

MS. DHVANI BHANUSHALI

Singer and Actress

Taken by the Editorial Board

YT: You were raised in a family with a deep appreciation for music. How did your upbringing, and the cultural environment around you, shape your initial fascination with music? Were there any defining moments in your early life that solidified your decision to pursue this as a career?

DB: I can not point to one specific moment, but I believe my passion for music grew naturally over time. My dad worked in a music company, so our home was always filled with music he brought back from work. I think being surrounded by it helped me develop a good ear for music. Initially, though, I did not see it as something I would pursue professionally. As a teenager, I was more focused on studying and was inclined towards marketing—just like my dad, who has been a huge inspiration for me since childhood. However, as I grew, learned, and started applying myself to music, it gradually transformed into a career. It has been surprising to see how far I have come. I never imagined becoming an artist, but I believe destiny has its way of guiding us toward the right path. Looking back, I am incredibly glad it led me here.

YT: Artists often find inspiration in those who have paved the way before them, drawing from their unique styles and innovations. Could you share some of the key musical influences that have significantly shaped your approach towards this field?

DB: When it comes to unique styles and innovations, I do not think anyone consciously decides, 'This is different, so I will do it.' For me, it's more about what feels right in the moment—something that stems from a small thought or even a sound you hear. Throughout our lives, we are constantly shaping ourselves through our experiences, likes, and dislikes. These preferences naturally influence the sounds we are drawn to and the ideas we consider unique. I think this individuality—our personal tastes and perspectives—is what sets us apart, even as artists. So, when you bring those elements into your music, it creates something distinctly yours. It is that combination of personal taste and creative instinct that ultimately defines your unique style.

YT: In 2019, you achieved a remarkable milestone as the youngest artist to surpass 1 billion views on YouTube with your singles 'Vaaste' and 'Leja Re'. Looking back, did you anticipate such overwhelming success early on in your career, or was this a pivotal moment that reshaped your journey and opened new doors for you?

DB: Honestly, I never thought it would happen so early. I genuinely had no idea it was even possible. I had been working hard at it for years, giving it my all, but I never expected to achieve something so significant at such a young age. When it happened at 21, it opened new doors for me. It was a pivotal moment that not only shaped my career but also instilled a sense of confidence in me. That confidence has been a driving force, allowing me to continue exploring my journey as an artist and pushing boundaries in my work.

YT: In recent years, independent music has seen a significant rise in India, with more artists choosing to bypass traditional labels. As someone who has worked within both the mainstream and independent frameworks, how do you see the future of independent music evolving, and what role do you think it will play in shaping the industry?

DB: Yes, I have experienced both, and I feel there is a significant contrast between the two. As an independent artist, there is a lot more freedom, but it also comes with much more responsibility. You are directly involved in every aspect of your career, and while it is a lot of work, I think it is ultimately a better way to go about things.There are many reasons why the label system does not always work well for independent artists. While I believe people in the industry have good intentions and genuinely want to help shape your career, the way they operate often does not align with what the artist wants. This disconnect can create challenges. That is why many artists choose to build their own teams and take control of their careers. Over time, mindsets evolve, but the label structure tends to maintain a rigid hierarchy of decision-making. As an independent artist, you have the freedom to make your own decisions while relying on a team that advises and supports you. I believe this approach is incredibly valuable because it is the best way to stay true to yourself and your vision as an artist.

YT: Every artist has a very unique and personalized method of dealing with the creative side. Could you walk us through your approach to crafting a new song, from the spark of initial inspiration to the final stages of production?

DB: The initial inspiration or a spark of thought could come from anywhere, maybe you hear a sample on the internet, you sort of see something, you hear someone playing something and then maybe a melody comes into the picture once you download it and sit on it. Or you play a certain instrument and sort of go at it. I would just like to give you an example of 'Mera Yaar,' that is how I made it. Abhijit sent me this piece, it was the beat and I just wrote the hook on it and sent it back to him and from there when we listened to it, it was very catchy and then we made the whole song and the idea basically at the time about the song was how when you have a crush on someone and you need like this really decent way of saying that to them and not be indecent about it, the idea was that and I just then went ahead and sort of completed the song with him and Shlok. So, it can come from anything really.

YT: You have successfully ventured into both Bollywood soundtracks and independent singles, showcasing your versatility as an artist. What were some of the key differences between the two formats and how do you navigate your way to meet the demands of both?

DB: It is just music at the end of the day. I feel when there is a Bollywood song, you are supposed to go and sing it according to what the music director wants but when you come to the independent side of things and when you are doing your own single, it is your own story that you try to tell and you work

with a few people from the seed of the idea. I feel like you develop it into a song and then the whole video and conceptualise it and make your own world really. So that way they are very different but at the end of the day it is music so I feel like I would also only sing songs that really fit into my world and really make my voice shine. Those are the differences and that is how one navigates but like I said since it is music, when you are an artist you can sort of maneuver both ways.

YT: Many artists have been experimenting with different genres recently, from classical fusion to electronic pop. Are you planning to explore new genres or musical styles in the near future?

DB: When it comes to experimenting with different genres, I have always done that, even in the past. When I did 'Radha,' it was very different from what I did initially with 'Vaaste' and 'Leja Re', which was made by Tanishk. With 'Radha,' I worked on it with Abhijit Vaghani and we had elements of house and we blended it with this traditional Sarangi in the drop. So I have always made sure, even in the album 'Lagan,' there are a lot of elements that are Indian instruments and when it comes to 'Thank You God,' again, it is a very different genre. It is straight up pop, a little bit of Latin elements there. I feel I have jumped from here to there for the sake of how different it can sound and how much I can explore. So, I have been doing it and I feel like musicians have been doing it for far too long and I feel like the audience is just realising it now.

YT: Balancing your academics in business management and entrepreneurship alongside a thriving music career must've been a formidable challenge. Reflecting on your own journey, what would be an advisable approach for students at St. Xavier's College, Kolkata, who are passionate about creative fields like music while managing their academic commitments?

DB: Yeah, balancing academics along with doing this gets extremely hard. So I remember when I was in college and doing all of this together, I really used to work constantly. But I feel like what helps is having extreme discipline. Monday to Friday, make sure you are constantly at it and maybe one day you can take an off. So rest is also important. I just feel it has to work like clockwork. I used to get up at six every single day and practice and everything before I hit college and sleep sharp at 10. So, you really have to sort of pull up your socks and make sure you have time for things that are important.