Working title: great gig in the sky

**Logline**: A domestic worker witnesses an unprecedented threat of demolition at her workplace - one of Bangalore’s wealthy gated communities that is usually protected from the precarities of the world outside. The contrast between her world and the world inside the gates is thrown into sharper relief when the conflict is swiftly resolved.

**Pitch**: In the aftermath of massive floods in the city of Bangalore, the municipal administration decided to take action on decades of semi-legal encroachments on the stormwater drains by private developers, deciding unilaterally to demolish structures built upon these pathways that excess rainwater had traditionally flowed through. This project takes an extraordinary event that emerged against this backdrop - the arrival of bulldozers and threat of demolition - and inserts it into an otherwise ordinary day in the life of a wealthy gated community in the city. Having retreated into an aspirational lifestyle that cushions them from precarities and everyday negotiations with the state in pursuit of legitimacy and housing security, gated community residents were shocked when the state - viewed usually as a nuisance that could be kept at arm’s length - barged into their haven in the middle of the city and prepared to demolish a set of homes. A few frantic phone calls to officials in the judiciary from well-connected residents, however, stopped the demolition in its tracks. This project views the day and its events from the perspective of a domestic worker, who experiences firsthand and on a daily basis the stark differences between the inside of a gated community (her place of work) and the outside (the city she inhabits). Apart from the event itself, the focus is thus on the contrasts between her lifeworld and that of her employers’, which stand out even as they share an experience that typically belongs to her world.

**Characters**: domestic worker (DW), her group of friends (other domestic workers), resident woman 1 (employer), elderly man/employer’s father-in-law, Jassi - man on the phone (resident), other residents (co-protestors), security guards, police, city official, journalists.

**Summary**:

Act 1: (DW enters GC. Inside-Outside distinction)

We open with a zoomed out, map-like shot of a red-roofed gated community (GC) with dense green vegetation that stands in sharp contrast to its gray, disorderly surroundings. Some little gray people are walking along the roads, both Inside and Outside. From over the shoulders of one of these gray figures - dressed in a typical Indian *sari* - we then see the gate that she will be entering. Like other things, it stands out from its surroundings in its brightness. The sounds of the outside fade away as she enters the gate; the stillness of the space is something she looks forward to every morning, interrupted only by faint birdsong. Walking to her place of work - one of the homes she is employed to clean - she is joined by a friend of hers, who strikes up a conversation about the woes of the current monsoon (rain) season, the leaky roofs in their homes and how everything is constantly wet. They soon pass by two brightly-coloured women - residents of the GC - dressed in branded gym clothes, talking about the ‘lovely’ weather and their plans for enjoying it.

Act 2: (DW’s day at work. Setting context for event in act 4)

Entering her employers’ home, we follow DW as she goes about her day’s chores. There is a rhythm to her day that runs in parallel to the lives of the house’s inhabitants. As she cleans the room of the elderly grandfather, he is watching the news on TV about demolition drives across the city to free up encroached stormwater drains. Just then, his daughter-in-law (‘lady of the house’) walks into his room and gently reminds him that the volume on his TV is too loud. Happy to have someone to talk to about the news, he points to the TV and conveys his disapproval about illegal encroachments. The daughter-in-law explains that sometimes stormwater drain maps are manipulated by private developers but these demolitions only happen to illegal low-income houses whose residents lack political connections. (I still need to refine this section).

Act 3: (DW speaks to friend. Setting context from different perspective)

After her shift, DW and her friends are relaxing in one of the GC’s parks before heading home. DW asks if they heard the news about demolitions, and if they think their homes will be targeted ‘again’. “Again?” Asks one of the friends. DW explains how her childhood home in another city had been destroyed to make way for private development. The friends then discuss how the situation in this city is different since it has to do with the rainy season - if their homes had not flooded this year, they are probably not built on the stormwater drains and should therefore be safe. The solemn moment is broken by a giggle from one of the friends, who remembers that the GC had experienced flooding a few weeks ago. They laugh at the absurdity of the idea that the GC would ever be demolished.

Act 4: (The event)

The friends’ laughter is interrupted by a commotion at the gate. A massive group of policemen are in an altercation with the security guards, and there is a bulldozer behind them. Looking the other way, the friends see angry GC residents rushing towards the gate, presumably to stop the bulldozer from entering. Wary of needless encounters with police, the friends shrink into the shadows. Some of them hold hands as the shock and gravity of the moment sinks in; a few of them have been in this situation in their own lives, and the idyllic calm of the GC being broken to reflect the precarity of life Outside is surprising (I will try to show this through a difference in colour, and change in sounds being heard).

The two chaotic sides meet in the middle of the road. A city official accompanying the bulldozer begins marking the buildings there with blood-red spray paint. The residents are livid - “these are our *homes*!”, they shout - and organise themselves into a human chain around the bulldozer. As the police tries to break the chain, one resident asks another one (Jassi) why he is glued to his phone. The latter says he is trying to get in touch with his political contacts, to see if any of them can ‘put an end to this madness’. He walks away from the noise to speak on the phone; DW watches him closely.

Meanwhile, the conflict in front of them gets more heated. Journalists have arrived on the scene, filming the women who have started crying and the men who seem to be negotiating with the unyielding police. Suddenly, Jassi loudly thanks the person he was speaking to, walks up to the police and hands them the phone. They immediately stop trying to push past the protestors after receiving an order to desist on the phone. The bulldozer backs away, and just like that, the tension is diffused. The sound of birds suddenly returns. “That was surreal,” DW says to her friends as they begin walking home. “Too bad Jassis only exist inside such gates”. (I feel the need to refine the ending further).