Where Turf Meets Time: Avid Learning Celebrates the Legacy of Mahalaxmi Racecourse as an Icon of Mumbai

In a city defined by density and constant motion, certain spaces resist compression. The Mahalaxmi Racecourse remains one such anomaly, an expansive, breathing pause within Mumbai's urban intensity. Historically carved out of reclaimed land, it has evolved into more than a sporting venue. Its uninterrupted presence in a city that routinely demolishes its past to build its future makes it remarkable; its continued vitality makes it singular. It is a site where ritual, routine, and spectacle converge, offering a lens into how the city negotiates class, leisure, and public life.

Across decades of change, the racecourse has mirrored Mumbai's shifting social and cultural rhythms. It has hosted generations of workers, enthusiasts, and spectators whose lives intersect on and around the track. From the mechanics of racing to the informal economies and communities that sustain it, the space operates as a microcosm of the city itself, layered, adaptive, and persistently relevant. The early morning workout sessions that draw joggers and trainers to the same track; the tote windows that once introduced Bombay to the idea of collective wagering; the restaurants and rituals that have grown around raceday — each layer tells a story about how Mumbai has chosen, across generations, to spend its leisure, its money, and its attention. To trace the racecourse is to trace something of the city's character: its appetite for spectacle, its instinct for community, and its particular genius for turning a single space into many things at once.

Avid Learning and **Royal Opera House, Mumbai** present **Uncovering Urban Legacies: The Mahalaxmi Racecourse,** in celebration of Photographer/Director **Sunhil Sippy's** book ***Raceday,*** a decade-long documentation of the racecourse and the community that keeps it alive. The panel discussion with Sunhil alongside *Horse Trainer, RWITC* **Subhag Singh** and *Committee Member, RWITC and Director* **Shiven Surendranath** will be moderated by *Independent Journalist, Novelist, and Oral Historian* **Jane Borges.**

ABOUT RACEDAY

Over 10 years, Sunhil has been documenting the racecourse and its many facets in a gentle and "purposeless" fashion. The images reflect the stubborn tenacity and tradition of the racing culture and community amidst the flux of a rapidly changing urban landscape. He slowly earned the trust of the community, gaining a very unusual insider's perspective on the mechanics of the city's racing narrative. The Mahalakshmi Racecourse is not just a historical landmark but a dynamic space where tradition and modernity intersect. The chronicling of its transformation presents a microcosm of the broader changes sweeping through Mumbai. This decade-long observation serves as a poignant reminder of its enduring place in the city's heart and its ever-shifting landscape.

Reflecting on the process of bringing the book together, **Sunhil Sippy said**:
"Assembling this narrative has been a long and difficult journey — broadly because the work has been made at so many different stages of my photographic journey and in so many formats, over so many years. Photographed in both digital colour & black and white as well as analog colour & black and white, I believe that the work remains reassuringly unpredictable as it traverses formats, refusing to embrace any particular photographic style. While this presented us with immense challenges over the two-year period through which the book was constructed, what initially appeared to be our greatest enemy eventually became our dearest friend."

Join us as we saddle up for an evening at the intersection of sport, memory, and the city's living culture.

When: Tuesday, 30th June 2026 | 6:30 PM Onwards
Where: Royal Opera House, Mama Parmanand Marg, Mumbai
Register: www.avidlearning.in
Press: Ayeshah Dadachanji (ayeshah.avid@gmail.com)