

CRG-IWM MEDIA PRESENTATIONS 2024

URBAN FAULT LINES AND VIOLENCE

A REPORT

11 NOVEMBER 2024

KOLKATA



Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen
Institute for Human Sciences



URBAN FAULT LINES AND VIOLENCE
A REPORT ON
CRG-IWM MEDIA PRESENTATIONS

2024

Calcutta Research Group
Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna
Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The presentations on Media Fellowships themed “Urban Fault Lines and Violence” held on 11 November 2024 was organised in Kolkata at Hotel The Sonnet by Calcutta Research Group (CRG) was part of the Ninth Annual Research and Orientation Programme on “Global Protection of Refugees and Migrants” in collaboration with the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS), and several other institutes in India and abroad. This session is part of the Media Programme under the collaborative research programme on “Refugees, Migrants, and Urban Justice” (2024) with the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna, and CRG is thankful to colleagues at IWM for the enriching academic endeavor and supporting CRG’s media programme since 2021. Dev Baraya, Jaishree Kumar, and Munazah Shakeel who had been selected for the 2024 CRG-IWM Media Fellowship on “Urban Fault Lines and Violences” in March 2024 for a three-month Fellowship from April–June 2024 presented their creative media output as an extended part of the Media Module in the Annual Workshop 2024. CRG is thankful to Samir Kumar Das (Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta, India) and Ranabir Samaddar (Distinguished Chair in Migration and Forced Migration Studies, CRG) for conceptualizing this year’s media programme centralizing on the core question: How are the dichotomies of city imaginaries reproduced through the media, central to the understanding of the changing political and economic landscape of cities? As different [in]visible zones in cities are demarcated and reinforced with the boundaries erected around them, social interactions across the zones become nearly impossible. CRG is thankful to the members of the Media Selection Committee: Shyamalendu Majumdar (Director, Calcutta Research Group), Rajat Roy (Eminent Journalist & Treasurer, Calcutta Research Group), Jayanta Roy Choudhury (Eminent Journalist and Member, CRG), Chandrima Bhattacharya (Eminent Journalist, Telegraph) and Anirban Chattopadhyay (Eminent Journalist, and Former Editor-in-Chief Anandabazar Patrika). The media—whether print or electronic—only add to the reproduction of these imaginaries. CRG is thankful to Rajat Roy (Senior Journalist, Kolkata) for recommending the importance and appeal of audio-visual media to the common reader/viewer to understand complex scenarios and arguments as “seeing” is a tool that not only creates a locational and relational awareness but a

generates a closeness to the event. CRG is thankful to the three Media Fellows for accepting the Fellowship Grant and preparing visual media resources on the blindfolds of the city biases by documenting the transgender homes in Delhi, the vanishing community organisations in a city's urge to become a modern city by pushing to insecure futures organisations like the Awami Idara Library in Mumbai where relocation is synonymous with de-location and disenfranchisement of the community that had organised itself around these institutions or how the effort to make smart cities even affecting the Tier II cities in Jammu and Kashmir altering not only the cityscape but also destroying the traditional livelihood patterns affecting not only the ecosystem of these urban centres stretching it to the point of pushing the heritages that are landmarks of Kashmir's ethos and almost synonymous to the region's identity itself—the houseboats—from an essential economical livelihood to museumifying the experiences through curated leisure and seeking heritage status as a method of survival. CRG is grateful to the reviewers of the Fellowship submissions for their valuable comments and suggestions that helped the Fellows to establish their propositions and arguments on firmer ground and Dr. Samata Biswas (Assistant Professor, The Sanskrit College and University, India) and Dr. Iman Mitra (Assistant Professor, Shiv Nadar University, India) for kindly agreeing to Chair and be Discussant for the session respectively. The media programme of CRG has been coordinated by Shatabdi Das (Researcher, CRG) and Rajat Kanti Sur (Researcher, CRG) and senior members and colleagues and the administrative office of CRG who have worked tirelessly despite their multiple commitments for an engaging and enriching media programme this year. CRG is thankful to Shyamalendu Majumdar, Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, Rajat Roy, Jayanta Roy Choudhury, and Samir Kumar Das for their insightful suggestions. This report would not have been possible without the dedicated rapporteuring of the session by Regina Domino (European masters Programme in Carl von Ossietzky, University of Oldenburg, Germany and CRG-Rabindra Bharati University, India), Tahseen Fatima (Doctoral Fellow, University of Delhi, India), and Poushali Basak (Researcher, CRG) and Julija Kekstaite (Intern, CRG and Doctoral Fellow, Ghent University, Belgium) for meticulously editing and preparing this report. It has been CRG's opportunity to engage with scholars, young academics, senior faculty from academic institutions, and journalists from India, Bangladesh, Taiwan, Greece, Germany, Brazil, Italy, the UK, and other parts of the world during the media programme.

PARTICIPANTS PROFILE



Dev Baraya is a budding documentary filmmaker and political researcher working at the intersection of history, politics, and urban culture. He is currently working with Progressive International as a research assistant and photographer on multiple projects, and Somnath Waghmare's Begampura Productions to explore the synergies and antagonisms between the Ambedkarite and communist movement in Mumbai. He brings over five years of experience working in policy and philanthropy organisations, and has previously assisted on a documentary (about junior artists in the film industry) produced by Shaunak Sen and directed by Rohan Ranganathan and has also worked with anti-caste commentator Anurag Minus Verma. He hopes his research and documentaries serve as compelling narratives that challenge and provoke audiences to engage critically with the complex socio-political and urban landscapes of India (and their own positionalities within it).



Iman K. Mitra is an Assistant Professor at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Shiv Nadar University, Delhi. His research interests are in the history of the economic discipline; Economic History and Political Economy of South Asia; Urbanization, migration practices, and informal economy in South Asia; State and non-state networks of dissemination of economic knowledge, especially in colonial and postcolonial contexts; Relation between economic rationalities and governmental reason.



Jaishree Kumar is an independent writer, journalist, and documentary filmmaker. Balancing her time between New Delhi and the Himalayas, Jaishree specializes in writing, producing, shooting, directing, and reporting stories centered on the intersection of gender, sexuality, inequity, climate, health, and other pertinent issues. Her work has gained recognition in prestigious publications such as Thomson Reuters Foundation, Queerbeat, BOOM, Deutsche Welle, and VICE as well as acclaimed international platforms including the BBC, NPR, and Voice of America. She was also the

recipient of the EQUAL Fellowship by the YP Foundation, to strengthen the knowledge of legal rights within the queer community, and the recipient of the Thomson Reuters Foundation where she investigated conversion therapies and torture towards members of the LGBTQ community. With a master's degree in convergent journalism from Jamia Millia Islamia, Jaishree previously contributed to news and culture coverage across Asia and beyond with VICE and VICE World News until 2022. She excels in research-driven storytelling, adeptly navigating between various mediums such as long-form and short-form content encompassing text, photography, videos, reels, shorts, and podcasts. Beyond her professional pursuits, Jaishree dedicates her free time to conducting diversity, equality, and inclusion training at global corporate firms in addition to leading workshops focused on promoting more sensitive reporting on the LGBTQ+ community.



Munazah Shakeel is a neurodivergent Muslim woman from Kashmir. She is an architecture graduate from Jamia Millia Islamia and a freelance writer and amateur photographer. She has been actively involved in mental health advocacy with Change.org, suicide prevention with The-Outlive-Project, peacebuilding with Million Peacemakers and Youth for Peace International, and creating social impact projects with One Future Fellowship. Additionally, she has worked on policy advocacy for Disability Rights with YLAC and feminist youth leadership with UN Women's Feminist Leadership Lab. As an aspiring journalist, she is fuelled by a desire to contribute to the development of intersectional and multifaceted discourse, as well as to generate alternative knowledge in Kashmir. She is driven by a deep-seated motivation to bring about positive change in her community and beyond.



Samata Biswas is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, The Sanskrit College and University, and a Member, of the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, India. Previously she has taught English literature at Haldia Government College and Bethune College. She completed a UGC-funded Minor Research project on the body cultures of contemporary Bengal as well as a project on an alternative logistical framework in Haldia, funded by Western Sydney University. She also runs the blog on forced migration studies, 'Refugee Watch Online'.

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

URBAN FAULT LINES AND VIOLENCE PRESENTATIONS BY CRG-IWM MEDIA FELLOWS 2024 11 NOVEMBER 2024, KOLKATA

organised
by
Calcutta Research Group
in collaboration with
Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna
Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung

9:00 am – 9:30 am : Registration

9:30 am – 10:30 am : Urban Faultline and Violence

Chair: Samata Biswas, *Assistant Professor, The Sanskrit College and University, & Member, CRG, India*

Discussant: Iman K. Mitra, *Assistant Professor, Shiv Nadar University, & Member CRG, India.*

Presentations by Media Fellows:

- 1. Munazah Shakeel**, *Jamia Milia Islamia, India*
Podcast: Unbricking Srinagar: Urban Renewal and Social Shifts
- 2. Dev Baraya**, *Progressive International, India*
Documentary: Beyond the Rubble: The Awami Idara's Fight Against Urban Erasure
- 3. Jaishree Kumar**, *Independent Journalist, India*
Documentary: Sisterhoods of Violence and Resilience: A Look Through a Shelter Home for Transgender People

10:30 am – 11:00 am: Tea Break

*** Ninth Annual Research and Orientation Programme on Global Protection of Refugees and Migrants,
8–12 November 2024

URBAN FAULT LINES AND VIOLENCE

PRESENTATIONS BY CRG-IWM MEDIA FELLOWS 2024

A REPORT

The media presentation session was Chaired by Samata Biswas and was summarized and discussed by Iman K. Mitra. The session consisted of presentations by Dev Baraya, Jaishree Kumar, and Manazah Shakeel, three CRG-IWM Media Fellows (2024) who looked into the production and reproduction of the urban faultlines and violence perpetuated through them.

Jaishree Kumar's documentary *Yeh Mera Ghar Hain* looked into the social exclusion faced by the transgender community and the bonds of resilience and friendship that emerge because of it. The documentary explored the lives of residents of a shelter home Garima Greh designated for the transgender community in the outskirts of New Delhi and their journey of belonging within the city. The documentary tried to capture the Garima Greh project established by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment that offers support to the transgender community with a fresh start in life as they move to the city to start life with a bio-social identity that they confirm. It showed how other shelter homes, government-run or privately funded are often inaccessible for people from the transgender community. Their rights to privacy and safety are at risk at other shelter homes. Even in this geographical space, the Garima Greh is situated in a low-income neighborhood of Dabri Mor, on the outskirts of New Delhi. The documentary showed the ways in which the trans community would form new forms of relationship with other people at the shelter home, get together during the weekends, and feel belonged. Delhi as a city emerged as a space of opportunities for people from villages who were not accepted due to their gender identities. Trans people living in the shelter home reflected their apprehensions about joining it in the fear of being forced to sex work. Eventually, they understood the importance of the shelter and created a second home for themselves. The trans community members living in Garima Greh were able to get jobs and receive seed funds to start their own businesses and develop a life of their own. The documentary reflected the creation of a friendly society for the LGBTQI+ society. The discussant, Iman Kumar Mitra pointed out the paradox of the governmental presence in the shelter home. While the home is a policy

made by the government, the police, which is another institution of the government perpetuates violence. When such violence takes place in a site that provides them with a sense of belongingness and home then it gives the community a deep sense of shock and betrayal. See the documentary by Jaishree Kumar and *Yeh Mera Ghar Hain*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3j-9rsYwLA>

Dev Baraya's documentary presentation, titled *Beyond the Rubble: The Awami Idara's Fight Against Urban Erasure* was a documentary film that takes a look at the Awami Idara - a 72-year-old communist library located in a working-class Muslim neighborhood in Mumbai - and the distinct changes it has undergone in response to the sharpening rise of a neo-liberal urbanisation agenda. The library was formed in 1952 by a group of cotton mill workers living in central Mumbai, and supported by the Soviet Union, the Idara quickly became an important cultural and political hub for the men and women in the neighbourhood. After finishing their day shifts, the labourers would come to the Idara to read, listen to speeches and watch free plays by the Indian People's Theatre Association. However, over the past few decades, the library has evolved in tune with the demands of the times. The Idara today expands on traditional expectations of a library, also serving as a community centre - one that conducts sewing lessons for young girls, sets up Tuberculosis camps, gives out free eyewear, and helps set up Aadhar IDs. However, in the name of "development," the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has razed the surrounding buildings to the ground, with plans of building sky-high builder apartments. The BMC had tried to seize the land that the Idara was built on too - the only reason they failed was because the community took the matter to the High Court, and they ruled in favor of the Idara just 4 months ago. Iman Kumar Mitra pointed out that the documentary reflected the violence of erasure in the demolitions of the library that worked as a place of identity for the Muslim working class. It is a mindful erasure of language as the books are largely in Urdu, of important archives and the role of the communist revolution in working-class areas. Further, the presentation also reflected a nostalgia for lost time, of pain that the people associated with the labour movement, factory production, communist movement, and struggles of setting up the library went through. The nostalgia is largely lived and therefore not easily inherited. The pain is not being transferred to the younger generation. The praxis on which the library was based has been forgotten by the youth which the older generation is trying to protect. See the

documentary by Dev Baraya and Maduli Thaosen *Beyond the Rubble: The Awami Idara's Fight Against Urban Erasure*,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f81Boym5MY&feature=youtu.be>

The third presentation was a four-part audio-visual podcast by **Munazah Shakeel** on *Drifting Boats, Shifting Shores: The Water Dweller's Struggle for Survival Amid Srinagar's Urban Revival*. The podcast documented the tourism industry in Kashmir, which is famous for its houseboats, an important image of the region. Houseboats in Dal Lake or Nigeen Lake in Srinagar receive tourists from all over India and the world. The celebration of this important part of their culture, however, hides an unpleasant truth. The houseboats may be deemed a tourist experience, but they are not considered as legitimate residences. Inhabitants of the houseboats have been blamed for causing pollution in the area, despite their environmental impact being minimal compared to factories that dump sewage in the area. Under the guise of development, many inhabitants have been displaced and relocated. The documentary revealed how the approach has been undemocratic. For this issue to be resolved, it is important to explore how the residents in the houseboats live. Currently, many of them have already relocated to the city. Dismantling the houseboat is equivalent to uprooting the community. In the discussion, Shakeel recollected seeing the disappointment in people's faces about the situation. They talked about the importance of responsible tourism. Apart from being the backbone of the tourism industry, they are also the backbone of the region's culture and identity. The playlist of the podcast by Munazah Shakeel on *Drifting Boats, Shifting Shores: The Water Dwellers Struggle for Survival Amid Srinagar's Urban Revival*,

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBF-WP5vW1ktSccox-xYhfdUA82UATefR>

The four episodes of the podcast series are:

Episode 1: *Mapping History on Water: Kashmir's Urban Past and Hanji Community's Water Roots*. 23.02 duration

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HNnOfFzuSU&list=PLBF-WP5vW1ktSccox-xYhfdUA82UATefR&index=4>

Episode 2: *Reflections of Life on Water: Houseboat as Home, Livelihood and Legacy*, 26.32 duration

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTnenwIZU4g&list=PLBF-WP5vW1ktSccox-xYhfdUA82UATefR&index=3>

***Episode 3: Rowing Shikara: From Water to Land: Navigating Displacement and Eroding Identity** 18.23 duration*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxbmTI-6-mk&list=PLBF-WP5vW1ktSccox-xYhfdUA82UATefR&index=2>

***Episode 4: Anchoring Rights on Water: A Fight for Recognition, Inclusion and a Secure Future** 23.01 duration*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2GQBJ8fszA&list=PLBF-WP5vW1ktSccox-xYhfdUA82UATefR&index=1>

After the presentation, the speakers took questions from the participants. Baraya answered an inquiry on the current situation of the library. People still frequent it, but half of the archives have already been shelved. Until now, people still have to struggle just to ensure the survival of the archive. Regarding Garima Greh, Kumar talked about occurrences of violence against transpeople, which did not only come from transphobia but also within the transcommunity. Lastly, Shakeel was asked about the involvement of inhabitants in the organization of the industry. She answered that they are not considered legitimate stakeholders. Meanwhile, the houseboats are still being promoted as a haven for tourists. The podcasts and the documentaries have been uploaded on CRG's official YouTube channel on open access for wider outreach. These media projects are also housed at CRG's library.

PHOTOS OF MEDIA PRESENTATIONS



PHOTO 1: From left to right: Dev Baraya, Munazah Shakeel, Jaishree Kumar



PHOTO 2: Media Workshop Session



PHOTO 3: Media Fellow Jaishree Kumar discussing her experiences while working on the documentary

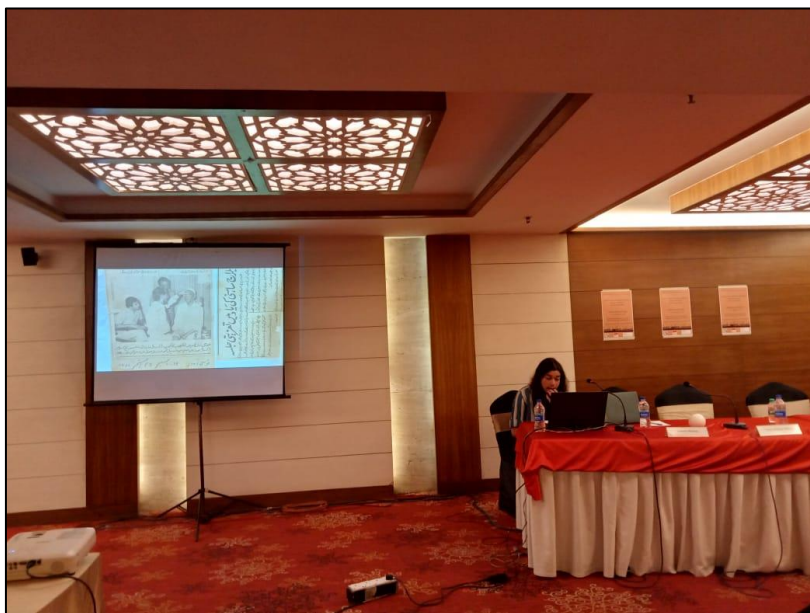


PHOTO 4: Media Fellow Deve Baraya showing photographs collected from the archives of the Awami Idara Library, Mumbai

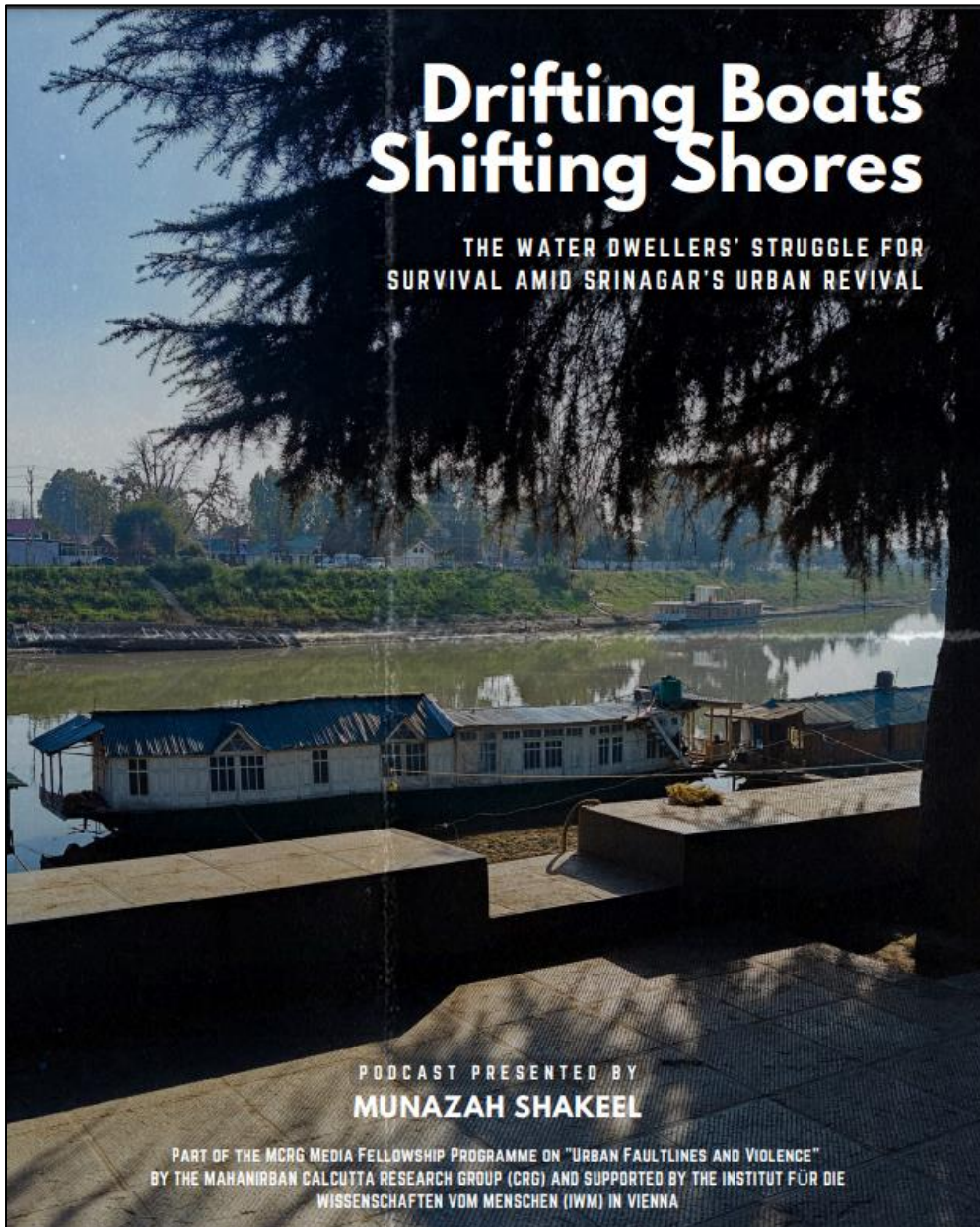


PHOTO 5: Media fellow Munazah Shakeel showing her Podcast interview with a houseboat owner



PHOTO 6: Screen capture from Munazah Shakeel's podcast presentation.

POSTERS



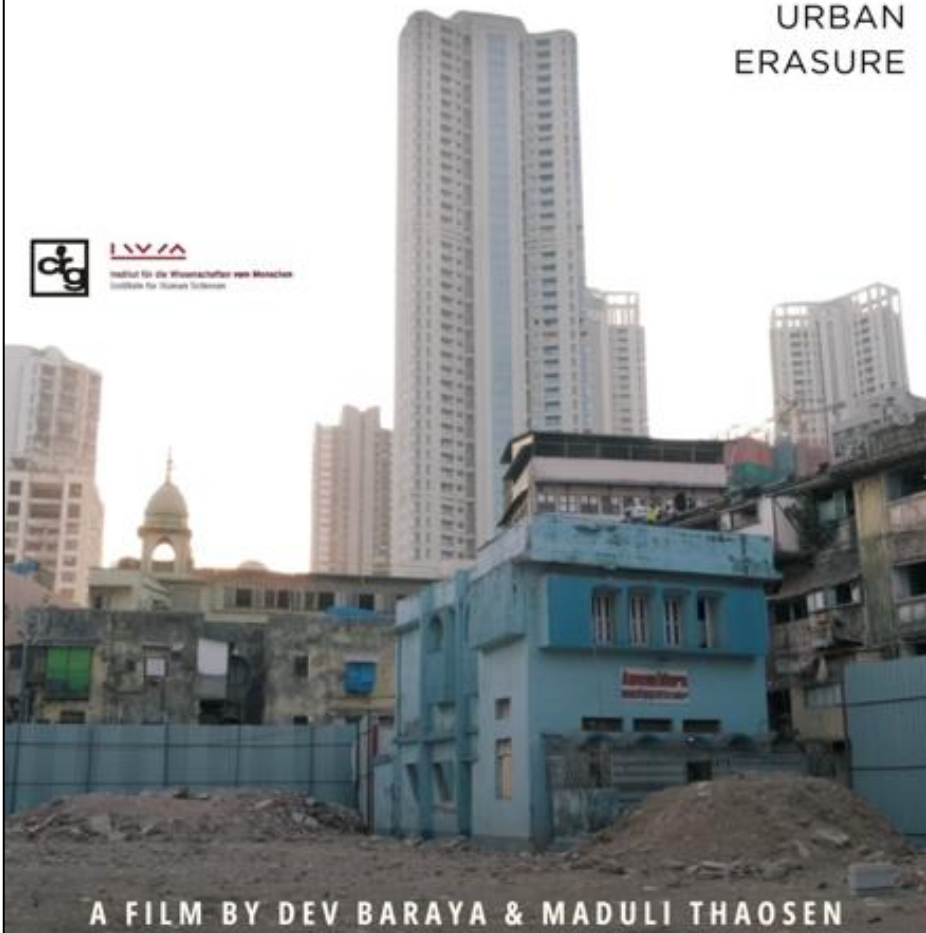
POSTER 1: Podcast on “Drifting Boats, Shifting Shore” by Munazah Shakeel

beyond the rubble

THE
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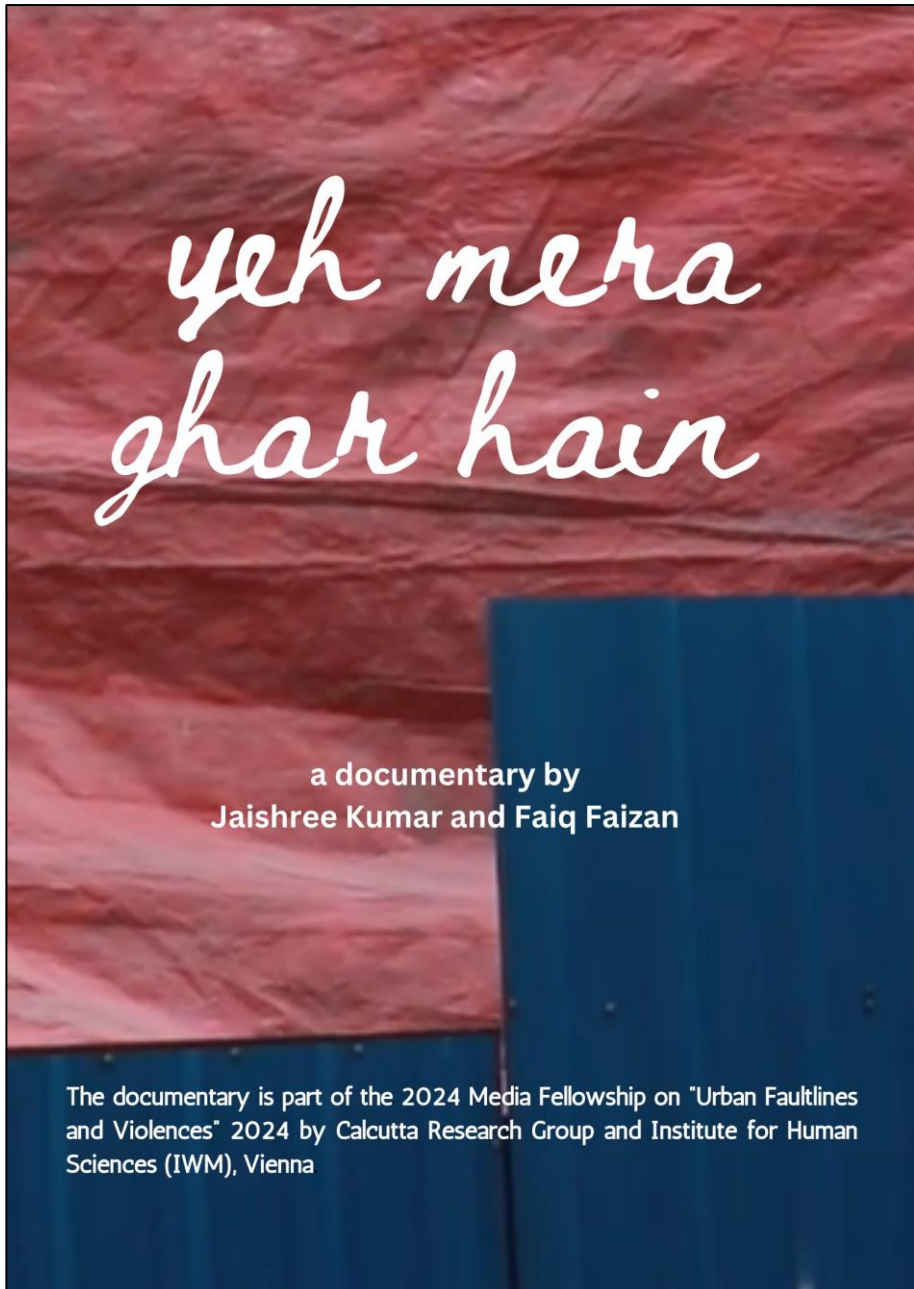


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A FILM BY DEV BARAYA & MADULI THAOSEN

POSTER 2: Documentary “Beyond the Rubble” by Dev Baraya



POSTER 3: Documentary “Yeh Mera Ghar Hain” by Jaishree Kumar