

**To mark the occasion of India's 73<sup>rd</sup> Independence Day, Avid Learning presents a panel discussion that examines the city's role in and influence on India's Freedom Movement**

**For Immediate Release**

Did you know that Mahatma Gandhi's pivotal Quit India Speech was given at August Kranti Maidan in Mumbai which also is home to the hall where the first meeting of Indian National Congress was held and the Gateway of India was where the last of the British troops sailed from when the colonials left India?

On the occasion of **India's 73<sup>rd</sup> Independence Day, National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai, Ministry of Culture, Government of India** and **Avid Learning** present **Multipolis Mumbai: Independence and the City**, a panel discussion that will revisit the city from that historic era, when Mumbai was Bombay and poised at the brink of a political, patriotic and socio-cultural renaissance with the birth of a brand new Nation.

*The description of the discussion is as below:*

Join *Mumbai Historian* **Murali Ranganathan**, *Corporate Archivist and Founder, Past Perfect Heritage Management* **Sanghamitra Chatterjee**, *Film Scholar, Theorist and Former Curator at the National Museum of Indian Cinema* **Amrit Gangar** and *Architect and Urbanist* **Himanshu Burte** in conversation with *Journalist and Editor of Scroll.in* **Naresh Fernandes**.

These experts and historians will discuss the role Bombay played in the Freedom Struggle. They will examine the city's unique function in the formation of a new nation's post-Independence identity as it emerged as the country's financial capital, the birthplace for the burgeoning film industry as we know it, the hotbed for Indian Industry and the site for new architecture that shaped its skyline. This panel will also explore how Mumbaikars of today engage with the history of the city on this special day each year through retrospective programming like historical walking tours, digital archival projects and other similar youth-directed engagements that foster patriotic learnings.

Bombay was culturally, politically and economically significant at and around the time of Independence. It was a hub for visionaries, industrialists and forward thinkers of all kinds, who built and developed not just large companies, but a larger Indian national narrative. Certain companies were instrumental in shaping a self-standing, independent India, especially in terms of certain products and services that were previously only able to be produced by the British.

Bajaj is one of the foremost companies to have pioneered India's self-sustained future, and a look at their decades-worth of service to the country is testament to this fact. The history of the Bajaj group is intertwined with the history of the financial capital of India, Mumbai. The family left an indelible mark on the city. Their legacy and contribution is an integral part of the city's history. Their influence on pre-independence and post-independence Mumbai is also significant and they have played an important role in supporting the freedom struggle and the subsequent emergence of an independent India.

Since their inception, films have told stories of people, of social realities, and of the pressing issues that govern a society at a particular point in time. The Indian film industry is no different, what with its contribution to creating a national identity right from pre-colonial times. In the 1920s and 1930s, the British imposed strong censorship regulations on films, so much so that they wanted films to serve their colonial interests. Despite this, the film industry continued to make significant and pointed films with themes of social concern and Pro-Independence messages, boldly making statements that reflected dissent and the desire for autonomy. Cinema was not just a medium of entertainment, but a canvas for Indian filmmakers to portray national sentiments and capture and transmit a ubiquitous yearning for social and political change. The tapestry of films, all through the 1900s, helped create a national identity, a voice that belonged to a new, liberated and unfettered India. Throughout the nation's fraught fight to freedom, and the first few decades after, the film industry depicted the emerging voice of a collective Indian nation and became a bastion of independent India's new values.

Architecture is one of the most defining aspects of any urban landscape and in Mumbai's context, has played a role in shaping its Pre- and Post- Independence appearance while cementing its status as a cosmopolitan and ever-evolving metropolis. The efficient civic infrastructure asserted Bombay's place as the main Indian seaport and the commercial and industrial capital of western India. The turn-of-the-century buildings in the city were a unique blend of European planning with Mughal and Indo-Islamic features, creating a fusion that became

known as Indo Saracenic style. By the early 1930s, a new futuristic style of architecture had arrived from the West: Art Deco. Yet, in Bombay, this style of architecture took on an avatar all its own and came to represent the face of an emerging nation in Post-Independence times. Some of the first Art Deco buildings constructed in India are in Bombay. The city's Art Deco residential buildings, cinema halls and institutions blended Indian design with Art Deco imagery and created a unique style that became known as Indo-Deco. These developments reflected major socio-economic changes in India during the 1920s and 1930s, including the rise of Western- educated Indian architects, the new concept of living in apartments and commuting to work, and the growth of the middle class. Indo Deco's influence spread through the Indian sub-continent until the adoption of architectural modernism by Jawaharlal Nehru for the then newly independent India.

This talk will be part of AVID's **Multipolis Mumbai Series** that decodes the past while looking to the future and finding novel ways of engaging, interacting with and reenergizing the city that we love! The original nine-part series, which began in 2012, examined how Architecture, Music, Food, Theatre, Fashion, Environment, Literature, Innovation, and Film influenced and were influenced by the city. Our second iteration of this series, which began in 2017 attempts to renegotiate larger perspectives on the city, dig deeper and capture its essence and changing rhythms and nuances. In this second round we seek to plumb new depths and unearth more fascinating nuggets about our ever-surprising Mumbai! On our journey, we have explored how entities like businesses and brands, architects and illustrators, historians and designers, artists and poets, women writers and female theatre stalwarts have influenced our city. We have also explored how art technology and gaming, wildlife activism, philanthropy and maritime culture, alternative museums and urban subcultures have all played a role in enriching Mumbai's cultural fabric. We've also held workshops that looked more closely at iconic Mumbai architecture (namely Art Deco, Indo-Saracenic and Victorian Gothic).

Revisit India's Freedom Movement and uncover aspects of the city from Pre- and Post Independence times by journeying back into Mumbai's colonial past!

**WHERE:** The National Gallery of Modern Art, Sir Cowasji Jahangir Public Hall, M. G. Road, Fort, Mumbai, 400032

**WHEN:** Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> August 2019 | 6:00 PM – 6:30 PM – Registrations | 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM – Discussion

**RSVP:** [www.avidlearning.in/](http://www.avidlearning.in/)

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*"quit India"*

# INDEPENDENCE and the CITY



On the occasion of India's 73<sup>rd</sup> Independence Day, National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai, Ministry of Culture, Government of India and Avid Learning present a panel discussion that will revisit the city from that historic era, when Mumbai was Bombay and poised at the brink of a political, patriotic and socio-cultural renaissance with the birth of a brand new Nation. Join *Mumbai Historian Murali Ranganathan, Corporate Archivist and Founder, Past Perfect Heritage Management Sanghamitra Chatterjee, Film Scholar, Theorist and Former Curator at the National Museum of Indian Cinema Amrit Gangar and Architect and Urbanist Himanshu Burte* in conversation with *Journalist and Editor of Scroll.in Naresh Fernandes*. These experts, historians and enthusiasts will discuss the role Bombay played in the Freedom Struggle and examine the city's unique function in the formation of a new nation's post-Independence identity. Revisit India's Freedom Movement and uncover aspects of the city from Pre and Post Independence times by journeying back into Mumbai's colonial past!

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## About the Speakers

**Dr. Himanshu Burte**, an architect and urbanist, is Assistant Professor at the School of Habitat Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai, and has a Ph. D. in Urban Planning (CEPT University, Ahmedabad). He has practiced architecture in Mumbai and Goa for over a decade and a half, and has also published extensively across the professional, popular and academic press for almost thirty years. His latest book (co-edited with Amita Bhide) *Urban Parallax: Policy and the City in Contemporary India* (Yoda Press and Aga Khan Agency for the Habitat India (AKAH), India, New Delhi, 2018) gathers diverse disciplinary perspectives to deconstruct urban policy in India. His 2008 book, *Space for Engagement: The Indian Artplace and a Habitational Approach to Architecture* (Seagull Books, Kolkata), proposes an alternative conceptual framework for architecture centred on the act of dwelling. Active for long in building critical discourse around architecture and urbanism in India, Burte is a co-founder of Gubbi Alliance for Sustainable Habitat ([www.gubbi.org](http://www.gubbi.org)) a network of architects practicing sustainably in India. His current research interests include urban transformation, critical practice, urban infrastructure, housing policy, theatre architecture and sustainable urbanism. A former Fulbright Fellow (University of California, Berkeley, 2008-09), he is a member of the Editorial Advisory Panel of Marg Publications, Mumbai, a premier arts and culture publishing house. He is currently editing a special issue of Marg devoted to new spaces of infrastructure in India.

**Sanghamitra Chatterjee** has several years' experience in the field of business and corporate archiving. Her professional journey began with the 118-year-old Godrej Group, where she set-up the archive of one of India's most trusted brands. She has also been an Adviser to the Cipla Archives, Mumbai where she introduced archival processes and documented the pharmaceutical company's core archival collection. Sanghamitra founded Past Perfect Heritage Management with the intention of taking the art of archiving and research to a larger audience. Past Perfect helps institutions, business houses and families engage, preserve and promote their inherited legacy and heritage, thereby making it relevant for future generations.

Writing both in English and Gujarati languages, **Amrit Gangar** has several books on cinema to his credit, including *24 x 7 = Mumbai* in Gujarati. He has presented his conceptual theory of Cinema Prayoga at various venues in India and abroad including Tate Modern, London and Pompidou Centre, Paris. He has curated and presented the art of Bollywood billboard painting in Europe along with the Billboard painters from Mumbai. He was curator of cinema programs for the Kala Ghoda Artfest in its first four editions, as well as of the Kochi Biennale. He is on the Editorial Board of the bilingual (English, Malayalam) journal *Chalachitra Sameeksha* published by the Kerala State Chalachitra Academy. In 2001, he was Artistic Director (India) along with Marina Abramovic on dance-theatre project *Total Masala Slammer* directed by Michael Laub. At present he is conceptualizing and curating the project called the Panj Tirath, the five Gandhian pilgrimage places around the city of Surat.

**Murali Ranganathan** researches the nineteenth century with a special focus on Bombay/Mumbai and western India. His current areas of interest include Bombay print history and culture, photography, newspapers and periodicals, business history, and public performance. His publications include *Govind Narayan's Mumbai: an urban biography from 1863* (Anthem Press, 2008), a translation of the iconic Marathi urban biography *Mumbaiche Varnan*, supplemented by a biography of Govind Narayan, biographical sketches of Mumbai men and organizations of the nineteenth century, and notes. He has edited and introduced two books connected with the urban history of western India: *Collected works of J V Naik: reform and renaissance in nineteenth century Maharashtra* (Asiatic Society of Mumbai, 2016) and *J R B Jeejeebhoy's Bombay Vignettes: explorations in the history of Bombay* (Asiatic Society of Mumbai, 2018).

**Naresh Fernandes** is a journalist who lives in Bombay. He is the editor of Scroll.in, a digital daily. He is the author of *City Adrift: A Short Biography of Bombay* and *Taj Mahal Foxtrot: The Story of Bombay's Jazz Age*.

## About Partners

**The National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) Mumbai, Ministry of Culture, Government of India** is a repository of the cultural ethos of the country and showcases the changing art forms through the passage of the last 160 years starting from about 1857 in the field of Visual and Plastic arts. The first NGMA was opened in New Delhi at the historic Jaipur House, in the presence of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and artists and art lovers on March 29, 1954. The National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai was opened to the public in 1996. It hosts various exhibitions and also has its own art collections comprising paintings, sculptures and graphics with a focus on Indian and International artists. It is located in the precinct of the former auditorium the Sir Cowasji Jehangir Public Hall and the Institute of Science. This architecturally marvellous building was designed and built by the famous British architect George Wittet which has been completely redesigned keeping only the facade edifice that was Public Hall. It has hosted eminent artists like, K.H. Ara, F. N. Souza, Gaitonde, S.H. Raza and M.F. Hussain and contemporary artists like, K.G. Subramanyam, Sudhir Patwardhan, Nalini Malini, Atul Dodiya and Sudarshan Shetty. The NGMA in Mumbai is run and administered as a subordinate office to the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, which has two branches one at Mumbai and the other at Bengaluru.

**Avid Learning**, a public programming platform and cultural arm of the Essar Group, has conducted over 1000 programs and connected with more than 125,000 individuals since its inception in 2009. Driven by the belief that Learning Never Stops, AVID's multiple formats like Workshops, Panel Discussions, Gallery Walkthroughs, and Festival Platforms create a dynamic and interactive atmosphere that stimulates intellectual and creative growth across the fields of Culture & Heritage, Literature, Art and Innovation.

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