

# THE DAILY PAO

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## A NEW WEBSITE BY TISS AIMS TO KEEP MEMORIES OF MUMBAI'S MILLS ALIVE

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The derelict interior of Madhusudhan Mills in Lower Parel. Photo: Kunal Ghevaria via Wikipedia.

There's an unforgettable scene in Saeed Mirza's 1989 Hindi film *Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro* in which Pavan Malhotra's Salim leans against the wall of Phoenix Mills, the chimney of which can be seen against a blank sky. It's hard to reconcile that wide-angle image of the bare wall with the chimney arising dramatically from behind with the pastiche of glass, steel and hoardings you see at Phoenix Mills today. Similarly, it takes effort, for those who have never seen areas of central Mumbai when the textile mills were active, to imagine that their compounds once spun a commodity and a culture that enriched the city.

To give people a sense of what Girangaon, the 600-acre swathe of central Mumbai that contained most of Mumbai's textile mills, was like, students of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and some faculty members have put together the site *Giran Mumbai/Mill Mumbai*. It's an archive of films, interviews, poetry, photos and other resources about the history of the textile mills and the struggle of their workers for compensation after the 1982 strike crippled the industry and hastened its eventual demise.

Among the films you can watch on the website are four short documentaries produced by TISS and made by the 2013 batch of the School of Media and Cultural Studies. *Delisle Road Dreams* looks at the travails of labourers after the collapse of the mills through the lives of one family. *Her Stories* is about three female workers who dealt with the aftermath of the closures, including Vaishali Girkar, a prominent member of the Girni Kamgar Sangharsh Samiti (GKSS) union. *Mahatma Phule Vyayam Shala* profiles an akhada started by mill labourers. *Rajacha Lalbaug* examines how the Ganesh pandal in the heart of the mill district became such a popular phenomenon. This section also includes *Saacha*, a film on the textile industry by Anjali Monteiro and K. P. Jayasankar, veteran documentary makers who teach at TISS.

*Giran Mumbai/Mill Mumbai* is a convenient starting point for anyone researching the mill issue as it brings together various aspects. It contains a useful bibliography and interviews by people associated with the workers' struggle such as GKSS member Datta Iswalkar, who continues to lead the movement to demand housing for former labourers; Neera Adarkar, an architect who co-authored the book *One Hundred Years One Hundred Voices*, an excellent repository of personal histories of mill workers; and journalist Darryl D'Monte, who has long campaigned for open spaces in the city.

The poetry and songs section includes the works of Narayan Surve, the Marathi poet who as an infant was found abandoned on a street and subsequently adopted by a mill labourer, and recordings of Marathi songs by the revolutionary poet-singer Amar Shaikh. The idea of creating the site, Jayasankar said at its launch on Tuesday, August 4 at TISS, was to "resist the process of erasure in history and geography". "The mills represented an important part of history and contributed to the wealth, culture and secular fabric of the city, which is obviously under threat these days," he said.

*View [GiranMumbai/MillMumbai](#) here.*