

Dockyard Tales

From 1736, around 600 ships were built in the Bombay Dockyard," said Commander (Rtd) Ninad Phatarphekar, member secretary of Maritime Mumbai Museum Society, who delivered a fascinating online talk on the 'Silver Nail—The History of Shipbuilding in Mumbai' on Saturday evening. The first ship to be built was HCS Drake. It was the master carpenter-ship builder, Lovji Nusserwanji Wadia, who made Bombay Dock world-renowned for its ships using Malabar teak. "Between 1736 and 1884, seven generations of the Wadias built over 200 ships in the Bombay Dock," he said. Among the clients were Bombay Marine, Madras Presidency, Calcutta Presidency, Viceroy of Goa, Imaum of Muscat and British Admiralty. Phatarphekar also revealed that 4,500 tonne of wood was used to build a 76-warship. Mumbai gained prominence as a cotton trading and commercial centre in mid-nineteenth century. The HMS Minden was the first Royal Navy ship built in Mumbai (1810), and it's claimed the Star Spangled Banner was conceived onboard in 1814.



Chaul chalo

An online talk takes you on a virtual trip to Chaul to explore the rich socio-economic history of a tourist destination that you've probably visited but didn't know much about

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IN recalling important trading ports, how often is it that Chaul makes it to the list? About 2,500 years ago before the formation of Bombay, a town called Chaul, all of 10 sq km, was a major international trading port, harbour and centre of maritime activity. Located approximately 125 km away from the city in Alibaug, or 70 km if you take the ferry, Chaul is now a popular tourist destination. Using this as an opportunity, Prashant Gharat, archaeologist and researcher, aims to ensure visitors are cognisant of the history of the ancient port. Gharat will be hosted by Maritime Mumbai Museum Society to deliver an online talk, titled Chronicles of Chaul, that will take listeners through the timeline of the port when it was operational between the third century BC and 17th century CE.

Mumbai-based Gharat will make virtual halts at various monuments and heritage points to map its history as it passed through the hands of different dynasties and cultural influences facilitated by international trade. He tells us that all of these artefacts and monuments depict how well-connected Chaul was with international trading ports and other countries such as China, Africa and the Middle East. The 38-year-old shares that even today, while conducting heritage walks at Chaul, he finds pieces of Chinese blue and white pottery. "These findings analyse the migration and assimilation of communities from various regions to Chaul, which has shaped the socio-cultural evolution that probably acted as the base of the cosmopolitan community in Mumbai." What catches our eye are the



Nizamshahi Mosque; (top) Revdanda Fort in Chaul. PICS COURTESY/PRASHANT GHARAT



places of worship; Gharat points out through pictures of a mosque, synagogue and temple, the religious history of Chaul which includes Buddhism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity. He adds, "There are written references of Chaul right from the first century CE by traders and travellers. Take for instance an inscription at Kanheri Caves that mentions donations made by a goldsmith from Chaul. Imagine how well-connected and wealthy Chaul was to have donated to a Buddhist monastery some 150 km away; think about the means of travel 2,500 years ago, too."



Prashant Gharat. PIC COURTESY/ DAKSH NAIK

Speaking about Chaul as a tourist spot, Gharat expresses that it's always important to move from negligence to appreciation of a place as its visitor. Head of the outreach programme, Anita Yewale, notes, "Getting the newer generation to speak about it is great because they have a new way of looking at and questioning history, and establishing new connections between the past and the present."

FREE ON June 25; 4.30 pm onwards LOG ON TO @maritimemms on Instagram to register

Women in Maritime

Today is also the first International Day for Women in Maritime. On this occasion, Maritime Mumbai Museum Society (MMMS) will host an online talk with a panel of distinguished women from the industry including Captain Suneha Gadpande, the first woman to captain an all-woman crew on India's cargo ship MT Swarna Krishna; Sonali Banerjee, the first Indian woman marine engineer; and Sanjam Gupta, director of Sitarra Shipping and founder, Maritime SheEO. "These women broke gender stereotypes to achieve success and paved the way for young Indian women to pursue a career in the Maritime sector," shares Anita Yewale, head of outreach programme, MMMS.



Anita Yewale



Sanjam Gupta

ON May 19, 5.30 pm LOG ON TO @maritimemms on Instagram



(From left) Sonali Banerjee and Capt Suneha Gadpande