

Annual
Symposium 2025

17/10/25

India-UK Creative Industries and Cultural Heritage

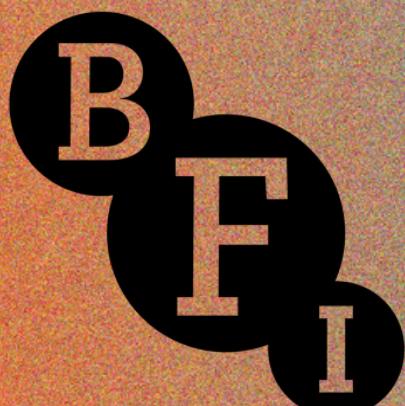
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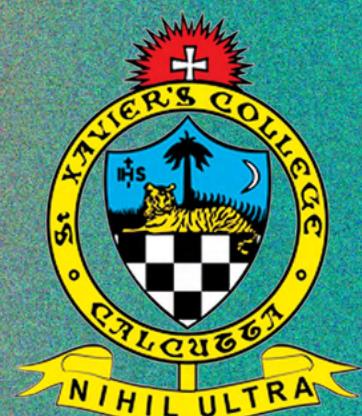
Project Partnerships



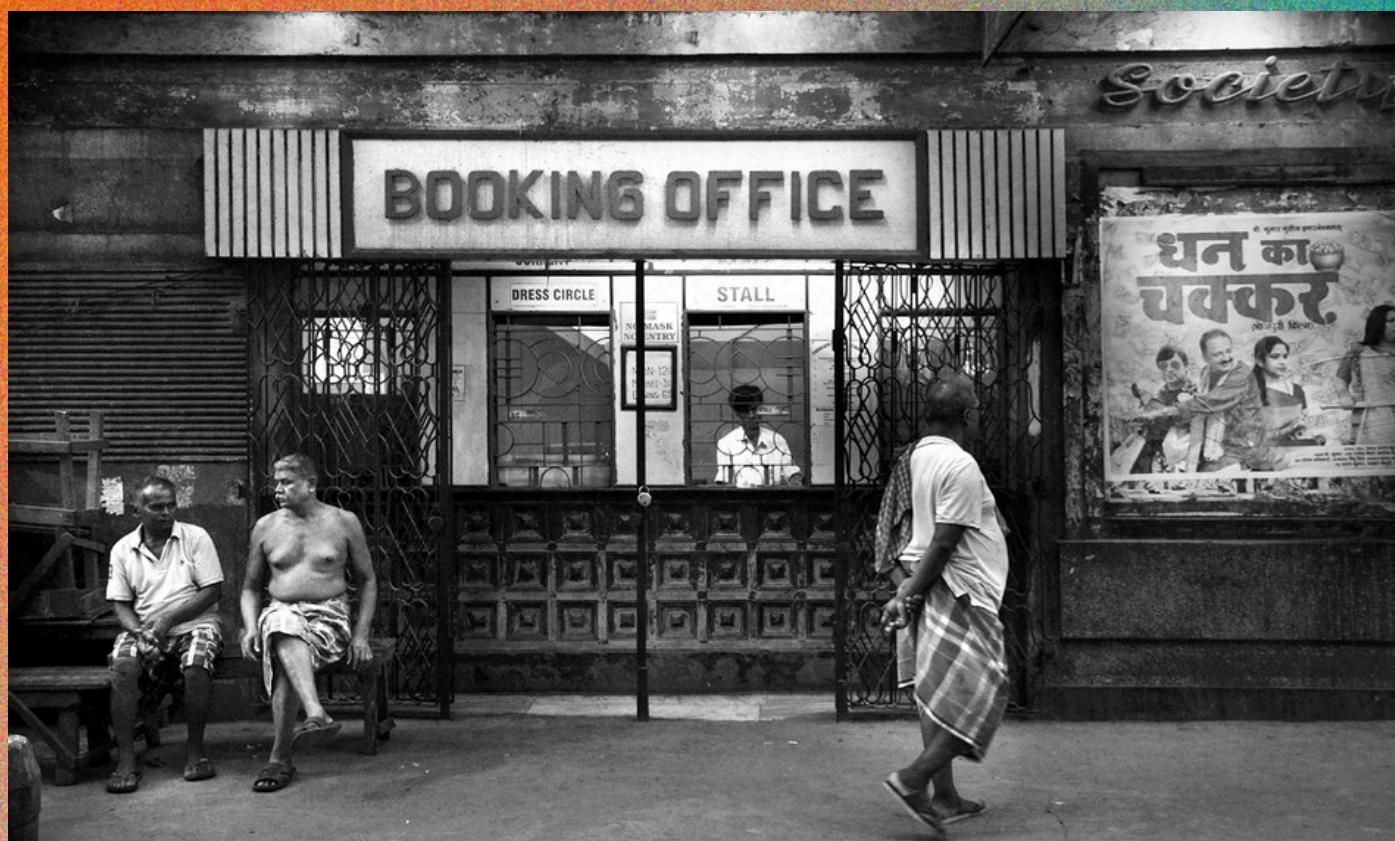
Arts and
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Research Council



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Connecting Creative Industries and Cultural Heritage: India-UK Film Festival Federation, Youth Curation and Community Co-creation (2024-2027)



Images by: Bijoy Chowdhury

Project Overview

Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council- UK Research and Innovation (AHRC-UKRI), this project aims to optimise creative collaboration, knowledge, strategy, research and policy sharing between universities in India and Britain and leading film festivals in New Delhi, Bangalore, Kolkata, Mumbai and London.

Three interconnected pathways will bring together academic research, creative industry practice and cultural heritage to foster a sustainable relationship between India-UK film festivals, young curators and community contributors.

**To know more about the project, please visit:
<https://indiauk-cich.qmul.ac.uk>**

Core Team and Festival Partners

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Ashvin Immanuel Devasundaram
Reader in Global Cinemas, Queen Mary University of London

India-based Co-Investigators:

Dr. Harmanpreet Kaur
Assistant Professor, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

Dr. Santosh Kumar
Assistant Professor, Christ University, Bengaluru

Dr. Shenjuti Dutta
Assistant Professor, St. Xavier's College, Kolkata

Dr. Veena Hariharan
Associate Professor of Cinema Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University,
New Delhi

Project Administrator:

Poorvi Gaur
Doctoral Scholar in Film Studies, Queen Mary University of London

Film Festival Partners:

Dr Pushpinder Chowdhry (UK Asian Film Festival, London)

Sridhar Rangayan (Kashish Pride Film Festival, Mumbai)

Premendra Mazumder (World Film Festival, Kolkata)

Dr. Pradeep Kenchanuru (Bengaluru International Film Festival, Bengaluru)

Vidyun Singh (Habitat International Film Festival, New Delhi)

Symposium Schedule

TIME	SESSION	VENUE
09:45	Arrival and Welcome	BFI Lounge
10:00	Introduction	Cinema Screen 1
10:20	Film Teaser Launch	Cinema Screen 1
10:30	Panel 1	Cinema Screen 1
11:30	Tea/Coffee Break	BFI Lounge
11:45	Panel 2	Meeting Room 1
12:45	Lunch	BFI Lounge
13:30	Panel 3	Cinema Screen 1
14:30	Tea/Coffee Break	BFI Lounge
14:45	Panel 4	Cinema Screen 1
15:45	Tea/Coffee Break	BFI Lounge
16:00	Open House Discussion	Meeting Room 1
17:00	Conclusion and Thanks	Meeting Room 1
19:00	Delegate Reception & Networking Event	The Balcony Bar, BFI Southbank

Panel 1

Challenges to Film Curation & Programming Funding, Infrastructure, Regulation

CHAIRS

Dr Ashvin Devasundaram (Queen Mary University of London)

Dr Harmanpreet Kaur (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai)

PANELLISTS

- **Anupma Shanker** (Curator and Archives Researcher, Garden Cinema, London)
- **Dr Omar Ahmed** (Author and Film Curator)
- **Dr Pushpinder Chowdhry** (Founder and CEO, UK Asian Film Festival)
- **Sridhar Rangayan** (Filmmaker and Founder- Director, Kashish Pride Film Festival, Mumbai)

Panel 2

Access for All: Implementing Policies for Diversity, Equality and Inclusion

CHAIRS

Dr Santosh Kumar (Christ University, Bengaluru)

Dr Shenjuti Dutta (St. Xavier's College, Kolkata)

PANELLISTS

- **Prof. Dinesh Bhugra** (Institute of Psychiatry at King's College London)
- **Mara Hafezi** (Sports Co-Lead, South Asian Heritage Trust)
- **Premendra Mazumder** (Film Critic, Author, Founder World Film Festival Kolkata)
- **Priscilla Igwe** (Founder and CEO, The New Black Film Collective)
- **Dr Pradeep Kenchanuru** (Screenwriter, Academic and Director, Bengaluru International Film Festival)

Panel 3

Creative Confluences: Film Festivals, Broadcasting, Digital Streaming & Community Networks

CHAIRS

Dr Shenjuti Dutta (St. Xavier's College, Kolkata)

Dr Veena Hariharan (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)

PANELLISTS

- **Aneeka Verma** (Publicity Lead - Film (UK & EMEA), Netflix UK)
- **Edi Smockum** (Founder and Director, thinkBIGGER)
- **Jasmine Bernard-Brooks** (Project Coordinator, The New Black Film Collective)
- **James Rocardols** (Head of Programming, BFI Player)
- **Nasreen Munni Kabir** (Television producer for Channel 4, Filmmaker and Writer)

Panel 4

Building India- An Ecosystem of Cultural UK Synergies: Institutions, Creative Industries, Academics & Artists

CHAIRS

Dr Ashvin Devasundaram (Queen Mary University of London)

Dr Santosh Kumar (Christ College, Bengaluru)

PANELLISTS

- **Agnieszka Moody** (Head of International Relations, BFI)
- **Amit Kaur** (Filmmaker and Board Member, UK Asian Film Festival)
- **Miranda Gower-Qian** (Cultural Partnerships Manager, BFI)
- **Dr Jaideep Gupte** (Director of Research Programme & Funding Management, AHRC-UKRI)
- **Vidyun Singh** (Creative Head of Programmes, Habitat International Film Festival, New Delhi)
- **Dr Toyeba Mushtaq** (Researcher, Curator & Programmer of South Asian Cinema)

Open House

Charting the Future India-UK Creative Industries and Cultural Heritage Landscape

**An inclusive, collaborative forum for
interdisciplinary dialogue to chart new
directions for the India-UK creative industries
and cultural heritage landscape.**

CHAIRS

Dr Ashvin Devasundaram (Queen Mary
University of London)

Dr Harmanpreet Kaur (Tata Institute of
Social Sciences, Mumbai)

Dr Veena Hariharan (Jawaharlal Nehru
University, New Delhi)

Delegate Reception & Networking

When: 7pm, 17 October, Friday

Where: The Balcony Bar, BFI Southbank

Hosted by the UK Asian Film Festival (UKAFF), the longest-running South Asian cinema showcase in Britain, and in partnership with AHRC-UKRI and Queen Mary University, the Tongues on Fire (TOF) delegate reception and networking event is part of the BFI London Film Festival 2025.

The reception (invite-only) offers an engaging platform for members of the South Asian and British film industries and festival circuit to connect, establish meaningful relationships and foster future collaborations.

Snacks and drinks (cash bar) available.

Panellist Profiles

Agnieszka Moody

Agnieszka Moody is Head of International Relations at the BFI with over 20 years' experience in film, television, and cultural policy. Her role focuses on building strategic global partnerships to strengthen the UK screen sector's international reach. A graduate of the renowned Łódź Film School, she previously led the UK's participation in Creative Europe, advising screen professionals across production, distribution, exhibition, festivals, and film education. Having worked in Poland, France, and the UK, she brings a uniquely international perspective and is widely recognised for her expertise in fostering cross-border collaboration in the screen industries.

Amit Kaur

Amit Kaur is a filmmaker working across narrative and documentary forms, with a focus on cross-cultural storytelling. Her BFI-funded short *Cuppa Chai* screened at Oberhausen and Cleveland Film Festivals and won at World of Film International, Glasgow. Her debut feature *Crown*, exploring young immigrant experiences, was selected for development with the FILMONOMICS Programme. As a Board Member of the UK Asian Film Festival, Amit fosters collaborations between the UK and South Asia. Driven by the philosophy of creating your own table, she champions inclusive creative platforms.

Aneeka Verma

Aneeka Verma has worked in Film Publicity for over 15 years. She currently leads the Netflix Film Publicity team based in London for the UK & EMEA. Over the years, Aneeka has worked closely with a range of filmmakers to bring their work to audiences across film festivals as well as theatrical and streaming releases globally. She has a personal passion for diversifying the industry and connecting audiences to art.

Anupma Shanker

Anupma Shanker is a British-Indian film curator and archives researcher with a deep and evolving interest in marginalised and minority screen narratives from, of and about the past. Her curatorial practice is focused on bringing to light films and filmmakers that remain overlooked, inaccessible and undiscovered but can offer valuable insight, wisdom and guidance in contextualizing the difficult but urgent discourses about the myths and realities of shared/contested histories, heritage, identities and memories.

Panelist Profiles

Ashvin Devasundaram

Dr Ashvin Immanuel Devasundaram is Reader in Global Cinemas at Queen Mary University of London. He is author of India's New Independent Cinema: Rise of the Hybrid (2016), Indian Cinema Beyond Bollywood: The New Independent Cinema Revolution (2018) and Indian Indies: A Guide to New Independent Indian Cinema (2022). These are the world's first books on Indian Indie films, establishing a distinct research area in cinema studies. Ashvin is Associate Director of the UK Asian Film Festival and directed the documentary Movies, Memories, Magic (2018). He is Principal Investigator of this AHRC funded project & lead editor of 'Urban Violence and Marginalised Communities' (UCL Press, 2026).

Dinesh Bhugra

Dinesh Bhugra, CBE, is Professor Emeritus of Mental Health and Cultural Diversity at King's College London. He has published over 500 papers and 40 books, including *Mad Tales from Bollywood: Portrayal of Mental Illness in Conventional Hindi Cinema* (Routledge, 2006). He served as President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists (2008-11), World Psychiatric Association (2014-17), and British Medical Association (2018-19). His Oxford Textbook for Public Mental Health won Book of the Year, and *Practical Cultural Psychiatry* was highly recommended. He currently serves as Non-Executive Director of Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

Edi Smockum

Edi Smockum is Managing Director of thinkBIGGER, a talent development, management and consultancy company specialising in groups historically excluded from the television industry. She began her career in Canada before moving to the UK, where she produced for the BBC for seven years. After five years in Paris with Radio France International, she returned to the UK as Head of Short Courses at the National Film & Television School, having earlier worked there as a freelance trainer. In 2007, she applied to Channel 4 for a job she didn't get but was subsequently asked to establish thinkBIGGER! to run training programmes for underrepresented people.

Harmanpreet Kaur

Harmanpreet Kaur is an Assistant Professor at the School of Media and Cultural Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. She earned her Ph.D. in Cinema Studies from the School of Arts and Aesthetics, JNU, New Delhi. Her doctoral research analyses and charts the journey of alternative films in India from their aesthetics to infrastructures of production, distribution and exhibition from 2007-2019. She has earlier worked as a producer of children's short fiction films in Mumbai and a broadcast journalist with Network18 in New Delhi. Her work has been published in Bioscope: South Asian Screen Studies and Studies in South Asian Film and Media.

Panellist Profiles

James Rocarols

James Rocarols is Head of Online Programme for the BFI Player, managing the licensing, curation and programming of BFI's online services (branded BFI Player) across various platforms and territories. Previously, he produced major film websites for the BBC, including Film Network, BBC Movies, BBC Films and Mark Kermode Uncut. Between roles at the BBC and the BFI, James has worked across the creative sectors, including work in website and video production, script and talent development and film journalism.

Jasmine Bernard-Brooks

Jasmine Bernard-Brooks is project coordinator at The New Black Film Collective (TNBFC), a UK-based organisation dedicated to amplifying Black-led narratives in film. She has curated and introduced screenings at major venues such as the BFI IMAX and Cambridge Film Festival, including films like One Battle After Another and Banel & Adama. Her work focuses on elevating underrepresented voices and fostering inclusive storytelling. Through TNBFC, she contributes to initiatives like Black History Month programming and community cinema events across the UK. Jasmine is passionate about expanding access to diverse cinematic experiences and supporting emerging Black filmmakers.

Mara Hafezi

Mara Hafezi is the Sports Co-Lead at South Asian Heritage Trust and is an expert voice in DEI topics across the creative, corporate, and community-based sectors. She is an avid film fan, and has worked with creatives and fellow influencers to curate collaborative events that showcase the best of South Asian talents. She also works with sports brands and organisations to increase diversity and has appeared on various media, including BBC. She uses her social media platforms to promote diversity in sports, raise awareness of obstacles women face and encourage women of colour to try new challenges.

Miranda Gower-Qian

Miranda Gower-Qian is a driven cultural partnerships manager with over six years experience working in the film industry. Her background is in programming and curation, with a passion for and expertise in film heritage, access and inclusion. She welcomes cultural exchange and creative collaboration between the BFI and other film and arts organisations and is excited to explore new ways of working in a time of growth and change in the sector.

Panelist Profiles

Nasreen Muni Kabir

Born in India, Nasreen Munni Kabir lives in London and has created several TV series for Channel 4, UK, on Hindi cinema, including *In Search of Guru Dutt*, *Lata Mangeshkar in Her Own Voice*, and *The Inner/Outer World of Shah Rukh Khan*. She has authored 23 books on Hindi cinema, including *Talking Films/Songs/Life with Javed Akhtar*, *In the Company of a Poet: Gulzar*, and *Conversations with Waheeda Rehman*. Nasreen has curated Channel 4's annual Indian film season since 1982 and served as a BFI board governor (2001–2007). Her latest work, *The Legacy of Guru Dutt* (2025), commemorates the filmmaker's 100th birth anniversary. She has also subtitled over 800 films from Hindi to English.

Omar Ahmed

Dr Omar Ahmed is a writer and international film curator from Manchester. He holds a PhD in Screen Studies from The University of Manchester. He has curated on Indian cinema for many film festivals including Il Cinema Ritrovato in Bologna, the Barbican and the Leeds International Film Festival. Earlier this year he announced the first boutique South Asian home video label titled 'The Cloud Door' which he co-founded and which will launch at the end of this year with Kamal Swaroop's *Om Dar-B-Dar*. He is currently writing a BFI Film Classics monograph on Mani Kaul's *Uski Roti* (1969).

Poorvi Gaur

Poorvi Gaur is a doctoral scholar in Film Studies at Queen Mary University of London. Her research interests include film archives, state-sponsored documentary, South Asian cinema and women's filmmaking. Her academic writing has been published/is forthcoming in *Bioscope: South Asian Screen Studies*, *The Moving Image* and *Screen* journal. For *Connecting Creative Industries and Cultural Heritage* (2024-27), Poorvi works as the Project Administrator.

Pradeep Kenchanuru

Dr. Pradeep Kenchanuru is a historian, film scholar, screenwriter, and curator from Karnataka. He holds a Master's in History from Mangalore University and a PhD from Kannada University, Hampi, on *Ideology and the Cultural Questions of the Kannada Film* (2020). A FTII Pune alumnus, he also completed a short course on sound at SRFTI Kolkata. He wrote the National Award-winning Kannada film *Reservation* (2016) and has published widely on cinema and history. Dr. Kenchanuru has served on juries and selection committees at MIFF, IFFI, BIFFES, and the 70th National Film Awards. He is the Artistic Director of the 14th BIFFES (2023).

Panelist Profiles

Premendra Mazumder

Premendra Mazumder is founder of World Film Festival Kolkata. He has authored five plays, an anthology of short stories, and two essay collections, and serves as Vice-President of the Federation of Film Societies of India, Asia-Pacific Secretary of the International Federation of Film Societies, and General Secretary of the India Chapter of FIPRESCI, and Editor of E-CineIndia. He has worked with numerous national and international film festivals as chairman, program director, curator, and consultant, serving on over forty international juries. He has received the Ritwik Ghatak Award (2016), Satyajit Ray Memorial Award (2018), and Vijaya Mulay Lifetime Achievement Award (2023).

Priscilla Igwe

Priscilla Igwe is a filmmaker and Managing Director of The New Black Film Collective, a nationwide network of exhibitors, educators, and programmers promoting Black representation on screen. She has expanded the organisation into Production, Exhibition, Distribution, Education, and PR. Since 2011, Priscilla has established a regular film club, an annual Black History Month programme, and contributed to six BFI Blockbuster seasons. In 2015, TNBFC became the first Black female-led organisation to distribute a film in the UK with Dear White People. She continues to build commercial and community cinema circuits curating diverse African diaspora titles.

Pushpinder Chowdhry

Dr. Pushpinder Chowdhry is a trained psychotherapist with over 38 years of experience supporting vulnerable communities and raising awareness of social issues. She co-founded the not-for-profit Tongues on Fire Ltd, which organises the annual UK Asian Film Festival. Pushpinder has received numerous awards, including an MBE in 2018 for services to community and arts. She is a published author (Women of Substance, 1997), a trustee at DAWN and Diwa Asian Women's Network, a committee member of Asian Circle NGO, and a member of BAFTA and the British Film Institute. She actively promotes dialogue, mental well-being, and representation through film and community initiatives.

Santosh Kumar

Dr. Santosh Kumar is a linguist and educator specialising in Critical Disability Studies, Cultural Studies, Sociolinguistics, and Applied Linguistics. He teaches at Christ University, Bangalore, following roles at NIT Delhi and Delhi University. His research examines how language and metaphor represent disability and marginalised communities across culture, media, and literature. Santosh is a co-investigator on the AHRC-funded project Connecting Creative Industries and Cultural Heritage: India-UK Film Festival Federation and serves on editorial boards including Disability and Society. He is committed to inclusive research, pedagogy, and promoting accessibility in cultural and academic spaces.

Panelist Profiles

Shenjuti Dutta

Dr. Shenjuti Dutta is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Film Studies at St. Xavier's College, Kolkata. Her research interests include feminism, film philosophy, theory, gender, and cinema. From 2014 to 2019, she served on the selection committee of the Kolkata International Film Festival and was a NETPAC jury member in 2013. Shenjuti has translated canonical Film Studies essays from English to Bengali and publishes in both languages. She is co-investigator on the AHRC-funded project Connecting Creative Industries and Cultural Heritage: India-UK Film Festival Federation and is also a fiction writer, having authored two graphic narratives in Bengali.

Sridhar Rangayan

Sridhar Rangayan is a pioneering Indian gay activist, award-winning filmmaker, and festival director of KASHISH Pride Film Festival, South Asia's largest LGBTQ+ film festival. One of the earliest openly gay men in India during the 1990s, he has advanced LGBTQ+ rights through his films, writings, and public advocacy. His films have won 35 awards and screened at over 300 international festivals. Rangayan has spoken at TEDx, conferences, and global forums, and was Grand Marshal at Montreal Pride 2016. He is also a petitioner in India's ongoing same-sex marriage case. His work blends activism, filmmaking, and community leadership to promote visibility, rights, and acceptance.

Toyeba Mushtaq

Dr. Toyeba Mushtaq is a film scholar, curator, and cultural programmer with over five years of experience in festival management, programming, and project delivery. She has successfully written and managed funding bids for the BFI, British Council, and Arts Council England. Toyeba plays a key role in sourcing and showcasing independent films from the South Asian subcontinent in the UK, using cinema as a platform to spark conversations around underrepresented communities and misrepresented narratives. She holds a PhD in Film Studies, focusing on Indian cinema and LGBTQIA+ representation, and has published extensively in national and international journals.

Veena Hariharan

Veena Hariharan is an Associate Professor of Cinema Studies at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her essays and articles on documentary, non-fiction cinema, and the environment have appeared in journals and edited volumes. She was an Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at Goethe University, Frankfurt (2022–24), where she explored non-human-human entanglements in cinema and new media. Veena is Co-Investigator on this AHRC project. She is also completing a book manuscript on Indian non-fiction cinema and has served in various capacities for film festivals, including IFFK, IFFLA, 3rd I Film Festival San Francisco, and the Habitat Film Club.

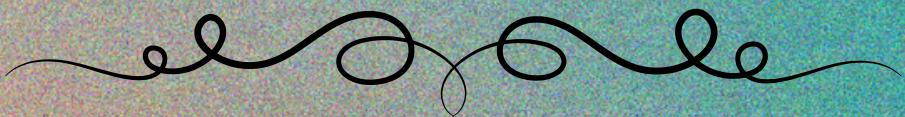
Panelist Profiles

Vidyun Singh

Vidyun Singh is the Creative Head of Programmes at India Habitat Centre (IHC), where she has directed performing and fine arts events since 1997. She has extensive experience programming festivals, exhibitions, and cultural performances, including Habitat World, and has pioneered fashion choreography in India. Vidyun has given direction to and benchmarked Indian design presentations on national and international platforms and advised the National Design Policy panel and Handloom Board. She has curated multidisciplinary programmes blending arts, culture, and design while mentoring emerging artists. Vidyun's work champions creative collaboration, cross-cultural dialogue, and public

Jaideep Gupte

Dr. Jaideep Gupte is the Director of Research, Strategy, and Innovation at AHRC-UK Research and Innovation. With over a decade as a Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, he has led research on urban development, encompassing cultural, material, social, political, and technological aspects. His academic background includes a DPhil in Politics from the University of Oxford, an MPhil in Development Studies from IDS, and a BA in Economics from Simon Fraser University. Dr. Gupte has provided evidence-based policy advice to governmental and non-governmental bodies both in the UK and internationally.



Documentary Teaser Launch

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