



# Advocating Rights and Space for Every Voice!

*Through Neera Adarkar's community activism and advocacy for urban preservations*

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## Abstract

The research aims to explore the role of women in the field of architecture, examining their work, participation, and impact to enhance the visibility of their contributions. In a survey of the world's 100 biggest architecture practices, only three were headed by women, and just two had as many female managers as male, according to magazine Dezeen in November (Matthew Ponsford, CNN, 2018). The question here isn't just about asking about the absence of woman architects, but the call is to infuse equity for women in the real sense in the architectural profession by talking about the visibility of women in architecture. The notion of architecture as a profession dominated by men should be discarded. The realities of the profession demonstrate that women have adeptly integrated into the traditionally male-dominated culture.

“Feminism isn't about making women stronger. Women are strong, it's about changing the way the world perceives the strength” (G.D Anderson, 2019)

With a notable absence of visibility in the past, magazines represent a pivotal shift towards inclusivity and recognition within the architectural community. Through captivating narratives, they celebrate the talent and resilience of architects, inspiring future generations to break barriers and thrive in the field. After thoroughly reviewing magazine publications focusing on female architects, a notable trend emerged: they were predominantly published post-2012. Furthermore, renowned magazines like Azure, a Canadian media outlet featuring “30 Must-Know Women Architects,” or Dezeen from London highlighting “The 50 Most Powerful Women in Architecture and Design,” along with Rethinking the Future, an online platform based in India showcasing “20 Women in Architecture of the 21st Century Shaping the World,” each only mentioned one woman architect from India.

When examining the realm of female architects in India, only two books have been published on the subject. Madhavi Desai authored “Women Architects and Modernism in India: Narratives and Contemporary Practices” in 2017, while Mary N. Woods penned “Women Architects in India: Histories of Practice in Mumbai and Delhi” in the same year. Initially, they collaborated on a single book, but later diverged, resulting in two distinct publications with slightly varied perspectives and selection criteria for women architects. Madhavi Desai revealed in an interview that, “It took 10 years to write because I had no funding and no institutional support. I had to work on it slowly over time, interviewing women if I happened to fly into a particular city for another project. It was very sporadic. It was challenging to source the material on these women, as they were largely invisible. It seemed impossible to find enough material on them. There is hardly any archival material available.” (Parlour Collective, 2020)

Although the above-mentioned books have catalogued and provided brief essays on approximately 40 female architects in India, they still fall short of offering comprehensive insights into each individual. Therefore, my research endeavours to concentrate on architect Neera Adarkar, with an attempt to trace her contributions within the intricate tapestry of India's economic and political landscape. The aim is to unveil the intricacies of her influence on the architectural domain. Through thorough analysis and investigation, the research aims to shed light on the profound impact of Adarkar's designs and ideologies in shaping India's built environment.



**Architect Neera Adarkar, Mumbai, India.**  
a leading practitioner, researcher, urban activist and academician  
*Fig.1 Architect Neera Adarkar during a visit to the chawls*

*(Nakwe, 2012)*

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# ***Introduction***

According to the Global Gender Index 2023, India was ranked 127 out of 146 countries in terms of gender parity. It further stated that India has reached only 36.7% parity between women and men in economic participation and opportunity. (World Economic Forum, 2023) However, within the contemporary landscape of modern India, women architects have prominently emerged, pioneering diverse architectural practices and securing a distinct place at the forefront of the field. Some have rebelled against the pressures of globalisation and consumerism, forging unique identities with opposing views to the mainstream. They offer broader interpretations of their positions as architects than the usual ones. A handful dedicated themselves to humanitarian social causes, activism, conservation and restoration, founding non-governmental organisations, and working with the informal sector. Thus within the context of India's modernist waves, the thesis will examine the journey, fundamental shifts and diverse work practices of Neera Adarkar.

Neera Adarkar, born in 1949 in Mumbai, India; is a woman architect who grew up in a progressive household and in the idealistic environment of a post-independence period of 'nation-making', in which she was encouraged to enjoy freedom in all respects. She graduated from Sir J.J. College of Architecture, Mumbai in 1971 and obtained a postgraduate degree in Industrial Design at the Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai, in 1974. In 1980, she joined her husband Arvind's architectural practice but influenced by the worker and feminist movements in India during the 1980s and 1990s, she has actively engaged in broader social and political causes beyond the realm of architecture. Her focus lies not in political affiliations, but in addressing pertinent issues and advocating for communities. Her advocacy revolves around pressing matters such as displacement, homelessness, and the erosion of identity, notably within locals like Girangaon, an area within Mumbai's former mill lands, shaping her roles as an activist, historian, and designer.

Given a recent shift in her work, the thesis seeks to question: **How did India's economic and political environment influence the practices of Ar. Neera Adarkar in the contemporary times?** It aims to reveal ways in which India's economic and political environment, along with significant events shaped Adarkar's philosophies concerning her advocacy for people's rights, spatial concerns and architecture. The research also delves into themes such as: What were the various roles, experiences, opportunities, and limitations faced by her in the realm of activism, particularly in a field traditionally dominated by men? Why is it important to incorporate diverse women's perspectives into activism, does it contribute to the overall effectiveness of the movement? Did she encounter resistance or pushback in her activism work, and if so, how did she address it?

To set a base for the research, India's Independence Movement plays a major role. It took place between 1858 to 1947, and it was a movement to establish India as an independent nation free from the British Parliament Rule. Mary N. Woods in her book *Women Architects in India: Histories of Practice in Mumbai and Delhi (2017)* stated that in the early 1900s, Sarojini Naidu, India's first women freedom fighter and nationalist leader proclaimed: "It is not you (men), but we (women) who are the true nation builders." During protests organized by Naidu, more than five thousand women were arrested between 1929 and 1933. Because they participated in the freedom struggle, Forbes writes, these women changed how others saw them and how they saw themselves. Additionally, in 1970, the contemporary feminist movement began in India with a powerful wave of activism to address issues of equality and sexual violence against women. Thus throughout India's changing economic and political environment, women actively participated and voiced their opinions.

Some of the discussions have been encapsulated by Bidyut Chakrabarty in the book, *Indian Politics and Society Since Independence (2008)* which talks about the ideologies and influences that have been critical in Indian politics. On the other hand Raka Rey through her book: *Fields of Protest: Women's Movements in India (1999)* questions, "What are the three most important issues women are facing today? The short answer to this question in Calcutta was likely to be "jobs", and in Bombay, "freedom from violence." While Vera Heuer in her book: *Activism and Women's Rights in India (2015)* stated: Not all issues that initially spur women's activism are motivated by gender discrimination, as exemplified by the ecological Chipko Movement to rescue the hill forests or the labour movements against corrupt landlords and government negligence in preventing famines. Moreover, Christine Forster and Jaya Sagade in their book: *Women's Human Rights in India (2020)* explore how women's perspectives and experiences should be included in human rights standards and practice.

The book written by Madhavi Desai: *Women Architects and Modernism in India: Narratives and Contemporary Practices (2017)* and *Women Architects in India: Histories of Practice in Mumbai and Delhi (2017)* written by Mary. N. Woods portrays short essays on women architects in India. The books situate Adarkar within designing for Post-Independence India and practising Neoliberal and Global India. These are the only two books that talk about women architects in India and share snippets of their personal life, journeys, roles, work and interests in the field.

To indulge more in Adarkar's work, her books and publications such as *One Hundred Years, One Hundred Voices. The Millworkers of Girangaon: An Oral History (2004)*, *Chawls of Mumbai: Galleries of Life (2012)* and *The Nation, the State and Indian Identity (2001)* focus on her roles, perspectives and work in the field of activism. Since there are no books dedicated to Adarkar's activism or her role in historical movements, the above mentioned books provide insights into women's involvement and viewpoints. Therefore, I seek to keep these published books as sources of historiographical relevance which will time and again tie with my analysis.

Focusing on one particular woman architect, the research delves into her life, works, and the socio-cultural context in which she operated. Employing a qualitative historical methodology, the primary method of data collection will involve a literature review. This will involve accessing resources such as books, journals, and reports to comprehend the dynamic of India's Independence Movement, and its economic and political landscapes, and to contextualise the contributions of women and Adarkar within it. Secondary methods include analysing Adarkar's published works including her writings, seminars, speeches and varied movements she was a part of. Given the constraints of limited access to certain books, employing the third method of conducting a semi-structured interview with Adarkar will serve to bridge the gap in my research. These interviews will be crucial for gaining personal experiences, and perspectives that may not be available through written records. Through these methodologies, the thesis aims to correlate three key elements: (1) historical events (2) her activism and published writings, and (3) her contributions and initiatives in the field.

The essay is structured in three chapters, where each chapter comprises one historical event in India. These events are led due to the political and economic environment of India such as Mumbai's mill workers' increased wage strike, demolition of mills and chawls, rapid urbanisation and the Hindu-Muslim riots. As these historical events took place between 1980 and the early 2000's, they overlap each other and so are arranged as a narration of what would have led to the other. Each event is then tied together through Adarkar's initial enquiry, role and activism which is translated through her published books and her projects. This structural approach thus illuminates the evolving practices and policies within Mumbai and highlights Adarkar's evolving interests and contributions. It explains how her involvement in political events influenced the development of her ideas, which she then translates through her projects and professional endeavours.

Chapter 01

***The Great Bombay  
Textile Strike***



*“The struggle for the daily bread is an everyday question  
At times outside the door, at times inside  
I’m a worker, a flaming sword*

*Listen, you intellectuals! I’m going to commit a crime  
I’ve suffered, witnessed, explored a bit  
The sweet ache of my world lies in it...”*

*“Bread’s my first love, I agree, but I need something more  
That’s why my world’s casting the royal seal  
It’s here that I drop flowers into the palms of my words*

*It’s here that I give swords into the hands of my words...”*

*- Poem titled Chaar Shabda,  
Nivdak Narayan Surve, 2008*

Published by  
TEJ BROTHERS  
MUMBAI

# BOMBAY CITY

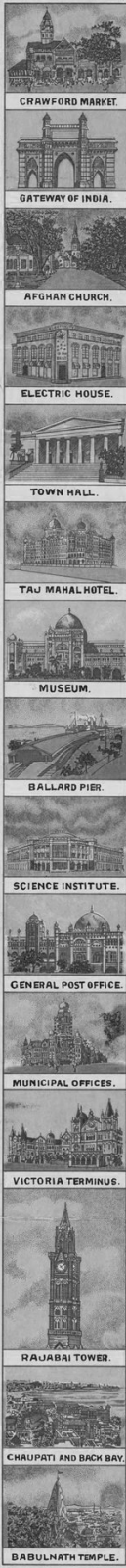
JOSHI & Co.  
SCHOOL MAP PUBLISHERS.

Pro. A. S. VAIDYA  
KANDEWADI BOMBAY 4

Scale 2400 Feet to an Inch.



- EXPLANATIONS-**
- TRAMWAY ROUTES ———●———
  - BUS ROUTES ———●———
  - TRAMWAY & BUS RTS. ———●———
  - BROAD ROADS ———●———
  - NARROW ROADS ———●———
  - RAILWAY ROUTES ———●———
  - PLAY GROUNDS & GARDENS ———●———
  - PONDS ———●———



**DETAILS ABOUT DIVISIONS**

Sub-divisions.	Ward.
COLABA and FORT.	A
MANDVI & PRINCES DOCK.	B
BHULESHWAR.	C
GIRGAUM, CHAUPATI, MALBAR & CUMBALA HILL.	D
TARDEO & KAMATIPURA.	E
MAZAGAON & BYCULLA.	F
PAREL, SEWRI.	F
DADAR, NAIGAUM.	F
SALT PANS.	F
MATUNGA & SION.	F
LOWER PAREL, WORLI.	F
MAHIM.	G
DHARAVI.	G

**PRINCIPAL TRAMWAY STATIONS-**

1 SASSOON DOCK.	20 J.J. HOSPITAL JN.
2 GRANT'S BLDGS.	20a NOOR BAUG.
3 MUSEUM EAST.	21 MAZAGAON.
3a MUSEUM WEST.	22 NAGPADA JN.
4 BALLARD PIER.	23 JACOBS CIRCLE.
5 BORI BUNDER.	24 BYC. BRIDGE.
6 CR. MARKET.	25 V. GARDENS.
7 DHOLI TALAO.	26 LAL BAUG.
7a THAKURDWAR.	27 PAREL.
8 CARNAC BND.	28 DADAR.
9 WARI BND. JN.	29 FLORA FOUN.
10 GIRGAUM P. CH.	30 SANDHURST BR.
10a OPERA HOUSE.	31 GOL PITHA.
11 PYDHONIE.	32 R. TEMPLE.
11a JAKERIA MUSID.	33 BHENDI BAZAR.
12 NALL BAZAR.	34 REAY ROAD.
13 C.P. TANK.	34a DOCK YARD RD.
14 COR. OF GT. RD.	35 GOWALLA TK. RD.
15 CHARNI RD. JN.	36 PRATH. SAMAJ.
16 GRANT ROAD.	37 TANK BUNDER.
17 FORAS RD. JN.	38 PALTOW RD.
18 TARDEO.	39 CHAKLA ST.
19 TWO TANKS.	40 KING'S CIRCLE.

Jan. 1947

PRICE 1 RUPEE.

Fig.2 Highlighting Girangaon in the 1970 "Road Map of Bombay" Guide

(Tej Brothers, 1970)

## 1.1 The city of Bombay and the origin of the mills

Bombay, now recognised as Mumbai during the nineteenth century held the title of India's economic capital and was often referred to as the "Manchester of the East". (Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai, 1995) Mumbai, originally a port city, underwent a significant transition from a trading hub to a manufacturing powerhouse by the mid-1880s. This transformation was spurred in the early decades of the nineteenth century when India exported cotton to Britain and subsequently imported the finished textiles. Moreover, the emergence of the American Civil War caused disruptions in supplies from the USA, consequently triggering a surge in cotton exports from India. Mumbai's textile industry thus emerged as one of India's earliest modern sectors, with millworkers playing a pioneering role in the formation of trade unions in the country.

This entire narrative unfolded in Girangaon, which literally translates to the "mill village". Located centrally in Mumbai, it sprawls over a thousand acres, stretching from Byculla to Dadar and from Mahalaxmi to Mazgaon. (See Fig.2) In 1854, Cowasji Nanabhai Davar founded the inaugural cotton mill, known as "The Bombay Spinning Mill", situated in Girangaon. By 1870, the number of mills had reached 13, which exponentially grew to 81 by 1925. While the city once boasted around 130 cotton mills, the impact of World War II and strong competition from Japan led to a decline, with only 53 active mills remaining by 1953. (Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai, 1995) (See Fig.3)



Fig.3 Girangaon mill lands

(Shirish Joshi, 2022)

As the textile industry flourished, there arose a demand for a larger workforce to operate the mills. Soon, advertisements were circulated, attracting individuals from various regions to migrate here in pursuit of better employment opportunities and income. By the early 1920s, the mills had employed approximately 150,000 migrants, including a considerable number of women, bringing the total mill workforce to 250,000. (See Fig.4) (Adarkar & Menon, 2004 p.123) While the majority of residents here are from the Konkan belt, there is also a significant presence of individuals from the Ghat region. In contrast to other parts of Mumbai, where each neighbourhood is characterised by diverse languages and cuisines within families, Marathi emerged as the predominant language in use here, although dialects and pronunciations vary. To address the housing needs of the mill workers, the owners constructed a new housing typology known as “Chawls” – three or four-story large overcrowded tenement housing, where entire families were accommodated in single rooms. These chawls were strategically located in close proximity to the mills.

During its peak, the cityscape of Girangaon could be vividly envisioned with towering brick chimneys defining the skyline, mills enclosed by high walls, chimneys looming over them, rows of unpainted chawls, and lanes crowded with vegetable and fruit vendors, all while a constant stream of workers flowed to and from the mill gates. Both men and women worked in the mills, and upon the end of their shifts, they often preferred spending their time on the streets rather than returning to their single rooms. Transitioning from the southern tip of Mumbai, characterized by its Gothic and Deco structures, to the central part of the city where the textile mills were situated, one felt transported to an entirely different cityscape altogether. (See Fig.5)



Fig.4 Women working in the mills

(Tata, 2004)

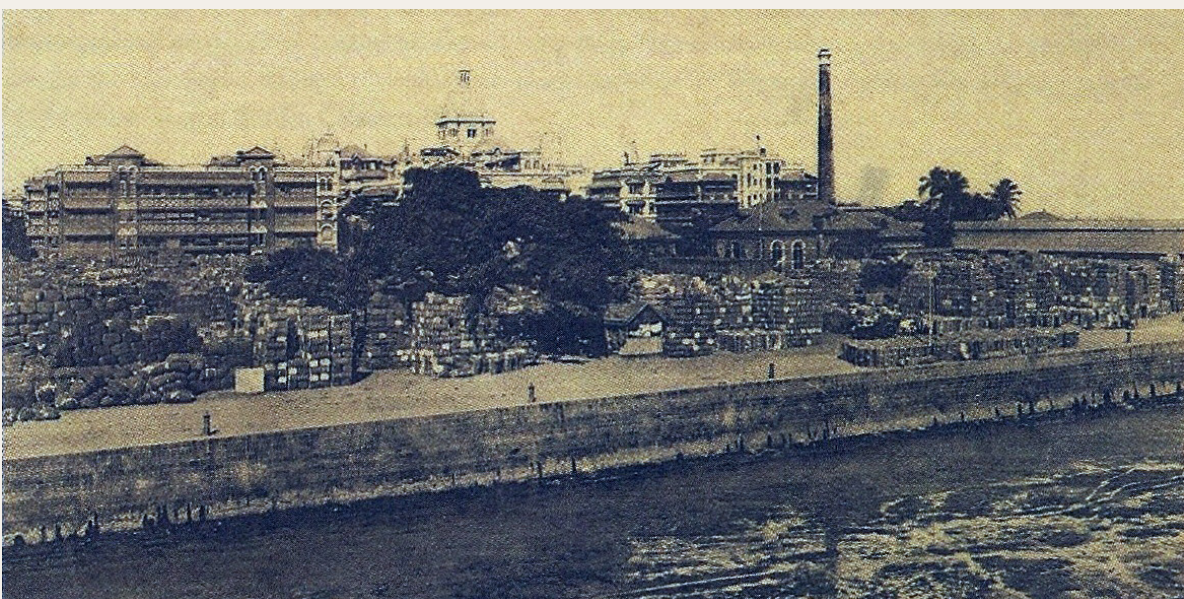


Fig.5 Cotton green mills in front of the Taj Mahal Hotel, Colaba in 1910.

(Wikipedia Commons)

## 1.2 The case of The Great Bombay Textile Strike

Between the 1880s and 1980s, smaller strikes occurred in the mills to address issues related to the reduction in working hours and the prohibition of night shifts following the arrival of electricity. However, the textile industry of Mumbai witnessed a significant turning point with the eighteen-month-long strike of 1982-83. This strike not only called for a wage increase but also demanded the implementation of ballot voting to select the representative union. The strike's repercussions extended beyond its 250,000-strong workforce, affecting not just the workers but also the broader community. (See Fig.6)

During this period, mill owners strategically began outsourcing cheaper weaving production to the internal power loom sectors of Bhiwandi and Malegaon to reduce costs. Labourers in these areas could be hired for half the wages and work longer shifts. In 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi allocated Rs 400 crores in the budget for mill owners to modernise their operations. (Adarkar & Menon, 2004 p.131) Anticipating the potential real estate value of their land, mill owners initiated the process of shutting down the mills. Many mills followed the same pattern, without government approval, putting the futures of thousands of workers at risk.

Datta Iswalkar, the Leader of the BKSS Closed Mills Workers Action Committee, expressed his frustration, stating, "Every day, workers gathered at the gate. They were helpless. I couldn't take this anymore. After all we were the only ones who were the ultimate sufferers." (Adarkar & Menon, 2004 p.137) At his juncture, mill owners employed various tactics to get rid of workers, aiming to create a blank slate for redevelopment. In the case of Khatau mil, 5000 workers endured nine years without wages, leading to two strategic suicides. (Adarkar & Menon, 2004 p.145) By the mid-1990s, Girangaon's skyline gradually transformed from mills to high-rise luxury towers, with no consideration for workers' subsidies or future employment prospects. The challenges surrounding the mill lands were no longer confined solely to the mill workers; instead, they evolved into a broader urban development concern.



Fig.6 Long march of Mumbai's textile workers 1982

(The Hindu Business Line, 2011)

## 1.3 Through the lens of Adarkar's book: One hundred years, One hundred voices

The process of writing the book paralleled the fight for workers' rights. Neera Adarkar and Meena Menon dedicated five years to its completion, as it was one of the pioneering works to document oral histories. Published in 2004, the book provides insights into the evolving social dynamics of the city through an exploration of Girangaon's history. (See Fig.7) Their work constitutes a significant contribution to the

understanding of the labour movement and the city of Mumbai. By gathering oral testimonies from 100 workers, they shed light not only on the past but also on the contemporary challenges faced by the city and its working class.

The importance of their strikes and political activism is occasionally recognized through evaluations by civil servants, political parties, and trade union leaders. Consequently, the voices of the working classes have largely been overlooked in Indian history. Many of the workers mentioned in the book have since passed away, underscoring the significance of documenting their thoughts and words during the strikes. Without such documentation, this aspect of history would likely have been forgotten.

This book is a collaborative effort by and for the people of Girangaon, encapsulating a vital chapter of its history. Just as the mills have evolved into malls, luxury apartments, and bowling alleys, parts of the cityscape are still grappling with the legacy of abandoned mills and the rights they represent. Adarkar's work is instrumental in reimagining the lives of the mill workers. As a woman deeply involved in fieldwork, she dedicated herself to advocating for the workers' rights and preserving their history, which might otherwise have faded into obscurity over time.



Fig.7 The book: *One hundred years, one hundred voices*

(Calicut University Library, 2004)

#### 1.4 Initiative: Save Girangaon Movement proposing counter plans for the mill owners land

Following the protest, activists recognized the importance of addressing the future development of the entire neighbourhood. Adarkar, who observed the strike and documented its events, played a crucial role in two key initiatives in the city. Firstly, she facilitated the creation of a unified platform by involving a diverse range of civil society organizations to oppose the state's policy regarding the development of mill lands. Secondly, she led initiatives to formulate alternative development plans for these lands.

In 2000, the Girangaon Bachao Andolan (Save Girangaon Movement) was established with a primary focus on safeguarding the rights of the local communities against encroachments by developers, mill owners, and mafias. Adarkar was one of the convenors and her main objective was to resist displacement and advocate for jobs and housing. Adarkar states that her feminism, along with her engagement with the mill lands, has made her think of architecture in new ways. As architects we always want to create something new but "What we need is Shramapur (city of labour) and not Singapore!" (Adarkar & Menon, 2004 p.146)

Adarkar along with other activists were fighting on many fronts simultaneously. They first opposed the closure of the mills, then worked to expose the illegal land dealings by mill owners, demanded protection for tenants on mill lands, and negotiated with mill management for fair compensation for workers. Following the publications of the Charles Correa Committee report, the Girni Kamgar Sangharsh Samiti (GKSS) organised a day-long workshop for mill activists, inviting architects and city planners to participate. After extensive deliberations, Adarkar and a selected group of urban activists and planners proposed a revised plan that prioritised land-sharing while taking into account the economic and cultural needs of the neighbourhood. (Adarkar & Menon, 2004 p.153) Adarkar’s dual role as an architect and a vocal activist was instrumental in translating their concerns and ideas into tangible solutions.

Furthermore, they proposed creating alternative livelihood opportunities, first by compensating workers for their involvement in the textile industry, second by allocating 25% of the land to build their own housing and, third by advocating for the protection of residential tenants before and after the development. Initially, the plan comprised 33% for worker housing, 33% for public amenities, and 33% for mill owners. However, with State complicity, 86% of the land was allotted for private profit. In the face of such powerful political influence, discerning right from wrong becomes challenging. (See Fig.8) Despite this, Adarkar’s active involvement and advocacy endeavoured to improve conditions for mill workers, securing some of their rights in the process.

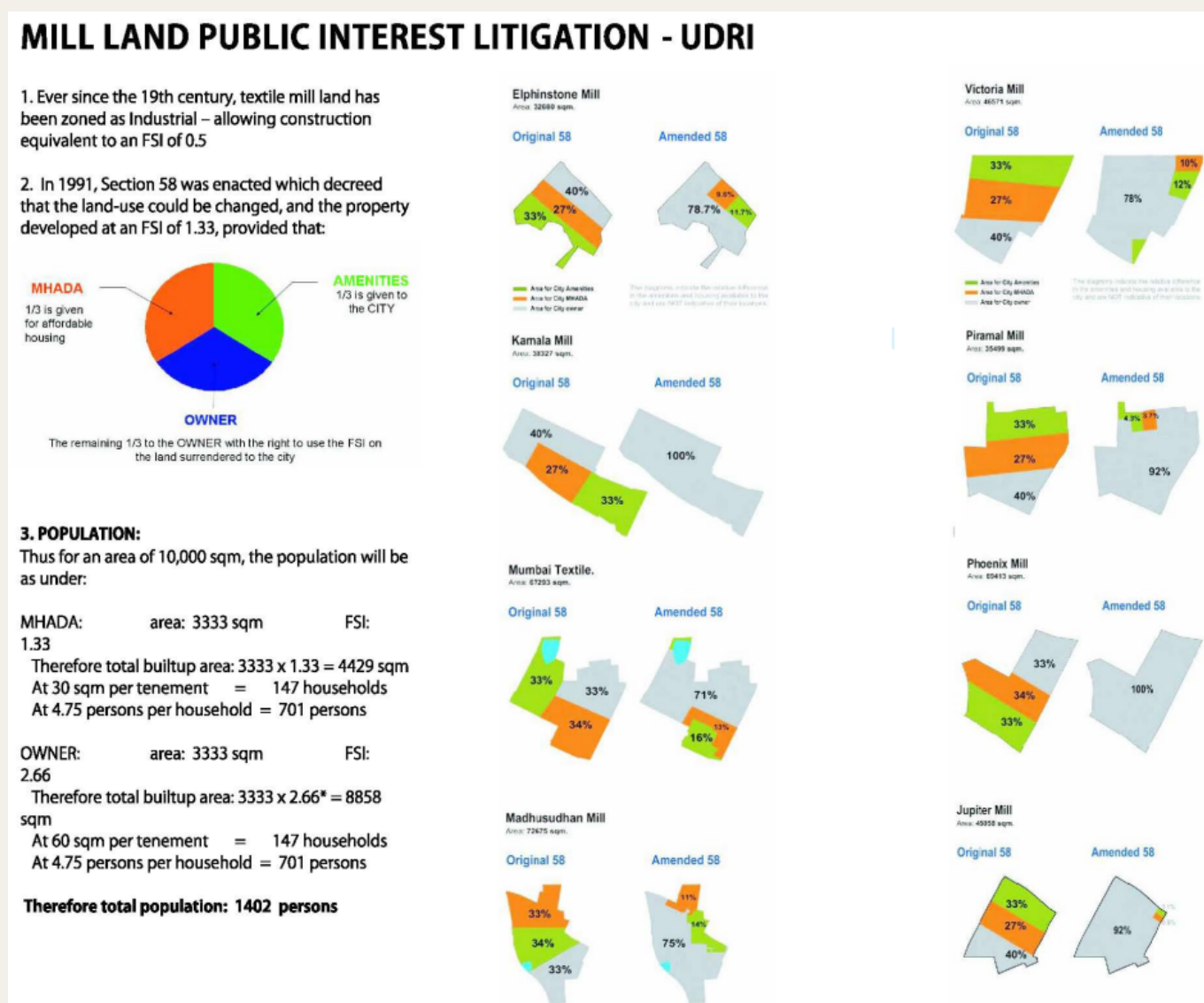


Fig.8 Proposed versus amended plans of the Mill lands

(Neera Adarkar, 2004)

Chapter 02

***Mumbai's rapid urbanisation:  
Learnings from the Chawl***



*A thousand lives stacked vertiginously.  
A thousand lives pressed together, pressed  
for space. A thousand lives, each in its  
own cubicle of hope, heartbreak, noise.*

*Each door a clarion call to privacy.  
Each curtain a rippling semaphore.  
Each verandah a geography  
of longing. Each window a dream's echo.*

*A thousand dreams in close proximity.  
A thousand schemes intersecting,  
retreating, reconfiguring. A thousand  
jostling shadows, each a ghost of  
opportunity.*

*In this maze of corridors, ghosts  
carouse, stairways teem, voices merge.  
Each footfall is an anthem of struggle.  
Each heartbeat is a story unfolding.*

*Chawl.*

*Where the tenements are tenanted  
by dreams, and a hundred stories  
rise from every pore.*

- Poem titled "Life in Chawl"  
Arundhathi Subramaniam, 2014

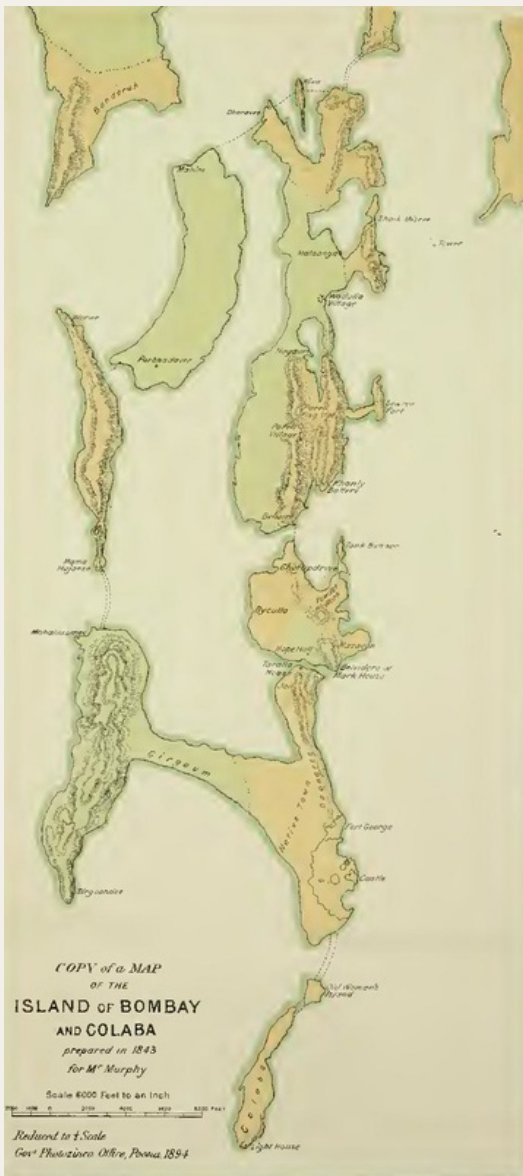


Fig.9 Map of Bombay 1843 (British Library, 2013)



Fig.10 Map of Bombay 1900s (Mark Frazier, 2019)

## 2.1 The historical origins and urban necessity of chawls in Mumbai

The first chapter delved into the inception of textile mills, while this subsequent chapter further explores the concept of chawls, a housing typology developed to accommodate the influx of individuals migrating to Mumbai for employment in the ports and mills. Mumbai initially was a cluster of seven islands which was surrounded by mudflats and marshy land which gradually reclaimed over the 18th century to become the city it is recognized today. (Mehrotra & Dwivedi, 2001 p.7) (See Fig.9) As the opium and cotton textile traders relocated from Gujarat to Mumbai, it offered a chance for individuals to migrate and accumulate wealth. However, the pressing requirement to accommodate the substantial influx of migrant workers remained unaddressed by both colonial authorities and employers. Therefore, newly arrived labourers started to reclaim the mudflats and marshy areas and built huts and sheds over them. (See Fig.10) Only a few opted to stay in open areas outside the mill gates, with an estimated 100,000 individuals sleeping on roads or footpaths. (Adarkar, 2012 p.6) According to the 1849 Census, only 1% who were Europeans lived in the spacious fort area, whereas two-fifths of the population lived in the crowded areas north of the Fort. The death rate in these dense areas was 4 times that of the Fort area. Responding to this need, mill owners constructed numerous chawls in close proximity to the mills. At its peak, approximately 75 per cent of the workers could reach their workplace within a 15-minute walk. (Adarkar, 2012 p.6)

During an interview held by Khaki Lab in Mumbai in 2021, Neera was asked about the origins of the term “chawl.” In response, she suggested that in Marathi (a language predominantly spoken in Maharashtra, India), the term might be closest in meaning to “anklet” - specifically, an anklet made of beads strung together. She elaborated that the term refers to a series of rooms arranged adjacent to one another, similar to beads linked together within a single structure. In terms of spatial layout, Chawls were commonly two to four-story structures featuring single occupancy rooms, typically measuring 10x12 feet, arranged in a linear fashion on each floor. Each floor typically housed a shared toilet, with two exits located on opposite sides. Many chawls also included an inner courtyard around which the floors were arranged. (See Fig.11) The rooms were meant to be for the men working in the mills and sometimes up to 16 men were cramped up in one room and would have issues having access to basic infrastructure. (Aditi Dey, 2018) In contrary to the tight space, chawls created a very vibrant ecosystem. Men migrated from Konkan which is on the west coast of Maharashtra and other states of Gujarat and Rajasthan. There were Hindus and Muslims and although they spoke the same language, the religion, cultures and social aspects of living were very different. The rooms were intended for the men working in the mills, often accommodating up to 16 men per room, leading to challenges in accessing basic amenities. (Aditi Dey, 2018) Despite the cramped conditions, chawls fostered a lively ecosystem as men migrated from different regions like Konkan on the west coast of Maharashtra, as well as from Gujarat and Rajasthan. Within these communities, there was a mix of Hindus and Muslims who, despite sharing a common language, exhibited distinct differences in religion, culture, and social norms.



Fig.11 Overlooking balconies and inner courtyards of chawl

(Maithili Rao, 2018)

## 2.2 The case of Mumbai's rapid urbanisation and life in chawls

### Structure and Ownership of Chawls

A chawl generally consists of single or double rooms, each with a balcony providing a view of the courtyard. Chawls can take various configurations such as U-shaped, E-shaped, or two parallel rows surrounding a central courtyard. (Aditi Dey, 2018) In Mumbai, there are three types of chawls: those owned by mill owners, private individuals, and public bodies.

Initially, chawls were constructed by mill owners to accommodate the immediate requirements of migrant workers. While these mill-owned chawls offered convenience, they weren't widely favoured. In this scenario, mill owners not only took control over the chawls but also over the worker's employment and management. Absences from work were not easily tolerated by the workers residing in the chawls. Mill owners would often resort to threatening to cut off electricity and water supplies in response to workers' strike. (Khaki Lab & Adarkar, 2021)

The second category of chawls consisted of privately owned properties, predominantly owned by traders who constructed them as rental units to generate a stable income. As these traders come from various regions across India, they imprinted their cultural influences onto the chawl designs. For instance, Pannalal Chawl showcases architectural ornamentations like chhatris (umbrellas) and minarets. (See Fig.12) Similarly, Ananji Laddha Chawl, strategically positioned at a significant three-road junction, reflects the owner's aspiration for a sophisticated urban aesthetic, featuring classical Corinthian columns and pediments. (figure) (Khaki Lab & Adarkar, 2021)

The third category of chawls was established by public entities such as The Bombay Improvement Trust (BIT) and the Bombay Development Department (BDD), with the primary objective of addressing public health and sanitation concerns following the plague epidemic in 1898. (Aditi Dey, 2018) These chawls were planned to incorporate ample spacing between buildings, creating expansive open areas. (See Fig.13) Notably, the BDD chawls marked a significant shift by welcoming individuals of all castes and religions, fostering a diverse community where Muslims, Dalits, and Hindus resided together. While pockets of diversity were evident, the chawls generally portrayed a sense of uniformity within specific groups, whether in terms of socioeconomic class, religion, caste, or geographical settings.



Fig.12 Pannalal chawl (Khaki Labs & Adarkar, 2021)

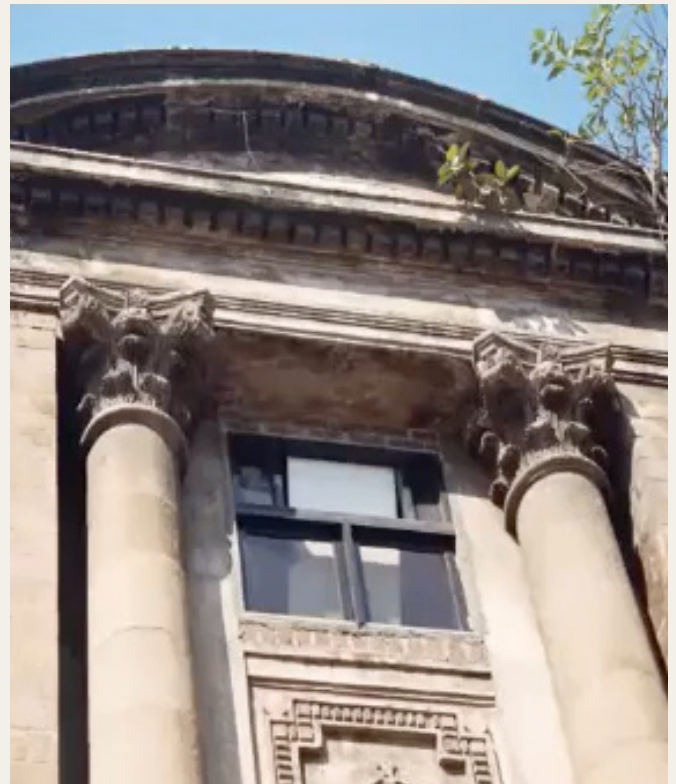


Fig.13 Ananji Laddha chawl (Khaki Labs & Adarkar, 2021)

## Spaces for men, women and children

When migrants relocate to a megacity, they frequently congregate in specific neighbourhoods where they bring not only their dialects, idioms, and cultural practices but also establish the presence of their deities, temples, stores, goods, and food from their places of origin. This regional identity becomes ingrained within the framework of the chawl institution. Consequently, each chawl courtyard would feature a temple dedicated to the community's deity. The courtyard plays a multifaceted role, serving as a central hub for festivals, weddings, political debates, and children's play.

When examining chawls from a gendered perspective, it becomes apparent that they were initially constructed by and for single men. However, as the influx of single migrants continued, their wives, children, and sometimes extended families also joined them. In an interview with Khaki Labs Mumbai in 2021, Adarkar noted that typical chawl facades feature intricate cast iron railings on the balconies, which interestingly served as a unit of measurement for laying out sleeping arrangements. She explained that ten bars of railings would mark one's bedding space, with the next ten bars designated for neighbours. Adarkar further highlighted the challenges faced by women in terms of hygiene and privacy, noting that the bathing space in the rooms was merely three by three meters without a door, only enclosed by a two or three-foot wall. This limited area served as the only private space for women. Additionally, the kitchen served a multifunctional purpose, as married couples residing together would take turns using it at night.

Women lacked dedicated personal space within the home, leading them to utilize balconies for their daily rituals and tasks, such as sieving spices and washing clothes, often in the company of other women. The consistent engagement in these chores fostered solidarity and created interdependencies among women. The women introduced "Khanavals" a dining space in one room in the chawl, providing lunch and dinner services for single men who lived in the chawls. (Aditi Dey, 2018) Khanavals became the spaces within chawls where women were considered reliable and essential; these women cooked food for the migrants in their native ways. (See Fig.14) It evolved into a setting where stronger connections were established, fostering the exchange of information between both men and women, thereby enhancing the unity within the chawl community. Moreover, women also engaged in various small-scale enterprises, such as selling pickles, spices, or sewing clothes. The economic framework of the chawl enabled women to actively participate as industrious and entrepreneurial members of the community. (Aditi Dey, 2018) Over time, these interdependencies of sharing the same space, running small businesses together and networks became the strength of the community.



Fig.14 Khanavals run by women

(Khaki Labs & Adarkar, 2021)

## Mumbai's Rapid Urbanization

The chawl landscape underwent a significant transformation following the Great Bombay Textile Strike of 1983, which precipitated the closure of numerous mills by their owners. This closure directly impacted chawl residents, as widespread unemployment made them unable to afford rent, eventually leading to the dilapidation of the chawls. In the early 2000s, as a response to the housing crisis and the potential mass displacement of communities, the government initiated mass housing projects in the form of high-rise buildings. (Khaki Lab & Adarkar, 2021) Contractors seized this opportunity to maximize profits by constructing numerous buildings within allocated plots, prioritizing density over quality of living. Although these new residences provided occupants with ownership rights, they were characterized by enclosed apartment layouts devoid of shared spaces, balconies, or courtyards. Furthermore, the buildings were lined up at a distance of 10m hindering sunlight from entering their homes. Over time, the 10-meter pathways between buildings deteriorated into garbage lanes, where waste would get discarded. (See Fig.15)



Fig.15 New housing for the mill workers

(Khaki Labs & Adarkar, 2021)

### 2.3 Through the lens of Adarkar's book: Chawls of Mumbai: Galleries of Life

In her book, "Chawls of Mumbai: Galleries of Life", (See Fig.16) Adarkar emerges as one of the pioneers in documenting and delving into the intricacies of life within chawls. Through various chapters, she presents perspectives from diverse communities, including considerations of caste, religion, and the pivotal roles played by women, highlighting their resilience and the interconnectedness of these communities. As a woman, Adarkar was able to establish great connections with female residents, providing insight into previously undocumented stories. Her advocacy for improving the lives of chawl residents isn't rooted in nostalgia, but rather in a call for planners, architects, and government entities to recognize and address the unique civic and infrastructural needs of these neighbourhoods. Instead of imposing entirely new living arrangements, she focused to acknowledge and build upon the existing interdependencies within these communities.



Fig.16 The book: Chawls of Mumbai: galleries of life and lecture series by Khaki Labs, Mumbai (Khaki Labs & Adarkar, 2021)

## 2.4 Initiative: Translating the spatial characteristics of chawls into Adarkar's project

In her analysis of housing provided by contractors and builders, Adarkar observed a trend of eliminating open balconies, which she initially regarded as a casualty of minimalism. (Mary N. Wood, 2017 p.161) Two decades later, she observed that male administrators tried to cut costs by reducing spaces traditionally utilized by women for various activities. Through her study of chawls, Adarkar noted that girls and women never made use of open spaces and courtyards as they were predominantly used by male residents. Instead, women tend to occupy galleries, balconies and staircase landings outside their rooms. (Khaki Lab & Adarkar, 2021) These observations influenced Adarkar's work in Nagri Nivara Parishad, a housing project in Malad. She explored designs by incorporating generously proportioned staircase landings and communal spaces where women and children could engage in work, play and socializing. (See Fig.17) In this project, Adarkar aims to translate the nuanced social dynamics of chawls into the design of new housing projects. Her practice stood out as one of the very few in India where mass housing was designed with a focus on creating spaces tailored to the needs of women and children.

In 2013, Adarkar designed Chaitanya, a retirement home influenced by the architectural style of chawls. Retirement homes in India serve as secondary residences for parents post-retirement. Chaitanya, a two-story structure with pitched roofs and vibrant yellow plastered facades prioritizes spacious communal areas despite its relatively compact bedrooms. As one enters the house, they are greeted with a generously proportioned double-height lounge, setting the tone for the expansive communal zones. The rooms lining the central atrium overlook the serene views while the rooms perpendicular to it open onto smaller, intimate courtyards. Adarkar's observations from the chawl are expressed in the design, with wide walkways reminiscent of chawl galleries providing avenues for residents to stroll, interact, and attend to everyday activities like laundry and drying. (Mary N. Woods, 2017 p.162) (See Fig.18)

Adarkar's work has been profound, involving meticulous documentation and engagement with chawl communities. She not only encapsulates their narrative in a book but also incorporates the social fabric that binds people in her architectural projects. Following the waves of urbanization in countries like India, similar to the fate of textile mills, chawls face decay and eventually disappear. Adarkar's book stands as a singular testament, documenting these pivotal historical transitions and shedding light on stories of religion, caste, and gender, and thus serves a crucial role in preserving their importance.



Fig. 17 Landing and Staircases, Nagri Nivara Parishad Trust Housing (Mary N. Woods, 2017)



Fig. 18 Chaitanya retirement home (Mary N. Woods, 2017)

Chapter 03

***Roits and the  
Indian Identity***



*And he stood there  
with his hair dishevelled,  
his breath heavy,  
his big eyes, watchful  
but not watery  
observing*

*as they tore down his village  
burnt the houses  
demolished the mosque  
raped the women  
and butchered them,  
stole the lives,  
out of his friends  
and trampled on their  
dead bodies  
rejoicing revenge.*

*But he is a grown up now,  
and he sees a village  
a temple,  
some women  
quite beautiful, but not as much  
as the ones of his village were*

*but there is no calm, no love  
in his big eyes  
which are, instead  
filled with anger, vengeance  
bitter memories  
as he enters the village,  
with other men*

*and as another child,  
watches from a distance.*

- Poem titled Communal Violence,  
Anshul Kumar Pandey, 2011

### 3.1 India's cultural and religious tensions

In India, a tapestry of cultures, religions, and traditions weave together, creating a land where diversity intertwines with intricacy. It is an immensely diverse country with many distinct pursuits, vastly disparate convictions, widely divergent customs and a veritable feast of viewpoints. (Ramachandra Guha, 2007) Amidst the vibrant cultural identities, there exist tensions and occasional eruptions of violence, reflecting deep-seated socio-political splits. Understanding the dynamics of cultural identities, tensions, and riots in India requires a multifaceted approach that delves into historical, sociological, and anthropological perspectives.

Ramachandra Guha in the book, "India after Gandhi: The History of the world's largest democracy" states that, in the opinion of Guru Golwalkar and his Sangh, India was a "Hindu" nation. With a population of 1.4 billion, India encompasses a diverse blend of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and followers of folk religions. Hindus constitute 79.8% of the population, with Muslims comprising 14.2%, while Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains collectively represent the remaining 6%. (Stephanie Kramer, 2021)

In this case, religious tensions arise as each religion has its own beliefs, and respects different gods and animals, cultivating distinct cultural sensitivities. Conflicts arise on multiple fronts; for instance, Hindus consider cows holy, while Muslims and Christians consume them. Alternatively, disputes may stem from differences in deity worship, as each religious group follows distinct gods. Religious tensions in India often revolve around disputes regarding ownership and control of sacred sites, including temples. These conflicts can arise between different religious communities, leading to social unrest and sometimes violence. "The language of the mob was only the language of public opinion cleansed of hypocrisy and restraint." (Hannah Arendt, 1951) The riots act as unfiltered sentiments of public opinion, free from any pretence or self-imposed limitations. When individuals gather as a mob, they express their collective beliefs and emotions without inhibition or regard for social norms or moral constraints. The phrase, "cleansed of hypocrisy and restraint", indicates that in the context of a mob, there is a raw and unadulterated expression of popular sentiment, free from politeness or moral considerations. Efforts to address these tensions often involve legal and political interventions, but finding lasting solutions requires dialogue, mutual respect, and a commitment to religious harmony.

### 3.2 The case of Babri Masjid demolition and Gujarat riots

#### Babri Masjid: Hindus and Muslims Stake claim

Built-in 1528 by Mir Bagi, a general under Emperor Babur, in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, India, the Babri Masjid is at the centre of a protracted legal controversy. Reports by Mathew John in 2013, state that scholars, politicians, and historical chronicles concluded that in order to build the Babri Masjid, a temple at Ayodhya which is supposedly the capital of Rama's father Dashrath in the Ramayana had to be demolished.

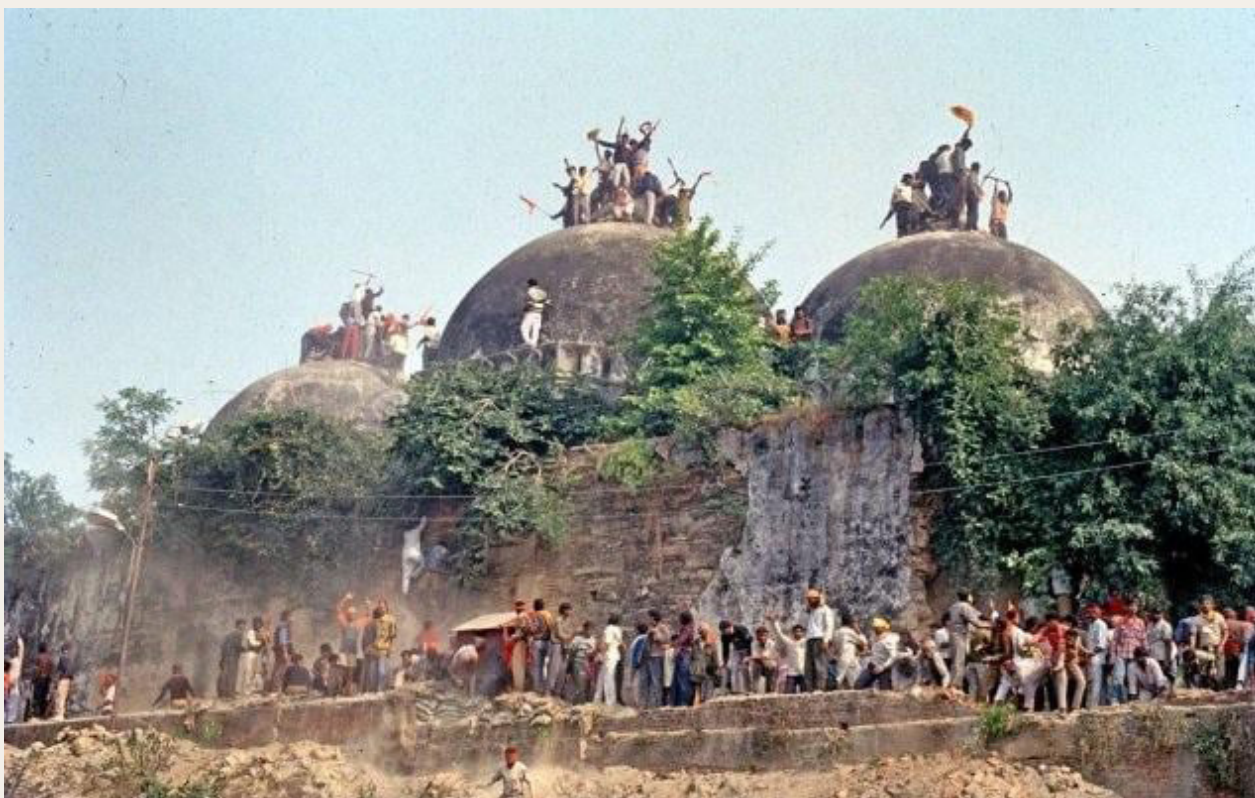
A timeline report by Noorani in 2003 states that, the legal issue over Ayodhya began in the 1880s, when tensions broke out between Hindus and Muslims over the site, which escalated from an alleged conflict in 1855 when Sunni Muslims claimed a temple in adjacent Hanumangarh was erected on top of a demolished mosque. In 1859, the Babri Masjid was fenced off by the British authorities due to the increasing belief that it was the birthplace of Lord Rama, or 'Ram Janmabhoomi'. Mahant Raghubir Das submitted a request in 1885 asking for authorization to erect a canopy outside the building, but it was turned down. Clashes between Hindus and Muslims in 1934 caused damage to the mosque's facade and dome. In 1949, there was a notable increase when the first idol of Ram Lalla was positioned beneath the central dome. Members of a fringe Hindu group had placed the idols inside, sparking further tensions. Late in the 1980s, the Babri politics flared up again, especially after a court in the area ordered in 1986 that the site be opened to Hindu worshippers. Religious tensions escalated as a result of this decision, and on December 6, 1992, a group of 'kar sevaks' meaning people who volunteer their services for free to a religious cause were carrying out the Rath Yatra, destroyed the mosque. Violent fights spread across the nation as a result of this incident, resulting in numerous political party officials being sued. (See Fig.19) (Noorani, 2003)

Tensions between Muslims and Hindus sharply increased following the destruction of the Babri Masjid, triggering fights between members of both religions in several places that claimed many lives. These

clashes frequently featured armed crowds carrying swords, sticks, and firearms. Raging crowds targeted and burned fire homes, shops, mosques, and temples that belonged to Muslims and Hindus. (Noorani, 2003) Particularly susceptible were historical and religious sites, several of which suffered total damage or vandalism amid the chaos. Reports surfaced of incidents of police abuse and absence in numerous regions despite the widespread violence. The situation was made worse by claims that certain police officers were biased or participating in the attacks, and some officers did not act to stop the violence or protect populations who were at risk.

Thousands of people had to leave their homes in search of safety as a result of the Babri Masjid riots, which resulted in widespread displacement. The government and non-governmental organisations set up relief camps for those who fled harsh living conditions and an uncertain future. (Mathew, 2013) The most terrible consequence of the Babri Masjid riots was the loss of thousands of lives, which included both Hindus and Muslims. The violence seen and experienced during this period shattered families and affected communities. The Babri Masjid riots highlight the dangerous consequences of religious intolerance and communalism, and they represent a tragic chapter in India's history. The violence's lasting wounds serve as an alarming reminder of the importance of acceptance, communication, and coordinated efforts to encourage social cohesion.

In 2019, the contested property was later awarded in the name of the god Ram by the Supreme Court, which also ordered the national government to keep control of the site and provide Muslims with five acres for a mosque. The building of the Ram Temple was subsequently started in 2020 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the Bhoomi Poojan and a 15-member trust for the temple was declared. A separate CBI court also cleared all 32 accused in the Babri Masjid destruction case in 2020. (Verma, 2020) Ultimately, the Babri demolition proceedings were concluded by the Supreme Court in 2022.



*Fig. 19 Attack on Babri Masjid*

*(Anwar, 2018)*

## **Gujarat riots 2002**

On the morning of February 27, 2002, the Sabarmati Express, which was transporting Hindu pilgrims from Ayodhya to Ahmedabad, was attacked. A fire broke out in one of the train cars close to Godhra station causing this terrible occurrence to result in the loss of 59 lives. (See Fig.20) (Deshpande, 2014) Given that Godhra is predominantly a Muslim area, assumptions arose that the incident is linked to religious tensions.

In 2005, the Indian government's inquiry determined that the fire was caused by an accident, however on the other hand, in 2008 the Gujarat government implicated local Muslims in its cause.

Enraged Hindu mobs accused Muslims of the pilgrim's death, starting a two-month wave of violence. They rampaged through the streets, committing crimes such as rape, murder, and looting. Shockingly, around 250 women and girls were raped and killed, children were set on fire, and men were brutally murdered. Nearly, 1,000 people, mostly Muslims, lost their lives in the incident. Roughly 150,000 people had to evacuate their homes and places of business, while 230 mosques and 275 dargahs (Muslim places of worship) were demolished. Notably, this was the first communal riot in which Hindu women took part in looting Muslim shops and houses. (Deshpande, 2014) Approximately, 200 police officers were killed while attempting to restore order amid riots. The most horrific violence took place at Gulbarg housing complex, where 70 people, including a former Congress member of Parliament, were burnt alive; and in Naroda Patiya, over 90 people were killed. (Elfi, 2014)



*Fig.20 Coach S-6 carrying Hindu pilgrims is engulfed in flames at Godhra, a Muslim-dominated area in the western state of Gujarat.*

*(Jain, 2006)*

Multiple reports highlight that the attack was well planned, using mobile phones to communicate and printed government records to identify Muslim homes and businesses. Attackers targeted Muslim-owned houses while leaving nearby Hindu-owned houses. Despite desperate calls for assistance, victims received responses from law enforcement suggesting a lack of authority to intervene. By the end of February 28th, curfews were implemented in 27 towns and cities throughout the state. Human Rights Watch recorded stories of the extraordinary bravery of several Hindus, Dalits, and tribal people who stood to protect a few Muslims from the violence. An investigation panel was informed by a senior state official that Mr Modi, who was Gujarat's Chief Minister at that time, had given officers orders to not intervene against rioters. Sadly, this official was subsequently killed. (Elfi, 2014) There were many charges against the attackers despite several eyewitness accounts being dropped by authorities for lack of proof, which raises questions about governmental bias towards a certain religion. In addition, the Indian government banned several documentaries and films on this event.

India, a country recognised for its diverse culture, has challenges in achieving peaceful coexistence. Incidents like these fuel anger and distrust, deepening societal differences rather than fostering understanding and collaboration. This kind of violence blurs India's pluralistic society at its core, weakening its secular values and destroying the country's image globally. It is crucial that to avoid such events, every Indian should firmly reject violence and work towards a future defined by equal participation and harmony.

### 3.3 Through the lens of Adarkar’s book: The Nation, the State, and the Indian Identity

Adarkar co-authored the book “The Nation, the State, and the Indian Identity” (See Fig.21) with two other Majlis members in 1996, in response to the ongoing national identity disputes in India. The book provides a thorough examination of the complex interrelationships that exist between state creation, identity construction, and nation-building in the context of India. India’s nationhood is first placed in the context of the colonial past and the anti-colonial movement in the book. In addition to changing India’s socioeconomic environment, Adarkar emphasizes how British imperialism aided in the formation of a cohesive national identity in India. She highlights the many beliefs and tactics used in the fight for independence while examining the roles played by significant individuals and movements in the development of Indian nationalism.

Central to Adarkar’s analysis is the concept of diversity within unity. She argues that the rich tapestry of languages, cultures, religions and ethnic groups in India presents both a challenge and can also be seen as an opportunity to carve out a distinctive national identity. Adarkar thus examines ways in which the Indian state steered this diversity, employing various tools like federalism, linguistic reorganization and affirmative actions to embrace the concept of “Pluralism” while upholding territorial integrity and national solidarity. The book emphasizes how the architecture of cities, buildings and urban designs emerge as vital elements in shaping the Indian Identity. Adarkar delves into how urban spaces, monumental buildings and cultural symbols have been employed by the state to assert dominance and foster a sense of national belonging.

Throughout the book, Adarkar engages with a wide spectrum of theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence. Drawing from history, political science, sociology, and cultural studies, she provides a nuanced analysis that transcends disciplinary confines. Her interdisciplinary approach enriches our grasp of the intricate layers of how the Indian identity is formed. The book holds great value in delving into multiple perspectives of comprehending the dynamics of Indian society and politics. By unravelling the complexities of Indian Identity and Nationalism, Adarkar invites readers to critically reflect on the challenges and possibilities of building a cohesive and inclusive nation in the 21st century.

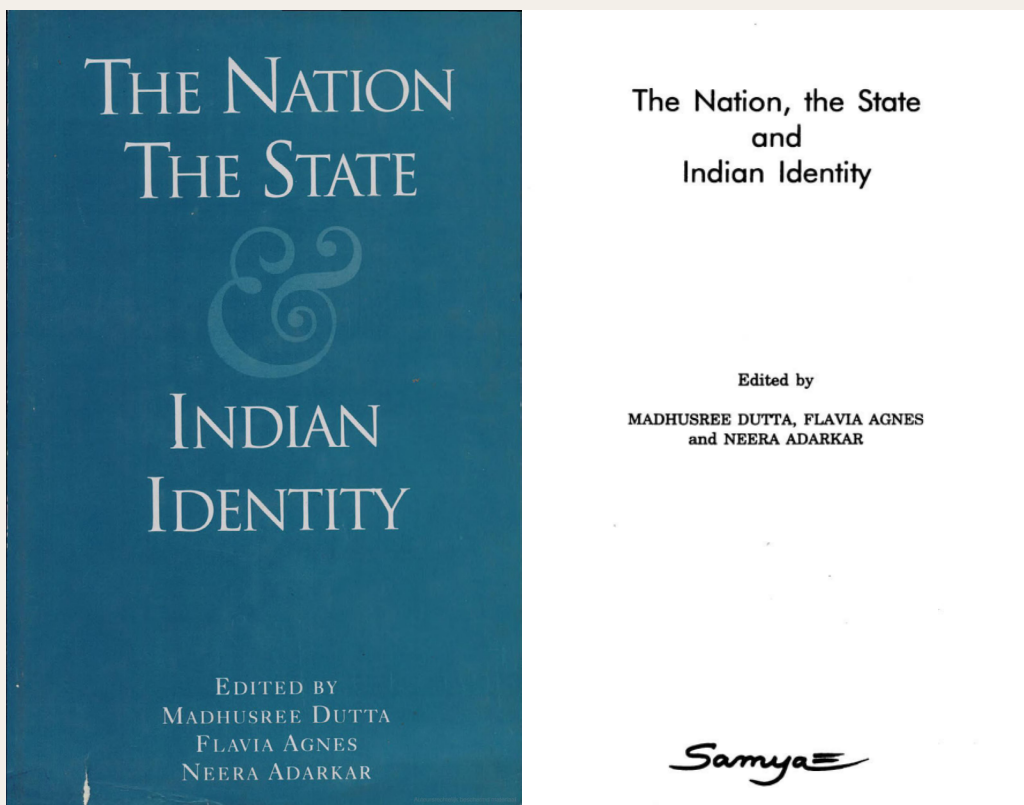


Fig.21 The book: The Nation, State, & Indian Identity

(Majlis, 2000)

### 3.4 Initiative: Majlis and India Sabka Festival

#### Formation of Majlis

Neera Adarkar, Madhushree Dutta, and Flavia Agnes, along with eight other women co-founded “Majlis” in 1990. The term “Majlis” which translates to “people’s forum”, refers to both a centre of culture and a platform for a wide range of activities such as film and theatre production, cultural literacy programs, legal advocacy for women and minority communities, research and publication on rights issues, public campaigns, and research on urban studies, among others. (Dutta, 1990) The trajectory of this feminist group was marked by “Expression” India’s first feminist art festival. However, following the communal riots of the Babri Masjid demolition in 1992, the organization also began to take stands on critical political events, ultra-nationalism, cultural studies, urbanization and globalization. (Dutta, 1990) Over time, Majlis has earned recognition primarily in two key domains: legal advocacy and cultural initiatives.

#### India Sabka Festival

Following the large-scale violence against Muslims in Gujarat during February-March 2002, Majlis and Open Circle collaborated to organize a festival promoting secularism and multiculturalism among college students. (Dutta, 2002) The festival, centred around the theme “India Sabka” meaning “India Belongs To All”, was conceived in the model of a youth festival. It featured competitions in various fields such as journalism, fiction writing, filmmaking, theatre production, billboard design, and urban planning. (See Fig.22) After a month-long competition phase, the festival culminated in a two-day festival celebrating multiculturalism. Scheduled for December, the festival aimed to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the demolition of Babri Masjid in December 1992 and the subsequent riots in Bombay. (Dutta, 2002) This marked the inaugural attempt of a group, particularly one led by women, to engage in discussions on national and multicultural issues in the youth and education sectors. A report written on the festival by Madhurshree Dutta states that to reach a wider audience, they collaborated with 100 colleges in Mumbai and Pune, recognizing colleges as ideal platforms to engage with students of diverse age groups and backgrounds in engaging in the ideas of “How do you envision our nation?” or “How can we celebrate our country’s diverse cultures?” Despite these topics being pertinent and fresh, conveying them to the students was perhaps difficult.

To foster multiculturalism, numerous performances showcased poems and songs celebrating the rich diversity of Indian cultures and identities. Additionally, quizzes were organized to explore various aspects of Indian cuisine, culture and folklore. A cartoon stall offered the opportunity for individuals to be sketched representing different religious identities such as Christian, Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh in just 15 minutes. Furthermore, a DJ played remixes of patriotic and multicultural music, while a kiosk allowed attendees to print their customized t-shirts. (Dutta, 2002) To expand the conversation beyond the Hindu-Muslim dichotomy, brochures highlighting visible minority communities and pictures showcasing the dwellings of diverse communities were distributed. Nearly two thousand students participated in games, wrote slogans envisioning India’s future, engaged in quizzes, and had the chance to win prizes. Laughter, tears and cheers echoed as they collectively affirmed, “Indiaaaa Sabkaa hai, tha aur rahega” (India was, is, and will always belong to all) (See Fig.23) (Dutta, 2002)

Through her endeavours, Adarkar has sought various avenues to reach a broader audience. While her book provides a deep understanding and diverse perspectives on topics such as partition, politics, gender issues, and riots; her initiatives with the festival aim to foster greater engagement, particularly among the youth. These efforts prompt individuals to continuously question, ponder, and learn from discussions, potentially leading them to embrace different cultures and recognize that amidst the backdrop of religiously motivated violence, no value, no work, no tradition, nobody is safe. India’s essence lies in its multiplicity and diversity, and “our response to violence is rooted in our creativity, our art as protest, and our music as slogans of unity.” (Dutta, 2002)



Fig.22 A snippet of the festival with Adarkar (on the left)

(Dutta, 2006)

**India Sabka Youth Festival**  
17-18 December 2002  
Rang Bhavan / Nirmala Niketan / SNDT, Churchgate

**India Sabka.** We, the citizens of India, have been watching in silence for a long time. We have been watching the gradual indignity to which our land has been subjected: the Rathayatra (1990 and 1992) to the Babri Masjid demolition (1992) to Bombay riots (1992 and 1993) to Bombay bomb blasts to the revival of Ram Janmabhoomi rhetoric in 2001-02 to the Godhra train burning to the four month long carnage against Gujarat Muslims to the attack on Akshardham temple. We realise that in this regime of violence in the name of religion, no value, no work, no tradition, nobody is safe. We have realised that the society which cannot provide security to its own minority community is bound to fail as the moral and physical custodian of all its citizens. As citizens we find it imperative to protest, and to defend our multicultural, multilingual and multireligious civilization. This is our country, our abode, our neighbourhood, India Sabka. Our country is celebrated because it is not bigoted and is instead, a cultivated, sophisticated and a plural civilization. Let us protect this national pride. We shall not allow anybody to snatch away our heritage of multiplicity and plurality. We do not want to be orphans in this culture of neo-Hindutva. Let us remember the national shame of the Babri Masjid demolition on 6 December 1992 and pledge not to let such an act happen again. The voices of those who destroy are generally louder than those who protect and those who build and create. But the time has come for the silent majority to regain its voice and actively protect the wonderful Hindustani heritage against the destructive powers. Our weapon against violence will be our creativity, our protest will be our art and our slogans will be our music.

**Competitions**

- 1. Newspaper Front page Design**  
दैनिक नवपत्रांच्या पहिल्या पानाचे संस्कारसह आवरण  
**Theme:** Date - 6 December 2002. Special 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue  
**Awards:** Best entries will be published in leading news papers / Book Coupons worth Rs. 10,000/- from eminent publishers.  
**Rules and regulations**  
**Eligibility:** Open to graduate and post graduate students of all disciplines.  
**Submission Format:** White cover paper / The size of the cover paper will be: 10.5" x 15.5" inches / Individuals or groups of maximum five / The layout, number of articles, captions etc. will be decided by the participants / Digital artworks or graphics permitted. Last date for submission - 5/12/2002
- 2. Fiction Writing** A fiction piece on multi-cuisine culture of India "मेरे पड़ोसी का खाना..."  
अन्योन्यतेन खाद्य संस्कृतिना कविता, निबंध, इत्यादी  
**Theme:** "The food that my neighbors eat..."  
**Awards:** Best entries will be published in leading magazines / Book Coupons worth Rs. 10,000/- from eminent publishers.  
**Rules and regulations**  
**Eligibility:** Open for graduate and post graduate students of all disciplines.  
**Submission Format:** On A4 size papers / The text should not be more than 3000 words / The form of writing can be of an essay, story, poem, etc. Last date for submission - 7/12/2002
- 3. Performance / Play** नृत्य / नाट्यप्रायोग  
**Theme:** "Mumbaikar Kaun? मुंबईकर कोण ?"  
**Awards:** Best entries will be performed at the India Sabka Youth Festival on the 17 - 18 December 2002 / A guided (expenses paid) exposure trip of four days to Asian theatre festival, New Delhi in January 2003.  
**Rules and regulations**  
**Eligibility:** Open to students from all disciplines and youth associated with social organizations.  
**To enroll:** A Concept note with details like title of play, duration, minimum technical requirements, etc. Maximum duration of the performance or play should be 30 minutes / Maximum number of participants should be 10 / The form of the performance or play can also be drama, monologue, mime, etc. Last date for submissions of entries will be 11/2/2002 / Orientation rounds will be held in North zone, South zone and Central zone on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of December. Venues will be announced at the time of submission of entries.
- 4. Script for a Video Loop** व्हिडियो फिल्म  
**Theme:** Refer to the above images and text.  
**Awards:** The winners will make the film with technicians provided by Majlis between 3 and 12 December. Production and distribution by Majlis and premiere at the India Sabka Youth Festival on the 17 / 18 December 2002.  
**Rules and regulations**  
**Eligibility:** Open only to graduate and post graduate students of Mass media, Communication, Fine Arts and related 25 yrs of age.  
**Submission Format:** Script or concept note in case of documentary / The max. duration of the film should be 5 mins / The form of the film can be documentary, fiction, commercial, awareness message, musical or any other / Professional help not permitted except for script writing. Each individual or group can give maximum two entries / Last date for submission - 1/12/2002
- 5. Billboard Design** जाहिरात पदावली डिजाइन  
**Theme:** India Sabka  
**Awards:** Best entries will be displayed on billboards at prominent locations. Book Coupons worth Rs. 10,000/- from eminent publishers.  
**Rules and regulations**  
**Eligibility:** Open to any one under 25 years of age.  
**Submission Format:** On paper or CD / The sizes of the Bill board are 60" x 20" and 70" x 7"  
Last date for submission - 5/12/2002
- 6. Art Installation** दुब्य कलाकृती  
**Theme:** Refer to the above images and text.  
**Awards:** Best entries will be installed at prominent public spaces by Opus Group.  
**Rules and regulations**  
**Eligibility:** Open to only graduate and post graduate students of Mass media and communications.  
**Submission Format:** Sketch or CD with a break up of costs not exceeding Rs. 10,000/- and detailed notes. The installations have to be designed for public spaces. The installation should be temporary in nature and can be constructions, interactive, mobiles etc. / The participants can work as individual or in collaboration. Last date for submission - 5/12/2002
- 7. Architecture Design** वास्तुशास्त्र  
पाई से शहर को देखो, मेरे में और मेरे  
**Theme:** An Architecture of the Edge - a response to the gradual degradation within the community in Jogeshwari.  
**Eligibility:** All architecture students and architects below 25 years of age / Individuals or groups of 5.  
REFERENCE MATERIAL AND DETAILS AVAILABLE AT ALL ARCHITECTURE COLLEGE LIBRARIES
- 8. Fielding a Question**  
**Theme:** The rights and responsibilities of the majority community  
**Awards:** 20 entries will be selected for the debate on 17th Dec. moderated by Barkha Dutt. All speakers will be awarded book coupons worth Rs. 3,000/- each.  
**Rules and regulations**  
**Eligibility:** Open to all under 25 yrs of age.  
**Submission Format:** One session written to the topic on email or on paper. / The last date of sending the question is 2/12/2002 / Names of selected speakers will be declared by 9/12/2002 and they should be present at Pathanjali, SNDT University, Churhatgaon. Open to take part in the final session.
- 9. Music Instrumental / Vocal** संगीत रचना वाद्य / गायन  
**Theme:** Write lyrics and make a musical composition on 'India Sabka'.  
**Awards:** Best entries will be recorded in a professional studio by eminent sound technicians / B-cadcasts on a radio channel.  
**Rules and regulations**  
**Eligibility:** Open for graduates and post graduate students of all disciplines.  
**To enroll:** Details of format, duration, etc. / The presentation should be 5 to 10 minutes / The style of rendition can be classical, Indian or Western contemporary, folk, fusion, remix, etc. / Last date for submission of entries will be 25/12/2002. Orientation rounds will be held in North zone, South zone and Central zone on the 12 December. Venues for the same will be announced at the time of submission of entries.

EARLY SETTLEMENTS OF MUMBAI (1256-1750)

Fig.23 India Sabka Festival brochure

(Dutta, 2006)

## ***Conclusion***



Gender activism in India has a deep and intricate narrative, befitting the country's standing as the world's second most populous nation. Numerous feminist activists have fought for gender equality, opposed gender-based violence, and addressed the complex concerns of caste oppression and religious culture throughout history. Gender, caste oppression, and religious culture have been closely linked in India ever before feminist agitation began there. Savitribai Phule from the nineteenth century is a woman who has spent her life campaigning for girls' education and establishing schools. Similarly, Famita Sheik provided essential education to marginalized women, recognizing the importance of intersectional feminism, which addresses the intertwined issues of gender and poverty, whether stemming from social class or caste. (Everett, 1983)

Furthermore, in the twenty-first century, initiatives like Vandana Shiva's backing of grassroots Green Movement groups and Medha Patkar's attempts to protect the Narmada River demonstrate continuous advocacy for social justice and environmental reasons. Over centuries, there has been a significant shift in the focus of women activists, from solely pursuing gender rights to engaging in broader social movements, facilitated by increased equality and education. (Richard, 2013) In the field of architecture, books such as "Women Architects in India: Histories of Practice in Mumbai and Delhi" by Mary N. Woods and "Women Architects and Modernism in India: Narratives and Contemporary Practices" by Madhavi Desai shed light on the journeys and passions of approximately 40 women architects. These works highlight the contributions of women in architecture, showcasing their experiences and dedication.

Upon examination of these two books, it becomes apparent that only two of the architects therein focused on social and urban causes. However, Adarkar distinguished herself by assuming multiple roles—architect, urbanist, writer, and academic—and by deeply analyzing her work through the lens of political events, thereby challenging conventional notions of a woman architect's role in Indian communities. While architects typically strive to create novel designs, Adarkar's engagement with political events, riots, and community formations provided her with insights into people's experiences, living spaces, and their desires for spatial design. Immersed in the shifts of India's political and economic landscape, Adarkar's professional journey expanded the boundaries of architectural practice in unconventional ways.

Adarkar's endeavours pushed the conventional boundaries of architectural practice in innovative ways. Her professional trajectory is characterized by versatility and adaptability, reflecting the evolving landscape of economic and political dynamics in India. She serves as a paradigm of embracing fluidity across diverse roles and activities, seamlessly integrating activism into her architectural projects. This approach transcends mere academic inquiry, offering tangible and pragmatic solutions to societal challenges. In conclusion, this paper highlights how Adarkar's active participation in and documentation of India's political events not only shaped her understanding and experience as an architect but also contributed to the diversification of women activists. Activists, like Adarkar, not only advocate for women and marginalized communities but also extend their voices to encompass broader societal concerns.

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