

Uncovering Urban Legacies: Tracing the Armenian Heritage Across Calcutta and Bombay

“The Armenians came to India by the overland route, through Persia, Bactria (Afghanistan), and Tibet, and we were well established in all the commercial centers long before the advent of any European traders into the country.”

(Historian, and school-master of Classical Armenian at the Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy, Kolkata, Mesrobian Jacob Seth)

What connects the first Christian grave, circa 1630 in present-day Kolkata, with the 226-year-old orthodox Church of St. Peter the Apostle in Mumbai? The Armenians.

The historians have found accounts of Armenian merchants flocking to the South Asian subcontinent from the 11th century. Long before the British East India Company docked its ships in Gujarat, the Armenians had settled in Surat, actively engaging in trade and culture. Over time, the Armenian community flourished in Bombay and Calcutta. **Bombay had become an important Armenian settlement in the 18th and 19th centuries**, embellishing the multi-cultural cap of Bombay with a rich feather. Their early establishments in Calcutta beg the question – **did the Armenians found Calcutta?**

In triumph of the Armenian Legacy in India, **Mumbai Research Centre, Asiatic Society of Mumbai, Editions JOJO, Gateway House, and Avid Learning** present **Urban Legacies: Tracing the Armenian Heritage Across Calcutta and Bombay**, a Lecture Demonstration on the Armenians in Calcutta and Bombay by **Alakananda Nag and Sifra Lentin**.

The lecture demonstration will be followed by a stimulating panel discussion moderated by *Journalist and Editor of Scroll.in* **Naresh Fernandes**. The invigorating evening will close with the two scholars signing their books on sale, **Alakananda Nag’s Armenians of Calcutta** and **Sifra Lentin’s Mercantile Bombay**.

Please read below for more information on the event:

The two experts will explore the rich heritage of the Armenian diaspora in India, sharing coveted perspectives on this fascinating community’s influence in a variety of cultural contexts. *Photographer, Archivist, and Writer* **Alakananda Nag** will take us on a voyage traversing the history of Armenians in Kolkata with the Mumbai celebration of her book *Armenians of Calcutta*. *Author and Bombay History Fellow at Gateway House* **Sifra Lentin** will make us familiar with the lesser-known saga of Mumbai’s Armenian past and present through her latest research project *Bombay’s Armenian Legacy*.

The event will be followed by a brief Q&A session.

Join us on this unique quest to discover and re-discover the stories of the Armenian community, from not one but two metropolises of India.

Event Details:

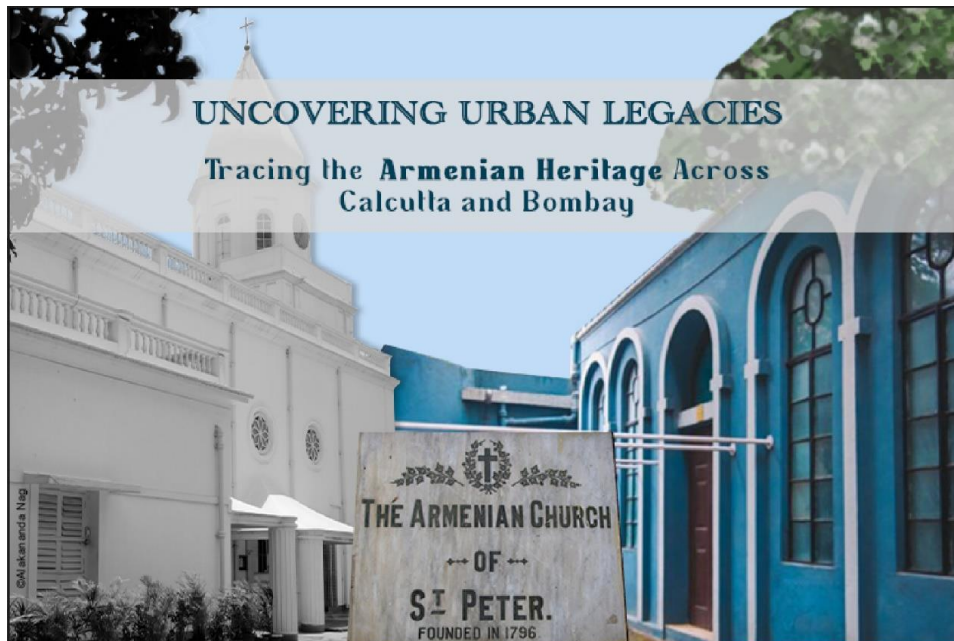
Where: Durbar Hall, Asiatic Society of Mumbai,

When: Friday, 7th October 2022.

6:00pm - 6:30 pm Registration | 6:30pm to 8:00pm: Session

RSVP: www.insider.in

Contact: ayeshah.avid@gmail.com



UNCOVERING URBAN LEGACIES

Tracing the Armenian Heritage Across Calcutta and Bombay

What connects the first Christian grave, circa 1630 in present-day Kolkata, with the 226-year-old orthodox Church of St. Peter the Apostle in Mumbai? The Armenians.

Join us for a **Lecture Demonstration on the Armenians in Calcutta and Bombay**, followed by a panel discussion to celebrate their *Legacy in India*. These eminent speakers will explore the rich heritage of this significant diasporic community in the Indian setting, illuminating the lesser-known saga of India's Armenian past and present. The invigorating evening will showcase a reading room of photobooks and will end with the experts signing their books on sale.

Join us, and be a part of this unique quest to discover and re-discover the stories of the Armenian community, from not one but two metropolises of India.



Author & Bombay History Fellow at Gateway House
Sifra Lentini



Photographer & Author of Armenians of Calcutta
Alakananda Nag



Journalist & Editor of Scroll.in
Naresh Fernandes

MODERATOR

Where Durbar Hall, Asiatic Society of Mumbai, Fort, Mumbai 400001

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About Speakers:

Alakananda Nag is a photographer, archivist, and writer. She lives in Goa, India.

She graduated in Documentary Photography and Photojournalism from the International Center of Photography in New York. She photographs, is an avid researcher, uses archives generously, and writes. Her first photobook, the self-published Armenians of Calcutta launched in February 2021 at Printed Matter's Virtual Art Book Fair virtually, then in person launched at the Goethe Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan Kolkata, Edible Archives in Goa, and at the International Center of Photography's (NYC) Photo Book Fair 2022. The book has been acquired by the Metropolitan Museum New York, SFMOMA, San Francisco, and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, among others. She is an Arts Practice grantee of the India Foundation for the Arts. She has founded Archival Matter, research, curation, and design firm working with histories of South Asia.

Sifra Lentin is a Mumbai-based writer and the Bombay History Fellow at Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relations. She was awarded the 2018-19 Herbert Katz Fellowship for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania for her ongoing project on “Karachi’s Jewish Community”. The books written by her are the Indian Navy’s Western Fleet coffee table book ‘A Salute to The Sword Arm – A Photo Essay on The Western Fleet’ (April 2007); Our Legacy: the Dwarkadas family of Bombay (March 2018), and more recently Bombay’s International Linkages (February 2019), a Gateway House publication. She has contributed chapters on Bombay’s Jewish community to three books.

Naresh Fernandes is the editor of Scroll.in, a digital news publication. 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 Mumbai Research Centre, Asiatic Society of Mumbai is the brainchild of the late Dr. Aroon Tikekar. Since its inception in 2009, the MRC has organized lectures and workshops, funded research projects and conducted heritage walks and visits, all with the aim of evoking interest and promoting interdisciplinary research about Mumbai. Since 2020, the Centre has organized online lectures, certificate courses, walks and visits such as the "Jashn-e-Dastaan-e-Mumbai", a multidisciplinary festival, with the purpose of raising awareness of the city's heritage, conservation, and communities.

The Asiatic Society of Mumbai, founded by Sir James Mackintosh, is a learned society generating, systematizing and disseminating knowledge of India and Asia in diverse areas like numismatics, epigraphy, anthropology, history, archaeology, linguistics, philology, natural history, geology, philosophy, literature and theology. In 1830, it moved into the Town Hall Building. In 1841, the Society started publishing its prestigious journal which continues till date.

Editions JOJO started as a self-publishing imprint by visual artist Kaamna Patel in 2019 and expanded to incorporate the JOJO Library. The JOJO Library is a free & publicly accessible photobook library currently housed in Mumbai and Open by appointment, incorporating over 300 titles from around the world. The library was originally established in 2015 by the BIND collective and Editions JOJO took over the management of the library in 2020. The library is constantly engaged in traveling exhibitions & reading rooms around the country, the most recent ones being in Raipur, Bangalore, and Ahmedabad. JOJO library’s primary mandate is to provide access to historical and contemporary photobooks to a wider audience and to be a learning resource, a platform for critical discussion, and a launchpad for practitioners in the region who are experimenting with the photobook.

Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relations is a foreign policy think-tank established in 2009, to engage India’s leading corporations and individuals in debate and scholarship on India’s foreign policy and its role in global affairs. Gateway House’s studies program will be at the heart of the institute’s scholarship, with original research by global and local scholars in geo-economics, geopolitics, foreign policy analysis, bilateral relations, democracy and nation-building, national security, ethnic conflict and terrorism, science, technology and innovation, and energy and environment.

Avid Learning is Essar’s cultural philanthropy arm and India’s leading public programming platform. Founded in 2009, over the past decade and counting, Avid Learning has presented over 1400 multiverse and hybrid programs on its offline and online platforms – AVID Online, launched in 2020 – and jointly reached 1.8 million interested learners, globally. With a vision to democratize the arts, create new audiences, and deepen engagement for India’s burgeoning creative sector, Avid Learning thoughtfully curates diverse events that embrace the spirit of collaboration. In all its efforts, Avid Learning stands true to its motto that #LearningNeverStops.