

# Urban Caregiving and Protection: Histories and Contemporary Practices

Youth Meet  
28-30 March, 2024  
Bolpur, Shantiniketan



Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen  
Institute for Human Sciences



CALCUTTA  
RESEARCH  
GROUP

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## **2024 Youth Meet**

### **Urban Caregiving and Protection: Histories and Contemporary Practices**

organised by

Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group

Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna

28-30 March 2024, Bolpur, Shantiniketan

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The Youth Meet on “Urban Caregiving and Protection: Histories and Contemporary Practices” is organised by Calcutta Research Group in collaboration with the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna under the project “Refugees, Migrants, Urban Justice”. The Youth Meet is part of CRG’s ongoing programmes on migration and forced migration conducted with the support and collaboration of various institutes in India and abroad.

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**Urban Caregiving and Protection  
Histories and Contemporary Practices**

**Calcutta Research Group  
Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna**



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## PREFACE

Urban centres have become magnets of magnanimity, of growth and wealth where capital has become the relentless superpower consuming every living being within its structure of preparing the infrastructures for a classic modern urbanity relevant to liberal global economy. This diabolical urban process on the one hand is visually co-relatable in major cities and its catering hinterlands with high-rises and glass charades, metro rails/tubes, multilane roads, upscale markets, multinational corporations, an ever-sprawling gig economy, thronging the service sectors, creating the easier life-system, more comfortable and competitive; while on the other it comes with a dialogic process of receding camaraderie, more individual time as opposed to family time and much less community involvement, pleasure and leisure that come at the cost of vulnerability of life and living, consuming everything that caters to this urbanity; labour migrants, refugees, citizens, the human-non-human interaction is scaled at the cost of other rather than harmonious interjections. Urban landscapes today are increasingly shadowing the ecological fragility with increasing instances of floods, inundation, epidemics, etc. This Youth Meet on “Urban Caregiving and Protection: Histories and Contemporary Practices” organised Calcutta Research Group in collaboration with the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna from 28-30 March 2024 will try to delve on questions of future urbanity within the model of urban caregiving, and protection, and find the historical linkages to contemporary caregiving practices. To seek how urbanity becomes both a method and recourse to the understanding and provision of protection and care; how proactive are smart cities today in their autonomy of protection and balanced social justice for migrants, invisible citizens, without negatively impacting the climatic conditions of the future. Will this urbanity be part of the placemaking practices or a transitory recourse of flux for further urban sprawl where the present recedes into the gerontology of the past and the new consumes the peri-urban and its consequential rural.

## YOUTH MEET PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

Urban Caregiving and Protection: Histories and Contemporary Practices  
28-30 March 2024, Bolpur, India

Calcutta Research Group  
in collaboration with  
Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna

### Day 1: 28 MARCH 2024

- 6:00 PM-6:30 PM:** Registration and Tea
- 6:30 PM-6:35 PM:** Welcome Address: Shyamalendu Majumdar, *Director, Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata*
- 6:35 PM-6:45 PM:** Introducing the Summer Camp: Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, *Professor, Department of Political Sciences, Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata & President, Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata*
- 6:45 PM-7:00 PM:** Introduction by Participants
- 7:00 PM-7:30 PM:** Pandemic and Precarity in Conversations  
Speakers:  
Debashree Chakraborty, *Researcher, Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata*  
Sucharita Sengupta, *Researcher, Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata*

Day 2: 29 MARCH 2024

10:00 AM-10:30 AM: Registration

10:30 AM-11 AM: Session 1: “Faultlines in Urban Caregiving”  
Chair: Shyamalendu Majumdar

**Speaker: Samir Kumar Das**, *Professor, Department of Political Sciences, University of Calcutta, Kolkata and Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata*

11:00 AM-11:30 AM: Tea Break

11:30 AM-1:00 PM: Session 2: “Agency in Creating Urban Spaces”

**Facilitator: Ranabir Samaddar**, *Distinguished Chair in Migration and Forced Migration Studies, Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata*

**Speakers**

**Athil Banna**, *Urban Fellow, Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Bengaluru*

Contesting the Concepts of ‘Migrant’ and ‘Worker’: Exploring the Translocality and Religious Agency

**Upasana Patgiri**, *Urban Fellow, Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Bengaluru*

Belonging in the City: The Governing Influence of Work Structure on Migrant Workers

**Olivia Banerjee**, *Postgraduate Student, Presidency University, Kolkata*  
Club as Agents of Power: Interrogating the Transforming Politics in Bijoygarh  
[15 Mins each presentation/talk & 45 mins Discussion/Q&A]

**1:00 PM-2:00 PM: Lunch Break**

**2:00 PM-3:00 PM: Session 3: “Ethics and Aesthetics of Life: A Workshop”**  
**Facilitator: Debashree Chakraborty**

**Speakers**

**Agni**, *Visual Artist*

Vandal

**Shruti Roy**, *Postgraduate Student, National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad*

Children and Inefficient Care-Giving Practices, and Anthology of a Few Special Lives

**3:00 PM-3:30 PM: Tea Break**

**3:30 PM-5:00 PM: Session 4: “Memory, Media and Migration”**  
**Facilitator: Sucharita Sengupta**

**Speakers**

**Dalia Mikulska**, *Freelance Journalist*

Palestinian Refugees: Memory and Conflict

**Vishal Shukla**, *Environmental Journalist & @internews Fellow*

Insights from Environmental News Reporting: Exploring Climate Change-Induced Migration

**Film Show: Walking in a Sinking Island in the Sundarbans**

Director: Sukanta Sarkar, *Special Correspondent, Frontier*

[15 Mins each presentation/talk & 45 mins Discussion/Q&A]

### Day 3: 30 MARCH 2024

**10:00 AM-11:30 AM:**

**Session 5: “Community and Care: Reflections”**

**Facilitator: Rajat Kanti Sur**, *Researcher, Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata*

**Speakers**

**Aishani Khurana**, *Doctoral Fellow, Department of Anthropology at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago*

Community Caregiving as a Practice of/in Sovereignty

**Swastika Kashyap**, *Doctoral Fellow, Centre for South Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nebru University, Delhi*

Caregiver Burden on Migrant Adolescent Girl Carers in Urban Households in India

**Tahseen Fatima**, *Doctoral Fellow, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi, New Delhi*

The Irony of Visibleness, Everyday Lives, and Labour: A Study of Indian Muslim Women and Their Relationship with Work

[15 Mins each presentation/talk & 45 mins Discussion/Q&A]

**11:30 AM-12:00 PM: Tea Break**

**12:00 PM-1:30 PM: Session 6: “Life in Motion”**

**Facilitator: Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury**

**Speakers**

**Rahul Yaduka**, *CRG-IWM Visiting Fellow 2024 & Doctoral Fellow, B.R. Ambedkar University, New Delhi*

Floating with the Diyarascape: Life of People in the Koshi River Flood Plains

**Sucharita Sengupta**,

Care for Tourists or Refugees? Diary of a Traveler from Cox’s Bazar

**Rajat Kanti Sur**,

The *Savngs* of Calcutta: Critic of Colonial Justice and Autonomy of the Subalterns

[15 Mins each presentation/talk & 45 mins Discussion/Q&A]

**1:30 PM-2:30 PM: Lunch Break**

**2:30 PM-3:30 PM: Session 7: “Cities and Storytelling”**

**Facilitator: Shatabdi Das**, *Researcher, Calcutta Researcher Group, Kolkata*

**Speakers**

**Deabshree Chakraborty**,

Care and Storytelling

**Titas Ganguly**, *Research Assistant, University of Amsterdam*

“Teen Shaap”: Three Tales of Urban Nightmares and a Careful Jolt for the Future  
[15 Mins each presentation/talk & 30 mins Discussion/Q&A]

**3:30 PM-4:00 PM: Tea Break**

**4:00 PM-5:00 PM: Session 8: “Margins of Protection”**

**Facilitator: Rajat Kanti Sur**

**4:00 PM-4:30 PM: Film Show: Struggle and Resilience of Momiron Nessa**

Director: Wahida Parveez, CRG Media Fellow 2022 and Amin Nozmul

**4:30 PM-5:00 PM: “Dunes and Depths of Urbanity: Creative Endeavours”**

**Open Discussion**

**5:00 PM-5:30 PM:      Session 9: “Chronicles and Urban Justice”  
Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury in Conversation with Ranabir Samaddar**

**5:30 PM-5:35 PM:      Vote of Thanks  
Shatabdi Das**

*\*\*\*\* This programme schedule is tentative and subject to last minute changes.*

## PARTICIPANT'S PROFILE

### Agni



Agni is a visual artist and like playing with various mediums ranging from prints to drawing, digital graphics, graffiti, AI, even errors and glitch-anything is a medium for him to express and channelise the harder-to-visualise ideas or expressions that often come together in a process based on intuitive flow, alongside more distinct visual memories and forms. But the choice of medium plays a very key role in embedding the contextual language of a creation as much as it does so for its visual language. Most of his work is highly individualised and personal in terms of its elements and a big part of the process of his own visual and pleasure during the process and afterward, but he mostly chooses to let them interact with their organic audience outside of the white cube-either in public spaces or on the internet. His biggest influences have been poster artworks, album covers, street art, graphic novels, local comic books, animated graphics, print media we see all around everyday everywhere, etc. Then came the post-internet era and influences extended beyond the said visuals to virtual and digital audio-visual experiences, a lot of which are experienced at daily level without being overtly conscious of it in our tech-heavy lives. He is currently working on a graphic novel in collaboration with a writer, working as an artist for a film, have worked with a videogame as a concept artist and usually have parallel independent projects ongoing.

## **Aishani Khurana**



Aishani Khurana, a third-year doctoral fellow in the department of Anthropology at the University of Illinois at Chicago, USA. As a socio-cultural anthropologist, she is interested in the questions of discrimination and violence in urban spaces. Her PhD research explores how religious violence shapes the democratic capacities of Muslims in India and the ways in which experiences of violence are contested. Previously, she researched on the modalities of urban gatekeeping by dominant communities that create barriers to access for Muslims navigating the housing market in Delhi.

## **Athil Banna**



Athil Banna is majoring in sociology and history. He has delved into subjects such as cultural studies, religion, and philosophy during his academic journey. His professional journey contributed significantly to research and writing endeavours, collaborating with institutions like the People Foundation (NGO) and EIH (heritage company) over nearly two years. These experiences, coupled with his experiences in various cities, ignited his passion for urban exploration. Thus, he joined the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS) as an UFP Fellow. This decision opened doors to an exploration of urban studies, broadening his perspective and sparking a keen interest in urban theory. Now, he is driven

to delve further into southern urban theory, decolonial thoughts, and knowledge production, seeking to contribute meaningfully to the discourse on urban.

### **Dalia Mikulska**



**Dalia Mikulska** is a freelance journalist and foreign correspondent from Poland, passionate about the world non-fiction writer, specialising in long-form journalism, particularly narrative features. She holds a graduate degree in Arab Master's in Democracy and Human Rights from Beirut, which has helped her specialise in the MENA region, with a focus on human rights and forced migrations. She has completed the Polish School of Reportage and published numerous articles in major country magazines and web pages. Since the beginning of her career in 2016, she has extensively travelled and reported from Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, Sweden, Germany and Tunisia. She was awarded a scholarship by the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation to report on crimes committed in Syrian detention centres, which allowed me to interview survivors of such crimes - former political prisoners from Syria. She has been a two-time finalist for journalism awards, including the Poznańskie Publishing House Award for the best book proposal and the Zygmunt Moszkowicz Special Award for Journalists. She was also awarded the Milena Jasenska Fellowship at the end of 2023 to work on my debut non-fiction book on Tunisia. Additionally, she has worked in the humanitarian and development sector in various countries, including Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa, Turkey,

Lebanon, Ukraine, and Greece. She has extensively researched the Tunisian strategy for preventing and combating radicalism, which gives me important background to report on this and related topics.

### **Debashree Chakraborty**



Debashree Chakraborty is a Researcher at Calcutta Research Group. She has previously worked as a Junior Research Fellow at the Department of English, Assam University. She has also worked as a Research Associate in an ICSSR sponsored Major Research Project and has taught at the Department of English, Gurucharan College, Silchar. For her PhD thesis, she has worked on Climate Fiction. Apart from environmental humanities, her research interests include the intersections of climate change, migration, Partition in cultural studies.

### **Titas Ganguly**



Titas Ganguly works as a Research Assistant at the University of Amsterdam. He received his MA in North American Politics at the John F. Kennedy Institute of FU Berlin and BA in Political Science at the Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University. His research interests include migration, social movements, and political ecology.

## Olivia Banerjee



**Olivia Banerjee** is a first-year Sociology postgraduate student at Presidency University, Kolkata. Her research interest mainly lies in areas of partition, migration, urban histories and formation, and Indian political thought through their sustained caste and kinship discourses, ethnography, political anthropological considerations.

## Rahul Kumar Yaduka



Rahul Kumar Yaduka is a doctoral fellow at the School of Development Studies, B.R. Ambedkar University Delhi working on Politics and Policy of Environmental Issues: The Case of Koshi River Floods in Bihar. He has done B. Tech. in Civil Engineering from IIT Bombay (2010-14) and MA in Political Science from University of Delhi (2016-18). His research interests are Disaster Studies, Development Studies, Migration, Climate Change and People's Resistance. He has been engaged with community-based organisations in Bihar, He is the member-secretary of People's Commission on Koshi River Basin, and also participant of river valley-based people's movements.

## **Ranabir Samaddar**



Ranabir Samaddar is Distinguished Chair in Migration and Forced Migration Studies, Calcutta Research Group, India. He is currently the CIFAR fellow in Humanity's Urban Future Programme. He belongs to the critical school of thinking and is considered as one of the foremost theorists in the field of migration and forced migration studies. A few among his recent works are *India's Migrant Workers and the Pandemic* (2021, co-edited), *Borders of an Epidemic* (2020), *The Postcolonial Age of Migration* (2020), *Neo-Liberal Strategies of Governing India* (2019), *Migrants and the Neoliberal City* (2018).

## **Rajat Kanti Sur**



Rajat Kanti Sur is associated with CRG since 2020. He did his PhD from University of Calcutta. He has previously worked with TISS (Patna Centre), National Library, Kolkata, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta and Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee. He has keen interest in urban studies, popular culture, public health and labour studies. He has published several articles in reputed journals, newspapers and periodicals. He is currently working on the role of labour organisations to ensure social security among migrant labours. He has keen interest in occupational health and plan to work on it in future.

### **Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury**



Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury is a Professor in the Department of Political Science at Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata. His areas of research interest include: global politics, South Asian politics, and refugees, migration, democracy and human rights in the Global South. His publications include: *The Rohingya in South Asia: People without a State* (Routledge: Abingdon 2018), *Sustainability of Rights after Globalisation* (Sage: Thousand Oaks 2012), *Internal Displacement in South Asia: The Relevance of UN Guiding Principles* (Sage: Thousand Oaks 2005), *Living on the Edge: Essays on the Chittagong Hill Tracts* (SAFHR: Kathmandu 1997). He was a Visiting Professor, Panjab University, Chandigarh (2016), Visiting Fellow, Dayton Law School, Ohio, USA (2008, 2009) and Salzburg Fellow (1996).

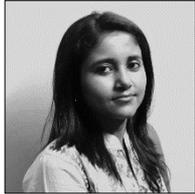
### **Samir Kumar Das**



Samir Kumar Das is Professor of Political Science and Director, Institute of Foreign Policy Studies at the University of Calcutta, Kolkata. Previously Vice-Chancellor of the University of North Bengal, and a Post-Doctoral Fellow (2005) of Social Science Research Council (South Asia Program), he also served as Adjunct Professor of Government at the School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, Visiting Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Universite Sorbonne Paris Nord among some of his recent

assignments.

## Shatabdi Das



Shatabdi Das is Researcher at the Calcutta Research Group (CRG). She was Junior Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna, in Austria, in April 2022, under the ‘Europe-Asia Research Platform on Forced Migration’. She is currently doing research on urban and environmental issues and climate crisis. She has previously worked as Junior Research Fellow at the Centre for Urban Economic Studies, University of Calcutta and has also taught Geography at PG level in Sarsuna College, Kolkata (affiliated to the University of Calcutta). Shatabdi has been working with CRG since 2018 on research projects on migration studies, borderlands, displacement, environment and climate change. She was awarded Ph.D. in Geography from the University of Calcutta in 2020. Her Doctoral thesis is on ‘the impact of industrial and urban development on the environment of Asansol-Durgapur Planning Area’.

## Shyamalendu Majumdar



Shyamalendu Majumdar is the Director of Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group. He was Associate Professor in Sivanath Sastri College and taught Political Science there since 1985. He is particularly interested in conducting research on forced migration and he had successfully completed his research on the problems and politics of internal displacement of the Reangs in Mizoram. His article on this was published in Refugee Watch Journal. He is deeply involved in carrying on research in the trends of political theatre in Bengal. Simultaneously he is focussing on the socio-political dimensions of the problems

of the vagrancy in-flows to the urban areas in post-Independent India. He is a member of Calcutta Research Group.

### **Shruti Roy**



Shruti Roy is an aspiring visual storyteller. She is currently working on her first animation film based on women's identity & representation in the red-light areas of Kolkata as a part of final master's degree project at National Institute of Design. She has previously engaged with research organizations and public sector media for visual development, namely, Centre for Policy Research and India Development Review. Shruti has keen interest in graphic storytelling and her comic strip on the environmental crisis 'This Could be Us' was exhibited at Indie Comix Fest.

### **Sucharita Sengupta**



**Sucharita Sengupta** is a Researcher at the Calcutta Research Group. She completed her PhD with the supervision of Professor Alessandro Monsutti and Graziella Moreas De Silva, from the department of Anthropology and Sociology in the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, Switzerland in July 2023. She was also a Teaching Assistant at the institute between 2019–21. Before joining the PhD, she had been working on issues related to migration and forced migration studies in South Asia as part of her work as a researcher at the eminent research organisation, the Calcutta Research Group, in India. Under

the supervision of scholars like Professor Paula Banerjee and Ranabir Samaddar, she has worked on Chakma refugees based in Arunachal Pradesh in India and on Bangladeshi women languishing under gross human rights violation in Indian Prisons (mainly West Bengal) under the foreigners Act, among others, as part of her work at CRG between 2014-2017.

### **Swastika Kashyap**



**Swastika Kashyap** is a doctoral fellow with the Centre for South Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She has completed her M.A. in Political Science (2019-21) from the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and her B.A. in Political Science (2016-19) from Cotton University, Assam. Her research interests appertain to intersectionality of gender and sexual rights, gender and sexual violence, class and caste.

### **Tahseen Fatima**



**Tahseen Fatima** is a doctoral fellow with the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi. Her research centres on Muslim women's labour question, who are specifically engaged in the production of textiles at various clusters spread across the state of Jharkhand. The study focuses on their work from the lens of transitions that a traditional caste-based occupation had to go through with larger transitions in the

economy and polity. Her work centres itself around the idea of livelihood citizenship, as the state policies talk about the concept of livelihood accruing to women engaging in such allied activities.

### **Upasana Patgiri**



**Upasana Patgiri** has an educational background in Urban Planning and is now transitioning to an Urban Practitioner. Ever since a young age, she has been interested in working in the domain of climate change, ecology and the urban. She wanted to be someone with the ability to have a say in how and into what our settlements develop, in a way that respects both the biodiversity in them and the local community. Belonging from Guwahati, Assam, her passion for sustainable development has been a driving force since her formative years. She finds solace and inspiration in writing, photography, traveling, and trekking.

### **Vishal Shukla**



Vishal Shukla as an environmental journalist and @internews Fellow brings a wealth of experience from premier institutions like the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) and St. Stephen's College. He has worked with Dainik Jagran, Latin Post, NewsX, and Vigyan Prasar's magazines. Recognised by esteemed national and international institutions including the Russian Embassy, TERI, and EJNI. He is recipient of the Rotary Club Mastermind Award.

## **PRESENTATION BRIEFS**

### **Contesting the Concepts of 'Migrant' and 'Worker': Exploring Translocality and Religious Agency**

**Athil Banna**

In the context of Peenya, we encounter a particular subset of migrant workers: the shop owners who have resided here for anywhere between 6 to 40 years. Understanding the nuances of this group requires highlighting the specific environment they inhabit. Peenya is currently one of the biggest industrial areas in Bengaluru established in the late 1970s<sup>1</sup>. The distinctive characteristics of an industrial locale, including its economic dynamics, labor market demands, and evolving socio-political landscape, create an environment for migrant workers to potentially establish long-term residence, guided by the prospects for future opportunities.

Peenya, as an industrial hub, relies on a steady influx of migrant workers to meet the demands of its labor-intensive industries. In turn, these migrant workers contribute to the productivity and vitality of the ecosystem by becoming a necessary labor force. While the industrial economy offers employment prospects, the social and political context determines the extent of inclusion, rights, and protections. Over time, as migrant workers

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<sup>1</sup> Banerji, Aman. "The Persistence of Peenya: Examining Industrial Space in 'Global' Bangalore." (2020): 79.

settle and establish long-term residence in Peenya, they become members of its social fabric, contributing not only to its economic growth but also to its cultural diversity and vibrancy. Considering the migrant workers as shop owners in two ways they are integral members of its social fabric.

**Belonging as Individuals:** One of the migrant shop owners called Peenya as “Karmabhumi” and his village as “Janmabhumi?”. Here the idea of Karmabhumi can be translated as "land of action", often refers to a place where one's actions play a significant role in determining their destiny. Another migrant articulated that,

When I will go back I will still keep coming for 2 days a week, to check on his kids and to meet my friends

This shows more responsibilities of these specific migrant groups because they have formed a family here, built a home, funded children’s education. Here the shop is a physical, tangible factor tying them to Peenya reflecting a very strong commitment to stay in the place. This physical infrastructure is a strong claim over space that broadens the sense of belonging, expressing their capability and agency over an area.

**Collective Sense of Belonging:** This process happens with a transition from individual sense of belonging to a collective sense of belonging. Firstly, they are economic contributors and a link between interdependent economies for example one migrant has a Ration shop where multiple groups of people come and make a network. He told us that he has accounts of people who come there. A Kabaddi shop run by another person is critical when it comes to the connection between different forms of economy that gather around recycling materials. Secondly a shop is not just an economic entity. It is a space where people gather and make a relation

and it becomes a place for social networking. In this sense they are agents of spatial making. The female garment migrant workers choose to go to their place because of the language and the familiarity with the shop owners thus, they gain a broader sense of belonging. This is where they exert more agency for the space & the people around them which leads to the emergence of leadership and the sense of community.

Understanding the reciprocal relationship between migrants and their environment requires a nuanced examination. Approximately seven years ago, migrants in the area came together to establish the Nav Durga Seva Samiti in 2017, dedicated to hosting religious festivals from their state of Bihar. Initially they rented a hall for Durga Puja but overtime with local support the group started celebrating the puja in a public space. The next Durga Puja took place on a market road where vendors in the area contributed supplies and members of the group donated rations for celebrations. After Durga Puja, they wanted to celebrate Chhatt Puja and they approached the ward commissioner who owned an empty land nearby and gave them the land for free to hold the puja. Over time the group raised funds and local support, and renovated an old temple in the market into their new venue.

One of the results of the festival was the collective idea of belonging as the female garment workers came to celebrate the festival with the community and gathering of community in a city space means socio-economic capital. Thus, analytically I am arguing that Shop owners are active agents in the creation of translocality and spatial transformation. They engage with the place in multiple forms of open, non-linear processes, negotiations and claim over claim thus, producing interdependent connections between places and people. Moreover, this exchange model constantly challenges and reshapes existing identities, highlighting the dynamic nature of reciprocal interactions.

The question of migrant workers is intertwined with urban dynamics, specifically within Southern Urbanism. Teresa Caldera distinguishes Southern Urbanism from the model of Northern urbanization, labelling it as Peripheral Urbanization.

I use the notion of peripheral urbanization to create a problem-space that allows us to investigate logics of the production of the urban that differ from those of the North Atlantic. I use it as a means of exploring processes of both socio-spatial formation and theory making<sup>2</sup>

One of the features of peripheral urbanization as she says is the idea of ‘Transversal Logic’,

Peripheral urbanization does not mean an absence of the state or planning, but rather a process in which citizens and governments interact in complex ways. While residents are the main agents of the production of space, the state is present in numerous ways: it regulates, legislates, writes plans, provides infrastructure, policies, and upgrades spaces<sup>3</sup>

This demonstrates that migrants are key contributors to urbanization within the Peenya market area. However, new inquiries arise regarding the interplay between religion and state, the influence of religion on specific

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<sup>2</sup> Caldera, T P (2017), “Peripheral urbanization: autoconstruction, transversal logics, and politics in cities of the global south”, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* Vol 35, No 1, p.2

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5

urbanization patterns, the state's role, the distinct role of caste, and the disparities and parallels in the logic employed by individuals and the state, particularly within the global South.

Hence, migrant workers aren't merely transient figures who enter, work, and depart; rather, they actively shape urban spaces and the process of urbanization. The conventional connotations associated with the terms "Migrant" and "Worker" necessitate reconsideration. A singular label fails to capture the nuanced experiences of individuals, leading to issues of stigma, oversimplification, and the disregard of vulnerabilities, agency, and diverse experiences. As Gautam Bhan articulated on the importance of vocabulary

It is invested in my own reading of what a vocabulary rooted in a specific empirical context – the contemporary Indian city – should be speaking about and allowing us to speak about. Each term asserts the political importance of viewing a set of key urban issues facing Indian cities in a particular way<sup>4</sup>

In light of these insights, I am perusing for an alternative conceptual framework that challenges the traditional boundaries between migration and settlement. This reimagined framework seeks to redefine the term "migrant worker" to encompass individuals as active agents shaping social transformations and cultural dynamics. Saying this one of the central limitations of this paper is the lack of understanding on Caste in these dynamics. As Malini Ranganathan put it,

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<sup>4</sup> Bhan G. 2019. Notes on a southern urban practice. *Environ. Urban.* 31(2), p.,3

Caste not as an outdated relic or as uniquely Indian, but as a core analytic in the study of urban social and environmental inequality in the Global South more generally<sup>5</sup>

Thus studying the urban and migrant in the global south has to look into the process of caste, religion and state because in India one can't talk about state without caste and religion or articulate religion without caste and state.

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<sup>5</sup> Ranganathan, M. (2022). Towards a political ecology of caste and the city. *Journal of Urban Technology*, 29(1), p., 7

**Belonging in the City:  
The Governing Influence of Work Structure on Migrant Workers**

**Upasana Patgiri**

The presentation is a culmination of the work I did as a part of our site study exercise in my fellowship at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Bengaluru. It showcases a study which investigates the dynamic interplay among migrant workers and their work structure in order to understand the idea of belonging within the industrial setting of Laggere, Bangalore. The study reveals that the work structure significantly shapes the lives of migrant workers in a new environment, hindering the development of a sense of belonging. However, the influence of religion emerges as a powerful force, suggesting the potential for transcending the constraints imposed by work structures.

The research methodology involves the utilization of Snowball sampling and in-depth interviews with interstate migrant workers. The study focuses on three distinct categories of migrant workers—Garment Workers, Salaried male Employees, and Shop owners—while exploring the impact of work structures on belonging. The inquiry unveils varying lived experiences among these worker types, showcasing a spectrum of belonging experiences ranging from rigidity to flexibility and agency. To comprehensively explore this spectrum, the paper is structured into three sections. Firstly, it delves into the contextual understanding of industrial space. Subsequently, the paper navigates through the distinct work structures of the three migrant worker types, examining their relationships with the locale and social interactions to elucidate the influence on the sense of belonging. The third section centres on a case study involving a temple in the locality, which has been reconstructed by migrant shop owners, revealing their role as economic contributors and key links between interdependent economies. The adaptable work structure empowers them to transform individual belonging into a collective sense of community. In conclusion, the paper

argues that migrant workers possess agency in shaping trans locality and spatial transformations. It posits that religion, as an influential agency, plays a fundamental role in facilitating this transformation. The study concludes by prompting a critical inquiry into alternative approaches for understanding migrant workers beyond conventional labels of "Migration" and "Workers," proposing that the contextual role of religion offers valuable insights into this complex phenomenon.

This study on Belonging, was the first such experience for me where the interviews we took, the interactions we had with the people who have lived in the area for different durations of time, showed us a peak into their lives. We began to see how the area had not only influenced their lives, but also how their presence and choices had helped to shape the character of the place itself. It was a fascinating interplay, a reciprocal relationship that added to our understanding of the urban fabric of Laggere.

**Animated Short film: The Fight for a Right:** “The Fight for a Right” is a 16-minute-long short film on refugee education, made by me and 3 of my friends as a submission for a competition called the 2020 Peace Motion Graphics Competition organized by the Sunhak Peace Prize Foundation. Despite it being our first time delving into the world of animation, we were humbled to receive an Honorable Mention for our work. This film is a piece of work really close to my heart as it was very different from things that I had done before and I had thoroughly enjoyed the entire process and hard work put behind it. It was an opportunity for me to research and learn about the very pressing issue of the refugee crisis as well as an opportunity to learn the process of animation and using video editing software like Adobe Premiere Pro and After Effects. More importantly, it provided me with a unique and creative outlet to express and explain information. Through the story of a young girl who was forced to flee her home country and become a refugee, the film depicts the struggles, journey, and hope of millions of refugee children across the world. The film reveals that education is the key to unlocking their potential and creating a better future. However, it also

sheds light on the many obstacles faced by refugee children, even after gaining admission to a school. Ultimately, "The Fight for a Right" concludes on a hopeful note, emphasizing that with the right environment, support, and resources, refugee children can overcome any challenge and soar to great heights. It also showcases various organizations working towards the same goal and how anyone can contribute to this cause. This animated film comprehensively encompasses the various stages of work put into it which includes research, writing, drawing, editing, storytelling, narration and visual representation of data. I am grateful to have gained new skills and a deeper understanding of the world of animation and the issue depicted, through its creation.

Link for the video uploaded on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/DZeV7itu1C4>

**Club as Agents of Power:  
Interrogating the Transforming Politics in Bijoygarh**

**Olivia Banerjee**

As an undergraduate student in 2022, I was struck with deciding what might entail in shifting from my hometown to a new city for my Masters. I was trying to envisage what would entail in my private space there, which circles would define my identity, which groups would dictate my stay, and what moralities to consider to settle as an appropriate resident in a completely new locality. Even though I finally did not move out, but leaving behind a place, and entering a new place, comes with a fair share of these considerations, as humans operate to frame their identities through dissociation and association with certain groups. As Oscella and Oscella observe, in ‘From Transcience to Immanence: Consumption, Life-cycle and Social Mobility in Kerala, South India’, in the context of caste, such a politics of equalising our status operates within a particular caste group, and politics of inequality operates between caste groups. The locational displacement in migration does not concern only the lone migration of the person. It is not the consideration of numbers that I am hinting at, but rather that the one migrating self brings with them their own idea of culture, politics, ideas, and practices essentially. The individual gets situated with the collective: the collective they belonged to, the collective that mediates the merge in the new space, and the collective that they get finally situated in. The middle reference of the collective that bridges is my lens for reading the phenomena of displacement among the Partition survivors of Bengal.

There was continuous immigration from East Bengal (now, Bangladesh) from 1946 to 1971. The first batch was primarily people with education, working links, and close associations within Bengal. They inhabited the southern and northern fringes of the city, by jabardakhal, or forceful inhibition of the vacant lands. To create a sense

of community in this new area, and recover from the horror of displacement, social associations, like colony committees, theatre associations, and neighbourhood clubs were created. The strategies of social and territorial control were enacted through these associational lives to ‘create a sense of community’, of para, ‘in response to an urban milieu’. For the refugees, it was symbolic to create this ‘vibrant part of middle and lower-middle class social life’ to seek legitimacy for the settlement, integrate into the existing local urban politics, build a sense of belonging to the place, and challenge the overarching otherisation perpetuated by the ‘original inhabitants of the land’.

Lund, Lindell, and Schindler argued that urban political life is governed beyond the state, dividing the post-colonial cities into ‘multiple configurations of power and overlapping spaces of governance’. The social institutions of ‘clubs’ self-identifying as ‘non-political’ regularly advocated ‘subject formation and reproduction of territorialised authority’, as per De Carteau’s Theory of Practice. And, reading through the history and contemporary situation of a post-Partition city, it readily informs that clubs perform as social, political, and cultural agents, through operating as ‘alternatives to and intermediaries within’ power-holding structures of state and party. It informs the identity formation of the residents, controls urban politics of everyday life, and reproduces different forms of disciplinary control. Academic engagements have mostly studied the hegemonic control of party politics. This empirical study based on Bijoygarh, the refugee colony of South Kolkata is an endeavour to situate both the pre-Emergency and post-Emergency presence of such associations in its territorialisation of power in an urban space. This study from Partition to today helps in contextualising the change of their practices, understanding consequently the present perception of community among residents with a shared past, and the contemporary sense of Partition. The paper runs parallel with phases of different political regimes in Bengal and their subsequent impact on club politics. The main theme tries to understand how social associations remain active forces for the creation of political subjecthood

of the residents, contest the social production of spaces of governance, and analyse the perception of the change in cohesion within the Bijoygarh community.

The research methodology adopts the narrative analysis technique. The history, social transformation, and spatial expansion of the area, from a forceful settlement to another south Kolkata neighbourhood, is reconstructed through the oral narratives of three 'second-generation' survivors of Partition, the academic involvements on Partition and autobiographical reminiscences in newspapers and local magazines of the residents. The activities and role of clubs are deduced through focus group discussions and unstructured interviews with colony committee and para club members, along with the residents, who are not direct stakeholders of these associations. A purposive sampling method was adopted based on my access. The course of the presentation will begin with a rough outline of the political, social, and cultural contexts behind the formation of Bijoygarh. The colony was built by the unauthorised occupation of the wireless centre and barracks for Allied Forces during World War 2 in the Jadavpur region of South 24 Parganas, with just twelve families. The land initially belonging to Muslim zamindar, Layalka was forcibly taken over to aid the process. This discussion would follow the debate over considering the settlement as a jabardakhal or not, considering the association of the settlement leader with the Bengal administration. The urban expansion would be situated historically.

The subsequent sections will be understood for an understanding of the activity of the associations till the Emergency, during the Left Front government, and from then to the contemporary time. The long-drawn temporal framework of arrangement of club activities, particularly for seeking legitimacy, for their involvement in urban movements, and their role in controlling the everyday affairs hint at the practices of territoriality and of creating subjects. The clubs operate within the liminal spaces of larger power structures to produce 'para' subjects. De Carteau's 'pragmatic contract' of clubs changes the political orientation, while earlier it was based on recognising

the identity of Bijoygarh as a refugee colony in resisting or negotiating with state authority and the 70s-time frame garnered fuelling the political distinction within the space, incorporating and reproducing the institutional disparities with the space. The cohesion of the community breaks down through these contextual practices and creates new meanings of 'shared and individual identities. Clubs never subordinate themselves in the process, but remain the prime locale of everyday urban governance. The pattern of membership in the clubs also change, earlier benign dominated by upper-middle class leaders of the settlement drive, changing to youth from mostly lower-middle class and lower-class backgrounds maintaining proactivity. While earlier the strife was against the ghotis, it now works as a representation of deprived classes. The contemporary is framed by Kolkata's larger practice, sporting a Bhadrakol imagination through the activities of 'social work, cultural programmes, etc', with a focus on the cultural celebration of a site of faintly imagined communities, the Baro Bhooteer Mela and Bijoygarh forming a renting neighbourhood. The understanding might be in line with many other clubs in the city, reinventing its claimed role in everyday life. With the intervention of party politics, and decentralised governance through councillors, the need for clubs to take responsibility is certainly lost, but the clubs through 'intermediarising' made possible the former intrusion. But dealing with subjective scrutiny in specific time frames, oral history, observations, and mapping trajectories of clubs, it hints that the history made the associations, and had its imprint shaped in ways of cultural stimulations. The trajectory made it possible that despite Bijoygarh changing into another Kolkata para, the refugee identity remains culturally propagated through club discourses.

## Vandal

### Agni

According to Google, the most favoured definition of the word “vandal” is - “a person who deliberately destroys or damages property belonging to others.” This definition of the word, debatably, assumes certain sociopolitical roles and norms and ways, for it to be true. Was the first cave painter vandalising someone else’s cave or destroying property of the residence he didn’t also pay any rent for? I will stick my neck out and say no, and also that in today’s day and age, whilst there is a lot happening in forms of creation and art-forms, let’s not forget the fact that we all often confirm (or are expected to) to certain roles and norms- artist, curator, host, audience, critic, bot, what have you. It is safe to say in the world we live in today is post-internet (as coined by Marisa Olson), post-truth, post-privacy. Public art and vandalism are two distinct yet interconnected forms of artistic expression that play significant roles in shaping the socio-cultural landscape of India. Within the contexts of urbanity, migration, and the socio-politics of visual expression, they both serve as reflections of societal dynamics, power struggles, and cultural transformations. In the urban context, public art ‘ideally’ serves as a means of enriching public spaces, fostering a sense of community, and promoting cultural heritage. These artworks often employ art practitioners and students and are sponsored by the Government or brands in the form of endorsements. All this layered on architectures of cities and towns along with uncatagorised organic forms of visuals like markings, hoardings or posters, living spaces, flora-fauna, waste, adds up to a manmade socio-political definition of every such space in context. 10 years back Shantiniketan did not have walls around its campus area. 10 years before that there were more trees than people or at least I would like to believe so. With India’s sociopolitical and communal history, a lot of vandalism should highly be labelled as destruction or war crime so as to not abuse the usage of this word and its potential in vocabulary

when discussing identity politics in the visual world. Urbanity also breeds tensions. Graffiti tags, defaced murals, and damaged sculptures are not uncommon sights in urban landscapes. Yet, vandalism, in this context, can be seen as a form of artistic expression, a rebellion against the hegemony of mainstream art institutions, and a means of reclaiming public spaces for marginalised voices. Where is the line really? At the end of the day, even the STICK NO BILLS writing adds up to defining a fraction of a place's visual identity. Public art and vandalism are inherently political acts, reflecting and challenging power structures, social norms, and dominant narratives. However, the socio-political nature of public art also makes it vulnerable to censorship and suppression. Yet, let's not forget, even when the powerful stayed silent, common individuals took to the streets with bold reds and whites and greens in these recent dire times. Even in the most dystopian landscape, a mark left by a person, a mark that we can cognitively communicate with, is connecting at a very human level that goes beyond the realm of art or design as field or subject, semantically speaking. I would like to use this gathering as an opportunity to create a safe space that can serve as a melting pot idea, identities, roots, vulnerabilities, memories, etc. in a voluntarily expressive and collaborative manner. In this workshop, let us all represent ourselves in whatever name or visual we want to, anonymously if needed, and say or draw or write or click or record whatever we want to make heard, and it would be even more ideal if we take the time to interact with a space or surface of our common or individual choice. By documenting these, we can compile it into a visual format like a zine or a short film- whichever is more complementary to the outcome of this exercise, which we will find out upon gathering and interacting. It will be a representation or a documentation of everything someone participating is or wants to be, at least during the duration of the said practice. This practice can perhaps, in the long run, help in community building as well.

## **Children & Inefficient Care-Giving Practices**

**Shruti Roy**

In typical Indian households grown up men are a significant breadwinner and oftentimes also caregivers alongside women in the family. However, absence of this figure disrupts this usual structure. Sometimes it may be a crisis but then it leads to alternate systems. My pursuit for stories has taken me to pockets of cities where these alternate practices co-exist. Cities provide homage to everyone who seeks a livelihood. This includes women and children. I would like to discuss the same through verbal narration of my experiences, its relation to my body of work along with pictures and sketches from my visits. In one of my academic field visits to Ahmedabad I encountered the instance of a care-receiver filling up for the absence of the care-giver in the family. Ahmedabad is known as Manchester of India because of its textile mills. Rakhial was one of the hubs for these mills. But after the emergence of power looms, the mills shut down rapidly and Rakhial couldn't completely recover from this economic crunch. Now the dingy area supports numerous unsystematic small scale textile industries and sewing workshops. These workshops thrive on child labour. The workshop owners are fully aware of this being an illegal practice and there was a certain level of gatekeeping that I faced while trying to interact with these children. But the chance of finally getting to know about one of the children, Rajan Gaur proved to be eye-opening. Before getting to know him, I had the premonition that children in the family were often imposed to start working for a source of additional revenue stream and due to lack of awareness about education among the caregivers. Rajan, however, was studying at 7<sup>th</sup> standard in a village school in Bihar and was looking forward to continuing his education. But then his father suddenly passed away. None of his uncles extended any support. So, Rajan voluntarily took up the responsibility upon himself to look after the family to continue his younger siblings' education. He sends money to his mother

every month so that she can tend to the youngsters. This inspired me to work on my graphic story 'Chhota-Bada'. I am primarily a storyteller, so I empathize with people and social concerns I encounter and I attempt to visually communicate them as a medium to a larger audience who can connect. But I lack the theoretical learning to analyse them and act on them. So, I wish to raise the discussion among my peers whom I'll be interacting with in the youth meet, regarding how the issue of child-labour can be tackled in such a situation of absence of primary caregiver in the family. I would also like to briefly discuss my observation on alternate caregiving practices in my ongoing project. So, I went to Sonagachi, the red-light area of Kolkata to understand the emotional and social concerns of the women residing there. While researching for the same, I also came to know the role of these women as caregivers. Sex workers face huge social criticism. But apart from that also challenges come in this profession through innumerable ways as it has not yet been legalized in India. For the same reason, the working mothers here, prefer to keep their wards away from their workplace for better safety and upbringing. Those who have a supportive family (knowingly or unknowingly of their profession) keep their children with the other members of the family who are then the caregiver and the mother is only the financial backer. But in many cases, the families are not at all supportive of the mother or their child. Some of these families are financially taken care of by the sex-worker but are not accepted as a member to the family. In these crooked scenarios, the women reside within their working area along with their child. So, during the time the woman is engaged with any client the children are taken care of by acquaintances of the mother or are asked to stay outdoors. These leave the child with a major impression. In most cases that become very prone to getting absorbed in the ecosystem of the area to follow mother's footsteps on being a girl and on being a boy they engage in drug circuits and other local politics. In very few cases, the children become truly aware of the situation they are in and strive to get out of the loop. Parvati is one of those rare successes, who was raised in the brothels but secured education and started working in an NGO. In turn, she worked for the welfare of her

area. I was very lucky to be able to interact and get the picture of the place from her. Based on my experience, I feel that the financially weak when there is a crisis in the caregiving system, the young care recipients, that is the children are most vulnerable and often it's their entire future prospect which is at stake. This is an impending concern that is swelling up within me and I am looking forward to having meaningful discussion with my peers and about their experience on similar streams and effective prospects to tackle the situation.



## **Palestinian Refugees: Memory and Conflict**

**Dalia Mikulska**

After the creation of Israel in 1948 and the defeat of the Arabs in the war (which Arabs call "Nakba" catastrophe), many Palestinians lost their homes and had to flee to other places. Today, we can find significant populations of Palestinians in Israel (although they have Israeli IDs, they still face various forms of discrimination), the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem (in all those places they have a different status, which affects their inhabitants' rights). Significant populations of Palestinian refugees also live abroad (beyond historic Palestine's borders): in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and some other countries. During my presentation, I will explain the challenges faced by Palestinian refugees in those locations, including legal status, employment opportunities, and access to essential services. I will briefly introduce the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) - a parallel to the UNHCR organization that was created in 1948 to support Palestinian refugees. Thus, Palestinians are the only nation that is not under the UNHCR mandate. Although refugee camps are usually associated with places where one lives temporarily, for example until an armed conflict ends and people can go back to their homes, there are many places in the Middle East where refugees have lived for generations and nothing indicates that this situation will change any soon. On the contrary: the ongoing war in Gaza produces even more displaced people. Such refugee camps, that host generations of Palestinian refugees exist both in Palestine (they house Palestinians displaced from places in what is now Israel), as well as in Lebanon. Today, those places seem more like a slum, impoverished areas of the city, than refugee camps. In Lebanon, the presence of Palestinian refugees is a contentious issue and has become one of the flashpoints that influenced the country's 15-year armed conflict, which took place between 1975 and 1990. In addition to Palestinians who have been living in Lebanon for generations, there is also

a significant population of Palestinian refugees from Syria who have sought refuge in Lebanon since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011. These refugees face additional challenges as they navigate life in Lebanon. Many Palestinians in Lebanon live in refugee camps established by UNRWA. These camps are often overcrowded and lack adequate infrastructure, leading to difficult living conditions for residents. Some of the major refugee camps in Lebanon include Ain al-Hilweh, Burj al-Barajneh, and Rashidieh. Jordan also hosts a significant population of Palestinian refugees. Estimates vary, but it's believed that Palestinians make up a significant portion of Jordan's population, possibly around 40-50% of the total Jordanian population. They are descendants of Palestinians who fled or were expelled from their homes during the Arab-Israeli conflict surrounding the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, as well as those who fled during subsequent conflicts, particularly the 1967 Six-Day War. Many Palestinians in Jordan live in refugee camps established by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Some of the major camps include Baqaa, Jabal al-Hussein, and Jerash Camp. I will also analyse the situation of internally displaced Palestinians within the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the socio-economic challenges, and access to basic services, including healthcare and education. I will also provide an overview to the current situation in Gaza, where many had to flee from bombs to Rafah, a city near the border with Egypt. Today, due to the war in Gaza (which some believe constitutes genocide), there are voices, on the Israeli right, about the settlement of Gaza (by Israelis). Some suggest that Egypt should host Gazan population. I will explain this in the context of ethnic cleansing. During my presentation, I will explain the concept of the “right to return”, enshrined in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194, adopted on December 11, 1948. Among Palestinians, as well as Arabs from other countries, the popular belief is that refugees have a right to return to their homes. Many of them still hold keys to the homes that their grandparents had to flee from in 1948 or 1967 (after the "Six- Day War"). They still hope to go back one day, although the reality seems much less positive. This concept refers to the

legal and moral entitlement of Palestinian refugees and their descendants to return to their homes and properties from which they were displaced during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and subsequent conflicts. This issue is central to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and has been a major point of contention in peace negotiations and international diplomacy. This presentation aims to delve into the challenges faced by Palestinian refugees within these regions and explore potential opportunities for addressing their needs and aspirations, but also to spark a discussion on how long one can be a refugee.

## Insights from Environmental News Reporting: Exploring Climate Change-Induced Migration

Vishal Shukla

This discussion proposal aims to deliver insights derived from my news reporting and field trips focusing on the linkage between climate change and migration. Through an exploration of my two stories, this presentation will highlight the multifaceted impacts of climate change on migration patterns and the urgent need for proactive measures to address this pressing issue.

**Climate Change Worsens School Dropout Rates of Kids in India:** Climate change is not only reshaping our landscapes but also affecting the very fabric of society, particularly in vulnerable regions like India. My story sheds light on the alarming trend of increased school dropout rates among children in India, exacerbated by climate-induced environmental crises. According to data from the Ministry of Education, approximately 37% of schools in India lack adequate protection against climatic events, leaving students, particularly those in marginalised communities, at higher risk of interrupted education. Girls, in particular, often bear the burden of household responsibilities, which intensifies during environmental crises, leading to higher dropout rates. It's projected that by 2050, India alone will see 45 million people forced to migrate from their homes due to climate disasters, further highlighting the urgency of addressing this issue. The correlation between climate change and migration is evident in the context of education. In regions highly susceptible to climate-induced disasters, such as floods, droughts, and cyclones, the disruption of schooling becomes a common phenomenon. Families, grappling with the aftermath of such disasters or struggling to adapt to changing conditions, often prioritise immediate needs over education. This

results in increased dropout rates, particularly among girls who are disproportionately affected due to societal norms and gender roles. The report by the Cross Dependency Initiative underscores the severity of the situation, identifying nine states in India as the most vulnerable to climate change. Apart from Kerala, states like UP, Bihar, Rajasthan, Punjab, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat exhibit alarmingly high school dropout rates, further emphasizing the urgent need for targeted interventions to support affected populations.

**Impact of Climate Change on Migration due to Food Shortage in India:** Climate change-induced food shortages are driving migration patterns in India, exacerbating existing socio-economic vulnerabilities. Agricultural disruptions and declining crop yields, exacerbated by unpredictable weather patterns, are forcing communities to migrate in search of livelihoods and essential resources. The Himalayan region, known for its rich biodiversity, is experiencing profound ecological shifts due to rising temperatures, leading to food insecurity and displacement. One of my reports underscores the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address food security challenges and support vulnerable populations affected by climate-induced migration. The relationship between climate change and migration due to food shortages is multifaceted. In agrarian societies like India, where a significant portion of the population depends on agriculture for livelihoods, the impact of climate change on food production is profound. Erratic rainfall patterns, prolonged droughts, and extreme weather events wreak havoc on crops, leading to reduced yields and diminished incomes for farmers. As a result, communities are forced to seek alternative means of sustenance, often resorting to migration to urban centres or other regions with more favourable conditions for agriculture. The Himalayan region, known as the 'water tower of Asia,' faces significant challenges due to melting glaciers and changing precipitation patterns. This not only affects agricultural productivity but also threatens water security for millions of people downstream. The resulting food shortages and resource conflicts further exacerbate

migration pressures, highlighting the urgent need for coordinated efforts to address the root causes of climate-induced migration.

Key highlights and Implications: Through an analysis of these two news stories, several key insights emerge, emphasising the interconnectedness of environmental degradation, migration, and climate change. I'll try to break them down separately:

**Environmental-Societal Interconnectedness:** Climate change-induced environmental disruptions exacerbate existing vulnerabilities within communities, leading to increased migration patterns as individuals seek to adapt to changing conditions and secure livelihoods. The nexus between climate change, food shortages, and migration highlights the complex interplay of socio-economic factors driving human mobility. Additionally, the projected increase in climate-induced migration underscores the urgency of addressing this issue to prevent widespread displacement and humanitarian crises. For example- The intensification of droughts in rural India leads to decreased agricultural productivity, resulting in economic hardship for farmers and subsequent migration to urban areas in search of livelihoods.

**Need for Adaptation Strategies and Policy Interventions:** Effective adaptation strategies and policy interventions are essential to mitigate the impacts of climate change on migration patterns. Early warning systems, infrastructure resilience, and community-based approaches to disaster preparedness are crucial components of comprehensive climate change adaptation strategies. Furthermore, addressing food security challenges and supporting sustainable agriculture practices are critical to ensuring the resilience of vulnerable communities in the face of environmental crises. For Example- Investments in climate-resilient infrastructure, agricultural

diversification, and social safety nets can help mitigate the impacts of climate-induced migration and build adaptive capacity among affected populations.

**Importance of Collaborative Action:** Addressing the root causes of climate change-induced migration requires collaborative action and multilateral cooperation at local, national, and international levels. By fostering partnerships and sharing best practices, stakeholders can work together to build resilience and support affected communities, thereby mitigating the impacts of climate change on migration patterns. Initiatives such as the Paris Agreement provide a framework for global cooperation on climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, highlighting the importance of collective action in addressing this pressing global challenge.

**Role of Education and Awareness:** Education and awareness play a crucial role in addressing the impacts of climate change on migration patterns. By empowering communities with knowledge and skills to adapt to changing environmental conditions, education can help build resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate-induced displacement. Furthermore, raising awareness about the linkages between climate change, migration, and socio-economic factors can foster greater understanding and support for proactive measures to address this issue. How a mindful awareness campaign can work wonders; here is an example: In the village of Keshavapuram in Maharashtra, where recurrent droughts had historically forced residents to migrate in search of water, a grassroots campaign promoting rainwater harvesting and efficient irrigation techniques resulted in a 30% decrease in outmigration rates, demonstrating the transformative impact of education and awareness on local resilience to climate-induced migration.

## **Community Caregiving as a Practice of/in Sovereignty**

**Aishani Khurana**

My ongoing PhD fieldwork looks into the afterlives of communal violence in urban spaces, taking the Delhi pogrom of 2020 as an analytic. Conducting ethnographic research in two Muslim neighborhoods in North East Delhi—Mustafabad and Shiv Vihar, that were at the epicenter of the religious violence in 2020 which claimed 53 lives, my preliminary findings indicate how practices of caregiving and rebuilding the community become practices of “sovereignty”. I utilize the concept of sovereignty as thinking tool to explicate both the nature of anti-Muslim state violence and also to qualify forms of agency and caregiving practices that emerge in the aftermath of violence.

While sovereignty has a legal dimension, i.e., it is the right to govern a territory, it is also “de-facto” i.e., it is the ability to kill, punish and discipline with impunity and is therefore the right over life (Hansen and Stepputat, 2006). Therefore, anti-minority violence, in this case the Delhi pogrom, becomes an act of sovereignty by the state. Agamben (1998) establishes his concept of “bare life” to underscore how lawlessness becomes a form of law that allows for killing with impunity. He argues that certain lives become “bare” because it can be taken by anyone without any accountability from the law and it would not even incur the guilt of homicide (Agamben 1998, 71). Das and Poole (2004) qualify this form of “bare life” as something that is constituted “before the law” and argue that Agamben’s theorization of bare life implies that “law produces certain bodies as “killable” because they are positioned by the law itself as prior to the institution of law” (12), especially because they are devoid of all and any political rights. This conceptualization of the bare life is crucial to understanding how sovereign power is utilized to establish a “state of exception” which is a socio-political space of force that is ruled by a juridical order in which

rights and lawfulness is suspended in the name of law (Agamben 1998). In this state of exception, the political community is split into membership and exclusion along the lines of race, ethnicity, or gender and produces new categories of people who are excluded from political membership. However, Puar qualifies Israeli military's violence as sovereignty not because it kills but also because it "creates injury". This "injury" or "debility" as Puar puts it, is not just corporeal but also structural and is engendered through unequal metrics of health, education and geography (2017; 15).

I utilize these theoretical frameworks of sovereignty to argue how the Delhi pogrom as an act of violence was in fact an exercise of sovereignty by the state. Moreover, Ruha Benjamin also talks about "weathering" in her book *Viral Justice* to underscore how racial groups are systematically weathered. Based on my ongoing fieldwork, I will share stories, anecdotes and incidents about what this "debility" and "weathering" looks like for Muslims in these two neighborhoods. However, based on my ongoing fieldwork, I flip this definition of "sovereignty" by underscoring agential practices by members of the community in these two neighborhoods.

Interrogations into mass violence often use the temporal category of the "aftermath" to explore what happens to individuals, communities, and the state after the event of violence has passed. I find this temporal paradigm of the aftermath extremely useful because my project intends to study the lived realities of Muslim women in the aftermath of the Delhi pogrom of 2020, their negotiations with the everydayness of religious violence even when the "event" of violence has passed and to investigate their social, cultural, and political worlds that become emergent. Coming to the question of what political worlds lie emergent in the aftermath of mass violence, Arif's (2016) work offers a unique interrogation to this anthropological inquiry. Taking the case of the 2002 Gujrat pogrom, Arif takes the vantage point of death to inquire the social is constituted— legally, economically, and politically, when life is exposed to death. She introduces the "event-afterlife" paradigm, to focus on affirmative biopolitics that looks not

at the power *over* life but power *in* life (Arif 2016, 31), especially how the social has a generative power for life. She argues that “the web of pathos that brings into being a network of people and emotions that experience the immediacy of suffering and, through that experience, create a social. This social gives shape to a form of life, a bios— that of a legal person aspiring toward citizenship in the frame of this afterlife” (Arif 2016, 76). Thus, the paradigm of the aftermath helps in registering death and destruction while also seeking what lies possible, what changes, and what can be reconfigured after the event of violence to underscore how lives are rebuilt and reconfigured.

Focusing on relationalities that emerge in the afterlives of violence, my work focuses on both vulnerability and potential. It is here that I situate the practices of urban caregiving that have emerged in the afterlives of communal violence. Discussing the emergence of institutions and community life in three sites that I have identified from my fieldwork—a library, a stitching center, and a school, I argue how these emergent forms of institutions run and built by Muslim members of the community are acts of caregiving which not only foster a sense of belonging and affirmative identity to the “debilitated” section of the population, but also becomes an exercise in practicing sovereignty, in place-making, in resilience and in making claims to citizenship.

## **Caregiver Burden on Migrant Adolescent Girl Carers in Urban Households in India**

**Swastika Kashyap**

Migrant adolescent girls taking on caregiving responsibilities within urban households in India is a common phenomenon. These adolescents often shoulder significant responsibilities in caring for the employers' family members, contributing to household chores, and sometimes even becoming the primary caregivers due to various socio-economic factors. The burden of caregiving on these young girls, compounded by their migration status and urban living conditions, remains largely understudied. Although in India there is a bar at 14 years of age below which children cannot be employed in domestic work, it leaves out a wide range of young caregivers within the adolescent age of 14-18 years, who migrate from rural to urban areas in search of work and livelihood. Adolescent girls usually engage in care work due to varied personal and household factors. Primarily, it is because the family she is born into is either unable to provide for her basic needs due to lack of income sources or unwilling to do so for a girl child. Poverty stricken rural families usually want to relieve themselves of the burden of raising a girl child. Sons are viewed as assets while daughters are thought to be liabilities. Furthermore, it is believed that household chores and care work is the domain of women, so it is only justified to them that their girl child work as a caregiver in an urban household and earn to support her family. These adolescent girl carers bear the caregiving burden under varied circumstances of financial and sexual insecurity, poor healthcare and no access to basic education. Additionally, during the adolescent phase, they undergo hormonal changes which not only influence their physical growth but also their emotional state. Employed in low-wage care work in urban households not only deprives them of the required parental guidance and support during these crucial years of physical and emotional development, but also

burdens them with the task of looking after elderly patients and young children in households where both the husband and wife are working professionals. Thus, the aim of the paper that I intend to present at the Youth Meet is to study the impact on adolescent girl carers' social, emotional and physical development. It seeks to explore the socio-economic factors contributing to migrant adolescent girls assuming caregiving roles within urban households in India and to investigate the caregiver burden experienced by these migrant adolescent girl carers in urban Indian households, understanding its impact on their well-being, education, and future prospects. In this paper, I intend to understand the phenomenon within the framework of global economy and capitalist society which on the one hand provides ample opportunities to women in the public domain, but on the other hand differentiates between, in the words of Nancy Fraser, "economic production and social reproduction". Further, the paper uses the concepts of "devaluation thesis" and "wage penalty" to highlight the association of women with care. The paper also aims to investigate the state's role in addressing the needs of migrant adolescent caregivers in India by examining existing policies and programs at the national, state, and local levels, assessing the effectiveness and adequacy of these policies and programs in addressing the needs of migrant adolescent caregivers and exploring stakeholders' perspectives on the role of the state in supporting migrant adolescent caregivers. Previous research has highlighted the challenges faced by migrant populations in urban India, including inadequate housing, limited access to education and healthcare, and socio-economic disparities. However, there is a dearth of studies specifically focusing on the experiences of migrant adolescent girl carers within urban households. Existing literature on caregiver burden primarily centers around adult caregivers, neglecting the unique challenges faced by adolescent girls in similar roles. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the intersection of migration, adolescence, and caregiving in urban Indian contexts.

## **Shilpa – The Work of Art**

Shilpa – The Work of Art is a poetry describing my recent experience with a care worker in a holistic health wellness centre based in Bangalore, Karnataka, India. The poetry begins with a glimpse of my state of mind and health when I reach the wellness centre and meet a care worker named Shilpa, who catches my attention with her dedication to serve the people and work to earn a livelihood despite all the stones that life has thrown at her. It goes on to elucidate how a brief interaction with the care worker delves me into a realization that access to both education and healthcare services is a privilege than a right in the world we live in today. Thus, the poetry, through the life of Shilpa, sheds light into the hardships faced by young care workers on a day-to-day basis. The irony of the poetry is how I, despite having all the opportunities of education and healthcare at disposal, feel encumbered by the inconveniences of life but the care worker, Shilpa, who toils everyday even for the basic necessities is grateful and humble for the little that she has and the work she does. Therefore, through the poetry, the perception of the care worker of her work is also portrayed. Her dedication to service is painted in words by her association of patients with the Lord and her ideas of social life is based on the dependence that human beings have on each other for work, food, care, money, love and empathy. The title of the poetry uses the actual name of the care worker, Shilpa, which translates to “work of art” in English to honour her zeal and commitment for the work she does and also to highlight my admiration of her outlook on life so as to describe her as a work of art itself.

**The Irony of Visibleness, Everyday Lives, and Labor:  
A Study of Indian Muslim Women and Their Relationship with Work**

**Tahseen Fatima**

Muslim women in India have been historically projected, in academia, politics, or activism through a prejudiced lens, wherein the discourses around them tend to have an overdue focus on their relationship with religion, culture, and other symbolic areas such as fundamentalism, terrorism, questions of hijab, talaq, and sharia. It discounts the fact that Muslim Women, stand at the intersections of not just religion and gender, but also caste-community, region, polity, and economy. There exists a strange paradox where Muslim women have become hyper-visible in certain areas of inquiry while remaining invisible in others. The day-to-day realities of life, living, and survival have not received their due attention, as if this social group is not affected by changes in economy and polity. There is a need to look into the question of work, labor, or gainful employment in the everyday lives of Muslim women and situate their work within the larger process of informality, globalization, state policies, and livelihood. The analysis and works on Muslim Women appear to have reached an impasse and a more deliberate engagement with the secular discourse of development and empowerment might be one way out of such an impasse. Further, a better understanding of Muslim Women as a social category could be developed by locating them within the broader context of economic, political, and other interests (Hasan & Menon, 2004). It is rather an accepted fact that Muslim Women in India have a precarious position, socially, politically, economically, and even legally. The relationship between Muslim Women and Work/ Labor seems strange, as it has not been a major focus point of various studies. “Virtually nothing is known about the social and economic status of Muslim women; no nationwide comprehensive

surveys of Muslim women have been undertaken, with the result that there is little understanding of the specific factors that keep a large population in the state of poverty and subordination” (Hasan & Menon, 2004). However, one of the most important sources that describe the socio-economic conditions of the Muslim community is the Sachar Committee report. The report marks that the lower levels of Muslims in employment are largely due to the low participation of Muslim women in work. Muslims are largely employed in non-agricultural self-employed industries. Further, “The economic vulnerability of Muslim workers engaged in informal activities is highlighted when we look at the distribution of the workforce by location of work... the share of Muslim workers engaged in street vending (especially without any fixed location) is much higher than in other SRCs; more than 12 percent of Muslim male workers are engaged in street vending as compared to the national average of less than 8 percent. Two, the percentage of women Muslim workers undertaking work within their own homes is much larger (70 percent) than for all workers (51 percent). While the larger engagement in street vending highlights the higher vulnerability of Muslim workers, the concentration of Muslim women in home-based work raises issues about spatial mobility and other work-related constraints that women face even today” (Rajindar Sachar, 2006). Certain other studies have also pointed out the low participation of Muslim Women in the workforce and their higher presence in sectors of self-employed activities (Das 2015, Neetha N. 2013). A closer look at the distribution of the population in various sectors or industries shows that the Muslim community is largely engaged in two types of manufacturing industries: tobacco and textiles. Even in such industries, one can see a certain sexual division of labor. Women largely work in what has emerged as home-based industries, performing substantial amounts of background labor that enables any form of production. It is often considered that self-employment is preferred by Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular owing to their cultural norms and observations. However, there is a need to problematize such simplistic explanations. Self-employment is also promoted in these groups through governmental policy

interventions considering it to be a good approach to tackling poverty and engaging marginalized populations in some productive activity. Empirical data shows that a larger population of Muslim women in India are engaged in informal work and subsequently their lives are severely affected by the changes in the economy, such as the forces of privatization, and globalization. Zoya Hassan and Ritu Menon have marked that Muslim women in India have the status of “unequal citizens”. ‘Material factors such as poverty, poor education, ill health, economic dependency, gender discrimination, and other factors that correlate with these objective factors can help to explain the existential reality of Muslim women’s lives’ (Hasan & Menon, 2004). My research aims to problematize and stretch the boundaries of citizenship of Muslim women. Citizenship has often been explained through a legal and political setup. This research attempts to take it beyond the attributes of voting and elections and place it along with the questions of equality in terms of human dignity, self-respect, and social, economic, political, and emotional security. The research shall aim to understand the quest for equal citizenship through the domain of paid work or labor undertaken by Muslim women. The scope is to investigate the adequate relationship between forms of employment and the social, economic, and political emancipation or empowerment that accrues to the women undertaking work and how such emancipation reflects in their day-to-day lives as well as their positioning as a citizen of the country. There may or may not be a linear or direct relationship between employment and empowerment. Various factors may determine or influence such a relationship. One such factor could be the advent of globalization and privatization that brought transformation in the way the state negotiates with the public sector undertakings. “Given the nature of the forces driving the current phase of globalization, there are few reasons to expect that women’s growing involvement in paid work will generate a commensurate expansion in their rights, both at work and beyond it. Instead, we have seen cutbacks in protective legislation, the privatization of welfare, and the means-tested targeting of social protection as social policies become increasingly residualised” (Kabeer, 2008). Therefore, it

becomes important to problematize the relationship between employment and empowerment and the various facets of citizenship of Muslim women relating to their lives, livelihood, and community.

**Floating with the Diyarascape:  
Life of People in the Koshi River Flood Plains**

**Rahul Kumar Yaduka**

More than a million people live in the Koshi Diyarascape.<sup>6</sup> The fluvial biophysical givenness of the region has been consistently interfered with by the state-led mega hydraulic interventions intended to manage floods, generate electricity, delineate land-water interface to ensure agriculture and associated land revenue, facilitate irrigation, etc. The journey of these interventions started in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century during colonial rule and, through some ups and downs, concretised into the Koshi Project of 1954. This project straight-jacketed the migrating river Koshi in a pair of embankments.

The impacts of the Koshi Project started manifesting in the region by the end of 1970s as reported by the inhabitants. The embankments impacted the region's ecology, which manifested in the socio-economic and cultural life of the riverine community. On the ecological front, the embankments ruptured the complex interrelationship between the main channel of the river Koshi and multiple smaller rivers in the region, led to the death of its paleochannels, intensified floods and land erosion on the riverside due to the deposition of the sediments, caused perennial waterlogging on the countryside, etc. These changes in the ecological backdrop led to uncertain monsoon crops, i.e., the paddy, and the extinction of riverine biodiversity, flora, and fauna.

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<sup>6</sup> The constantly shifting land-water matrix renders the use of both 'landscape' and 'waterscape' incapable to capture the reality of the region. The geomorphology of the Himalayas and the ongoing changes in land use patterns influence the hydrological behavior of the river downstream and the river hydrology persistently rupture the geomorphology of the Koshi Diyarascape. In a sense, it is dance of the land, river and the people, as coined by Kuntala Lahiri-Dutta and Gopa Samanta.

The marked change in uncertain behaviour of the river, further catalysed by the onset of climate change, made agriculture less productive and contingent of the river behavior. Agriculture being the only driver of the economy, in the absence of non-farm employment, compelled people to migrate out of the region in search of livelihood. Although the profile of destinations for the migrants has become more complicated over the years, the community still goes ahead with the phrase *Dilli-Punjab* to mean the destination. My field immersion indicated that although migrants predominantly rely on the agricultural fields and *mandis* of Haryana and Punjab, the young generation is exploring possibilities in construction, transportation, MSMEs, etc. I also learned that this migration pattern is generally aligned with the region's agricultural cycle, wherein the migrants balance their agricultural needs and the requirements of the agricultural fields and mandis of Haryana and Punjab. This migration is at its peak around the sowing and harvesting season of the destination, the packaging time of the mandis, etc. The linking of the first-time migrants from the village to the traders and farmers in Haryana and Punjab is done by the previous migrants and *thekedars*. Thekedars are also from the same village or panchayat but have spent some time at the destination and have contacts. Interestingly, the migrants seldomly move alone but in a team which has its cook and a quack, popularly called the doctor in the village, who possesses some hands-on experience with the treatment of petty medical issues, has the skill of injection, bandaging, and some level of everyday knowledge about medicine. The migrants reported usual issues like delay in payment, holding off payment, no social security, etc. The scale of migration becomes visible when one lands at the Saharsa junction, the most prominent railway station connecting the Koshi region with destinations in Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, etc. It is also interesting to note that the traders of the Supaul district in the Koshi region are leading a movement to connect Supaul with trains for longer routes.

Here, it must be emphasised that there is an urgent need to study the ‘process’ of this huge outflow of migrants from the Koshi region. We don’t have much research and documentation regarding the diverse destinations migrants go to, like Telangana, Maharashtra, Gujrat, etc. I have some anecdotal evidence of migrants going to grape plantations in Nashik to fertilise the growing grapes, which involves handling hazardous chemicals. The young men, possibly below 18, showed me their hands with damaged skins. They also reported not getting standard safety equipment to handle these hazardous chemicals. In another incident, I dealt with the medico-legal case of migrant construction labour from the Koshi region who suffered an on-site accident while working in Delhi. That process introduced me to the shocking state of informality, legal and social support at the source and destination. Being involved in caring for the victim, I understood how the *thekeedar* roped in local Mukhiya at the source to pressure me not to drag the matter to police, and settle the matter rather informally. Currently, that labourer is disabled and is bedridden with nothing to support his family.

Having listed a few anecdotes, the case for a serious and deep research is felt which examines the preparation of the migrants at the source, the journey and the diverse locations to which they go. This will also lighten the changing nature of labour requirements in India's urban-industrial complex. In a few key informant interviews, I learned that a larger force is at play that deliberately facilitates the huge-scale outmigration from the region. This helps Bihar survive amidst a lack of livelihood-generating options and has gradually reduced it to a remittance-based economy. It is also interesting to know that the migrants after saving some money prefer buying land in their native villages which are rather flood-free.

Coming to people’s movements in the region, I witnessed a very small presence of serious people’s movements. There are some one-off issue-based agglomerations of people with particular interests in mind, like demanding a short stretch of embankment to protect their lands from floods. Very few movements focus on the

larger problem of embankments being the cause of the region's overall decline. This aspect has been probed at a greater length in my thesis. This demonstrated how the material interests of the people are realigned with the structural interventions and their alignment. These structures reorganise the space and people by creating both beneficiaries and victims in the same space. I visualise this intra-community division as a major reason for the limited entrenchment of people's movement. What is particularly relevant to this region is its fluvial ecological backdrop. Having been part of some of the people's movements during my 3-year-long immersion, I can testify that large-scale mobilisation in this region is very challenging. The scale of poverty, navigation challenges, absence of electricity, etc. make political outreach and communication tough. This challenges the conventional studies on social movements where the biophysical givenness of the region is bracketed out. The case of Koshi and similar fluvial ecologies can be a new entry point to expand the theoretical canvas of resistance studies.

Despite the region being in huge flux, the policy paradigm of flood management is rooted in the colonial episteme of river control undergirded by a reductionist ontology. Despite voluminous criticism, there has been negligible policy reimagination, although there is no dearth of recommendations by the academics, movement and government-constituted committees. There has been limited research to trace the possible reasons for this policy inertia. My thesis sheds some light on this by arguing that the larger political economy of the state of Bihar shapes the politics of earthwork around the rivers in which the technical expertise of the Water Bureaucracy works as a depoliticising force.

In effect, my research raises more questions and offers possible directions of research than providing concrete answers.

Photo exhibit: Rendered Invisible: How Development Bypasses the People of Diyara

## **‘Care’ for Tourists or Refugees? Diary of a Traveler from Cox’s Bazar**

**Sucharita Sengupta**

‘Tourists go home, refugees welcome’<sup>7</sup>

It was quite late in the evening when I went to meet my interviewee of the day in compliance with the time, she gave. The glittery lights all around the four-star hotel stood in sharp contrast to the long dark alley where the hotel stood with pride. The year was 2019, my second visit to Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh. I stood there staring with amazement at the newly built hotel that wasn’t there in 2015 when I had first visited Bangladesh for my research. Gently stating my surprise to the interviewee, a well-known lawyer activist in Bangladesh, I learnt that much has changed between 2015 to 19 in the region. A small seaside town and an international tourist destination, Cox’s Bazar spans over some 75 miles stretch of beaches and is now paradoxically also a hub for foreign humanitarian aid workers who work in the nearby Rohingya refugee camps<sup>8</sup>.

Change is the only constant as goes the saying and hence this wouldn’t have been an aberration, or a case in point, had it not been for the cause that has both triggered this change and resulted into several fault lines, as is outlined below. I have started this piece with a quote that welcomes refugees as opposed to tourists. The quote is in the context of Barcelona, an international attraction for tourists that has now become an overcrowded place so

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<sup>7</sup>‘Tourists go home, refugees welcome’: why Barcelona chose migrants over visitors” , the Guardian, 25 June 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/jun/25/tourists-go-home-refugees-welcome-why-barcelona-chose-migrants-over-visitors>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.hi-us.org/bangladesh\\_my\\_eye\\_opening\\_journey\\_to\\_a\\_rohingya\\_refugee\\_camp](https://www.hi-us.org/bangladesh_my_eye_opening_journey_to_a_rohingya_refugee_camp)

much so that it has elicited this response from the locals. This is striking for me for the sheer contrast of the South Asian scenario in contemporary times. Normally, tourists and refugees are oxymoronicly pitted against each other in South Asia. Refugee camps are mostly situated in slightly faraway places from the main town areas that are often borders. These places get marked by illicit transactions, smuggling and trafficking that result into the criminalisation of refugees without taking into cognizance the obscurity of the regions that necessitate such semi formal settings. The case in point here, is also indicative of the general contemporary South Asian scenario of refugee reception. The Indian subcontinent is not new to hosting refugees. Crossing over of tourists, migrants -both economic and forced- and asylum seekers across new borders that came up in 1947 thus have remained a recurring occurrence. Despite being non signatory of the international conventions of Refugees, India and Bangladesh have been known to have welcomed refugees to their respective countries in the past, but now times have changed, to which I shall come back a moment later.

It was as back as 2003, when in an article Ruth V Russel mentioned that this century holds promise of being both the “Century of Tourism” and the “Century of the Refugee<sup>9</sup>. The continuous growth of migratory flows, as well as of tourists, are two of the most important features of this century<sup>10</sup>. Never in history perhaps there have been so many refugees and tourists crossing international borders and there are ironic similarities of both positive and negative impacts of tourism development and refugee relief, on countries in South Asia. Tourism has remained one of the fastest and largest growing industries in the world and as a researcher when I got the chance to visit an

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<sup>9</sup>Russell, Ruth. (2003). Tourists and refugees: Coinciding Sociocultural Impacts. *Annals of Tourism Research*. 833-846.

<sup>10</sup>Tsartas, Paris & Kyriakaki, Anna & Stavrinoudis, Theodoros & Despotaki, Georgia & Doumi, Maria & Sarantakou, Efthymia & Tsilimpokos, Konstantinos. (2019). Refugees and tourism: a case study from the islands of Chios and Lesbos, Greece. *Current Issues in Tourism*.

international tourist place for the second time, which is now also famous for hosting the world's biggest refugee camp of that of stateless Rohingya refugees, I was very intrigued by the way the place is changing logistically.

Standing there in 2019 evoked the same emotions as my first visit there in 2015, both times for my field work on the camp life and resilience of Rohingya refugees surviving in Bangladesh. The Rohingya camps in Bangladesh incidentally are also the largest refugee camps in the world at present. All the changes that Cox's Bazar as a town is experiencing, its steady growth as a global urban centre is oriented around the million plus refugees bordering the townscape but what is the scenario of care and protection for the refugees in question? Has the nature of tourism changed in the region giving rise to more international travelers interested in visiting the Rohingya camps from the global North? Has tourism suffered in wake of the current refugee influx in Cox's Bazar, or it has escalated logistically opening the space to new expansions and markets? These are some of the questions that this research intends to explore through field work experiences in Cox's Bazar in 2015 and 2019.

**Notes from the Field: Cox's Bazar through Changing Times:** The Rohingya camps of Bangladesh are located a bit far from the town or beach area of Cox's Bazar, in Ukhiya, Kutupalong and Teknaf (Teknaf is the border area between Myanmar and Bangladesh through which most Rohingya cross over). After more than one million Rohingyas were forced to flee Myanmar in August 2017 taking shelter in Bangladesh, the entire district of Cox's Bazar has changed to accommodate the refugees, developing into a sort of 'refugee tourism'. It is an interesting field now, one that is overcrowded with researchers, scholars, journalists, NGO workers, human rights activists, lawyers, and other global actors jostling for attention. The structures of these camps too have undergone significant changes in contrast to 2015, when I first visited the locality. No one especially non-Bangladeshi citizens were not allowed to

visit the registered camps then. It was not a spectacle drawing massive international attention, opening door for researchers from the global north to south that has opened up a new system of tourism to the camps.

The first thing that I noticed after arriving at Cox's Bazar from Dhaka was the airport. The airport is located 1.5 kilometres from Cox's Bazar City and 396km from Dhaka. It used to be a small airport with manual checking of luggage which is now replaced by an electronic baggage check point. The first question that I was asked by the airport security authorities was whether the purpose of my visit was to go to the Rohingya camps? - and then on my affirmation, he added, and I quote him, "we used to get tourists interested in traveling here and now we only get foreigners coming from long distances here only to visit the Rohingya camps. Real tourists have almost stopped arriving". This is why I have named this as 'refugee tourism'.

The digital logistics website of the airport notes that due to increased traffic at the airport owing to the present scenario, the government of Bangladesh has decided to expand and upgrade the Cox's Bazar Airport to an international airport. Development works are going on for a new terminal building. To promote Cox's Bazar Airport as an International Airport, a project called Cox's Bazar Airport Development Project is also in progress as part of which the government has decided to increase the runway length from 9,000 to 10,000 feet, along with a series of such measures. The aim is to provide international standard facilities to all incoming passengers by 2030<sup>11</sup>.

Road connectivity projects are also underway to make Cox's Bazar better connected with the rest of Bangladesh and flights have also increased. It is undeniable that all this is being done to make Cox's Bazar logistically more accessible to visitors and tourists. These are just a few instances of the becoming of a place as a destination. This is not to imply that Cox's Bazar was not a destination before but what this study argues is how the influx of a

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<sup>11</sup> Information has been gathered from the official website of the airport <http://www.caab.gov.bd/airports/coxsbazar.html>

million plus refugees has garnered world attention to the place affecting multiple winds of change. Are big humanitarian aid bodies pumping crores of funds to the region boosting employment opportunities for the locals? How far are locals benefitting from the situation? Who are the main beneficiaries? How do researchers based in Bangladesh for research work navigate this space now which till recently was a weekend gateway are some of the questions that arise here? Can we also decipher from here that these camps will perhaps attain a semi-permanent temporality that will not disappear in near future even if that is what theoretically the government wants to do.

Through my field experiences, thus, one of the aspects that this presentation wishes to explore is the conceptualisation of the host, and the host-refugee intersections through the discourse of hospitality and care. Therefore, what is significant to this study is the framing of tourism as a cultural exchange and expression, how hosts and guests view the realm of a “place” and boundaries, and the volatility of the tourism industry with regards to communication mediums, socioeconomic and current events<sup>12</sup>.

Several studies done in 2015, after the refugee crisis worldwide hit its pinnacle have explored the nexus between the host and the tourists. There are debates regarding tourism and its effects on a host community but most focus on the disastrous effect that a tourist leaves behind apart from the monetary benefits. But who is the tourist? In the context of my research in Cox’s Bazar, I was considered as one, because I would leave soon. What is the relationship, if any, that may form between a stranger and the host- vis-à-vis the refugees? Is this relationship limited to a mutually beneficial financial relationship? Is it a relationship that implies dependence, and subsequently,

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<sup>12</sup> Eleni Maria Rozali. ND. “Host Communities and the Refugee Crisis: A Case Study of Kos Island, Greece”, Malmö University Faculty of Culture And Society <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1482213/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

power? How is the figure of the refugee incorporated in this broader discussion of a place that is a destination for various kinds of stakeholders? These are some of the questions that I am wondering aloud for this presentation.

Cox's Bazar is situated in the southwestern part of Bangladesh. It is a fishing port with a width of 2491.85 Sq. km with a population of 2,289,990 and is the longest unbroken beach in the world. Historically, the major source of Cox's Bazar economy is tourism. Millions of people from all over the world visit this city every year. Almost 500 hotels and guest houses in the district are dependent on tourism. "People are also involved in fishing and collecting seafood and sea products for their livelihood. Oysters, snails, pearls and their ornaments are very popular with tourists. Some people are involved in transport business serving the tourists. Cox's Bazar is also one of the few major spots for aquaculture in Bangladesh. Many people are involved in hospitality and customer service-orientated business"<sup>13</sup>. The long, beautiful beach of Cox's Bazar, also known as the world's largest can render anyone awestruck with its sheer magnitude and brilliance. Cox's Bazar now has grown into a vibrant hub with businessmen, hotels, shopkeepers and migrants jostling together. It is also precisely because of this cosmopolitanism that Cox's Bazar presents a unique demography, effecting in turn multiple fault lines, fissures and frictions. As many as 130 local NGOs are now working in the camps which have generated employment opportunities<sup>14</sup>. The camps are gradually transcending into semi urban pockets. Camps' themselves can come to resemble slums of thousands of people, especially when they have existed for many years. As Ramola Sanyal puts in, Michel Agier argued that theorizing

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<sup>13</sup> "Cox's Bazar in the wake of Rohingya influx" (Archived 11 March 2024). Analysis <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/views/coxs-bazar-in-the-wake-of-rohingya-influx-1520606249>

<sup>14</sup> Information gathered from the field from personal interview with Abdul Monsoor conducted in March 2019 in his house in camp 9, Balukhali.

camps is difficult because of the complexity of their urbanity<sup>15</sup>. They are stuck between being humanitarian spaces and cities. Liisa Malkki argues that choosing to talk about the camp as a ‘not yet city’, as Agier does, is unhelpful because it is a developmental jump that does not achieve much (if anything)<sup>16</sup>. So how are all these coming together in the context of Cox’s Bazar? Is Cox’s Bazar changing for the better as a refugee-tourist location or its shine is degrading with the overcrowded field?

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<sup>15</sup> Ramola Sanyal, “Urbanizing Refuge: Interrogating Spaces of Displacement”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Wiley online library, 23 May 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Ramola Sanyal, “Urbanizing Refuge: Interrogating.”

**The *Sawngs* of Calcutta:  
Critic of Colonial Justice and Autonomy of the Subalterns**

**Rajat Kanti Sur**

*Sawng*, a form of the street performance by the subaltern class, was almost a unique identity of Calcutta's popular street culture. Though also enjoyed by the nineteenth-century neo-rich class of colonial Calcutta, performances of sawng also acted as a method to criticise the class. The neo-rich sections of society sometimes used sawng performances against their contemporary rivals within the same socio-economic background. The song actors, who were primarily servants of the palaces of these rich peoples, took this opportunity to design '*sawng*' performances of the nineteenth century as humorous criticism against different activities of the elites. They became a critic of the colonial Law and jurisprudence system that had been prepared to provide justice for all its citizens and subjects. As a result, criticism against the abolition of 'Sati' or the "widow remarriage bill" was not only for its reformist stand but mainly because the elites conceptualised it. Though the current studies proved that the conservative religionists played a crucial role against the reformist laws like the "abolition of Sati" or "Widow Remarriage Bill", performances brought intense criticism of the colonialist idea of ideal citizens through their performances. History of the city witnessed several incidents where *sawng* performance and the performers (mostly the subalterns or working-class people) became the faces of protests against colonisation. Implementing the Dramatic Performance Act in 1876 witnessed a direct criticism of the Municipal system and Law and order made by the *sawng* performers. The autonomy of the performers allowed them to support the strike of the Manual Scavengers of the Calcutta Corporation in 1928.

*Sawng* became a medium for nationalist sentiments to be popularised by nationalist leaders in the twentieth century. It attracted the newly emerged Bengali middle class, who gradually became the most influential sections of Bengali society. It resulted in a significant cultural shift of sawng performances where the subalterns were moving away from these performances due to the imposition of nationalist thought by the newly emerged political elites. Gradual changes in the cultural taste and the growing popularity of regional cinema and theatre had also taken the Bengali middle class out of this popular cultural practice. At the same time, the changing socio-economic conditions in Calcutta during the Second World War, partition and independence caused a significant shift in the cultural scene. The great economic crisis during the 1940s and 50s also changed the economic status of the middle class. Those who especially came as refugees from then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) changed the definition of Bengali subalterns because of their original belonging to the middle or lower middle class before the partition of Bengal.

The talk aims to tell the story of the *Sawng* performance and its performers and their role as a critic of colonialism, the legal and judicial system, and the municipal and police administration. The talk will share how the subalterns of the city claimed their own space through performance and the reaction from the colonialists against the claim. The talk will use maps, photographs, and short video clips to show the geographical location of the performance, the demographic character of those areas, and a glimpse of the performance.

## Care and Storytelling

**Debashree Chakraborty**

One of the many facets of caregiving is the relationship that caregivers share with the ones they provide their support to. While caregivers are required to be cordial and understanding towards the person they are supporting, the relationship sometimes becomes more than just the being within the auspices of caregiving. Caregivers often become confidantes to the ones they provide their services to turning a professional relationship to something intimate and close. The persons at the receiving end of their care often times take refuge in the familiarity they feel with their caregivers. Not that it happens always, but there are instances of such relationships probably within many of our families.

One of the many ways of sharing this bond is through engaging in daily chit-chats, talks, etc., which also hinge on ‘gossip’. Caregivers often act as windows to the world to the ones who avail their services thus relieving them of boredom, loneliness while at the same time making sure they are taken well care of. Senior beneficiaries often associate with their caregivers on the basis of the moments they share between each other beyond the professional limits of care. While we talk of caregiving, we often don’t pay enough attention to the personal bonds that caregivers and their beneficiaries, exchange. The lament and sadness of caregivers at the end of their beneficiary’s journey is often times explained or understood in terms of the monetary engagement. But what really happens to the caregivers? How do they feel to be detached from the child they raised from its infancy when it grows up and does not require care anymore? Or for that matter when the old and frail person whom they called with endearment passes away. Also how do the beneficiaries behave in the absence of their caregivers—when they

don't show up? What happens to a senior beneficiary when their caregiver, who beyond functioning as a caregiver, also acts as companion, as someone who talks and brings news and tidings from the world around does not show up? Films and literature have always tried to explore these relationships and the complexities embedded with these. Since these are human associations, storytelling becomes an ideal way of exploring these relationships.

**“Teen Shaap”:  
Three Tales of Urban Nightmares and a Careful Jolt for the Future**

**Titas Ganguly**

Hundreds of acres of Kolkata’s ‘ecologically-subsidized’ sewage management system aka the East Kolkata Wetlands have vanished since 2016, as trucks filled with soil and pockets filled with real estate kickbacks take over. Once a certain return over capital is recovered from the market, we are left behind with corpses of lush creeks, ‘remodeled’ urban imitations, opaque local civic bodies and ultimately ghost towns. On an August evening in 2022, a Zomato personnel was viciously attacked by a pet German shepherd as he emerged from the elevator on a Mumbai high-rise. In India’s numerous gated communities however, distraught anxieties are not restricted to the canine tribe. The same year and at the height of the pandemic, people flocked on their terraces, balconies and doorsteps, to ‘thank’ the ‘warriors’ and ‘ward off corona’, in a bizarre nod to an old colonial ghost. The bruises and horrors of the ‘bhoots’ of our neoliberal awakening and awkward leap is the premise of my presentation. From Derrida to Fisher, hauntology has provided a new perspective to look at, if not deconstruct, the history of capitalist production, neoliberal development and different aspects of our current social condition. The theoretical tenets became much more tangible through climate activism and working as a field investigator with platform workers in Kolkata. The contradictory and hauntological realities of working as an ‘informal and time-independent’ employee in an urban workplace and living as an urban worker have intrigued me ever since. Even a quick glance at the unfolding of the time of ‘literal haunting’, i.e., night, makes us rethink about the new subjects, conditions and spaces of 24/7 neoliberalism and our collective urban experience. There are other ghosts in our midst, the skeletons of our welfare net, the relics of our colonial past and so on. This is precisely what I would like to build on at the Youth Meet, a

retelling of the 'bhooter netyo' of urban reorganization through three contemporary and somewhat personal tales, to better understand how the nostalgia and remnants of the past, the grudges of the present, and promises of a 'careful' future can be addressed through experiences of daily life and work in the city.

## OVERVIEW OF FILMS

**Walking in a Sinking Island in the Sundarbans**, Director: Sukanta Sarkar, *CRG Media Fellow 2021, and Special Correspondent, Frontier*

The Sundarbans, a cluster of low-lying islands in the Bay of Bengal, spread across India and Bangladesh is an active delta region measuring about 10,000 sq.km area covered with wide swathes of rare mangrove vegetation of which over 4,000 sq.km is in West Bengal, India. Out of the 102 islands in Sundarbans, 48 are reserved forest. The landscape of the Sundarbans region is unique, and includes many water channels. This region is cyclone prone, receives heavy rainfall, and is low-lying. The intensity of natural calamities has increased in recent years due to climate change. The region faces a significant threat from rising sea levels. Studies have highlighted that the rise in sea level is one of the biggest threats for the region as many islands have already submerged or are on the verge of being submerged. The Sundarbans is also an ecologically fragile and climatically vulnerable region that is home to over 4.5 million people (Census 2011). Struggle for survival of the people of this region are very tough and hazardous. Main livelihood of the people of the Sundarbans are agriculture and fishing. Apart from these, honey collection from the forest is another means of livelihood for the local people, which is very risky affair for the inhabitants of the Sundarbans because of man-eater Royal Bengal Tiger. Sundarbans did not have a large number of human settlements until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During colonial rule, the British took initiatives to use part of the region for economic benefit, and therefore, people migrated and settled here. They used the resources in the region, and within a few years, the population of the place increased. The main occupation of the population was agriculture, fishing, extracting honey and selling woods. 'Natural resource-based livelihoods such as agriculture and fishing predominate in the Sundarbans. Due to paucity of fresh ground water resources, mono-cropping is common, which exposes them more to climate hazards such as floods and cyclones. For many migrate is a way out.' Researchers on

Sundarbans also claim, ‘one in every five household now at least one family member who has migrated.’ The above-mentioned environmental shocks lead to an increase in migration outside the region. “Climate refugee” is still not explicitly acknowledged as a specific category eligible for protection under international law refugees. A rise in sea level is one of the biggest threats that the Sundarbans region is facing. It is leading to land erosion and submergence of the islands. According to a study conducted on involuntary migration in Sundarbans, sea level rise was mentioned as an important factor. Three islands Lohachara, Suparibhanga and Bedford – have already been submerged on the Indian side (Bera, 2013). While the island of Ghoramara, on the Indian side, is at a high risk of land erosion, five villages of the island have already submerged. The desecration of the Sundarbans region has been attributed to multidimensional issues, such as, calamity threats, environmental degradation, lack of livelihood opportunities and lack of infrastructure. In 2011, a socio-ecological study conducted by the Jadavpur University and World Wildlife Fund revealed that four islands – Lohachara, Bedford, Kabasgadi and Suparibhanga – have already vanished due to sea-level rise in the last five decades and nearly 70,000 people became climate refugees. The Bedford, Suparivanga, 0Lohachara have already gone under the water. Ghoramara, Moushuni and Sagar Islands are sinking. Among these 3 costal Islands Ghoramara and Moushuni Island is highly worst affected due to rise of sea level and natural calamity like cyclone and storm. Sagar Island has been sinking too due to rise of sea level. Ghoramara the sinking Island. According to land record of South 24 Parganas administration its original size was 29 thousand Bighas, now it has only around 3 and half thousand Bighas during last 5 decades. More than 45 thousand inhabitants were lived in this island. today Ghoramara’s population around 4 thousand only. More than 40 thousand people lost their hut and land to the water due to natural calamities and rise of sea-level. In 2009, I first visited the Ghoramara after that I went their several time. A few days back I have again visited the rest of the land of Ghoramara. During my walk in this sinking island what I have seen I would like to share with people, who are really concern about Climate Refugees!

**Struggle and Resilience of Momiron Nessa**, Director: Wahida Parveez, *CRG Media Fellow 2022*

Every year Assam is hit by floods and it takes a lot of people's lives, crops, houses etc. Erosion is also a major problem of the people who live in char-chapori area. Sometimes it becomes a chronic problem like if someone lost his/her home in flood or erosion, then he/she shifted to another place. Most of the people who live in the riverine area are shifting their home because of the erosion. They are the victims of both climate induced displacement as well as state sponsored structural violence. According to the NESAC report Brahmaputra expanded its area to 6,080 km in 2006 from 4,850 km in (1963-75). Another study conducted by IIT Roorkee, estimates that around in fifty years 7 percent of Assam's total land mass has been eroded. These figures only tell how devastating the effects of climate change has caused on the lives of ordinary people. Moreover, the construction of dams of Kurishu in Bhutan has further worsened the flood situation downstream of Beki and Manas. Beki and Manas river come from the Himalaya from the Bhutan side, both of the rivers have different courses but now both of them have expanded and joined on Mathanguri. In 2004, Kurishu dam released excess water and created havoc in the downstream areas. Now, almost every year three to four waves of flood ravage these areas, many of these are actually flash floods. Last year in Jania, Barpeta district, Beki took a new side course and it took a village into the river. This documentary is the story of a woman who was living in a char called Takakata on the river Beki. The erosion took away her home and she moved to another char chapped Monir char. This is the story of resilience and adaptation of a women living in ecologically fragile zones and her struggles for identity.

## **BOLPUR**

A municipal town situated roughly around 150 kms to the north of Kolkata, Bolpur is about four hours away from Kolkata by road and rail. Located in the Birbhum district of West Bengal in India, Bolpur is famous as a cultural haven and an educational centre. The world renowned Viswa Bharati University established by the noble laureate Rabindranath Tagore is seated in the neighbourhood Shantiniketan that was gradually developed since 1863 by Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, father of Rabindranath. In 2023, Shantiniketan was inscribed into the UNESCO World Heritage List by the World Heritage Committee. The two rivers Kopai and Ajay flow by the city of Bolpur which earlier had dense forest cover but today is marked by substantial soil erosion. The weather in March is warm with the season of bloom of the fiery *Palash* flowers. The ashram complex of Shantiniketan, Rabindra Bhavan, Kala Bhavan, and many other institutes have museums dedicated to the exploration of arts, languages, humanities, music, and more. The celebrations for *Holi*, the festival of colours, locally known as *Basanta Utsab* (Spring Festival) is a delight to watch. The famous *Sonajhuri haat* (local market place) named after the Sonajhuri forest provides a collective of handicrafts.



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