

EDUCATIONPLUS

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P.V. Navaneethakrishnan

Exams are not confined to educational institutions but are also used in other areas to evaluate talent for employment or elevation. In this context, the cancellation of two exams held in Uttar Pradesh in February is disturbing. The police recruitment exam taken by over 43 lakh candidates was held across 2,385 centres across 75 districts and had a mere 0.014 probability of success. The State Public Service Exam for the post of Review Officers had over 10 lakh candidates and was held across 2,000 centres in 58 districts.

There are two aspects of concern. One is the mental stress and anxiety of the candidates who would have not only worked to prepare but would have had to deal with the logistics and expenses to take the exam. Second is the reason for cancellation: leaking of the question papers. There is talk of coaching centres, individuals and candidates being involved in this.

In the past

The issue of question paper leakages has been a vexing problem in education. Just take a look at the following examples: January 2024, Rajasthan Teacher Recruitment Exam; April 2023, a teacher leaked a Class 10 exam paper in Telangana; 2020, four government employees were arrested with regard to a recruitment exam for junior engineers in Rajasthan; 2003, the CAT exam paper was leaked;



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

1997, the IIT-JEE question paper was leaked in some centres, including Tirupati.

Today with exams being conducted both offline and online, the question paper may be a printed one or an electronic one.

In the first case, the issue of security begins at the press. The printer should be selected on the basis of reputation rather than the "lowest quote". A representative of the examining organisation should be physically present during printing, packaging and despatch of the papers.

The packets should be received by the superintendent officer of each centre who should store them securely until the exam. Anna University, Chennai, had adopted this procedure for its entrance exams, including the Tamil Nadu Professional Courses Entrance Exams, without a problem.

On the other hand, when the question paper is sent to the exam centre to be printed, the email should be encrypted and the password made available only to the designated authority.

Online mode

When it comes to online exams, in many cases, the paper may differ from candidate to candidate. However, technical glitches can affect the conduct of the exam and also have an impact on the question paper security.

This is what happened in the first edition of the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) in 2022 and the

exams had to be postponed in many centres.

In 2018, technical snags of a large magnitude occurred in the online exam conducted by the Ministry of Education of the United Arab Emirates. The authorities immediately switched over to offline mode in the affected institutions and got over the difficulty with only 30 minutes delay. Such measures can be adopted by allowing for adequate manpower and basic materials such as a master copy of the question paper kept ready to create the required number of hard copies in convenient nodal centres.

The writer is Former Professor and Director, Entrance Exams and Admission, Anna University, Chennai.



OFF THE EDGE

Nandini Raman

I am 24 years old and have a B.Com with over two years of work experience. I want to pursue an MBA and have quit my job to prepare for the CAT. Am I too old to do an MBA? Natasha

Dear Natasha,

You are not too old to study further. But ensure that doing an MBA aligns with your long-term goals and objectives. Identify your specialisation, as it will contribute to your professional development. Your work experience will offer a practical advantage. The CAT is a tough exam, so, develop a study plan and consider joining a coaching centre or an online training programme that will give you the discipline and time management skills you need.

I am currently pursuing a degree in Economics. How can I get a related job in the U.K.? Aparna

Dear Aparna,

Do well in your current course and cover key and relevant areas such as microeconomics, macroeconomics, and econometrics. Apply for a Master's programme in the U.K. based on your career goals, as many positions require a Master's or Ph.D. Stay updated and informed about the current trends, policies, and industry developments. Specific job

Gain practical experience

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This career counselling column may help

requirements will vary and so you might need to tweak your application and resume to highlight relevant skills and experiences. Work on developing your quantitative and analytical skills and proficiency in statistical software like Stata, R, or Python; gain practical experience through internships and summer jobs; and join professional associations to network and meet professionals. Attend career fairs, conferences, seminars and company presentations to learn about job openings. Explore portals like Indeed, LinkedIn, and industry-specific websites to find jobs. Build an online presence to showcase your education, skills and experience.

I completed B.Sc. Industrial Microbiology and Biochemistry in 2023. I wish to pursue M.Sc. Psychology. Is this possible? Hisana

Dear Hisana,

In India, the eligibility criteria for M.Sc. Psychology is an undergraduate degree in Psychology. But many universities also accept students from diverse undergraduate Science backgrounds. So check the admission criteria and specific requirement of the institutions you are interested in. While it is possible to pursue a Master's in Psychology abroad even if you

undergraduate degree is in a different field, you may need to fulfil certain prerequisites by taking additional classes or credits to meet the requirements. Some universities offer pre-Master's programmes or post-Baccalaureate courses to help students bridge this gap and complete this mandatory requirements. Check the college website for admission requirements and start a discussion with the academic counsellor to understand their process. You might also need a GRE score, letters of recommendation (LORs) from professors or professionals about your abilities and academic potential in the field of psychology and a compelling statement of purpose (SOP) that outlines your motivation to do a Master's in the field. Highlight all relevant experiences, such as internships, research projects, or work experiences that demonstrate your interest in and commitment to the field.

I am 21 years old and in the final year of B.A. English through IGNOU. While I want to do my PG, I am unable to do so due to my financial situation. What are the possible options for a job? Sabith

Dear Sabith,
Financial difficulties can be a challenge. However, there are various job options

available. Your skills in communication, critical thinking, and writing are valuable in several fields. Here are some potential options that may not be directly related to your field of study but can serve as a stepping stone to gaining work experience and financial stability. Explore opportunities and study further when your financial situation improves. You can be: a content writer, creator or editor in websites, blogs, and marketing materials; a copywriter in advertising agencies and marketing firms for advertisements, promotional materials, and campaigns; a social media manager to manage the online presence of organisations and companies; a customer service representative at a call centre, addressing inquiries and concerns; or a freelance writer on platforms like Upwork or Fiverr. Other options include teaching, tutoring, working as administrative assistant, a data entry operator, digital marketing assistant or sales and marketing assistant

Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to edplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line Off the Edge

Grappling with uncertainty

As the U.K. enters recession, Indian students in the country face challenges in finding jobs and deal with financial strain



Akash Dhanurkar

The U.K.'s economy has officially entered recession, as its GDP contracted by 0.3 % in the fourth quarter 2023. According to reports from Reuters, the recession is the longest run without growth on record as GDP per person shrinks. This has left international students from India worried about their future in the face of economic turmoil. Many have expressed their fear of exhausting their post-study work visa without getting a job.

Job crisis

Vaishnavi Jawalkar, a student of Media Management from the University of Stirling, says she is worried about her future and is struggling to find a part-time job, let alone a full-time one. "The U.K. government and the universities made every effort to invite international students to pursue world-class education but have failed to abide by their initial promise of helping students get a job. Taking a loan of nearly ₹25 lakhs has compelled me to compromise on my career and rely on part-time jobs for daily expenses," she says. "When I arrived in the U.K., nearly 34 renowned universities across

the country launched a strike due to issues related to pay and working conditions. Our academics, which we considered our priority, suffered."

Usually students complete their dissertation in August-September and work part-time until they receive their graduation certificates, when they start looking for full-time work. Nikita Shihbate, a student in a London-based university, points out, "It isn't practically possible for us to visit India from September to January and then return to apply for post-study work visas. There is no clarity on what needs to be done after submitting our dissertation. After carefully reviewing the situation, I have decided to return to India and drop my plan to work in the U.K. as the cost of living is rising." She also mentions that many scamsters are using the students' desperation to find a job to cheat them of money.

Other aspects

Ashutosh Ghorpade, a student from Cardiff University, raises another aspect of the problems students are facing. Students are charged for healthcare facilities "but many international students go back to India to seek medical treat-

ment because in order to get a medical appointment in the NHS-run hospitals, we have to wait for six months, suggesting a collapse of the U.K.'s health industry."

Saumitra Kokane, another student from the same university, says that international students are not given a comprehensive understanding of the U.K.'s job market. "Our job application is rejected even before it is considered for a screening round. Recession has just made things worse in a job market where international students are already struggling to find a place."

Reports also suggest that a section of students who have got a job have scrapped the idea of accepting sponsorship, due to the rising cost of living and increasing work pressure. Mihica Bakre, who has been working for two years, isn't keen to extend her visa through sponsorship. "There are multiple things I may miss in India but taking decisions by considering the future of the U.K. is crucial. The job insecurity is constantly hovering around international residents."

The writer completed his M.A. in International Journalism from Cardiff University recently.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Kotak Suraksha Scholarship Programme

An initiative from Kotak Securities Limited (KSL) to support students.

Eligibility: Open to PwD applicants from Classes 9 to 12 or pursuing general/professional graduation in India who have secured at least 55% marks in their previous academic year. Annual family income must not exceed ₹3.2 lakhs.

Rewards: Up to ₹1 lakh a year

Deadline: April 30

Application: Online www.b4s.in/edge/KSSP1

University of Bath GREAT Scholarship, India 2024

An opportunity offered by the University of Bath in collaboration with the British Council's Study UK campaign.

Eligibility: Open to Indian students with a valid passport who hold an offer from the University of Bath to

Rewards: ₹10,000 for one year

Deadline: May 7

Application: Online www.b4s.in/edge/GUC1

pursue a full-time, Postgraduate taught Master's course starting in 2024 and are classified as international students for tuition fee purposes.

Rewards: ₹10,000 for one year

Application: Online

www.b4s.in/edge/UBG01

UCL-GREAT Scholarship

A joint initiative of University College London (UCL), the British Council, and the GREAT Britain Campaign.

Eligibility: Open to Indian nationals who have applied to study for a full-time Master's degree at UCL in 2024/25 and have received an offer for a place by the closing date.

Rewards: ₹10,000 for one year

Deadline: April 30

Application: Online www.b4s.in/edge/KSSP1

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

SAVE THE DATE

SBI Youth for India Fellowship

The SBI Foundation invites applications for the 13-month programme, which aims to empower youth to create transformative change in rural communities.

Themes: Health, Rural Livelihood, Food Security, Environmental Protection, Education, Water, Technology, Women's Empowerment, Self-Governance, Social Entrepreneurship, Traditional Craft and Alternate Energy.

Eligibility: Those between 21 and 32 years who are either Indian citizens or hold an OCI card or are citizens of Nepal or Bhutan and are committed to advancing sustainable development objectives in rural areas.

<https://bitly.ws/3gcbR>

M. Sc. Advanced Pharmaceutical Manufacturing

The University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, the U.K., invites applications for its one-year course starting in September 2024.

Eligibility: Minimum second-class (2.2) Honours degree in Science or Engineering; two references (at least one academic). Minimum IELTS score of 6.0 (with no component below 5.5).

<https://bitly.ws/3gice>

PG programmes at UPES ON

UPES ON, the digital education arm of UPES University, has partnered with L&T Edutech, to introduce two new PG Programmes in Industrial Safety and Renewable Energy, and a Bachelor of Computer Applications (BCA).

Last date: June 15
<https://bitly.ws/3gcY9>

Awards

Team Invictus from IIT Kharagpur was the winner of the student track of the third edition of TomorrowLAB, a business competition conducted by Tata Steel.

The School of Law at Mahindra University concluded its first International Moot Court Competition, with participation from 24 law colleges. Hon'ble Justice R. Subhash Reddy, Former Supreme Court Judge, and Narsimha Reddy Anantha, Chairman of Telangana Bar Council, inaugurated the event. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University,

Lucknow, came first followed by Dharmashastra National Law University, Jabalpur.

The sixth edition of the MCX-IPF COMQUEST 2024, a national commodity market educational quiz for students, organised by the MCX Investor Protection Fund (MCX-IPF), saw participation from 5900 students from over 485 academic institutions. Ivan Mohanty of IIFT, Kolkata, was declared the winner.

Shuvankari Biswas, Tiasha Guha, Sohini Dey and Subhasree Roy, Class XI students from Techno India Group Academia South Kolkata won the second prize at the World Science Congress Poster Making

Competition. The students was mentored by Subhro Saha, assistant teacher at Techno India Group Academia.

Prof. Nilam Kaushik of the Strategy area of IIM-Bangalore has been conferred with the 'Young Woman Researcher in Innovation Management' award at the ninth Venus International Women Awards by the Venus International Foundation for her contribution and achievement in the discipline of Management.

MBA students from CMR Institute of Technology (CMRIT) took the top three ranks at the 23rd VTU Convocation for the

academic year 2022-23. Tharu G. took home four gold medals along with the first rank in MBA studies across Karnataka, followed by Aishwarya A in second place and Apoorva M.S. coming third.

KPIT Technologies announced the winners of the KPIT Sparkle 2024, its mobility software design and development innovation contest. Team G-Rex from Kongu Engineering College, Perundurai, Tamil Nadu, won the Platinum Award and Team Krenoviantz from Sri Krishna College of Engineering and Technology, Coimbatore, won the Gold Award.

GREEN CAREERS HUB

Cartoonist for conservation

Rohan Chakravarty, cartoonist, illustrator, author and the creator of the Green Humour series, on his journey to becoming an advocate for wildlife conservation.

While jobs in engineering, medicine, law etc have been popular with Indian students, challenges such as climate change demand a new skillset. With a growing green economy projected to add 3.7 million jobs by 2025, students should not only be exposed to green career options but also understand how popular choices such as artists, content creators, lawyers, photographers, architects, entrepreneurs, and so on can be green. Beginning a new fortnightly series by WWF-India that highlights niche and unconventional green careers through the stories of well-known personalities from the field of environment and conservation.

I don't consider myself a wildlife conservationist. I am merely a cartoonist and illustrator who draws about wildlife and conservation. I have always loved both wildlife and cartooning but, in my initial years, I drew everything from politicians to celebrities, never really getting anywhere. Only after I started drawing about wildlife did my cartooning find its identity. Naturally, every day when I set out to draw, I feel like I owe my muse a debt!

My career has been a like a meandering tree snake. After graduating as a dentist and realising it is not for me, I worked as an animation designer for a film studio, while developing my comic series on the side. When my series got picked up by publishers, I quit my job and plunged



into cartooning full-time.

The turning point that drove me into the field of conservation was my first wild tiger sighting at Nagzira, a tiger reserve in my home state of Maharashtra. This inspired my wildlife cartoon and illustration series, 'Green Humour'. Now half of my day goes in ideating on paper, and the rest in executing the idea. As with any other creative profession, a lot of coffee is also involved.

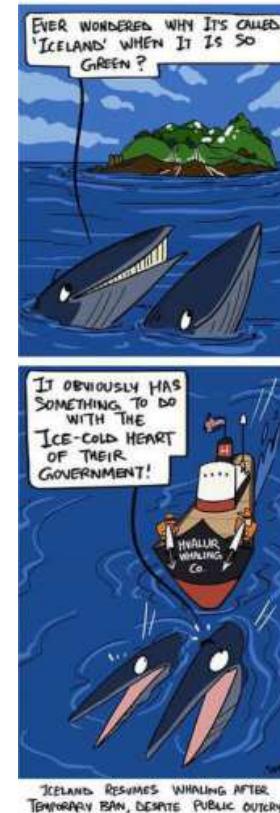
What excites me most about my work is the fact that Nature is an inexhaustible canvas, and that there is a new subject and a creative challenge every day. It's all about the thrill of making my own little explorations. I could be drawing the Tickell's blue flycatcher in my yard today and an Arctic ground squirrel I have never yet

had the pleasure of meeting tomorrow!

During a field visit for one of my recent projects, a habitat illustration of the Great African Seaforest, I got the opportunity to snorkel in South Africa's False Bay with the team behind the Oscar-winning documentary film 'My Octopus Teacher'. I had two

life-changing experiences during this adventure: one was when I put a snorkel on and jumped into water that froze every strand of hair on my body into icicles; the other was when I held in my hands a Mermaid's Purse: a shark's egg case!

Apart from these exciting projects, I derive inspi-



ration from innumerable artists, storytellers, and conservationists. As an artist, I have been heavily influenced by the work of Genndy Tartakovsky, Gary Larson, Bill Patterson, and Nina Paley. A lot of my work relies on science journalism, and I must name young Indian science journalists who

have inspired so much of my work: Aathira Perinchery, Vaishnavi Rathore, and Supriya Vohra. Dr. Nandini Velho, a prolific conservation biologist, has been a guiding light throughout my career. As an illustrator, I derive inspiration from the work of Charley Harper, Brendan Wenzel, Priya Kuriyan, Rajiv Eipe, and Kripa Raghaban.

But no matter how widely we are published as a cartoonist, one faces a blank page when you start work every morning! The creative block is a daily challenge and singing, cooking, long walks with my pets, and birdwatching always come to my rescue. What also helps me to keep going is saying no to uninspiring works, trusting my instincts, and drawing a lot of circles!

When I think of evolving in my career, the most important thing I plan to do is to slow down and prioritise the kind of projects and endeavours with respect to the story-telling that I believe in but I have been neglecting investing time and effort due to my freelance commitments. In the near future, I hope to tell more stories that explore the intricate links between human communities and wildlife.

To all readers, I would just like to say: making an environmental contribution is possible no matter which line of work you're in, EVEN if you are an official in the MoEFCC!

In the classroom, many lack the ability to analyse things critically. Teachers who are accustomed to blindly following orders from authorities often lack the capacity for creative and critical thinking. Consequently, they may not take the necessary steps to foster critical thinking in their students.

Teachers who possess the gift of critical thinking and have analytical skills have the potential to provide constructive criticism. Only such teachers can instil critical thinking in students and catalyse change in the system. Governments and institutions should recognize such teachers as valuable resources and utilise their intellectual contributions to reform the system.

In *How We Think*, written in 1909, John Dewey highlights the importance of 'thought training' and shares his views on the role of educators in training students to think well. He advocates for curiosity, open-mindedness, and professional responsibility. Educators who possess these qualities can be effective thought trainers, equipped with analytical minds, innovative ideas, and intellectual courage to engage with society democratically. The question remains: will authorities encourage such teachers to spread their wings and fly freely?

Views expressed are personal

The writer is an ELT resource person and education columnist.
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and perseverance to make a mark.

Performing artist: As a performing artist, one can either join a band or be an individual performer. Once they establish their names, performing artists get lucrative opportunities at numerous domestic and international tours and music festivals.

Tutor: Vocalists can train aspirants as tutors and trainers. This can be done privately or as faculty in an institution that offers music as a subject. Today, one can also conduct classes online.

Music critic: This is an emerging career option and allows those with technical knowledge of music to write or speak about it.

Master the visual language

Tips for Graphic Design students to make an impact with their work



FREEPIC

Nealesh Dalal

Graphic design is a powerful visual language. It goes beyond the manipulation of pixels to forge an effective dialogue without uttering a sound, evoking emotions with a smart click, and guiding viewers through a maze of information with exceptional clarity.

Elements

What does it take to create an impactful design? This involves a harmonious convergence of balance, contrast and alignment. Balance is not just about symmetry, it is about distributing elements to create an aesthetically pleasing tension, like juxtaposing a bold headline set in Adobe InDesign with a calming expanse of negative space in Adobe Photoshop. Contrast provides emphasis and clarity, a whisper-thin typeface dancing against a stark black canvas, rendered in Illustrator. Alignment, the invisible ruler, keeps the composition organised and prevents visual discord, often aided by grid systems implemented in Procreate.

+

Sketch. This requires knowing when to let go and allow the emptiness to add depth and breathing room to the composition, often enhanced by clever masking techniques in Procreate.

Software
Mastery of graphic design software empowers students to translate their visions into tangible realities. These digital spellbooks have tools to conjure up shapes, colours, and effects, transforming abstract ideas into captivating visuals. From crafting logos in Blender to conjuring fantastical illustrations in ZBrush, the possibilities are as boundless as one's imagination. Yet, software is just the brush in the hand; the student's creative spark infuses the design with life and meaning.

The future of graphic design is not confined to the flat confines of the screen. Virtual Reality (VR) invites students to step into their own creations and crafts immersive experiences that blur the lines between the real and the imagined. Imagine walking through a self-designed museum exhibit within your own headset, where every element is powered by engines like Unity, Unreal Engine, or Discard. But, even here, the core principles of balance, contrast, and typography remain the guiding lights.

Typography
This acts as the orchestra conductor of the visual symphony. Each typeface carries a distinct personality, from the playful script of Adobe Fonts to the authoritative serif font of Google Fonts. Choosing the right font is similar to casting the perfect character for a play. A delicate script might grace a wedding invitation designed in Canva, while a bold, industrial font could announce a grand opening in Affinity Designer. Mincasting, however, can lead to conflicting visuals, so handle typography with the respect it deserves.

Collaboration
No design masterpiece is born in isolation. Collaboration is the essence of the creative process, allowing students to share their visions, learn from each other, and push the boundaries as a collective force. Online platforms such as Slack, Trello or Asana are bustling marketplaces of ideas, where critique and mentorship fuel creative evolution. Collaboration is not merely completing tasks; it is about building a community of visual storytellers, each enriching the other's journey and collectively shaping the evolving landscape of information.

The writer is the founder of JD School of Design powered by JD Institute of Fashion Technology

Teachers as thought trainers



WIDE ANGLE

Albert P' Rayan

If teachers are not allowed to express their critical views on matters that matter to the nation, how can they teach critical thinking?

protest against the administrations' intimidating tactics.

This incident of suspending the teacher has prompted questions regarding the right to criticise the government and advocate for the rights of teachers and students. Many activists and some political leaders have condemned the disciplinary action and demanded the revocation of her suspension. Interestingly, the teaching community, with the exception of some teachers, has largely remained silent on this and other similar issues. Their diplomatic, but deafening, silence raises several questions: Is it not the teachers' professional responsibility to critically evaluate governmental educational policies or the existing system and express their views through writing or speech? Is it not their social and moral responsibility to speak out against in-

Recently, I met an academic who was highly critical of certain issues such



as One Nation - One Election and the National Education Policy. As he was quite knowledgeable and his views on the issues were remarkable, I asked why he didn't write about these issues. He responded, "Do you want me to lose my job? Do you know what will happen to me if I comment critically on such matters?" Disturbing questions, indeed! Does our democracy not allow us to be truly democratic? Our leaders and policymakers extol the virtues of 'critical thinking' and emphasise the importance of promoting critical thinking among students. Unfortunately, teachers are not afforded the opportunity to apply critical thinking in real-life situations.

If teachers are not allowed to express their critical views on matters that matter to the nation, how can they teach critical thinking? In our modern society that faces numerous complex challenges, teachers are expected to be knowledgeable citizens and express their views fearlessly. They should play a key role in the intellectual development of students, creating opportunities for students to reflect on various issues, raise questions, look at things critically, construct knowledge, and disseminate it.

Although all teachers are expected to be proficient critical thinkers and express their views on issues that impact the na-

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and perseverance to make a mark.

Recording artist: Those who would like to freelance and explore multiple options can consider being playback or ad jingle artists, composers and more for music labels, production companies and bands.

Music production: Recording, arrangement, acoustic design, sound engineering are technical aspects that can be learnt through a variety of courses and offer job opportunities.

Tutor: Vocalists can train aspirants as tutors and trainers. This can be done privately or as faculty in an institution that offers music as a subject. Today, one can also conduct classes online.

Music critic: This is an emerging career option and allows those with technical knowledge of music to write or speak about it.

ing through online sessions from their homes. By showcasing their talent on social media, they can gain new followers. Music production has also become affordable and easy with the availability of editing, recording and merging tools such as Ableton, Sibelius, Logic Pro and more. This allows musicians to produce music without having to depend on labels.

From the educational angle, music educators must emphasise practical training and design the curriculum in such a way that it includes the technological aspects as well.

The writer is Dean, School of Performing Arts, NMIMS Mumbai.

Find your voice

Perfection in the craft, knowledge of the technical aspects, patience and perseverance are essential to succeed as a musician.

Vikas Bhardwaj

Hindustani classical: One of the oldest and more traditional forms, it includes specific styles such as Khayal and Dhrupad among others. Aspiring musicians will require rigorous training in *sur* (tone) and *laya* (rhythm). **Semi-classical:** With its

is segmented into a variety of genres and offers diverse career opportunities for budding singers.

Light music: This in-



cludes folk music, *bhajans*, *ghazals* and film music.

Western music: Western classical, Jazz, Blues, Rock, Pop and more recent forms resonate with Indian listeners and musicians.

Diverse options
Pursuing music as a profession, especially as a vocalist, involves hard work, as perfecting of the craft requires years of training and practice. Even after this, singers need patience

and perseverance to make a mark.

Performing artist: As a performing artist, one can either join a band or be an individual performer. Once they establish their names, performing artists get lucrative opportunities at numerous domestic and international tours and music festivals.

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