

## **Rhythms and Threads: A Confluence of Couture and Choreography Honouring Astad Deboo**

*"Clothes and costumes are the first dancers. They give the body its shape and its significance."*

- Dance Critics and Authors, **Mary Clarke** and **Clement Crisp**

The connection between dance and textiles is a mesmerizing blend where movement and material come together harmoniously. Each dancing step resonates with the gentle flow of fabric, creating a dialogue between the body and cloth that goes beyond the physical realm. Across different eras, this interlinked artistry has served as a vibrant canvas for cultural storytelling.

The textiles worn by performers act as a second skin, breathing vitality into their movements while adding layers of depth to their expressions. The fabrics' tangible quality transforms each leap into visual poetry. Whether draped in rich, ornate brocades or lightweight, free-flowing chiffons, the dancer's attire becomes an intrinsic part of their artistic interpretation – paying tribute to the exquisite craftsmanship and customs that gave birth to these garments.

The **National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, Avid Learning, VarnikaDesigns**, and **Kala Ghoda Association** present **Dance of the Textiles**, a panel discussion celebrating the inextricable link between dance and fashion. The unique event pays homage to *Contemporary Dancer and Choreographer* **Padma Shri Astad Deboo** with leading creative practitioners including *Photographer* **Ritam Banerjee**, *Textile Designer, Author, and Curator* **Ashdeen Z. Lilaowala**, and *Fashion Designer and Co-Founder, Jade* **Monica Shah**. The conversation will be moderated by *Founder, VarnikaDesigns* **Poulomi Das**.

The discussion will look back at the innovative haute couture designs and the rich heritage of traditional garments worn by Astad Deboo, who was known for blending Indian and global styles. The design experts will explore the close relationship between the art of dance and the artistry of textiles, unravelling how fashion, costumes, and crafts can uplift and enhance dance as an art form.

With a dynamic dance career spanning over 50 years and performances in more than 70 countries, Astad Deboo, a pioneer of modern dance in India, mesmerized us at Avid Learning with his artistic brilliance and fashion statements. In 2020, we had the privilege of presenting a unique Indo-Korean collaboration titled '**Same Same But Different**', where Astad's contemporary dance seamlessly merged with the soundscape of new-wave Korean and classical Indian music. This was preceded by two engaging panel discussions graced by Astad exploring the trajectories of dance in Maximum City and the transformative power of arts for social change.

Join us for an extraordinary confluence of creative forces, celebrating the indelible bond between movement and material, inspired by the trailblazing work of Astad Deboo.

**When:** Tuesday, 3rd September 2024

6:00 PM - Registrations 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM – Panel Discussion

**Where:** National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai

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

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## About Speakers:

**Ritam Bannerjee** seeks inspiration and challenge in diversity — rejecting, redefining, and bending genres to give his imagination and his images enough room to breathe. He shoots spas and slums, ketchup, and cars with the same intensity and focus that he reserves for Hollywood royalty and Fortune 500 CEOs. He plays no favorites between portraits and photojournalistic work, or advertising, architecture, automobiles, fashion, food, travel, and projects that fall between those stools. Known for his visual wit and high energy, Ritam's craft is unorthodox, intuitive, and fun — and designed to draw out that invisible, elusive magic that lies 'beyond the canvas'. In an age when conversations on cameras and lenses often become more important than the photographs themselves, he reminds his audiences about the power of simplicity. His Masterclasses with CNBC TV18 are a great example of that.

Award-winning textile designer **Ashdeen Z. Lilaowala** is known for invigorating and contemporizing the Parsi Gara embroidery tradition while retaining its essence. He studied textile design at the National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad. A passionate researcher, he travelled across China, Iran, and India to immerse himself in the evolution of the Parsi Gara embroidery tradition.

In 2013, he published *Threads of Continuity – The Zoroastrian Craft of Kusti Weaving*, a book that documents his seminal research on the traditional and vanishing craft of Zoroastrian Kusti weaving. He has taught textile and fashion students as a part-time lecturer at the National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi, and has written extensively about the Parsi Gara craft in publications such as Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, Elle, Marie Claire and others.

Lilaowala has several collaborations to his name including a recent collaboration with Maharani Radhikaraje Gaekwad of Baroda to showcase the Parsi Gara experience at the prestigious Laxmi Vilas Palace in Baroda.

**Monica Shah** is the Creative Director and Co-Founder of JADE By Monica and Karishma, a leading luxury couture house in India. As a TED Speaker and advocate for craftsmanship, Monica has spearheaded JADE through notable initiatives such as the Grassroot Artisans Project. This project aims to craft a new visual language that transcends traditional frameworks by incorporating multiple crafts, adding depth, complexity, and modernity to the art form. Her commitment to Indian craftsmanship is also evident in the JADE Accessories collection in collaboration with PETA India, highlighting her vision for sustainable luxury. Monica's impact on the fashion industry has garnered prestigious awards, including Forces of Fashion 2023 by VOGUE India and the Contemporary Craftsman Designer Award 2022 by PETA India. Recognized as one of the 50 Most Influential Women in Luxury in India 2021 by Luxebook, Monica Shah continues to shape the landscape of luxury fashion with innovation and cultural advocacy.

**Poulomi Das**, Founder of VarnikaDesigns, is a Curator for cultural heritage access and inclusion, educator, blogger and a cultural interpreter leader. She has over 20 years of experience in research and documentation of Indian arts, textiles, and heritage. She curated the retrospective on contemporary dancer Astad Deboo called 'Breaking Boundaries' in December 2022.

She has been a Senior Curator for the Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum. And has consulted with projects like the upcoming Lord Krishna Museum, Dwarka, the Bihar and Buddha Smriti Park Museums, Patna, the RBI's Monetary Museum, Mumbai, and the Hiremath Art and Heritage Foundation.

She is the Founder of the 'The Museum Memories Project' since April 2020, the only one in the world which invites memories of museums visited by individuals across the globe. Poulomi is a Nehru Trust and Charles Wallace Fellow and an International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) Fellow of the US government in 2010. She blogs at [www.varnikadesigns.blog](http://www.varnikadesigns.blog) the website is [www.varnikadesigns.com](http://www.varnikadesigns.com) and [www.themumeproject.com](http://www.themumeproject.com)