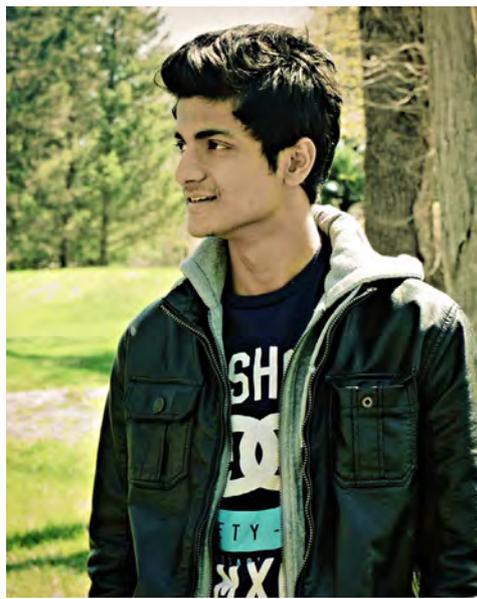


Opposite: Gateway of India
(Vikas Sawant)
Clockwise from top left
Vikrant Raje, Shirsha
Roychowdhury, Khubi Ali,
Rishita Das



Imagine a city half the size of London but with double the population, and you have Mumbai. 'It is the 'city that never sleeps,' says Vikrant Raje, an assistant manager at the Mumbai-based Axis Bank. 'Thousands of people work day and night to get what they wish for, but it also demands a crazy amount of dedication. As far as I have experienced, the work here never ends because the demands never end.'

This unique work ethic unifies the city's extraordinary religious and cultural diversity. 'Your team has people who have come from all over India,' says Khubi Ali, deputy editor at Mumbai's *Be Beautiful* magazine. 'Everyone finds a place to contribute where they are coming from, and somehow that makes the whole cosmopolitan culture of the city special.'

Why does Mumbai have such a relentless work culture? 'There is a continuous flow of work around the clock,' says Rishita Das, a manager at Trunkoz Technologies. 'And I think the reason for this is that the people do not have any other option. They usually come from far-off places, and they cannot afford missing work. Everyone wants to find their place in the city.'

There is nothing as permanent in the city as its work culture. 'In Mumbai, there is no time for permanent hatred. Only Dhanda [work], right?' exclaims Vir Das, an Indian stand-up comedian in his show. His words sum up the essence of the city in one line. The economic capital of India, Mumbai – previously known as Bombay – is a city famous for its mix of people who come from all across India. According to the World Population Review, more than six major religions exist in this city and it hosts no less than 16 different language groups.

Because of the varied mix of people in the city, one might assume sexism at the workplace would be a rampant issue. But those who work there disagree. 'The work environment in Mumbai is relaxed with low underlining sexism in my experience,' Ali says. 'In comparison with coordinating with men in different cities, it has been a breeze working with men who function in Mumbai because they are a lot more in-sync with women at work.'



'Being a female employee, I think I am more comfortable in this city's work environment than I would in other cities in the country.'

Shirsha Roychowdhury, an administrative assistant manager at UniMoni Enterprise, says: 'Being a female employee, I think I am more comfortable in this city's work environment than I would in other cities in the country.'

But the city has some things it can improve. Mumbai's estimated population is 20.41 million – greater than the country of Ireland. The statistics give a sense of the bubbling problems in the city. The most common problem comes from the lack of systematised public transport. 'Over-crowding seems to be an increasing problem in the city,' says Das. 'Water-logged tracks make it difficult for commuting to work.

Not to forget, it happens every year.' Other issues include sky-high property prices, over-crowding and the excessive heat: Mumbai can soar over 40°C between March and May.

But nothing is perfect. Mumbai's imperfections make it a believable city. As Roychowdhury says, 'One thing that comes to my mind when I think of Mumbai is that it is the heart and soul of any Mumbaikar out there.' Gregory David Roberts, whose book *Shantaram* defines the vividness of Mumbai distilled Mumbai's essence into one line: 'More dreams are realised and extinguished in Bombay than any place in India.'



Bharatanatyam: dance for body, mind and soul

Konica Sarkar dives into the story of a disciple of the classical Indian dance form Bharatanatyam, Swastika Dutta Purkayastha.

Swastika's last day at university was an emotional one. She spent her years learning multiple classical Indian dance forms. 'I was thinking about all the memories I made at the university. I did not want to leave them behind,' she says. Swastika Dutta Purkayastha, 23, learned the symbolic dance form of Bharatanatyam for two years while at university. She finds it to be one of the most beautiful dance forms. 'It was born in temples and mainly presented as an offering to Gods,'

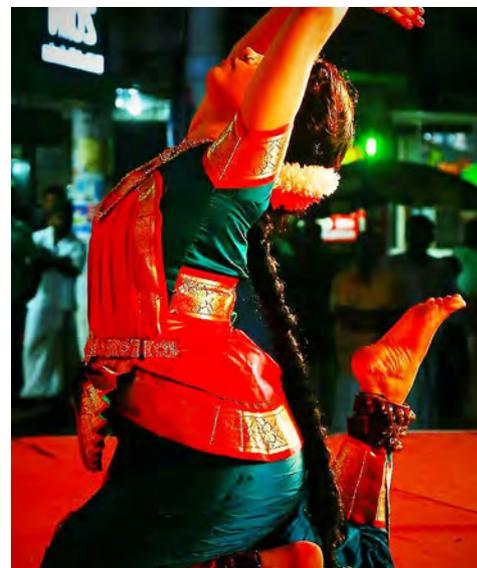
Swastika says. 'Bharatanatyam is like painting a beautiful picture and is like magic.' This dance form focuses on various body parts and the synchronization between them. 'It mainly explores the body's immense power and expression.'

India is the birthplace of, and arguably the finest place to learn, a myriad of unique art styles. One such art is Bharatanatyam, the oldest classical dance form in India which has its origins in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

The art is handed down as a tradition from

one generation to another. According to the Hindu religious texts, known as Puranas, Bharatanatyam was mainly performed by young girls in temples, known as Devadasi – who were dedicated to worship a God. After the arrival of the East India Company, an 'anti-dance movement' banned temple dancing. The dance form was described by the British as the front for prostitution. But after India's independence, the dance form was reintroduced to the people.

The music used for this dance form is called Carnatic music, and the attire is deemed as



Swastika performing Bharatanatyam at university © Krishnan Anurag

‘A lot of young people learn new dance forms... but there are equally as many people who want to learn the classical dance forms, which gives me hope’

one of the most important parts of the dance form. ‘We would wear a saree, lots of jewellery and makeup and also Ghungroo, which are small bells around our ankles which help us accentuate our foot gestures,’ Swastika explains.

Swastika learnt the art from the Assistant Professor at Rabindra Bharati University in Kolkata. ‘I would practise every day for two hours,’ she says. ‘I took private dancing lessons from him, and he is truly a dedicated dancer.’ Swastika remembers how her professor during the practice sessions, would scold her. ‘But it

was only because he wanted me to be better at it and give my best effort,’ she says. Before any performances, Swastika would teach children choreography, and they would perform them. ‘The first time I taught almost 15 children together was one of the most surreal moments of my life,’ she says. ‘Every time I am on stage performing, I feel like a different person. I feel wonderful, and all my nervousness disappears.’

An accident changed this, and he was bedbound for months. The doctors told him that he would never perform again. But her professor did not give up, and he started practising Yoga. ‘He got the idea of amalgamating Yoga with dance and wrote a book on it.’ Her teacher was one of the biggest inspirations for Swastika as even after him going through such hardship; he did not give up on his passion. According to her professor, Bharatanatyam is the bond between the body and the soul.

Bharatanatyam is a difficult art form to learn. ‘But, if you practise with dedication, it becomes

easier. You just have to feel the rhythm.’ As the generation is changing, Bharatanatyam is becoming even stronger according to Swastika, and the younger generations should learn the art form. ‘A lot of young people learn new dance forms such as Bollywood dancing,’ she says. ‘But there are equally as many people who want to learn the classical dance forms. Which gives me hope.’

Unfortunately, Swastika had to discontinue learning the art form as she was learning two other Classical dance forms, Odissi and Manipuri, and it was too much pressure on her. ‘I could not give enough time to Bharatanatyam, and I was not doing justice to this art form,’ Swastika says. ‘In the future, I am planning to continue it, and maybe I can give it more time then.’ Even though she is not taking any classes, she is still practising and learning Bharatanatyam from the internet. ‘I would love to teach the art someday and have my own academy as soon as I complete the curriculum. I hope to continue the legacy.’

Heavy metal hero

Konica Sarkar meets Tony Iommi, one of the founding members of the rock band Black Sabbath.

Tony Iommi never imagined that one of his songs would enter the Eurovision Song Contest. That was until 2013 when he wrote the song *Lonely Planet* for Armenia's entry in the annual international song competition. 'My song has done better than England,' he says.

Iommi says originally wanted to be a drummer, started his music career with an accordion, and ultimately switched to a guitar his mother bought him for £35. After an industrial accident in which he lost the tip of his middle finger and ring finger of his right hand, Iommi considered abandoning guitar entirely. But Django Reinhardt's music inspired him and encouraged him to continue.

It was the start of an illustrious career in rock music that would culminate in playing Madison Square Gardens with his band Black Sabbath. The music world has changed and evolved remarkably from when he started, he says, and techniques are so different nowadays. 'I like the old classic music,' he says. 'It certainly has changed a lot, but some of it still has the roots of the old.' Iommi says that adapting to changing technologies was very difficult. 'We have gone from the years of tape machines to computers,' he says. 'I was lost. I hadn't the faintest idea of what I was doing.'

To this day he still finds computers difficult and the equipment he has at home is just used for putting a riff down. 'I have to get my engineers to do all the other stuff,' Iommi says he prefers the sound of tapes. 'It's a lot warmer



'There is no point in selling something you do not like. I have never followed trends'

sound but, I would not go back as it was difficult, and we had to splice the tapes.' He says that modern technology is amazing and that you can do a lot with computers. 'I think if you use it the right way, it's fantastic.'

To survive in the music industry, it's crucial to like what you are doing, he says: 'There is no

point in selling something that you do not like.' Jumping on a bandwagon, he says, generally does not work. 'It's something I would never do. I have never followed trends.' He encourages people to do what they like and not listen to the naysayers. 'That's how music changes, by you liking it,' Iommi says. 'If you listen to everybody, we would all be playing the same stuff.'

Iommi reveals that the thought of quitting music has never crossed his mind. 'I have always had belief in what we have done,' he says. 'I think that is what you got to stick to because it's so easy for people to persuade you different.' He adds that if they would have listened to others, they would have packed up years ago. 'And we would not have been here now.'

He knows that love for music is not enough to make someone stop listening to what others have to say. 'You got to fight through all the things that come up, and as long as you believe in what you are doing, then you just keep going.'



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