Tatya - Design and Development Process

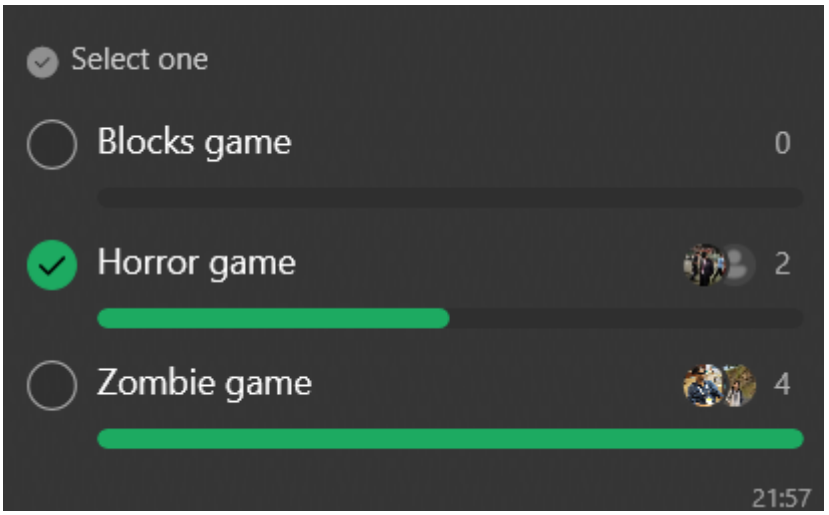
Brief:

This document outlines the complete design process I followed while creating *Tatya*.

Phase 1: Initial Pitch

Tatya began as a semester-long college project. Teams were formed by combining Game Development students with Game Design and Art students. I came from the Design side, so my team consisted of five developers, one artist, and myself as the game designer. (The fifth developer joined a little later.)

Once the teams were decided, we moved into the ideation phase. As a group, we agreed that each member would think of one game idea and present it during a meeting the next evening. When the meeting began, everyone started sharing their concepts. Most of them were typical choices—shooters, tower defense games, zombie shooters—basically the common ideas everyone gravitates toward.



I wanted to do something different, so I presented a unique concept:

The player is trapped in a room with Tatya. A conveyor belt constantly spawns item parts. Tatya gives riddles, and the player must figure out the correct item, combine its pieces, and hand it to him. Giving the wrong item results in death; giving all correct items leads to escape.

I pitched this simple idea intentionally. Since I had never worked with this team before, I wanted to ensure the scope remained manageable and achievable within the semester timeline, while still allowing us to deliver a polished final product.

Some teammates liked the concept; others were unsure. I tried to convince them because I knew most teams would end up making similar shooter-style games, whereas this idea would stand out as something fresh.

The next day, we presented both concepts to our faculty. Sir appreciated my idea but suggested increasing the scope since the original version was too short. After understanding the team's capabilities better, I expanded the concept into a puzzle-horror experience:
We play as Tatya's old friend. Tatya is trapped by a tantrik, and the player must solve riddles, explore the motel, find hidden items, complete puzzles, and ultimately free Tatya.

Even after this revision, some teammates were hesitant. But I persisted, explained the potential, and eventually convinced them that this could turn into a strong, memorable game.

Initial Documents :

Initial Concept GDD

Tatya GDD01

PHASE 2: DESIGN

Before moving into production, I created a detailed Game Design Document (GDD) for ***Tatya***, covering all essential elements needed for development. This included the core mechanics, progression structure, puzzle concepts, and detailed explanations of each gameplay system.

I designed multiple puzzles, drafted 2D map layouts with clear annotations, and wrote all dialogues for Tatya, including riddles, narrative beats, and the storyboard for both the opening and

ending cutscenes. I also created the character design for Tatya during this phase.

Midway through the process, I faced a major setback—my laptop stopped working. Because of this, I had to rely heavily on paper sketches for some puzzles, room layouts, and flow ideas. I also continued the work by borrowing a friend's laptop late at night once he was done with his tasks. Using that, I completed the remaining flowcharts and design documentation.

Despite the challenges, the design phase was successfully completed, forming a clear foundation for the rest of the development.

All the Documents:
TatyaUpdated01

Gameflow.png

GameDesignDocument

GameDesignDocument01

TatyaDialoguesDocument

TatyaDialogues&EventsDocument

Phase 3: Development

Once the design phase was finalized, the entire team began development. Our first priority was to build the core mechanics and then integrate each system one by one. Every developer worked on their assigned mechanics in separate scenes, while we coordinated through daily discussions on WhatsApp and Discord to resolve doubts and maintain consistency.

Since my laptop still wasn't working, the responsibility of building the environment inside Unity was given to two developers. I provided them with detailed 2D layouts and references so they could construct the level accurately.
On the art side, our artist—my classmate—handled all the assets. I prepared a complete asset list along with references to ensure visual consistency throughout the project.

However, the biggest challenge came with the character model. I was the only person in the team who knew character modeling, but because my laptop was still dead, I had to work on a friend's laptop late at night after he was done with his work. This caused delays, but eventually, I completed the character and imported it into the engine.

The Major Setback

Everything was progressing smoothly until the two developers responsible for building the level made a critical mistake: instead of creating the environment based on the layout I provided, they imported a premade environment from the Asset Store. This caused massive disruption — the room layouts and object placements were now completely different from what the riddles and puzzles were designed around.
Since the riddles were dependent on precise locations, this change broke the entire design structure.

The team was understandably frustrated, but with very little time left, we had no option but to adapt. I had to redesign large portions of the puzzles and flow at the last moment. Because of this rushed redesign, some parts of the game didn't feel as solid as originally intended.

Another big issue emerged from this disruption: the checkpoint system was never implemented. It was planned in the GDD, but due to the sudden shift in direction and time pressure, it got overlooked—resulting in the biggest drawback noted during testing.

Final Outcome

Despite all these challenges, we managed to complete the game. During the final playtesting session, players appreciated the atmosphere, enjoyed the horror elements, and had fun exploring and solving the puzzles. Even the teammates who were hesitant early on were happy and proud of the final product.

Of course, as with any project, there were mixed reviews. Some players questioned the lack of checkpoints; others asked narrative questions like why Tatya is tied to the chair—even though it was clearly shown in the cutscene.

But at the end of the day, we were satisfied that, despite setbacks, redesigns, hardware issues, and time pressure, we still managed to pull off the project and deliver a complete experience.

PHASE 4: AWARDS

Our college hosts an annual prize distribution event where students can submit their projects for recognition. We registered *Tatya* for the awards, and based on the response it received during playtesting, everyone—both within our team and across our batch—believed it had a strong chance of winning. It was even nominated for **Best 3D Game.**

However, despite the expectations, *Tatya* did not win. The entire team, along with many classmates, were genuinely surprised by the outcome. Even though we didn't receive the award, the nomination itself reflected the hard work and uniqueness of the project.

PHASE 5: IGDC 2025

After a two-month break, we received exciting news from the college: *Tatya* was selected to be showcased at **IGDC 2025** at the Seamedu booth. The only requirement was that all game assets had to be completely in-house.

This immediately created a huge challenge. In the earlier build, two developers had imported an entire premade environment from the Asset Store. Because of this, we now had to redo a significant amount of the game.During this reboot those 2 developers were not involved. So this new game was made with 3 programmers.

By this time, I finally had a new laptop (the old one never recovered), so I took charge and restarted the project from scratch. The first thing I did was schedule multiple meetings to align everyone and ensure the workflow stayed on track.

I began by revisiting the narrative. I refined the story, fixed weak points, and addressed feedback from the previous build. Once the narrative revision was complete, I created a brand-new GDD, including fresh riddles that were more understandable and better integrated into the gameplay. Everything that felt off in the old version was redesigned properly.

The most important step was rebuilding the level **myself** inside the engine, using my original 2D layout. This allowed me to maintain the integrity of the design and ensure the game structure was strong.

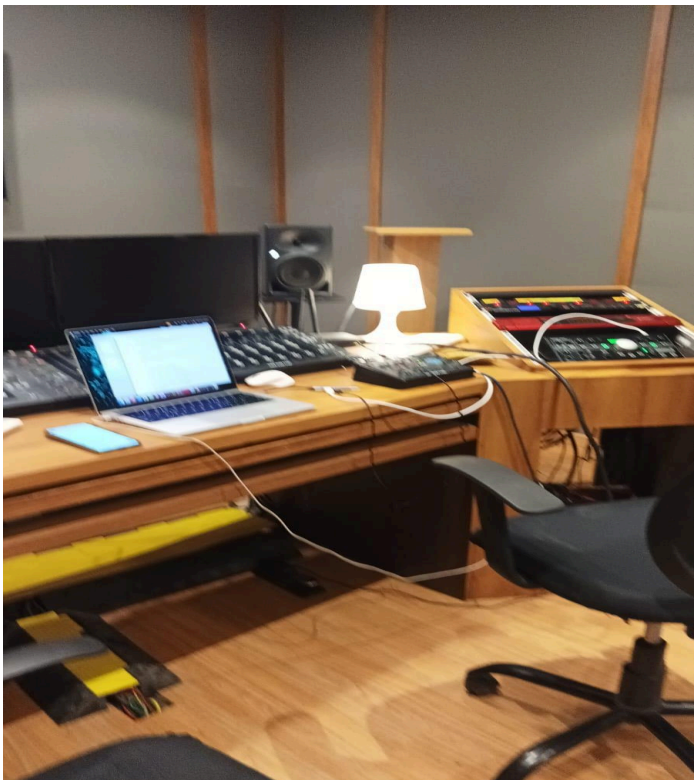
Once the level was ready, I handed the project to the developers so they could migrate and implement mechanics from the older scenes into the new one. I also worked closely with one of the programmers who was responsible for creating jumpscares. I provided him with a detailed jumpscare document and regularly sat with him to test timings, polish reactions, and fine-tune the sequences to achieve the right horror feel.

At the same time, I had additional responsibilities: overseeing cutscene art and sound. Although I'm capable of doing the cutscene art myself, I was already handling too many critical tasks, so I brought in a junior artist—an extremely talented one. I provided him with a written storyboard and conducted frequent review meetings to ensure the cutscenes matched the intended direction. He produced beautifully hand-drawn 2D panels for the cutscenes. Originally, the game had three cutscenes planned, but due to time constraints, we were only able to implement two: the opening cutscene and a single ending cutscene (instead of the two we initially planned).

Sound Production

The sound team assigned to us did an outstanding job. During the Diwali break, I prepared a complete sound assets list and briefed them thoroughly. We also needed Marathi dialogues, but although I am Marathi, my command over formal Marathi wasn't strong enough, so I worked with one of the sound students who handled all translations—from dialogues to riddles to storyboard narration.

Once we returned to Pune, the first task was booking the recording studio. Our original voice artist wasn't available, so we approached one of our faculty members to voice Tatya—and he absolutely nailed the performance.



Recording day started early. I arrived with Kabir (the sound student who had translated the lines). We set up the studio, and once sir arrived, we recorded all Tatya lines within two hours. The team was extremely efficient and professional. Later in the afternoon, the rest of the sound team arrived, and we began foley recording in parallel.

Two studios were running at the same time—one for narration and player dialogues, the other for foley. I kept switching between them, reviewing audio, approving takes, and ensuring the recordings matched the tone of the game.

We left the studio around 6:30 PM completely exhausted.

But IGDC was approaching fast.

I requested the sound team to deliver everything as soon as possible. They worked through the night (their "fuel" is a secret—but let's just say it kept them awake). I stayed on Discord with them the whole time, reviewing music, approving SFX, and giving feedback.

Within two days, I had all the audio assets. I passed the SFX and BGM to the programmers for implementation, while I used the dialogue files to edit and assemble the cutscenes—adding sound effects, timing overlays, subtitles, and transitions.

Once the cutscenes were completed, I handed them to the programmers for integration into the engine.

Finally, everything came together. Testing went smoothly, and the game was working well. Although we had to cut a few planned features due to time constraints, the final build looked polished and ready for IGDC.

However, there was still one major issue that remained unresolved: the game **still didn't have a checkpoint system**. With IGDC approaching fast, the programmers attempted to implement it, but given the limited time and the complexity of restructuring the flow, it simply wasn't feasible. After several attempts, we collectively decided to proceed without checkpoints for the IGDC build. It wasn't ideal, but with the tight deadline, it was the only practical choice.

Documents Used in Reboot:

NarrationChanges

[Tatya Item Location and Jummpscare with Sequence]

[Sequence and Puzzle]

[Tatya Riddles for Items]

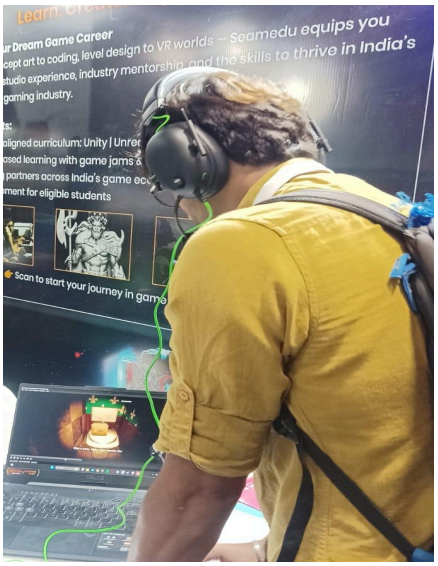
[Cutscene Storyboard]

[Sound]

[Storyboard: Cutscene 2 -Betrayel of Tatya]

PHASE 6: ATTENDING IGDC 2025

During **IGDC Day 1, Day 2, and Day 3,** we showcased *Tatya* at the Seamedu booth. To our surprise, the game attracted a huge crowd—its originality, Marathi dialogues, unique horror tone, and strong sound design drew a lot of attention. Throughout the three days, nearly **100 people** personally playtested the game. The response was overwhelmingly positive, and seeing players genuinely enjoy *Tatya* was one of the most rewarding moments of the entire project.



Many people even suggested that we release *Tatya* on **Steam,** which was incredibly encouraging. The game was played by well-known industry professionals, including studio owners and developers of successful titles. Beyond the event, my LinkedIn post about *Tatya* reached several major figures in the Indian game dev community—**The Kamla Developer, Nikhil Malankar (Founder of GameEon Studios), Vaibhav Chavan (Developer of Mukti), Gametout,** and several other influential creators.

Through IGDC, I received an incredible amount of feedback, appreciation, and recognition. It was a moment of pride not just for me, but for the entire team who worked hard to bring *Tatya* to life.

Team: