



The HT for Mumbai Awards ceremony at Four Seasons Hotel, Worli, on Friday was attended by a bevy of changemakers, celebrities, activists and media personalities. The awards were presented to highlight the indispensable roles played by distinguished Mumbaiites and path-breaking organisations in making the city a better, safer and a more inclusive place for not only the ordinary man and woman but also for the marginalised groups and communities. It was an evening of debates, discussions and wonderment about the ever-changing megapolis. PRODIG GUHA

Changemakers do what politicians can't: CM

FOR THE PEOPLE Prithviraj Chavan says in politics sometimes right decisions need to be sacrificed at the altar of populism; hence, espousing unpopular causes needed in shaping city



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MUMBAI: Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan on Friday conceded that Mumbai's civic infrastructure is severely stretched, and trying to find a balance between the city's growth requirements and creating amenities is becoming increasingly tough.

"There is huge pressure on the civic infrastructure in [Mumbai] and to build affordable homes and make sure the civic infrastructure can keep pace is a daunting challenge," he said.

Chavan, who was the chief guest at the inaugural edition of HT for Mumbai Awards 2013, candidly pointed out that often in politics, the right decisions have to be sacrificed at the altar of populism. And this is what makes the role of individuals and organisations passionately striving to make Mumbai better all the more special, he said.

The chief minister made the observations in his address after presenting awards to three individuals and three organisations, along with a lifetime achievement award, to the city's changemakers. A diverse audience of citizen activists, policymakers and politicians was present at the Four Seasons Hotel in Worli.

"In a democratic setting... populist observations have to be taken with an eye on elections... many times what is right is not possible. But, it is said politics is the art of the possible and keep doing what is possible, not what needs to be done," he said.

The Chavan-led coalition government will complete four years in December and faces polls the next year. He is often accused of not taking populist decisions.

"Away from publicity, individuals and organisations have espoused unpopular but very necessary causes, and that gives character to Mumbai that no other city can claim," Chavan said. HT award winners have contributed to different facets of city life — from working to protect urban landscapes and nature preservation to women's safety and rights.

After handing away the awards, the chief minister admitted he had heard of the work of one or two organisations, but not all of them, and the HT awards function had been a "rare occasion when undiscovered gems hidden from public gaze were presented to the public". "Learning about their stories, the work they have done, their lives dedicated to their passion, is indeed touching," he said.

The award winners were delighted it was Chavan who honoured them. "It was heartening to get recognition for my work from the chief minister," said Kishore Bhatt, one of the award winners, who has been honouring the dead for the last 46 years.



Attendees at the HT for Mumbai Awards ceremony on Friday. (Right) CM Prithviraj Chavan addresses the gathering during the event. HT PHOTOS: MAHENDRA PARIKH/ ANSHUMAN POYREKAR



they said



ONCE A PERSON COMES TO MUMBAI, HE DOESN'T WANT TO LEAVE. YOU BLAME THE TRAFFIC AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT, BUT YOU CAN'T COMPARE THE CITY TO ANY OTHER.

AROON TIKEKAR, historian and writer

AS A WOMAN IN MUMBAI, I HAVE EXPERIENCED THE CITY'S OPEN-MINDEDNESS. WHAT MUMBAI GIVES YOU IS A THOUGHT THAT YOU CAN BE FREE AND STRONG.



CHANDRA IYENGAR, IAS officer



YOU DON'T STAY IN MUMBAI BECAUSE THERE IS NOWHERE ELSE YOU CAN GO. IT IS ONLY BECAUSE YOU WOULD RATHER BE HERE THAN ANYWHERE ELSE.

RAHUL BOSE, actor, director

WHILE WE WERE GOING THROUGH THE JUDGING PROCESS, IT WAS FASCINATING TO SEE THE BODY OF GOOD WORK THAT HAS BEEN DONE IN THE CITY.



SOUMYA BHATTACHARYA, editor, HT Mumbai



I WAS MOVED AND HUMBLED BY YOUR AWARD TO SHARADA. IT WAS A MOVING CEREMONY. SHARADA WAS A REMARKABLE WOMAN. MY FAMILY AND I WILL CHERISH HT'S GESTURE.

BHAGIRATH, spouse of late Sharada Dwivedi

'It's time to give back to the city'

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MUMBAI: "Mumbai is a liability to the rest of the state, but it is open-minded and inclusive". It does not have good public hospitals or clean beaches, but it has one of the biggest networks of NGOs who provide a range of services to citizens'.

The city was under the scanner during a panel discussion at the HT for Mumbai Awards event on Friday, as panelists Aroon Tikekar, Rahul Bose and Chandra Iyengar addressed the topic: 'Giving Back to Mumbai'.

Tikekar said the movement of giving back to the city was picking up again.

"In the 19th century, social philanthropy was a habit. Many institutions were built with public money, including the Asiatic Society. I feel the movement has picked up again, and newspapers have been a

part of it," said Tikekar, former president of the Asiatic Society. Bose argued that one can give back to a city only if the city has invested in them — a livelihood, a chance for a better life.

"I find that the overwhelming feeling among Mumbaiites is that they feel ill-served in terms of somebody investing in them," he said.

On a question whether non-profit organisations have to fill in because the government leaves so many blanks, IAS officer Iyengar said, "We are a blessed city to have a big network of NGOs. But they are not filling gaps. The government and NGOs are working together in providing services."

Explaining the need for the debate, Smruti Koppikar, editor, special assignments, Hindustan Times, who was moderating the discussion, said, "The idea of giving back to the city is not

new, but there are questions whether it is fading away and whether it has much less premium now."

Tikekar proposed the idea that it would help to have Pune as the capital of the state. "Mumbai has become a liability to the state. The rest of the state is neglected."

"I wish Pune is made the capital," he added.

Soumya Bhattacharya, the editor of Hindustan Times Mumbai, concluded the discussion with the promise of continuing to contribute to the city through the HT for Mumbai Awards. "This is our way, as a paper, of giving back to the city. While we were going through the judging process, it was fascinating to see the body of good work in the city. We will come back next year and introduce more categories and more kinds of good work," said Bhattacharya.



Music director Anu Malik, (right) Congress legislator Amin Patel at the awards ceremony.



PRODIG GUHA AND ANSHUMAN POYREKAR/HT PHOTO

Chronicling Mumbai: an achievement of a lifetime

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MUMBAI: She chronicled the city's history, heritage and architecture for several decades, and as scholar and city expert Aroon Tikekar put it, "she was the conscience-keeper of Mumbai".

On Friday, noted historian Sharada Dwivedi, who passed

away last year, was posthumously honoured with the lifetime achievement award at the HT for Mumbai Awards for her contributions to the city. Dwivedi's husband Bhagirath, 72, and daughter Radhika, 30, accepted the award.

Describing the significance of the award, Bhagirath Dwivedi said, "It brings some closure in our personal lives after her death.

It means a lot and my family will treasure this award. But a lifetime achievement award is still an understatement. What Sharada did with absolute passion is not going to be done again."

Tikekar, who was a jury member for the awards, described Dwivedi as courageous and bold. "She was full of courage

Changing city's name does not change city

Rahul Bose

The idea behind giving back to a city is the assumption that you have received from the city, that it has been responsible for giving you a livelihood, a new life.

For that, cities have to be totally inclusive so you feel wanted, you feel safe at all times and you feel the excitement of a chance of a better future.

Besides this? The hope for your loved ones to live a life of more ease than the one they had: a school to study in, a hospital to heal in, a garden to walk in, a museum to marvel at.

Changing the name of a city does not ensure that.

Most of poor, migrant Mumbai sends money home as opposed to getting their families here. Why? Living conditions. Cost of living. Civic amenities. Safety and security.

So who then feels invested in Mumbai? Or perhaps a more pertinent question is, who has Mumbai invested in? Is there a Central Park that lifts the mood of millions of New Yorkers, poor and rich, everyday? Are there public maidans where kids can play a sport outside of cricket like in Sydney? Are our government hospitals a sheer joy and convenience like the ones in London?

These are all first world cities, lets take third world examples: Are our pavements ours to walk on unhindered, like in Colombo? Are our seaside beaches wonderful places to stroll in without spending a paisa like in Rio (or do private citizens organisations have to start initiatives to clean them)?

If the overwhelming feeling is that past and present administrators of Mumbai have not invested in a single Mumbaiite, then you will understand why this is one of the most NGO-networked cities in the world. NGOs that teach you how to negotiate filing a complaint in a police station (Majlis), how to get to know where your polling booth is (Agni), where to give your child a decent educa-

tion for free (Akanksha), where to get help if your husband beats you every night (Akshara) even where if you are a child in a slum, to learn the classical violin for free (Mehli Mehta Music Foundation).

They step in where the state as failed. By giving to you, to us, they give to the city. This has become the nature of giving in Mumbai. While some of it might be an embodiment of a special affection, gratitude or love for the city, most of it is propelled by compassion.

While that in itself is a beautiful thing, it is the linking of civic pride to a city that Mumbai lacks. For that it is time to look at it as an entity that is ours, not the BMC's or Mantralaya's or the police's.

IT IS TIME TO LOOK AT MUMBAI AS AN ENTITY THAT IS OURS, NOT THE BMC'S, OR MANTRALAYA'S OR THE POLICE'S

Mumbai is ours. Ours to demand of our politicians and administration that they plan for its future, they assure us essential services, they keep its boundaries forever open.

It is ours. Ours to care for the freedom of its universities, the secularism of its administration, the legality of its high rises, the cultural nourishment of its children, the physical well being of its aged.

Ours to pour our money into so that nobody goes hungry, ours to pour our skill into so that nobody stays jobless, ours to pour our time into so that others have time to walk by the sea with their families, ours to pour our love into so that nobody feels alone. Ours to call someplace home not because there is nowhere else to go, but because there is nowhere else on earth we would rather be.

(Rahul Bose is an actor, director, an avid rugby player and was one of the jury members for the HT for Mumbai Awards)