

Dangerously Irrelevant

Sharing the global stage: Musings on Mumbai

[cross-posted at the [TechLearning blog](#)]

After nearly 24 hours here in [Mumbai](#), several things already are quite apparent to me...

1. The Southern states in the USA - my previous benchmark for hospitality – have nothing on the folks that I have encountered so far in India (and I say that as a native of the South). The people here have been uniformly gracious, friendly, and welcoming.
2. The word that best describes this city might be LOTS. As in LOTS of poverty (it's staggering, really, to a Westerner such as myself). As in LOTS of traffic (a bewildering mess of cars, trucks, taxis, buses, auto-rickshaws, scooters, bicycles, and pedestrians, all darting in and out of extremely small gaps in traffic). As in LOTS of people and LOTS and LOTS of construction and LOTS of energy. Somehow it all combines together into a positive, tangible buzz. There is a feel to this place – a palpable sense that this is a city that is on the move.
3. Mumbai is a place of startling juxtapositions. At the foot of a gleaming corporate office building will be a shantytown. Adjacent to an eight-block section of decrepit, decaying apartment buildings (that, of course, are packed with residents) will be a shiny glass-and-marble shopping mall. Next to a filthy, tin-roofed store selling tires (that appears to be held up only by the posters and ads affixed to its rickety wooden walls) will be a new high-end electronics store selling HDTVs.
4. For all of the possibility that is here, there's still an enormously long way to go. Mumbai and other parts of India may be on a tremendous upswing but there are hundreds and hundreds of millions of people who are seeing little, if any, of the economic growth. That said, it's a numbers game. Even if only one or two hundred million people in a nation of over a billion join the Indian middle class, the economic impact on the global economy will be quite substantial.
5. Any tech plan that starts like this (as does the [American School of Bombay's](#)) is probably going to be pretty succesful:

As our world becomes more technologically and globally interconnected, it's increasingly imperative that we all understand and plan how to facilitate student and faculty acquisition and mastery of 21st century skills. The 21st century isn't a time in the future; it is now.

Have I said anything that hasn't been said before? Probably not. But I now can feel in my gut a sense of what this city is like. In [Flight of the Creative Class](#), Richard Florida notes that the biggest danger facing the USA is not terrorism but rather that talented, creative people will stop wanting to come to America. There are places for those people here in Mumbai (and in South Korea, Australia, Singapore, Ireland...). [Tom Friedman](#) is right: we Americans are going to have to get used to sharing the global stage.

Scott's trip to Mumbai: [pics at Flickr](#), [movies at YouTube](#).

[Email this](#) • [Add to del.icio.us](#) • [Digg This!](#)

Posted by Scott McLeod on February 27, 2008 in [International](#) | [Permalink](#)

[Technorati Tags](#): [administration](#), [administrators](#), [America](#), [Australia](#), [Bombay](#), [construction](#), [creativeclass](#), [creativity](#), [education](#), [educationaladministration](#), [educationalleadership](#), [Florida](#), [Friedman](#), [growth](#), [HDTV](#), [hospitality](#), [India](#), [innovation](#), [Ireland](#), [leaders](#), [leadership](#), [McLeod](#), [Mumbai](#), [poverty](#), [principals](#), [schools](#), [scottmcleod](#), [Singapore](#), [South Korea](#), [superintendents](#), [technology](#), [technologyleadership](#), [theworldisflat](#), [traffic](#), [USA](#)

TrackBack

TrackBack URL for this entry:

<http://www.typepad.com/t/trackback/1040165/26593448>

Listed below are links to weblogs that reference [Sharing the global stage: Musings on Mumbai](#):

Comments

I look forward to reading of your experiences in Mumbai? Is there a palpable sense that the caste system still plays any relevant role in Indian society? Is the sharp contrast there between haves and have nots tied to societal norms regarding cast? I'm just curious. i have heard the caste system is in sharp decay.

Posted by: [Charlie A. Roy](#) | [February 27, 2008 at 08:48 PM](#)

As I am not familiar with Mumbai, the concept of the juxtapositions parallels that of the culture in Mexico. Are you in a position to compare the divisions between the two for those of us that are less world-travelled?

Posted by: [Lewshall](#) | [February 27, 2008 at 09:56 PM](#)

Scott and I are presenting together in Mumbai. Having lived in Arizona for six years, I did see many of the same issues in Mexico, between the haves and have nots. In India, however, the chasm is much greater. An example - I was admiring a multimillion dollar yacht in the bay as several women were begging me for change.

Posted by: [David Quinn](#) | [February 28, 2008 at 01:12 AM](#)