

RIYA AGARWAL
Brooklyn, NY | riya.agarwal124@gmail.com

Riya Agarwal is an award-winning filmmaker (MFA, NYU Tisch), researcher, and writer, investigating the intersection of media systems, narrative authority, and non-violent conflict transformation. Currently pursuing an MA at NYU Gallatin focused on how conflict and violence are constructed and contested through information systems and community-centered governance.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Conflict Transformation
- Media & Narrative Authority
- Decolonial Practices
- Peacebuilding
- Film/Visual Ethnography
- Environmental & Marine Conservation

EDUCATION

New York University **August 2025 to present**
Gallatin School of Individualized Study, Honor: Dean's Graduate Scholarship
MA in Conflict, Film, and Civic Engagement
Focus: Bridging narrative foundations with the political dimensions of peacebuilding
Relevant Coursework: Peacemaking and Peacebuilding, Workshop in Applied Peacebuilding

New York University **September 2023**
Tisch School of the Arts, MFA in Film Production (Writing & Directing)

New York University, Honor (2013): Dean's List. **May 2015**
The College of Arts and Sciences, Bachelor of Arts in Cinema Studies and Psychology, Minor in Physics.
Tisch School of the Arts, Minor in Film Production.

CONSULTING - PEACE TECHNOLOGY

Malawi Voice Data Commons (MVDC), Graduate Student Consultant **Jan 2026 - Present**

- Collaborating with NYU PREP and UNDP Malawi to translate research findings into structured recommendations for AI-supported reporting systems across Sub-Saharan Africa
- Conducting literature review and qualitative research on crisis communication and conflict systems
- Designing a contextual audit analyzing how linguistic signals map onto local crisis indicators
- Leading field implementation of this research across multiple districts in Malawi (Summer 2026)

PROJECT MANAGEMENT - Selected Experience

Independent, Producer & Director **June 2016 - Present**

- Managing film budgets, overseeing heads of departments, complex workflows, day to day schedules and high intensity environments across countries like India, Italy, USA, with varying socio-political contexts
- Leading international creative teams in development, production, and distribution of multiple short films, ranging in budgets from 500\$-\$50,000

BSway Productions, Producer, Writer, Director **Jan 2024 - Present**

- Managing multi-year development cycles, complex production budgets using MovieMagic, rigorous schedules and international teams to ensure adherence to project timeline.
- Producing multi-million dollar feature films currently in development starring lead talent with over 8M followers on social media

Nandita Das Initiatives, Director's Assistant, Assistant Writer **May 2016 - May 2018**

- Assisted in pre and post-production of feature film *Manto*, (Cannes' Un Certain Regard, 2018)
- Conducted archival research and (ghost) co-authored a published book on the life and work of Saadat Hasan Manto, synthesizing historical material into structured narrative form

AWARDS & QUANTITATIVE RIGOR

- **Semi-Finalist, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Feature Film Award** for script *Spies in the Himalayas*. Recognized for integrating complex scientific/technical themes into narrative structures.
- **NYU's Roger King Finishing Award:** Competitive grant awarded for excellence in project execution and creative vision.
- **#1 in Mathematics** in India (IGCSE)

SKILLS

- **Logistics:** Production Budgeting/Scheduling (MovieMagic/Excel), Team Management, Field Operations
- **Research:** Literature review, qualitative analysis, citation management, academic writing & editing
- **Technical:** Professional A/V Field Systems (SoundDevices mixers, Film/Digital/Video cameras)
- **Certifications:** Social & Behavioral Research: CITI Program, NYU (Certification pending), PADI OW/AOW/EONx Scuba Diver
- **Languages:** Fluent in English, Hindi; Conversational in Urdu, Bengali; Beginner in Spanish, Chichewa