

FROM THE
WATERFRONT
MARINE DRIVE,
BANDRA-MAHIM

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The vicissitudes of development of the spatial layout of Bombay have created fetish locations for the cinematic in the city. Functional constraints have led to psychic obsessions. The built-up area of the city being concentrated in a dense straight line through the middle of the pseudo-peninsula has created in the minds of its citizens a peculiar, overdetermined fantasy about its sea-fronts. Cinema-making too, on the one hand, has avoided detailing of filmic action within the built city because of the lack of breathing space, and on the other, ridden on the fetish value of the sea-fronts to relentlessly place scenarios of overblown fantasies of sensory freedom on those sites. For long, the sea-fronts have served as an adequate short-hand to indicate that a film is set in Bombay. But frequently, certain key locations on the sea-fronts have also been used to indicate a certain tenor of life in Bombay, its citizens' value systems and lifestyle habits, as well as the dreams the city sells to the viewers of Bombay cinema.

Marine Drive is 'the' metropolitan image of not just Bombay/Mumbai but of the whole country. Bejewelled high-rises and art-deco apartment buildings that flirt with the edge of the sea form the backdrop against which the city and its cinema have played out their aspirations towards modernity. In films like **Chalti ka Naam Gaadi**, made in the 1950s, Marine Drive was used to depict people going out for a picnic in their cars. Since the 1950s, it has also been used as a location for shooting romantic songs, the most famous being 'Pyaar hua, ikraar hua...' in **Shree 420**. A breakthrough for a new generation of film viewers came with the famous 'Rotay hue aate hain sab...' song from **Muqaddar ka Sikandar** where Amitabh Bachchan rides down the Drive standing up on a motorbike, denoting his ambition to dominate the city through his larger-than-life personality and monumental actions.

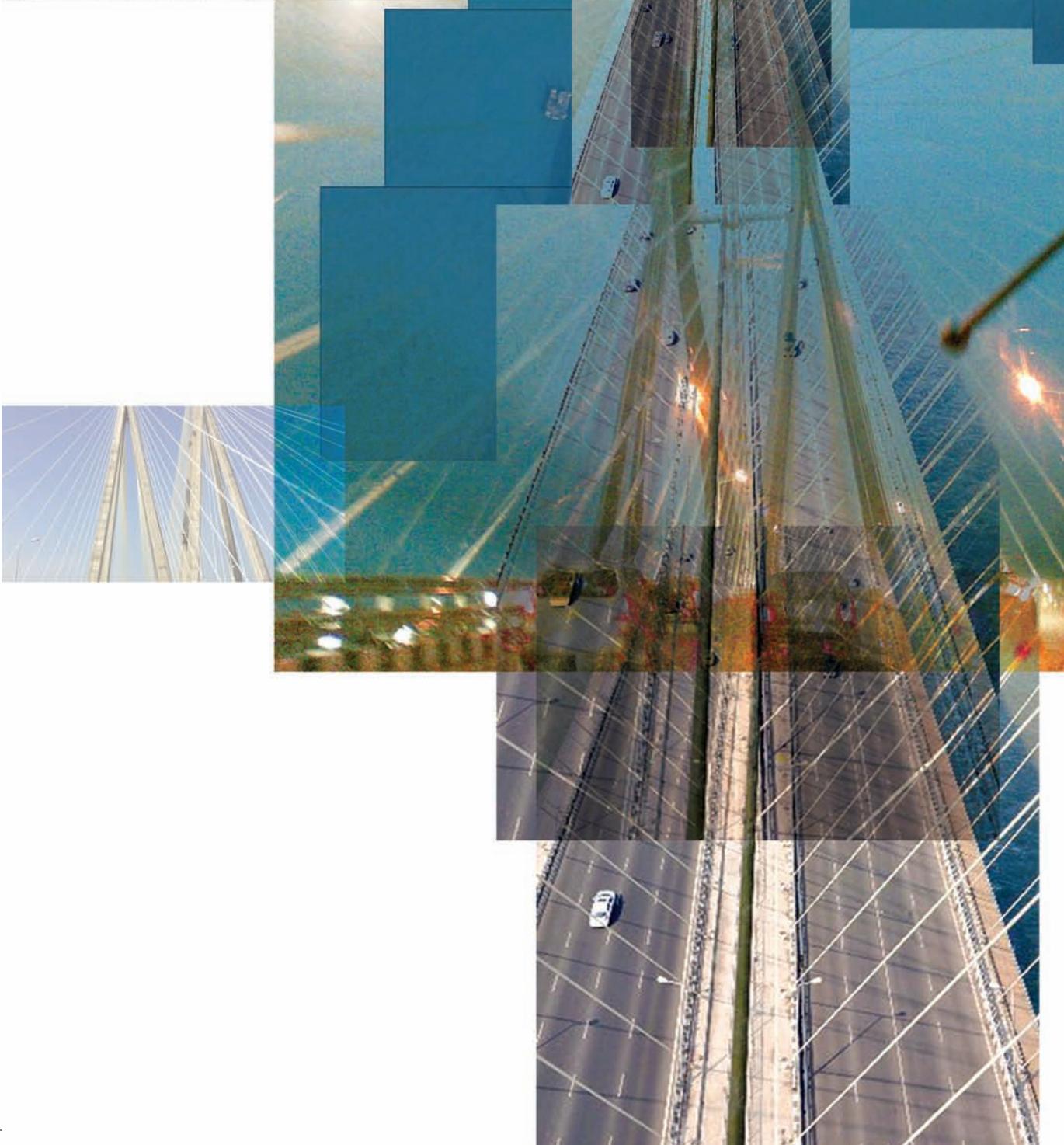
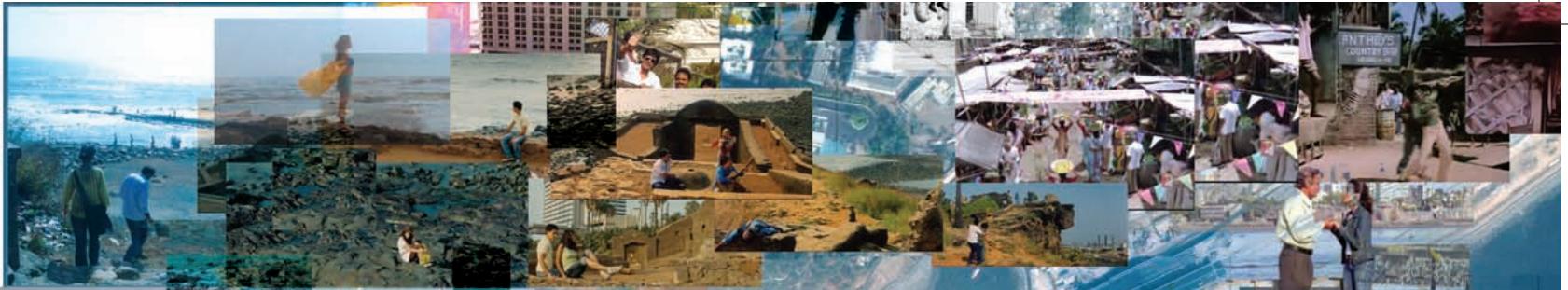






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Image © 2011 DigitalGlobe
Imagery Date: 1/25/2010 2000
19°02'58.83" N, 72°50'27.24" E, 4m, 11m
Elev: 472 m





Mahim and **Bandra** are both geographical markers of the expansion of the city northwards. Bandra is the first limit of the suburbs of Mumbai, and Mahim the last limit of the city. The adjacent areas straddle the Mithi River and are now connected by Mumbai's newest symbol of modernity – the Bandra–Worli Sea Link. While Mahim's shores have been home to fishing villages, Bandra's watered edges house the city's nouveaux-riches in high-rises. Both these areas guard their older neighbourhoods, while making way for new economic and architectural changes. Mahim and Bandra have captured Bombay cinema's imagination and have appeared in many films – from *Amar Akbar Anthony* to *Aakhri Khat* to *Baton Baton Mein* to *Mashaal* to *Dil Chahta Hai*.

A surfeit of images accumulate on such sites as the rest of the city remains opaque to the movie camera. They spill over into the sky and the sea, imposing one imagination over another – juxtaposing the cinematic with the pedagogical with the commercial with the documentary. It is precisely for such sites that the pixel was invented, compression that allows an archive to do justice to the fetishistic image production here, and as prolific as the junk that picnickers, having no other place to go out to, produce on the sea-fronts.