



**Pritham Raja, 25**  
 co-founder, **Threads of Freedom**

**COWORKS OUT OF**  
**Bombay Connect,**  
**Mumbai**

**WHAT HE DOES** Finds employment for human trafficking victims with a garment factory in lieu T-shirts ordered by his company that will be sold in the US

**WHY COWORK**  
 Sharing space with people in social entrepreneurship helps networking and learning

“Something exciting is always happening at the next table”



**Guncha Khare**  
 partner and co-promoter  
**Bombay Connect**

**ACCOMMODATES**  
 15 start-ups

**USP** Mentoring for social entrepreneurs

PHOTOS: BHARAT CHANDA

now has six members. She has another team working from hometown Indore.

Bombay Connect looks anything but a regular office space. Its colourful walls attracted Ritu when she paid her first visit. The seating though spacious is informal. She says the casual and happening atmosphere has helped her retain and hire good talent. “We are hiring MBAs who have some expectations of their workplace. It is tough as a start-up to provide that,” she explains. Her employees, however, stay interested, courtesy workshops and events organized by Bombay Connect and a melange of talented people who cowork there with other start-ups.

**All-India Scenario**

Bombay Connect is not a unique experience any more. In Mumbai itself, there are at least half a dozen other coworking hubs of different shades that start-ups and entrepreneurs now prefer to work out of, instead of renting out expensive real estate or working out of home or the garage. And it is a trend across the country. All the major metros, plus small states and cities like Goa, Pune, Ahmedabad and Ernakulum, now boast of such spaces. And each has its own flavour.

In Delhi’s Hauz Khas village, overlooking the lake and the walk ways, is Social Offline. It is a café-cum-coworking hub that transforms into a bar after 6 pm. The entry is low-key and sudden with a tunnel-like passage and some colourful art work on the wall. But it gets better as you go in.

Huddled at a table on the first floor are Anjali Batra, 24, and Shuchir Suri, 26 – hard at work on their phones and notebooks. The ambience – soft lighting, couches, EDM music and a bar counter not too far away – would suggest that the duo were living it up away from the office.

They’re living it up alright – but they’re also hard at work. Batra and Suri are the founders of Food Talk India, and they work out of Social Offline at least twice a week. “I couldn’t have asked for a more hip working place in such a great location,” says Batra, who lives in Defence Colony in south Delhi. Suri commutes from Gurgaon where they also have a six-people office.

In August, Batra and Suri were developing an app for their business and were grappling with marketing options. “I am obsessed with technology but am not a techie,” says Suri. At Social Offline, they bumped into Akhil Chandra, founder of Studiomosaicapps.com, an app-publishing start-up. “Serendipity,” says Suri, “it was a perfect match”. Chandra is helping with the marketing of their app.



**Ritu Ghuwalewala, 30**  
 Co-founder & managing partner, **MavenMagnet**

**COWORKS OUT OF**  
**Bombay Connect,**  
**Mumbai**

**WHAT SHE DOES**  
 Big data research, finding trends out of public online conversations

**WHY COWORK**  
 HR and team management became easier with a peer group of founders around and the office arranging events

Cut back to Mumbai, where two engineers, Rohit Shintre and Vinayak Minde (both 24), decided to base their design start-up Cadsol Services in The Playce, a coworking hub in the north-eastern Mumbai suburb of Mulund. Shintre soon chatted up a workplace neighbour who is also a .net (dot net) programming expert. Result: the techie next door pitched in with backend support, for free. Another company sharing The Playce, called Carbon Brand Solutions, helped design their logo – yes, for free.

It helps that most coworking hubs are also start-ups themselves and therefore can be more flexible. At a section of Gurgaon’s 91Springboard, which offers a fuss-free atmosphere for tech-based start-ups, Aakriti Bhargava leads the 25-member team of the five-year-young Boring-brands.com. Apart from taking away administrative hassles and allowing her easy options for scaling up by just signing up for more seats, the hub offers something more – Bhargava is able to bring along her year-old infant and a nanny to the workplace.

“The events and activities at Bombay Connect help me retain staff”