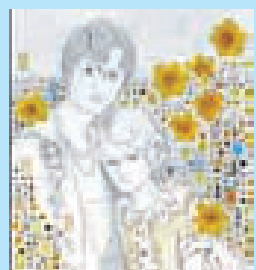


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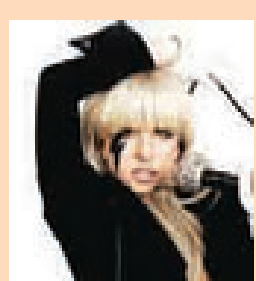
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Tarun Kumar (INK TATTOO STUDIO)

For Tarun Kumar, a holiday to Thailand changed his life. "I got my first tattoo done in Thailand and the tattoo artist noticed I had a flair for sketching and he asked me to try tattooing," says the young tattoo guru who runs his own studio 'Ink - The Tattoo Studio' in Chennai. With a keen interest in the art, he took the bold step to turn his passion into his profession, an idea that seems to have worked well for him. "Initially my family was a little apprehensive as they came from an electronics business but once they saw my interest level, they supported me and continue to do so," says the youngster. As mindsets in the city change, Tarun also believes that tattoos are no longer exclusively to make a style statement and can cost up to Rs one lakh (he did one such tattoo for a foreign client), but most often have a genuine reason or cause behind them. "There are people who get

tattoos of their deceased parents' names to remember them and there are also people who get meaningful tattoos, like the one I have," he says showing a lion head with a Nepali tiger that helps him guard against evil spirits and backstabbers. So is the city warming up to

TATTOOS ARE NO LONGER EXCLUSIVELY TO MAKE A STYLE STATEMENT AND CAN COST UP TO ONE LAKH

tattoo artist? "Initially people used to stare at me like I was an alien, but now it's changing. In fact, even my mom got a tattoo done about a year ago," he adds with a smile. Ink may be new to scene, having opened only two years ago, but Tarun has tattooed some big names in the film and fashion industry, both, in Chennai and Mumbai. Someday he also hopes to tattoo Sanjay Dutt, his idol. "Tattoos are very personal and it requires a lot of care to tattoo someone because it's permanent. It's a scary profession to be in, but if someone feels strongly about it, then there's nothing quite like being a tattoo artist" he says as he signs off.

PM Shaji (FCML)

FOR Shaji, setting up The FCML Store was a dream come true. "I have always wanted to deal in luxury goods and with FCML, I can say that I am living my dream," says the entrepreneur. Located on the high street of Chennai, Khader Nawaz Khan Road, The FCML Store deals in bathroom accessories. From fancy faucets to creatively designed ceramic basins, the store has it all. And they boast of great brands too — Gessi from Italy and Laufen from Switzerland among others. Shaji is also the owner of FCML Home, a shop that deals in high-end décor and art-facts. So how has the ride to the top been for this jet-setter? "Pretty smooth, surprisingly," says Shaji in his contagious pleasant way. He also adds that, "In fact, it was as if Chennai has been waiting for a luxury store all this while. The time I spent with my other venture, Cold Point,

was slightly more challenging. There were days I worked for almost 16 hours. And the concept of servicing air conditioners in a systematic way with slightly added cost was new to Chennai then." Chennai is surprisingly not very price-conscious, says Shaji and adds, "People here have a lot of money but don't know where to shop. They go all the way to Italy and take the trouble of clearing Customs at the airport. With FCML, life has become easier for them. The costliest item we have sold is a shower for Rs 20 lakhs." The man who is constantly travelling on work and meeting his clients and associates around the world speaks of Chennai warmly. "This is home to me. All my friends are here and there is nothing like our South Indian food." What is his advice for budding entrepreneurs? "Customer is the king and that is the name of the game," he finishes off with an effervescent smile.

IN ROSHNI'S MEMORY



Roshni and her mother

Roshni Menon, our columnist passed away on Valentine's Day. An irony, considering she was the one who championed the cause of love through her campaign last year (sending greeting cards to Ram Muthalik) and by her participation in the city's first gay pride along with her mother. The girl whose hero was her mother, never failed to impress those she came into contact with. As a journalist, R.J., women's rights activist or animal rescuer she did it with her heart and soul. To celebrate her life and the passion with which she lived it, a memorial service has been organised by her friends. The service will begin with a prayer at 7:30pm tomorrow at the Unwind Centre, Gandhi Nagar. Arjun Thomas from Molotov Cocktail will perform her favourite song and friends and family will share their memories of the girl they all remember as the effervescent Rochu. This event is an open to all.

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PASSION

These are the hep and happening lads of Chennai. Their empires are built with the right mix of commerce and copious amounts of style. **Team Expresso** talks to the men raking in the *moolah* through lifestyle businesses

Lads into Lifestyle



Vipin Sachdev (SUBWAY RESTAURANTS AND TUSCANA)

HE is the poised man of hospitality. With his ventures like Subway and Tuscana around the city, he has redefined the concept of an eatery. Adding verve to his spaces is of course his wife. Initially he shares, "I used to be one of the three directors of Npt Offset Press Pvt Ltd from 1980 until 2006 in various capacities from production, HR & Marketing with a qualification in printing. But after 23 years working for this same industry the work gets boring. I want happiness and fulfilment in the jobs I do," adding, "Since this line of work didn't provide that happiness anymore, I

moved to another."

That is when Subway restaurants and Fresco Gelato Parlours came into being in 2006. "The food & beverage industry is a very challenging one but I love the work. Prior to us, the city folk never had the opportunity of eating healthy fast food & fat-free ice creams and I was the one who introduced this concept," he smiles. Speaking of his love for the business, he shares, "I love meeting people and this job allows me to do just that. This is the main attraction that this industry had for me. Second to that is that there is no delay in cash flow. In my previous job, 40% of my time was



WITH HIS VENTURES LIKE SUBWAY AND TUSCANA AROUND THE CITY, HE HAS REDEFINED THE CONCEPT OF AN EATERY

taken up chasing people who we had already served and owed us money. In the hospitality industry, you serve and you get rewarded then and there," he says rather matter-of-factly. Recently with Tuscana he has added another feather to his cap and speaks of it fondly, "It is a Italian pizzeria where we serve authentic dishes including an elaborate breakfast too." On Chennai's eating habits he shares, "I believe that the people in Chennai are a lot more conscious of the whole dining experience. In North, there are restaurants where people want to be seen in purely because the said restaurants are famous. However, here the diners are always looking at four things: great food, great service, great ambience and value for money."

Shandy Ravi
(WHITE CLIFFS HAIR STUDIO)

IT'S not without reason that women fuss over their tresses, most times of the day. Because, and according to hair expert Shandy Ravi, "The way your hair looks can play a vital role in your confidence level".

For this accountant turned businessman who is the MD and Director of White cliffs, a hair studio, getting into the trade was a means of addressing a problem plaguing many — hair loss. He believes that his entry into the profession leaving that of a conventional accountant's job was a wonderful accident. "I came in to the field purely by accident and by necessity, but it has been a great journey. Until I got involved with this business I did not realise the impact it had on people," says Shandy who was in New York recently to open their latest branch. With several awards to his credit, including that of one of the 15 best medical inventions in the UK, Shandy's role in people's lives have been both therapeutic and cosmetic. Having styled some of the biggest names in the film industry including that of Rajnikanth and Kamal Hassan for *Kuselan* and *Dasavatharam* respectively, Shandy's company is a name to reckon with. "All our products and services are certified and our hair extensions are the best in the world. In fact, they're so strong that you can actually style your hair after getting the extensions done," says Shandy. "People walk in as a client and walk out as a friend", he says. Shandy caters to the diverse pockets of his clients, "I can help someone with a budget of Rs 10,000 to Rs 10 lakhs," he concludes.

THE WAY YOUR HAIR LOOKS CAN PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN YOUR CONFIDENCE LEVEL, SAYS SHANDY



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