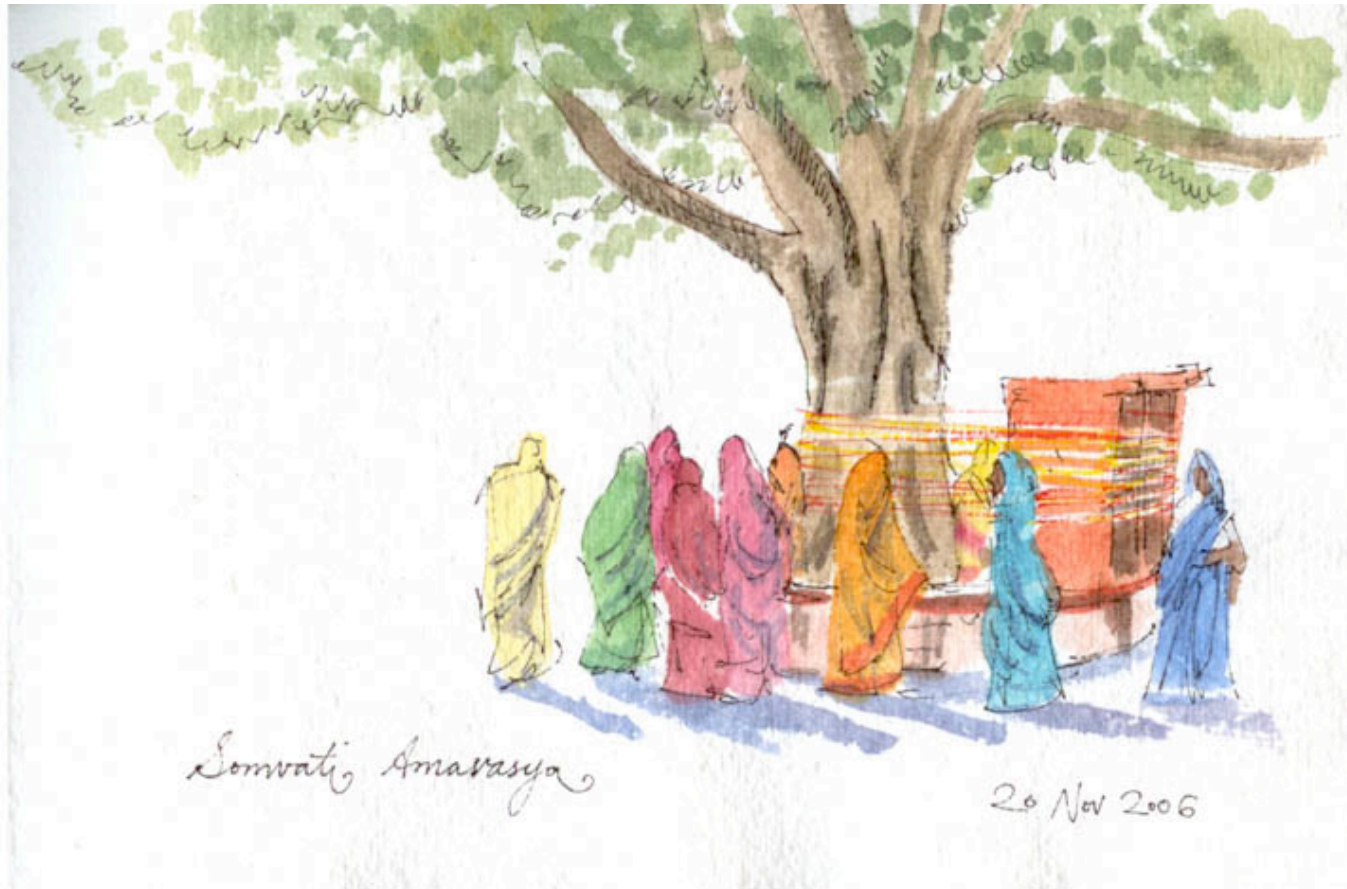
Audience

This film could be shared with children and adults alike. The idea is to reinterpret and retell myths associated with nature, inspired by world cultures and communicate them to global urban audiences, otherwise disconnected from nature.

It could be shown to communities that work with nature and conservation issues. It is a love story that has a universal theme that can appeal to the widest possible audience.



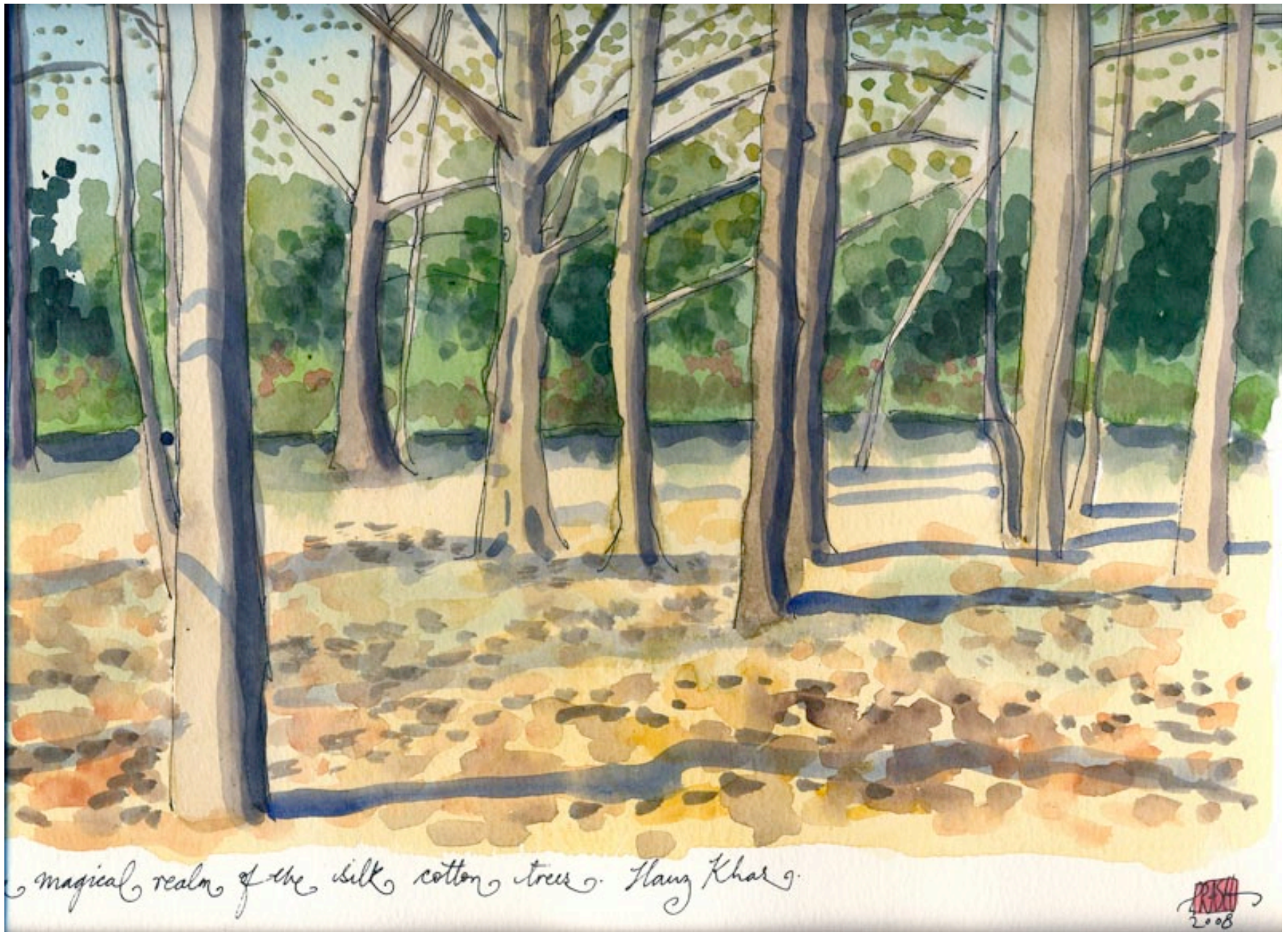
Trees from my sketchbooks




A pipal tree being worshipped on a new moon day.



My favourite Pipal tree at Assi ghat, Varanasi



magical realm of the silk cotton trees. Hang Khar.


2008

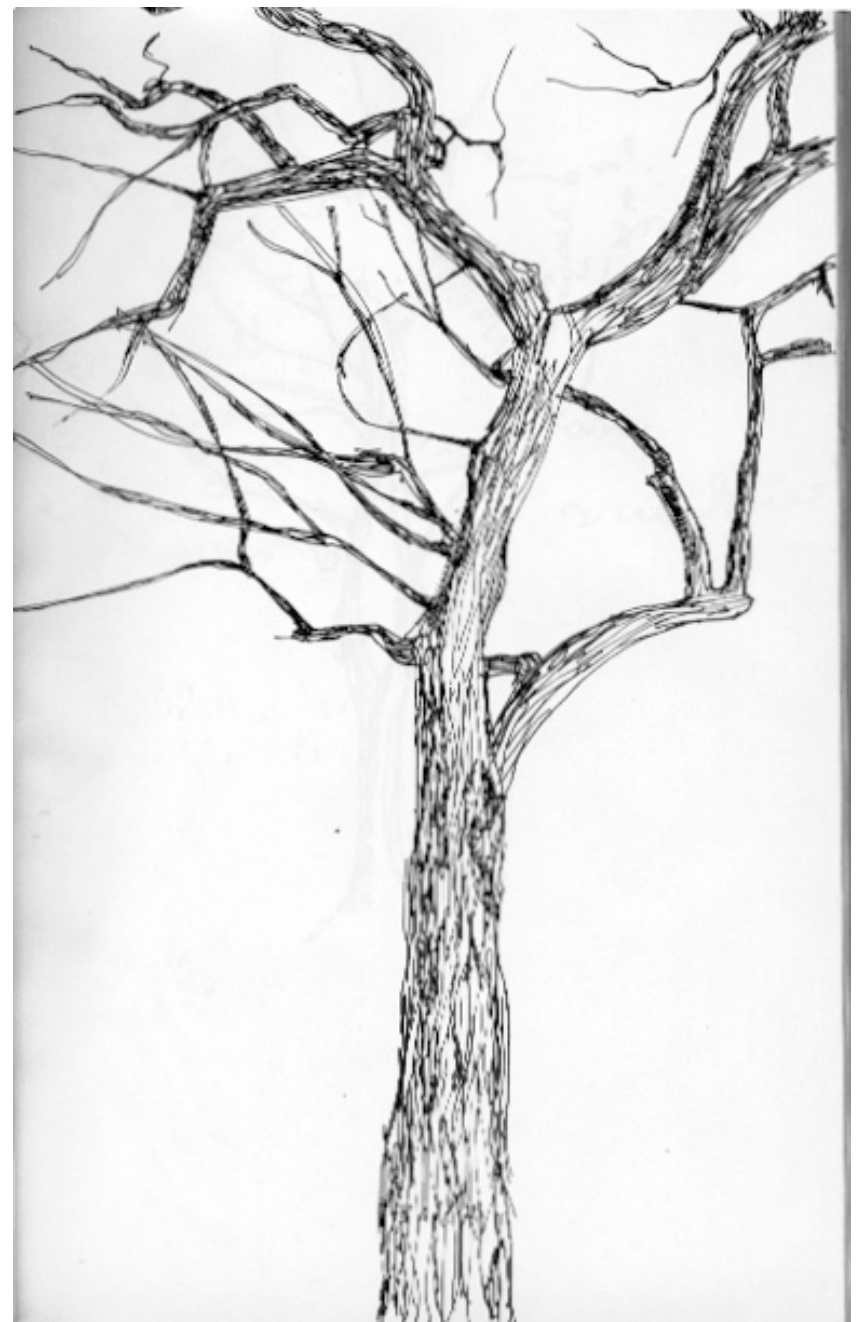


The mighty Pipal tree next to the Sri Dharmapuriwarar temple, Madam Nilkan.





From my show at 401, Richmond, August 2007



Trees in Toronto

Professional Experience in Animation

Detailed CV attached to email.

Currently developing an animated series for Cartoon Network Asia, called "The Guide to the Only Planet".

As an animation film designer at Cuppa coffee animation inc. Toronto:
(1999-2004)

- Designed and developed a 26 episode Stop motion animation TV series for children called "Henry's world". Currently on air on the family channel. Clients Alliance Atlantis kids, TV Loonland, Family channel.
Nominated for a Genie award.
- Designed and developed a preschool series for TV called "Ted's Bed". Still in development. Designed the website for it. Check out www.tedsbed.com
- Animated the trailer for "Planet in Focus", the Toronto International Environmental film festival for the years 2003 and 2004.
The 2003 festival trailer, won a BDA gold at the Broadcast design awards in New York.
- Production designer and art director for two animated shorts, for Sesame St. Stories, called "Stand tall Molly lou melon" and "The great ball game".
- Character designer for an animated episode of CBC's "newsroom"
- Designed and developed a pre school series for Disney called "Tinker tots". Clients the Disney channel.
- Background artist for a pilot episode for the Cartoon Network, called "Clever Trevor".
- Creative director for a CD Rom for pre school children. Clients Golden Books NY.



Prashant Miranda

www.prashant.blogspot.com

www.tedsbed.com

