

Award-winning  
choreographer  
**Shobana Jeyasingh**  
reveals how  
contemporary dance  
captures city life  
during her maiden  
tour in India

ing aspect is that her company has an eclectic mix of performers from Britain, United States, Malaysia, Italy, India and Spain. Shobana says, "London attracts people from all across the world. I choose those performers who impress me with their dancing abilities. Since they hail from different countries they bring their own individuality."

The Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company has produced innovative and critically-acclaimed work that offers viewers interesting insights into issues pertaining to national identity and social integration. Her company recently performed two of its

most feted works, *Faultline* and *Bruise Blood*, at Mumbai. *Faultline* paints a gripping picture of the turbulent tensions among 21st century British-Asians. Shobana explains that it is inspired by *Financial Times* journalist Gautam Malkani's critically-acclaimed novel *Londonstani* that deals with the lives of second and third generation South Asian immigrants. She says, "*Faultline* revolves around city-bred youth and the choices that they are compelled to make. After the London bombing there was a lot of focus on young Asians in the country. I wanted to do a performance around this subject and fleshed out the idea after reading Malkani's book." The dance piece has electronic sound score interwoven with music and songs rendered by India-born UK-based Soprano Patricia Rozario.

*Bruise Blood* is based on American composer and pioneer of minimalist music (an experimental form) Steve Reich's work that been remixed for a new version. It starts off with a powerful solo performance by Roxor Loops who is later joined by eight dancers.

Explaining the impact of location and social issues on her choreography, Shobana says, "Contemporary dance reflects the life and time that we live in. Since we live in cities we are aware that things are in a constant flux and try to come to terms with it. Whereas our parents had a traditional outlook and moved within limited circles, we lead different lives in cities and struggle to find some order. As far as integration is concerned, we strive to live together in a harmonious way and look for things that we share. My dance tries to capture the energy of city life."

Shobana, who was named the Asian Woman of Achievement for her contribution to Britain's cultural life in 2008, is upbeat about the thriving dance scene in India. She says, "A lot of interesting work is being done by young as well as established choreographers."

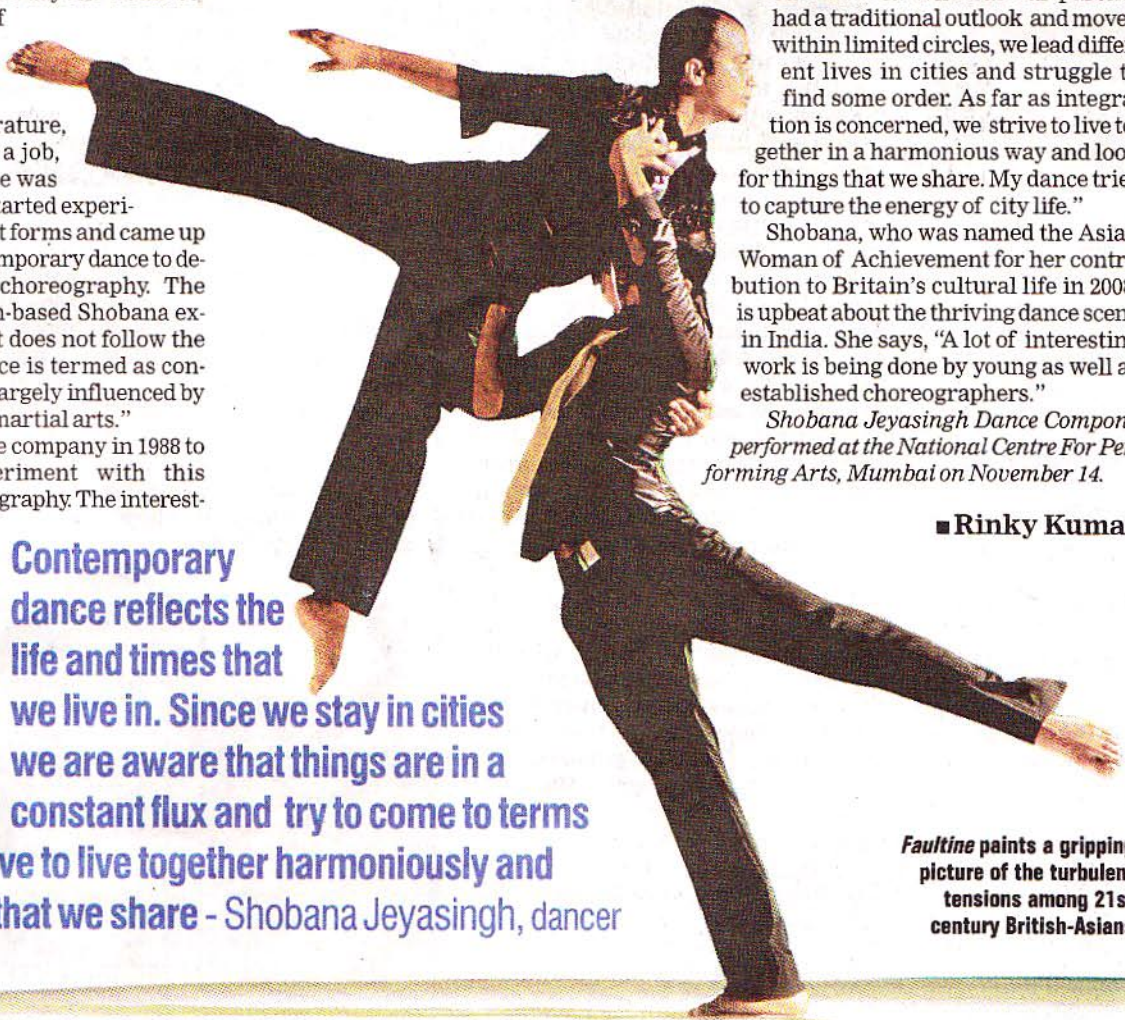
*Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company performed at the National Centre For Performing Arts, Mumbai on November 14.*

■ Rinky Kumar

# Dance for a CAUSE

As a child, Shobana Jeyasingh was enrolled into *Bharatanatyam* classes by her mother. Though she enjoyed herself, seven-year-old Shobana never imagined that one day she would become the exponent of contemporary dance in the United Kingdom. After graduating in English literature, while looking out for a job, she realised that dance was her true calling. She started experimenting with different forms and came up with the term of contemporary dance to describe her style of choreography. The Chennai-born London-based Shobana explains, "Anything that does not follow the rules of classical dance is termed as contemporary dance. It's largely influenced by *Bharata-natyam* and martial arts."

She set up her dance company in 1988 to propagate and experiment with this unique form of choreography. The interest-



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