# READING CITIES THROUGH NEIGHBOURHOODS

**Winter School in Community-based Research**

**15-20 February 2023,
Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi, Karampura Campus**

# NOTES

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**NAME:**

Welcome to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD).

The Centre for Community Knowledge at AUD is an interdisciplinary unit that documents, archives, and disseminates the diverse oral, cultural and historical, and practice-based knowledges of communities. Its work aims to promote a better understanding of living heritage and integration of such knowledge into policy and alternatives for sustainable futures. As part of its work across locations such as the Delhi region, Himalaya and Northeastern India, and Central India, the Centre has conducted extensive oral history-based research emphasising the ideas, artefacts, and places that contribute to the vibrancy of people's living traditions, despite major socio-economic changes happening around them. CCK has put together multiple archives, neighbourhood museums, audio-visual content, publications, and community-based events since its inception in 2012.

The Winter School is being organised with three main objectives in mind. First, to share CCK and its partners' work and methods with the wider community of researchers and practitioners. Second, to promote conversations around the place of heritage and community knowledge in the backdrop of broader urban transformations. Third, to help build a community of interested individuals with some shared understanding of and stake in these issues.

The Winter School includes workshops on diverse methods of 'Readings Cities through Neighbourhoods' such as walking and sensing, mapping, oral history, and storytelling alongside walks and observation-based fieldwork in the fascinating neighbourhoods of Khirki and Karampura. Plenaries on various aspects of community-based research and engagement are also planned.

Hope you find the School productive and generative!

# PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

_A girl sitting on the stairs of Jama Masjid, February 1972._

## DAY 01
### February 15

**10am - 11am**
Opening

**11:30am - 1:30pm**
**Walking as Method**
Workshop on Walking
by Mesha Murali &
Saransh Srivastav

**2:30pm - 4pm**
**Walking as Method**
Neighbourhood Walk
in Karampura with
Mesha Murali and
Saransh Srivastav

**4:15pm - onwards**
**'Smell Assembly and
Beyond'** by Ishita Dey

**10am - 1:15pm**
**Mapping
Neighbourhoods**
Workshop on mapping
by Shamindra Nath Roy
and Khushdeep Kaur

**2:15pm - 4pm**
**Mapping
Neighbourhoods**
Mapping exercise
in Karampura by
Shamindra Nath Roy and
Khushdeep Kaur

**4:15pm onwards**
**'Gali, Mohalla, Basti,
Shahr: Writing Qasba
Histories in a Post-
Partition City'** by Yogesh
Snehi

## DAY 02
### February 16

# DAY 03
**February 17**

**10am - 11:30am**
Workshop on Oral History Methods by Ekta Chauhan

**12pm - 1:30pm**
Workshop on Oral History Methods by Ekta Chauhan

**2:30pm onwards**
**'Memories–the past remembered, received, and reconstituted'**
by Swapna Liddle

# DAY 04
**February 18**

**10am - 4pm**
Workshop on Digital Storytelling by Surajit Sarkar

**4:15pm onwards**
**'Forms of Urban Storytelling'**
by Bhagwati Prasad and Mariam Fatima

# DAY 05
**February 19**

**10am - 1pm**
Neighbourhood Walk in Khirki, and screening of 'Khirkee Stories' at the Simurgh Centre

**1pm onwards**
Creative time

# DAY 06
**February 20**

**Until 12pm**
Creative time

**12pm - 3:30pm**
Presentations on collaborative work by participants

**4pm onwards**
Closing

# Ishita Dey

**I**shita Dey is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, South Asian University, Delhi. Her research interests are migration, labour, food, and senses. She has been working on the life of sweets and sweetness in South Asia. She has co-anchored an art research project on the Smells of the city, focusing on Delhi, supported by the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Delhi. She is an editorial board member of the journal Society and Culture in South Asia (Sage). She has published her work in journals such as The Sense and Society, Gastronomica, Refugee Watch, and South Atlantic Quarterly. She has co-edited the book Sustainability of Rights After Globalisation (Sage, 2011) and co-authored Beyond Kolkata: The Dystopia of Urban Imagination (Routledge, 2013). Ishita also co-hosts a podcast – Travel Matters.

# Yogesh Snehi

**Y**ogesh Snehi teaches history at the School of Liberal Studies, AUD. His research zooms in on the study of margins. Focusing on North-Western India, he has studied regions, popular religions, and small-town histories. He has published a monograph on popular Sufi shrines in Punjab. More recently, he has been engaged with envisioning an Institutional Memory Archive at AUD, a collaborative project on the Farmers' Movement Archive, and a neighbourhood history project for Abohar (Punjab).

# Swapna Liddle

**S**wapna Liddle is a historian with a special interest in Delhi. She has been closely involved in the movement to preserve historic neighbourhoods and monuments for many years. She is associated with the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH). Swapna is the author of 'The Broken Script: Delhi Under The East India Company And The Fall of The Mughal Dynasty, 1803-1857'; 'Connaught Place and the Making of New Delhi', 'Chandni Chowk: The Mughal City of Old Delhi,' and 'Delhi: 14 Historic Walks'.

# Screening of 'Dhobi Ghat–Traditional Occupations in a Global City' by Mariam Fatima

This short film shows the transformations in the traditional occupation of dhobis in Delhi caused by larger urban change. Typically performed at the ghat, these activities have increasingly moved to the urban core.

The demand for land in the floodplains, official actions to prevent 'river pollution', and periodic anti-encroachment drives have impacted the Dhobi Ghats significantly. The film explores these themes, and the experiences of the people caught amid these shifts.

**M**ariam Fatima has a Master's degree in Urban Studies and is an aspiring researcher, filmmaker, and citizen scientist. 'Dhobi Ghat' emerges from Mariam's MA dissertation on the same topic.

**B**hagwati Prasad works with composite drawings and performance. He has conducted extensive research with Sarai-CSDS on Delhi's popular culture, water wars, and media life from 2002 to 2012, during which period he published 'Tinker. Solder. Tap.' (co-authored, 2009) and 'The Water Cookbook' (2010). He is known for his large-scale wall drawings, notably at Jaipur Kala Kendra (2018), and his 'Hashtag series' has proliferated on social media since 2017. He has performed at the 11th Shanghai Biennale (2017) and Serendipity Arts Festival (Goa, 2017). He has been part of many international residencies and was the recipient of IFA's Artist Practice Grant (2015). Prasad's works include Begumpura Series in which he revisits the egalitarian imaginary of Saint Ravidas showed at MACBA, Barcelona, in (2018-19) and The Stutter of Food presented at Five Million Incidents at Goethe-Institut, Delhi, in 2020. An interview with him was recently published in the drawing journal Fukt (Berlin, 2019). His recent work includes Dumm (Breath; Perseverance; Courage) with Khoj International (2022).

# WORKSHOP LEADERS

**Mesha Murali** holds a Master's in Sociology and works as a freelance Research and DEI Consultant. She has worked on projects based on a wide range of thematics, such as gender and sexuality, urban histories, and cultural heritage. She has also previously worked with CCK on various Delhi-based projects such as Camera Dilli Ka photo exhibition, Mehrauli Neighbourhood Museum, Revisiting Delhi Conference, and Humanities Across Borders. She is the co-author of 'Between Memory and History: The Neighbourhood Museum Programme.'

**Saransh Srivastav** is a Research Assistant at the Centre for Military History and Conflict Studies (CMHCS), United Service Institution of India (USI). He holds a Master's degree in History from Ambedkar University Delhi. Before joining USI, he worked with CCK as a researcher on the Delhi City Museum project in collaboration with the Delhi Archives. His work entailed researching, producing dissemination material on Delhi's industrial past, and developing a 'Then and Now' digital map of 'Shahjahanabad'. At USI, his work includes research on Wars and Operations post-Independence and developing an archival repository for a joint project on Gallantry Awardees of India between the Ministry of Defence and USI.

**Shamindra Nath Roy** is an Associate Fellow in the urbanisation initiative at the Centre for Policy Research and an Adjunct Faculty at Ambedkar University Delhi. He is a mixed-method researcher, and his interest lies in examining inequalities through a spatial lens. He has worked on rural-urban transformations, internal migration dynamics in India, and socio-spatial inequalities in basic services in Delhi. He is keen to deploy spatial concepts like proximity, contiguity, or interaction in analysing non-spatial data. Shamindra has an M.Phil and Ph.D in Regional Development with a specialisation in geography from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

**Khushdeep Kaur** recently completed her Ph.D. in Geography and Urban Studies from Temple University. Her dissertation examines experiences of home-making and belonging among the Kashmiri Sikh community in the context of precarity and militarization in Kashmir Valley. Currently, she is working on expanding her dissertation research to understand Sikh youth's political subjectivities across Kashmir and Punjab. Khushdeep is a research scientist with IIT-Delhi, tasked with understanding young women's on-campus experiences and their implications for women's retention in STEM. Both projects focus on using 'affective' GIS to tell data-driven stories. Before the Ph.D., Dr. Kaur worked in Public Health, using GIS and other mapping technologies to understand health disparities among historically excluded communities in the US.

**Ekta Chauhan** is pursuing her Ph.D. in Heritage Studies at the Brandenburg University of Technology, Cottbus (Germany). She has previously done a Master's in Public Policy from the National Law School of India University (Bangalore) and a BA (Hons.) History from St. Stephen's College, Delhi University. Her doctoral thesis focuses on the role of communities in managing cultural heritage tourism in Delhi. She works on the themes of heritage, communities, and urban development. She runs the project "Dilli ki Khirki," an oral history archival project for the communities of urban villages of Delhi in partnership with the Citizens' Archive of India.

**Surajit Sarkar** is an independent researcher and practitioner, a curator with Kerala Museum, Kochi, and Digital Storytelling Lead at the Asian Heritage Foundation, New Delhi. He is a member of the Advisory Council of INTACH and Vice President of the International Association of Agricultural Museums. He was an Associate Professor and the founding Coordinator of the Centre for Community at AUD from 2012 to 2022. At CCK, Surajit led the Neighbourhood Museum Programme, which created 'pop-up' community museums and exhibitions, which describe urban and rural Delhi from the perspective of its residents, one neighbourhood at a time. He is co-author of 'Aise Basi Pipariya' (CCK and Vani Prakashan). Before his academic career, Surajit worked as a photocopier salesman, a bank officer, a primary school teacher, and a film and TV director. As a video artist, he has worked in theatre and dance productions, museums, and galleries in India and abroad.

# KHIRKEE STORIES

A tourist with a Yashica Mat 124G camera, 1970s.

In March 2022, filmmaker Zamarin Wahdat conducted a two-day workshop with members of the Afghan community living in Khirkee, a locality in south Delhi. They made four short films, shot entirely on mobile phones. These are the 'Khirkee Stories', portraits of Delhi's streets and residents, seen from the perspective of its Afghan community.

**Desire of the Blue Sky** follows Atta Mohammad, a baker working hard to supply naan to the Afghan community living in the heart of Khirkee. We meet his customers, learn about the challenges he faces, and his dreams for his future. The film was made by Haries and Laila Azmi. Laila Azimi is a refugee in New Delhi. She is a librarian, has a Bachelor's in Political Science, and loves to make short movies on the struggles of refugees.

**A Day in My Life** - Two Afghan students travel through Delhi on their daily commute in 'A Day in My Life'. Poetry keeps them company, transforming the mundane sights into something touched with beauty. The film was made by Mursal and Abdul Bari. Mursal is a photographer who has lived in India for four years, and did her university degree in the field of multimedia and mass communication. She has been doing photography for less than two years, and most of her photos are about immigrants. Abdul Bari Delawery is from Kabul, Afghanistan, and is pursuing his last semester of Journalism from Delhi University. He also works as a producer and editor in Giloy Ghar Film Collective.

**Kitab-e-Dill** - Tucked away in the narrow lanes of Khirkee is a magical place full of books, where everyone is welcome. 'Kitab-e-Dill' is a love letter to this special space, and an exploration of how books and reading can help create a sense of belonging for a community that has experienced displacement. The maker of this film, Sofia Kakar, was born in Afghanistan in 2001 and has lived in India since 2017. Her favorite writer is Leo Tolstoy. She loves to read and is a self-taught artist. She worked on this short with the help of Danyal Zaheer and Zamarin Wahdat. Danyal Zaheer is a multi-disciplinary artist and freelancer, based in New Delhi.

**Little Dreams (in Khirkee)** - The film follows Aisha, an 11-year-old Afghan girl, as she describes her life in Delhi, from the difficult days of the Covid-19 lockdown to what she loves about Khirkee, to her dreams for her future. The film was shot and made by Fahima. Fahima is a 12th standard student. She is originally from Afghanistan and is currently living in Delhi.

# NEIGHBOURHOOD WALKS
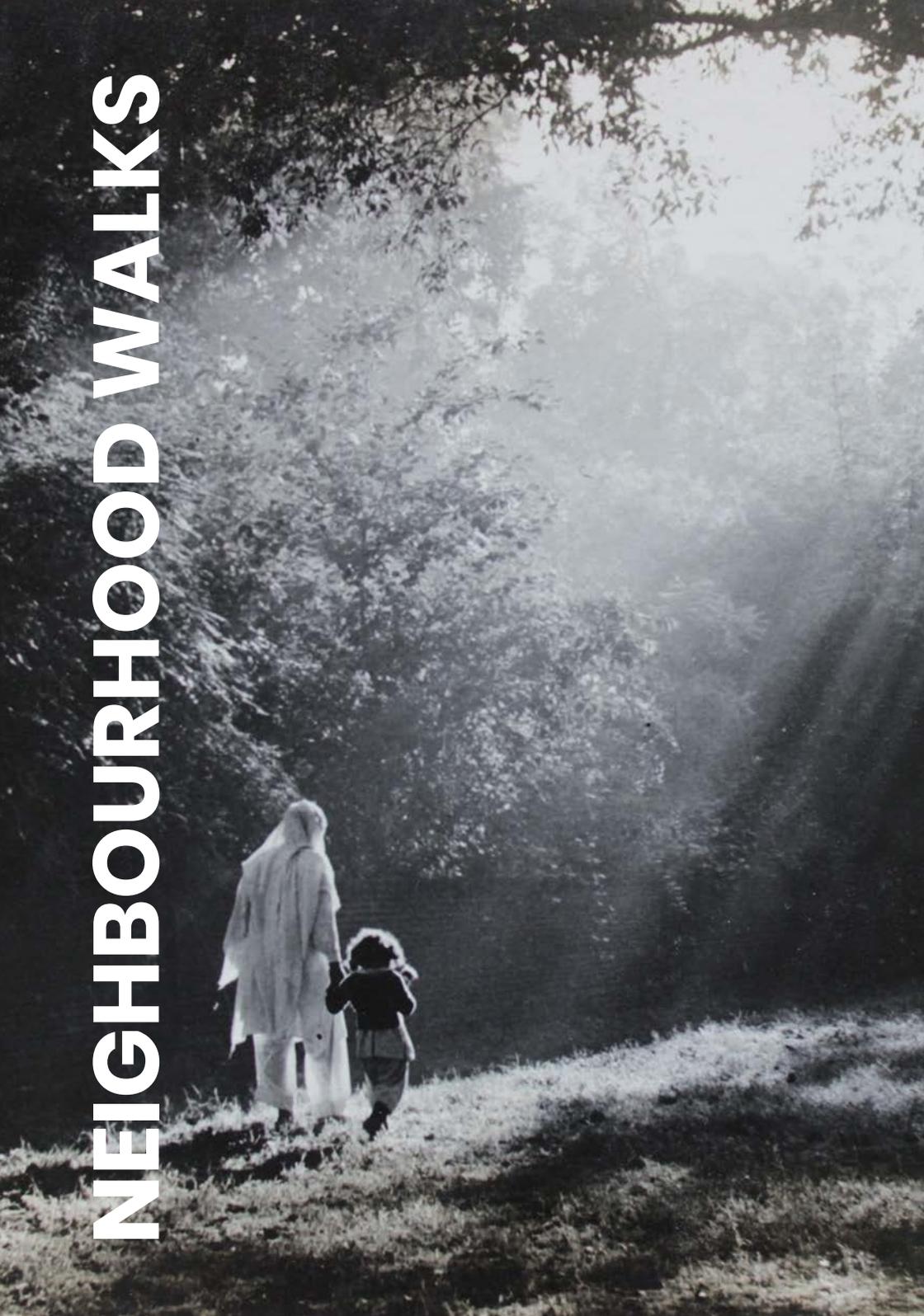
## Karampura

Situated in West Delhi, Karampura was an industrial area until the 1990s. The Swatantra Bharat Mills (of DCM) was a significant employer alongside many other industries set up in the area after 1947. One-room units allotted to the workers were converted into long-term leases with the possibility of sale and purchase in the late 1970s by the central government. Two decades later, when the mill and other industries closed down, the neighbourhood started to change in character towards more commercial uses. Residents also began to invest in their housing units and extended them horizontally and vertically. Many small shops were opened on the ground floor of these units, and by the 2010s, the area had radically changed in character to become a mix of land uses, building types, and demographics. Meanwhile, the SBM property was passed on to DLF, which built multi-storeyed flats and office space. AUD's KP campus was initially a school for workers' children and later a college of Delhi University. In 2016, the campus was transferred to AUD to house new programmes and attendant facilities. The walk will explore the changing economic and cultural geographies of the Karampura area as a microcosm of shifting urban space economies.

## Khirki

Khirki village is an urban village located in the heart of South Delhi. On the one hand, the village has an old community of erstwhile landowners and farmers. On the other is its new neighbourhood  Khirki Extension, which houses diverse populations and is known for its vibrant street culture and houses organisations like the  Khoj Collective and the Simurgh Centre.  The village also boasts two important Tughlaq-era archaeological sites, Khirki Masjid and Satpula.  Despite its assimilation into the city, Khirki village has managed to preserve some of its traditional way of life and its strong sense of community. This urban village is a fascinating blend of the past and the present, making it a unique and interesting place to visit and study.  The walk will end with a stop at the Simurgh Centre, where young filmmakers from the local Afghan community will screen their works.
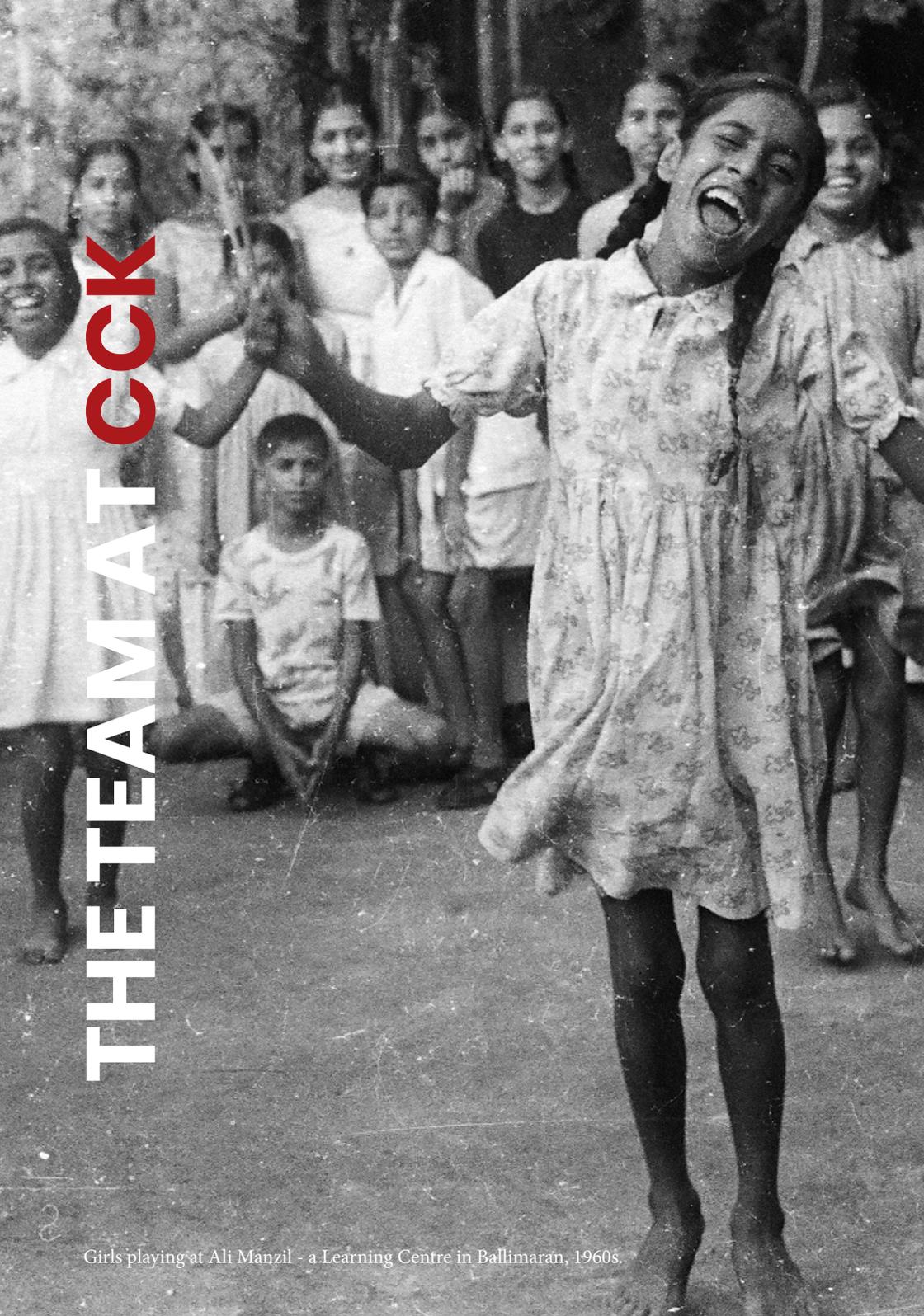
Girls playing at Ali Manzil - a Learning Centre in Ballimaran, 1960s.

# THE TEAM AT CCK

**Rohit Negi** is an Associate Professor of Urban Studies and Director of the Centre for Community Knowledge. His research is on everyday lives, politics, and knowledge-making at the intersection of urban and environmental change. He has studied and published on air, mining, and built environments in Delhi, Zambia, and Himachal. Rohit has a Ph.D. in Geography and a Master's in Urban Planning.

**Neeharika Sreedhar** is a researcher, aspiring writer and graphic designer, and, above all, a heritage lover. She completed her History Honours from Kamala Nehru College, Delhi University and MA in Urban Studies from AUD. Her research interest lies in exploring the changing dynamics between the ever-growing city to its heritage. She was a Project Assistant at the Centre for Community Knowledge from February 2021 to December 2022. Neeharika is the co-author of 'Aankhon Dekhi Dilli - A Photo Memoir' published by CCK. She is engaged with the reFrame institute of arts and expression.

**Shimna K** has been an Administrative Assistant at CCK since 2017. Shimna is a native of Kannur District in Kerala, with an educational qualification of MSc Chemistry, B Ed. and work experience in various Schools and Edutec startups in Chennai, Bangalore, and Delhi.

**Toshali Chattopadhyay** is a researcher with an interest in urban arts and aesthetics. She graduated from the University of Calcutta, studying political science, and finished her post-graduation in urban studies from Ambedkar University, Delhi. She is currently working as a project assistant at the Community Centre for Knowledge. Known for her illustrations, Toshali's sketches are humble but often take a critical view of contemporary socio-cultural and political issues. Her stay in Delhi has undoubtedly added to her creative nous.

## Additional Support

**Ankit Saxena** is an architect and urban researcher interested in studying the built environment, infrastructure development, and their interactions with socio-economic and cultural aspects in cities. He has worked as an architect with multiple design firms and is currently an urban infrastructure analyst. Ankit has a Bachelor's degree in Architecture and a Master's in Urban Studies.

# EATING OUT IN KARAMPURA

NAJAFGARH DRAIN

## Neighborhood Food Walk

Different Food Stalls

Snacks

North Indian

South Indian

Tapri

Post Office

ESI Hospital

Milan Cinema

AUD Campus Gate No. II

Karampura Worker's Colony

DLF Capital Greens

Punjabi Dhaba

Cake's Treats

SatyaDev Upadhyay Marg

Ram G Samose

Milan Cinema Rd

Kumar Samosa Wala

Karampura Worker's Colony

AUD Canteen

Raja Snacks

Rajindra Corner

Tapri

Bahadur Dhaba

Haldirams

Patel Road

Shivaji Najafgarh Rd
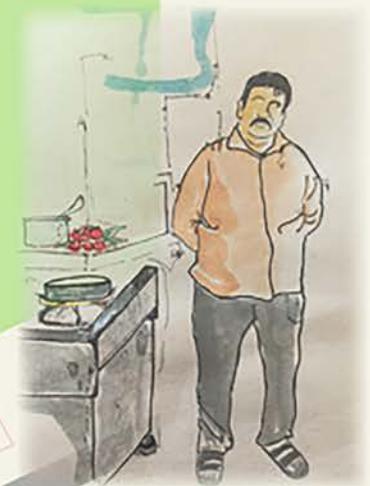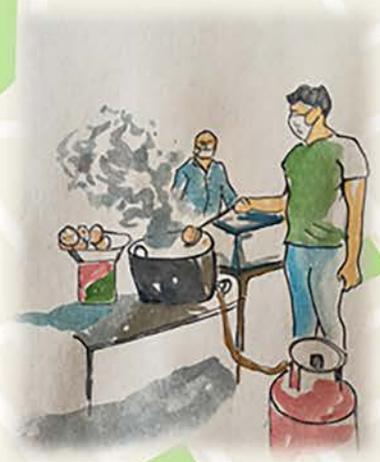
Map by Ankit Saxena
Sketches by Toshali Chattopadhyay