Pulwama attack

Page 4

Women's Day Special

Page 6

Oscars 2019

Page 7

2019- A POST-POPULIST ELECTION

Sajjan Kumar

Democracy and populism are cousins. A charisma laden leader mesmerizes the masses establishing a chord that takes away the agential distinction between the leader and the Led. However, charisma doesn't automatically translates into populism. It requires demagoguery wherein hitherto suppressed and unarticulated but popular desires operating in public realm gets articulated by a soul who emerge as the savior. Hence, both Gandhi and Nehru were charismatic but not populist as they assumed a guiding role vis a vis the people rather than getting subsumed by them. Gandhi didn't hesitate a moment from withdrawing Non-Cooperation Movement at the height of its momentum in the aftermath of Chauri-Chaura incident and Nehru stood for secularism and scientific rationality in the midst of partition generated mass frenzy. The popular and the populist could be perfect strangers or bedfellows. The thin line between them lies in the chemistry between the social and the political, and by extension to the electoral.

In this backdrop, post-Independence India witnessed its first populist national election in 1971 on the plank of Garibi-Hatao. Being true to the saltiness of the turbulent 1970s, Indira Gandhi mounted the bandwagon of Leftwing populism, thereby denouncing all her rivals as right-wingers. Being labelled as Right then signified being anti-democratic, anti-people, anti-Poor. That populism made the leader and the Led coterminous when it was proclaimed that 'Indira is India'. The quest for a savior seemed an externalization of one's internal angst–someone who speaks the language of venting out the collective frustration, locating a demon who must be destroyed for societal salvation. The 'angry young man or slightly aged woman' generated blockbusters in political and cultural realm effortlessly–their mediocrity notwithstanding. When populism is your ally, mediocrity is a non-issue.

What makes an election populist? The answer lies in taking a journey backwards and locating the constituting elements of the package. First and foremost, one needs a democratic set up–real or farcical– as masses are indispensable to populism. Secondly, a charisma laden leader is required who must be seen as an inside-outsider to the system offering chemotherapy to the carcinogenic polity. It denotes a politics of 'impatience' and 'exasperation'. Institutions and established procedures appears as the Privileged's sorcery against the masses. The collective quest then heralds into a longing for a larger than life savior who signify the resurrection of the dead. Thirdly, a leviathanic demon must be constituted whose destruction only a messiah is capable of causing. This takes the focus

away from institutions/structures to personalities. A perfect battle ground of protagonist vs. the antagonist is drawn. In nutshell, populist elections offer a biographical solution to structural problems. A prophet is born who must seek popular approval to take the demon head on. Election in a democratic set up is the perfect occasion for this crusade. This is how democracy is claimed to be resurrected.

'On every occasion elections seemed like a biography of a new prophet. The pollsters and political analysts in their amazing humility call this phenomena as the 'Leadership factor'.'

Starting in 1971, India has witnessed four populist national elections. In 1977, 1989 and 2014 a collective democratic quest in the electoral arena seemed for a savior rather than a leader. On every occasion elections seemed like a biography of a new prophet. The pollsters and political analysts in their amazing humility call this phenomena as the 'Leadership factor'. So, if 1971 was about Indira Gandhi, 1977 was about Jay Prakash Narayan, 1989 was about the sudden metamorphosis of an erstwhile feudal leader, V.P Singh, into an anti-corruption crusader, and 2014 was nothing short of the Tenth, that is, the final incarnation of the divine in the mortal abode of Narendra Modi who promised an epochal change. True to the populist requirement, he emerged as the complete package thereby being everything to everyone. A Hindu-Hriday-Samrat to the Hindutva constituency, a developmentalist for the corporate and the middle class, a ray of hope for the rural masses, an ultra-nationalist for the adrenalized souls, a Chai-wallah for the poor and an inside-outsider to the masses feeling vanquished by the very system that is supposed to protect them. Thus, the circle of electoral populism that emerged from a Leftward vantage point in 1971 got completed in 2014 with a Rightwing populism of Modi.
However, the political journey since 2014 reveals something mammoth. The charisma that Modi used to command

is dipping even if its hasn't vanished entirely. This signify a new political scenario of India without charismatic leaders. At present, India doesn't have any charismatic leaders. We don't have Bal Thakrey in Maharashtra, NTR in Andhra Pradesh, MGR/ Jayalalitha/Karunanidhi in Tamilnadu, the old avatar of Laloo Yadav, Mayavati in Bihar and UP respectively, Biju Patnaik in Odisha, the likes of Jyoti Basu, the old spirited self of Mamata Banerjee in west-Bengal besides 1980s centric AGP's Prafulla Mahanta in Assam, and the Kejrival of 2013.

This means India has heralded into a post-charismatic leadership phase. How this phenomenon would unfold in the ensuing electoral realm is yet to be seen but one big take away lies in the fact that there couldn't be a populist election without a charismatic leader. With dwindling charm, Modi can't make a repeat of 2014 in 2019. A populist election like 2014 needs a charisma laden leader offering a binding narrative which brings together the socio-economically differentiated sections under a unified framework. Modi isn't the Modi of 2014. He sounds repetitive.

Hence, all the political hullaballoo on the hyper-nationalism in post-Pulwama scenario may offer a deal of appreciation and a shot in the arm to the dwindling charm of Modi. However, treating appreciation as an automatic translation into a positive vote for BJP would be a quantum leap of assumption. The ground narrative suggests that the core-voters of regional parties who shifted significantly to BJP in 2014 have gone back to their old choices and would remain with the same despite BJP's desperate attempt to make Nationalism as the binding narrative in 2019 elections. Modi of 2019 would be measured against the Modi of 2014– an inside-outsider who promised everything to everyone. All the narratives he is offering a fractured, including that of Nationalism. In all likelihood, the ensuing election, too, would offer a fractured mandate. Despite going against the common sensical desirability of political stability, a fractured mandate at this juncture would be a good omen for Indian politics as a democracy mustn't be reduced to the biography of a leader. Therein lies the subtle charm of a non-populist election. A saga of fractured tales.
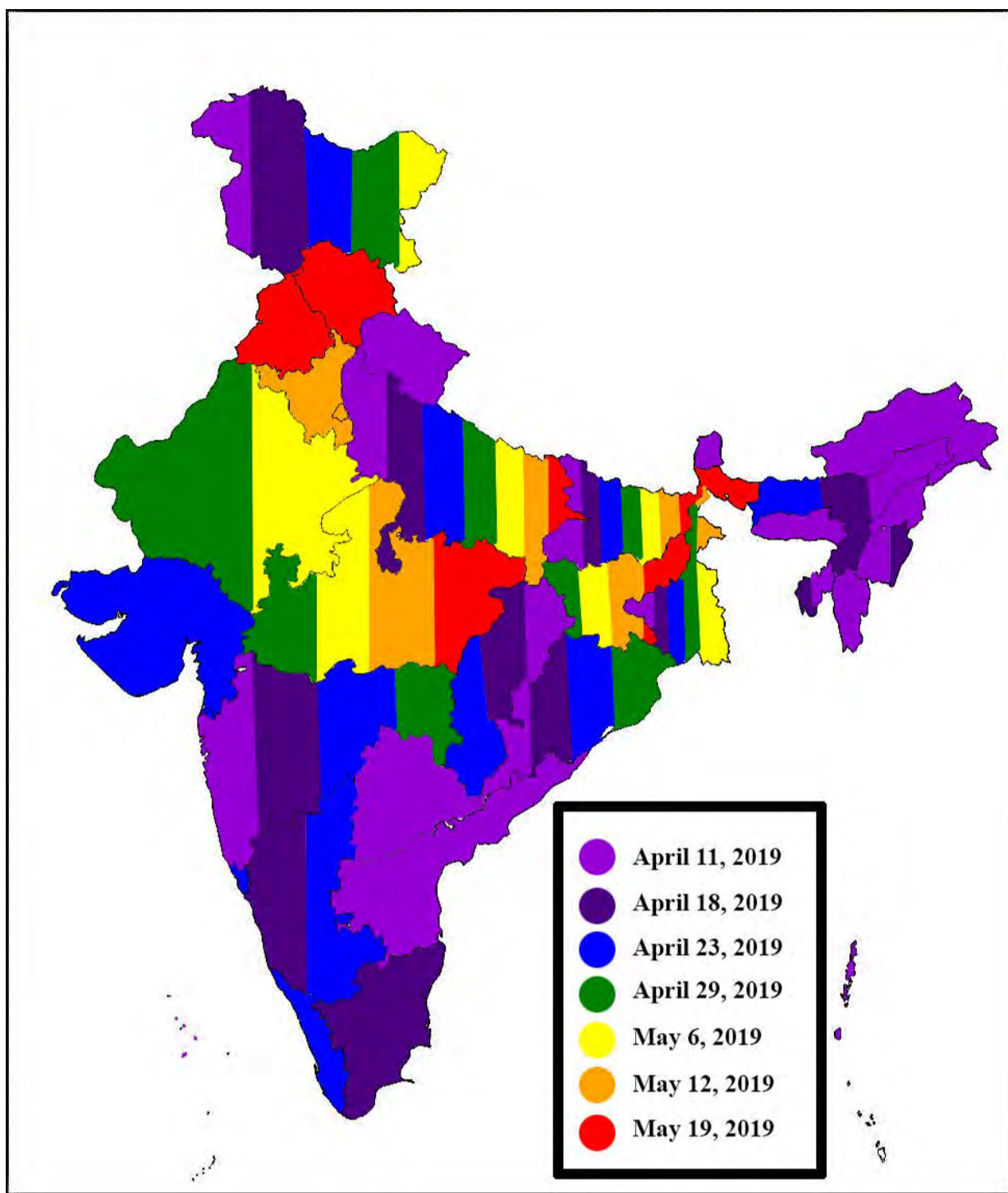
India Goes to Polls

**Amandeep
Supriti David**

7 phases

April 11, 2019 to May 19, 2019
543 constituencies

- 10 lakh polling stations

- 90 crore voters

- 1.5 crore between 18-19

- 8.4 crore new voters

- 38,325 transgender voters with gender mentioned as 'others'

- Braille voter slips for visually impaired

- Result - May 23

●	April 11, 2019
●	April 18, 2019
●	April 23, 2019
●	April 29, 2019
●	May 6, 2019
●	May 12, 2019
●	May 19, 2019

Will the Bicycle be able to Carry the Elephant?

At a joint press conference on January 12, Mayawati and Akhilesh Yadav announced an SP-BSP alliance to stop BJP

**Harsh Shukla
Tiyashi Datta**

"Miley Mulayam Kanshiram, hawa mein udd gaye Jai Shri Ram"

This slogan grabbed the limelight after the fruitful SP-BSP alliance in Uttar Pradesh during the Assembly Elections of 1993. Kanshi Ram, chief of Bahujan Samajwadi Party (BSP) and Mulayam Singh Yadav, the supremo of Samajwadi Party (SP) threw a political bombshell when they formed coalition to halt the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) juggernaut.

BJP was riding high in the already communally surcharged state of Uttar Pradesh, owing to the Babri Masjid demolition of 1992. Despite this, the coalition managed to keep BJP out of power, with BSP and SP getting 67 and 109 seats respectively. Due to a lack of majority, Mulayam formed government after a post-poll alliance with smaller stakeholders like CPI (M), Congress, CPI and others.

History took a turn on June 2, 1995. According to reports, some of the SP workers assaulted Mayawati in the Meerabai Guest House of Lucknow, forcing her to take the rivalry to a personal level. However, in 1995 with BJP's support, Mayawati became UP's first Dalit woman Chief Minister. A future alliance between the two parties was out of question.

When asked about an alliance again with Mulayam after BJP came to power in 2014, Mayawati said, "For me, self-respect comes before power," referring to the infamous Lucknow guest house incident.

Bismarck's famous saying "Politics is the art of the possible" became evident with SP-BSP allying for the 2019 General Elections, 24 years after the guest house incident. This time, both parties will fight on 38 seats each, leaving 2 seats for any future alliance they might form with smaller parties. The By-Election victory of 2018 in Gorakhpur (CM Yogi Adityanath's constituency) and Phulpur (Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya's constituency), both considered BJP's stronghold set the stage for the coalition.

BJP demolished both SP and BSP in the General Elections and Assembly Elections of 2014 and 2017, getting 73 and 325 seats respectively. But the question is - with SP and BSP coming together, can 1993 elections be repeated?

BJP's vote share in 2014 was 42.30% in UP while SP and BSP managed 22.2% and 20% respectively. Now that SP-BSP will fight the upcoming elections together, they might manage to get a vote share almost equal BJP's in 2014. However, politics is about chemistry, not arithmetic. "The announcement of the BSP-SP alliance was greeted with much enthusiasm by the opposition but the bua-bhatija still lacks the on-ground chemistry to match the arithmetic (for example, will Yadav voters readily switch to the BSP candidates?)," wrote journalist Rajdeep Sardesai in DailyO. Mulayam's backing for Narendra Modi to be the Prime Minister again in Parliament shows the rift
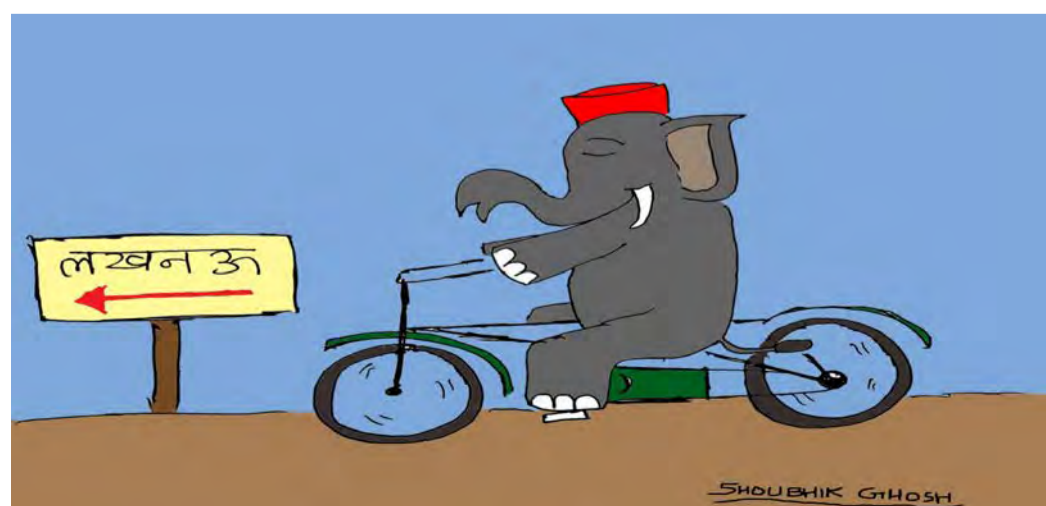
in SP. Will the loyal SP voters vote for BSP candidates in 38 seats and vice-versa?

In 2017, SP allied with Congress in Uttar Pradesh Assembly Election and failed miserably. While speaking to Gulf News, Akhilesh Yadav, chief of SP said, "It was too late for an alliance with the Congress party. The Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samajwadi Party has joined hands in UP and the Congress must respect this alliance because this alliance will stop the BJP."
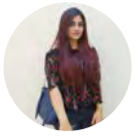
"Congress placing 80 candidates in Uttar Pradesh will actually eat up votes of the BJP, particularly in Upper caste sections and that would indirectly help the SP-BSP alliance. I would like to believe that the Congress being left out is rather strategic," added Yashwant Deshmukh, chief editor of C-Voter. In the political corridors of Delhi, there is a common saying that "the road to Delhi goes via Lucknow." The 80 seats of UP will play a key role in deciding who occupies the throne of Delhi as every one out of four seats in BJP's kitty of 282 came from UP in 2014.

The possibility of a majoritarian government in Delhi will be decided on how the SP-BSP alliance works in 2019. Will the victory of 1993 be repeated?

Modi or Gandhi: Who are First-Time Voters Turning to?

Rohini Banerjee

As the Lok Sabha elections inch closer, 30 million Indians turn 18 and become eligible to vote. In the 2014 elections, the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) had successfully captivated the county's young voters. Modi's mammoth presence and addressal of issues on social media platforms secured them a vote share of 34.4%, compared to an average of 31.1%.

This year the party's youth wing, Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), travelled across 80 Lok Sabha and 403 Rajya Sabha constituencies in the last month to influence first-time voters to vote for Modi, as a part pf their 'Pehla vote Modi ko' (first vote to Modi) campaign. The key question, however, that presents itself this election around is if Modi has been successful in keeping his young voters captivated enough.

Soham, 20, from Calcutta University, says, "BJP commercialised jingoism and fake promises. There's been too much of wrong doing by them," In a sample survey conducted through Facebook and Instagram Polls, 170 first-time voters shared their views about the election strategies of the incumbent government and Rahul Gandhi led Congress. When asked about who should form the government in 2019, 57% voted for BJP. Interestingly enough 63.5% of them, including those who voted for BJP, agreed that the BJP's focus was temple politics and polarising India, as opposed to farmer's distress, unemployment, education, and women's safety.

"BJP isn't good, but Congress isn't really good enough [as a replacement] either. They lack a leader," says Aditya, 19, from Presidency University, West Bengal. 80% believed that Rahul Gandhi is not an ideal replacement. "For the next election, BJP should resort to methods other than Hindutva and cow politics to garner votes. They even released confidential details of surgical strikes,", continues Ravi, 18, from La Martinere School for Boys, Kolkata. Why are first-time voters then still inclined to vote for Modi?

Bhanupriya Rao, an open data and RTI campaigner working in the area of transparency, accountability and governance, attempts to decode the trend. She says, "Congress has unfortunately not set an alternate agenda which spells out what they stand for and what they aim to do. Until now they have only reacted to Modi and NDA's failures, and sometimes rather belatedly,"

Despite Rahul Gandhi's attempt at a good election campaign, there are first-time voters who feel that he is not deemed a worthy alternative as yet. Additionally, their lack of a social media presence alienates the first-time voters even further, especially in the face of BJP's formidable presence. However, one will have to wait to see if this is enough to cost them the election.

Citizenship Amendment Bill: Modi's Northeast Gamble

Christie Syndor
Shaleen Jha
Pooja Verma

Celebrations broke out across the North-eastern states of India as the controversial Citizenship Amendment Bill lapsed amidst protests. The legislation, passed by the Lok Sabha during the winter session on January 8, was awaiting the Rajya Sabha's approval. It was listed for passing in the Upper House in the Budget session of Parliament, but it failed to come up there. The Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance appeared to have aborted it at the very last moment. Since Parliament has now been adjourned indefinitely, the bill has finally lapsed.

The Citizenship Amendment Bill 2019 intended to provide Indian citizenship to all immigrants barring Muslims from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Citizenship would be granted after seven years of residence despite not possessing any documents.

Once passed by the Lok Sabha the bill faced immense political backlash. It triggered widespread protests, violence and pitted communities against each other in most North Eastern states. Some of the most vociferous protests came from Assam and Manipur – both BJP-ruled states. Protests against the bill rocked the northeast for over six weeks, with several organisations and political parties claiming that the bill threatened the identity, language and culture of indigenous people.

Sadon K Blah, a Lecturer of Political

Science at Seng Khasi College, Shillong who is also the General Secretary of The Hynniewtrep Youth Front, an organization working to protect the interests of tribal communities says, "I fully agree that the Citizenship Amendment Bill is a threat to the indigenous people of the entire Northeast, because we are a minority and northeast is limited by different tribes. If the Citizenship Bill is passed, population from Bangladesh will find their way into India and since the state like Assam and Meghalaya is closer to them, it will post a threat to the entire Northeast. Passing the Citizenship Amendment Bill would be an addition to extra population, and we north eastern are trying to shield ourselves from the influx,"

"We have seen viral protests all over Northeast. The mood of people in North East is that, if in any form whatsoever the central government has any intention to pass this bill again then agitation will take up to a different level," he adds.

Trinamool Congress and other opposition parties accuse the BJP of using the bill as a pre-electoral sop. "Through the Bill's passage, the BJP and the RSS want to consolidate the Hindu population in Assam, as large majority of the 40-lakh people, who were left out of the complete draft of National Register of Citizens or NRC, are perceived to be Bengali Hindus," says Dr. Sajjan Kumar, a political analyst.

While fully backing the bill allows the BJP to appease its core Hindutva voters, letting the bill lapse in the upper house allows it to preserve its Northeast alliances. These decisions thus hint at a larger BJP strategy. Referring to themselves as victims of 'anti-Hindu' opposition parties who want to propagate a bill meant to strengthen Hindu solidarity, they act in line with the culturally singular ideology that the party is based on.

In Conversation with West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee's Supermo, Somendra Nath Mitra

Madhurima Dey

The Congress's swift decline in the recent years has allowed the BJP to occupy prominence in Bengal. Rallies by Narendra Modi and Amit Shah in the state lay bare their attempt to make up for losses in the 'Hindi heartland'. Amid differences with the Trinamool the probability of an alliance between the Congress and the Communist Party of India led united Left Front has grown substantially. The president of Bengal Pradesh Congress committee Somendra Nath Mitra, speaks to Madhurima Dey about this unusual alliance and the possibility of a Congress win in Bengal in the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

Could you explain the urgency of forming an alliance with the Left Front?
We wanted a strong alliance till 2021 Bengal assembly polls to get acceptability from the majority of Bengal. We chose the Left because we want the maximum share of anti-TMC and anti-BJP votes. If we are sidelined, we will definitely not favor the Left either and will fight this election of our own. We have the list of 42 candidates ready.

If your party is considering the Left for an alliance then why not Trinamool, as was the case in 2009?
To gain seats we would never compromise with our dignity. No one from the party wanted the alliance due to the adamant attitude of the TMC leaders.

With Mamata Banerjee's party going strong and the BJP gaining momentum as well, do you think Congress will be able to gain favorable seats in Bengal?
The existence of Congress is not new in Bengal unlike BJP. The Bengal Congress has given the nation many stalwart national leaders like Pranab Mukherjee, Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi, and Ghani Khan Choudhury. Tinamool is not indomitable or unbeatable, they were able to gain 19 seats in 2009 with the help of Congress. This year we have got abled candidates, and Congress is hopeful in making a major comeback in Bengal too like other parts of the country.

Do you think, Priyanka's coming into active politics can give your party the required boost?
Priyanka Gandhi is going to play a crucial role for the party along with Rahul Gandhi for this election. She is a great leader and we are happy that she finally entered into the active zone of politics. She is someone who can guide the entire party with values like Indira Ji [Gandhi].

What do you think are Congress' chances in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections?
I personally think this time we have a high chance to get good results all across. The performance of Congress in the Assembly elections proves that people want leaders who are capable of solving real issues like agrarian distress and employment.

Fake News Attack on Social Media

Pratiksha Thayil

On February 14th, a Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist rammed an explosive-laden SUV into a vehicle ferrying Indian security personnel. This killed 40 men in the Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir. Within hours social media platforms were augmented with disinformation. Since emotions ran high during this period, so did the number of fake news. Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp were the platforms where this dissemination struck hard. This unprecedented overflow took Trushar Barot, who heads Facebook India's efforts to counter fake news, by surprise. He tweeted "I've never seen anything like this before – the scale of fake content circulation on one story".

Here is the list of misleading, dangerous and falsely claiming content that was shared on social media:

2. Video of security mock drill at Mumbai shared as footage of a foiled terror attempt

The footage of a security mock drill that was conducted by local police, Riot Control Police and Quick Response Team on the same day, was shared as footage of a foiled terror attempt.

4. Video of Pakistani SSG commando shared as that of arrested terrorist

The video suggested the flogging of a terrorist post his arrest after the attack. The video was originally of the Survival Evasion Resistant and Escape training module undertaken by Pakistani Army.

1. Old video of car and truck bombing shared as CCTV footage of the attack.

A video extensively shared on the social media sites claimed to be CCTV footage of the attack. However, fact-checkers found that it was visuals from a truck bombing in Iraq and a car bombing in Syria.
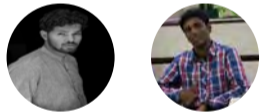

3. Photo of Dantewada Massacre being circulated as Pulwama attack

An old photo that displays the devastating aftermath of the Dantewada landmine explosion in 2010, which led to deaths of 76 CRPF jawans was circulated as a photo of Pulwama attack.

5. Old video of injured driver shared as Kashmiris being beaten post the attack

A video from April 2018 claimed that Kashmiris were being beaten up in Jammu post these attacks.
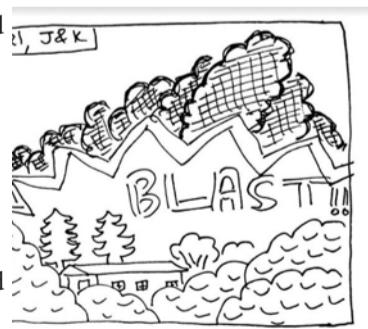

Indo-Pakistan Escalation: Uri to Pulwama

Sharon Singh
Shoubhik Ghosh

Uri attack - On September 18, 2016 four fedayeen stormed into the army base in Uri near the Line of Control. 18 soldiers were martyred and 23 wounded.
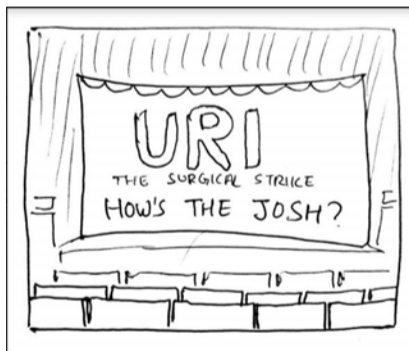
The attack was carried out by a terror group, Jaish-e-Mohammad . **The First Surgical Strike** – 10 days later, the Indian Army carried out a surgical strike inside Pakistan administered Kashmir. Conflicting reports of the number of casualties were declared by the Indian and Pakistani governments.
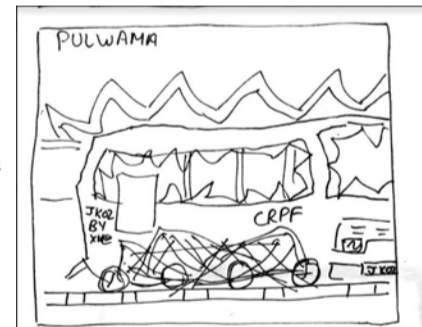
'Uri', the film - A film on this operation was made called 'Uri: The Surgical Strike'. Directed by Aitya Dhar who cast Vicky Kaushal as the lead, the film was a box office success. It boasted a record breaking collection of Rs 212.78 crore in just 31 days. A quote from the film, "How's the josh?" became so popular that it was used by PM Modi in a speech, as well as the Mumbai police to raise awareness about cybersecurity.

Baramulla declared militant free - Baramulla district of JK was declared militant free district on the 24th of January, 2019. This was the first time that the Indian army had declared a district as militant free in Kashmir. It was after killing three militants affiliated with Lashkar-e-Taiba that they stated this.

The Pulwama Attack - On February 14th a CRPF convoy carrying 2,547 jawans was attacked. A van carrying explosives rammed into one of the buses killing 42 jawans. Jaish-e-Mohammad claimed responsibility for the attack.

The Second Surgical Strike- On 25th February, two Mirage squadrons designated 12 jets for a mission that claimed to have bombed terrorist camps in Pakistan administered Kashmir. The Indian media sensationalized the story, quoting casualty figures that were not only refuted by Pakistan but also army officials.

Wing Commander Abhinandan's capture and release- The surgical strike let to a direct clash between Pakistani and Indian jets in which Pakistan shot down 2 MiG21 jets. One pilot, Abhinandan Varthaman was held by the Pakistani army and later released as a call for peace on 28 Feb 2019. Videos of the captured pilot flooded social media evoking questions of violation of the Geneva convention.

Lathi Charge: A Weapon Against Right to Protest

Akshaya
Supriti David
Sonal Gupta

A rally of over 11,000 hearing and speech impaired protestors was forcefully suspended by a police lathi charge on February 25, 2019. They had gathered outside the Commissionerate of Social Welfare along with representatives of State Level Association of the Deaf (SLAD) as their demands for quality higher education, employment opportunities and reservations in government jobs amongst many others had met with state inaction for over five years.

Pradeep More, General Secretary, SLAD, through interpreter Taslim Shaikh, stated that protests had become their last resort because the government had failed to create a disabled-friendly environment. Direct communication between both parties is prevented because the disabled are completely dependent on interpreters whom they can't afford and due to the lack of proper education and language barriers.

The police stated that they had used "mild force" to manage a law and order situation. Suhas Bawache, Deputy Commisisoner of Police (zone I), told Hindustan Times, "It is not a lathi charge incident. A scuffle broke out between the protestors and the police as the former wer we just started marching on the road which agitated the police," the interpreter added. More said that "As a means to regulate the crowd, the leaders chose to take a higher ground by climbing on bikes and walls, so that everyone could see their sign gestures. We were trying to calm the crowd, but it was impossible to ensure that our hands were visible to everyone." Without understanding sign language, the police insinuated that Pradeep was trying to instigate the crowd and took to lathi charge.

Over 15 people were injured during the lathi-charge and were taken to Sassoon Government Hospital. "They were just left there by the police without ensuring if they were receiving any treatment," said Aniket Selgaonkar, vice-president of SLAD. For four hours, the injured struggled to communicate with the doctors and treatment only began when interpreters arrived with Selgaonkar.

The incident was widely reported, however, SLAD is dissatisfied with the reportage. "The media attention is a show. It didn't amount to anything," said the interpreter. The misuse of lathi charge not only points to the police's insensitivity towards the differently abled but also silences their fundamental right to peaceful protests.

'Unschooling' – An Alternate Route to Education

Subhiksha Manoj

We have all debated the poor education system in our country. While most of us still struggle to identify the fault lines in our education system, more than 15,000 families in India already have.

'Unschooling' has seen an increasing trend in urban India, especially in Bangalore and Pune. It is an abandoning of the conventional approach to education that follows a 'self-directive learning' approach. It encourages children to delve into their interests at their pace. This concept is often misunderstood as home-schooling, which is a completely different approach. The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) provides choices in curriculum (CBSE, IGCSE, State board) and flexible examination dates, which a 'homeschooler' will have to adhere to. This is not the case for 'unschoolers'.

Balancing vocal practice sessions and basic English and mathematics classes, Stefany Vatz, 15, finds herself learning a lot more than she ever did in school. When asked about her views on unschooling she said, "I don't study, I learn and there is a huge difference there. I love music and learning everything about it excites me." She has finished her grade two examination with Trinity Music Academy and is prepping for the remaining 6 rounds of the test. She now sees herself becoming a famous name in the industry but was not so sure about it while in school. "I didn't have time to pursue music, I was stuck in a cycle of examinations, assignments, and tests. But music is what I love," she said.

Lydia, a French professor, mother of two, living in Bangalore, is one of many parents who have let their children explore alternate methods of learning. She explains, "Unschooling is all about completely letting loose,".

"In a school system, all students are expected to perform at an optimum level at all subjects whether they have an interest in it or not. Whereas in unschooling it is self-directed, where the children will choose, in different seasons of their life, what interests them the most," says Steeve Vatz, a music director and father of three living in Chennai. This is a revolutionary concept and new in India, therefore mass misconceptions are not a surprise. However, the perception that 'unschoolers' are loners is a myth. "It is not really about the children socialising, it is about them wanting to socialise," says Lydia pointing to a much larger issue of the culture of forcing socialisation amongst kids at a very young age.

Nine year old Neil lives in Bangalore and misses his school friends but does not want to go back to school. "When I say I miss school I mean my friends," he says. He spends his time skating, swimming, and cooking. Although he has not found his passion yet he is in no hurry. His younger brother Ryan too will be in no hurry to understand what the future holds for him. On the contrary, he will spend today learning something that is conducive to his interests.

Freagles of India- A Voice for Voiceless

Akanksha Saxena

Imagine being caged. Your freedom denied to you and the deafening cries of your misfortune heard only by you. Now replace yourself with a voiceless being, a dog for instance. Your agency of expressing pain the way humans do is non-existent. Your liberty is compromised in terrifying ways for the cruel benefit of others. While a majority of us remain selfish, there are some who go to great lengths to make sure that animals do not have to go through torture ever again. One of these endeavours is Chinthana Gopinath, founder trustee of "Freagles of India."

The organization was founded in 2013 based on Gopinath's observations of own beagle named Sasha. She one of 102 beagles held captive in an experimentation centre. Due to prolonged captivity, Sasha was unable to behave like a normal dog and adapt to the surroundings around her. She cowered at the sounds of people and refused to go out for walks. Her vocal cords were severed as well.

This gave rise to the "Speak for Sasha" campaign where awareness regarding animal cruelty and other issues were raised – from Sasha's point of view. It talked about how the docile nature and size made beagles more susceptible to testing in laboratories. In 2015, Committee for the Purpose of Control and Supervision of Experiments on Animals (CPCSEA) mandated that beagles should be released by pharmaceutical laboratories after the first round of clinical testing. This was a first not only for India but also for the world. 2016 thus witnessed 156 beagles being freed from a laboratory in Bangalore making it a great success story for the initiative.

Chinthana Gopinath has provided lab released beagles with a loving home, which is not an easy feat. A lot of special attention, care and patience goes into rehabilitating them. The initiative also provides rigorous counselling before the adopters can take a dog home.

Small Dreams, Big Impact

The journey of The Good Harvest School, India's first agricultural primary school for girls

Vasudha Kaukuntla

Can you imagine a school only for girls teaching agriculture, with no syllabus at all? Surely, it sounds like a dream to most of us. A couple, Ashita Nath and Anish Nath, dreamt something phenomenal for their village, Paschim Gaon in Unnao district, Uttar Pradesh. They started 'The Good Harvest School', India's first agricultural primary school for girls. Ashita Nath, revealed some interesting facts about their journey to Vasudha Kaukuntla.

What urged you to start this school?
The village Paschim Gaon is my husband's native. It was his idea to start a school and teach people about farming. Only one type of crop was cultivated here: wheat. We left our jobs in Delhi and came to the village to improve agriculture by educating the girls.

What drove you to choose only girls?
In Unnao district, education for girls is not a priority. They are stopped from denied it to get them married or get their brothers educated. In an attempt to balance out the drop-out rate, we chose to educate girls.

Why is there no syllabus? Is farming the sole focus?
It is easy without a syllabus since it frees children from the pressure of confining themselves to curriculum. It gives us a chance to pay attention to each child. Alongside farming, we teach them basic English, Hindi, Mathematics and Computer Science. We have guest teachers for Natural Farming and international teachers for Geography. We practice 'Permaculture' i.e., care for nature and return everything surplus back to the nature.

What has been school's impact?
From 2016 to today, there has been an encouraging amount of change. The girls have grown more confident and parents are now convinced. Earlier, we would visit homes to get the girls to school. Now we see them looking forward to school.

Do you have any plans to expand the school?
We cover 7 villages, Paschim Gaon, Jabrella, Soho, Diwan Kheda, Kunwar Kheda, Imliya Kheda and Lalu Mar in Unnao district. We are willing to provide human resource assistance if any school plans to come up. We help girls move on after class 5 by identifying their passions and helping them get admitted to high schools. Our focus, however, remains on Unnao district.

Not Your Ordinary Bus: Pune's Mobile Toilets

**Amrutha Khandekar
Aachal Maniyar
Rose Stephanie Justin**

Alone pink bus stands in a shady corner of a footpath at Revenue Colony, Shivaji Nagar.

Until about three years ago, it belonged to Pune Mahanagar Parivahan Mahamandal Ltd and was awaiting its turn to be scrapped off. Today, however, it opens its doors only to the womenfolk of Pune and addresses their concerns.

'Ti' is a women-centric initiative engineered by SaraPlast Pvt Ltd.

With cleanliness being its unique selling point, the added luxuries pamper the consumer's level of comfort in just Rs. 5 per visit. Sanitary napkins are sold for Rs. 40 per packet and Rs. 10 per piece. Young mothers enjoy an additional perk with assigned spaces for changing diapers. Customers are entitled to use free WIFI and TV as well.
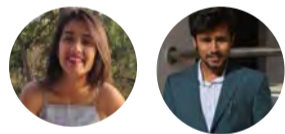
Tanzila Khan, Caretaker of the toilet in Shivajinagar said, "On an average, around five people visit the restrooms per day." Avisitor said," I am happy with the facilities, they have done a good job, this is my first time here, I liked it. We saw it on our way. The display makes it very clear that it's for women."

Sunita Valmiki has been working at the Sambhaji park toilet for two years. She adds, "There are only washrooms here, one western style restroom and three Indian styled ones. We also sell juice, water and organic tea bags. The timings are 8 AM to 8 PM on all days and this outlet has about forty to fifty users on weekdays and over a hundred visiting it during the weekends. The park attracts a lot of crowd and thus the extensive use is explained. However huge the number may be, the cleanliness it promises is never compromised."
These bus-turned-toilets started three years ago. They are completely functional in Sambhaji park, Phule nagar, Vishwantwadi, Baner and Bopodi. Eknath, the operations manager at Sarasbaug Pvt Ltd, said, "One could find these toilets in 11 locations across the city like Sambhaji Udyan, Shaniwar wada, Aundh, Balewadi, Lohgaon functional from 8 AM -12 PM and again from 4 PM to 10 PM. It's clean and posh therefore most of the big shots visit it at times."

"Menstrual Hygiene Still a Myth"

**Monika Asthana
Pranav Jalan**

India has witnessed multiple campaigns over the years targeted at educating women about menstrual hygiene and sanitation. Among them is a recent attempt by AARAMBH, an NGO based out of Madhya Pradesh. They conducted a sample survey to analyze and evaluate menstrual hygiene awareness and practices among the urban poor. Six slums constituted their sample which included New Shiv Nagar, Chaandmari, 100 Quarter, 60 quarter, 40 Quarter and Durgeshnagar.

They found that some women preferred to use cloth instead of pads stating reasons that ranged from comfort to adhering to traditional values. Data also revealed that most of the Aanganvadi, or child care centers, and ASHAs did not have adequate access to sanitary napkins. The price of the napkins too were inconsistent with government mandated rates.

Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), women trained to work as an interface between the community and the public health system, play a crucial role in educating women regarding menstrual health. They spread awareness by conducting community seminars, visiting government schools and going door to door to talk to girls and

women about the necessity of menstrual hygiene as well as aids given by the government.

Archana Sahay, Director of AARAMBH said, "The main hurdle is the irregular and inadequate supply of sanitary napkins from the government. Also, ASHAs involved in distribution of sanitary napkin ar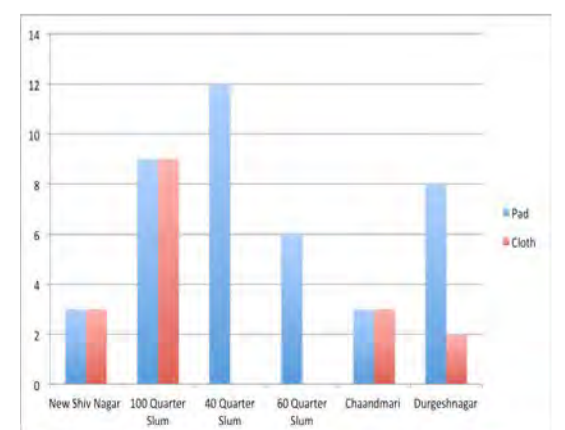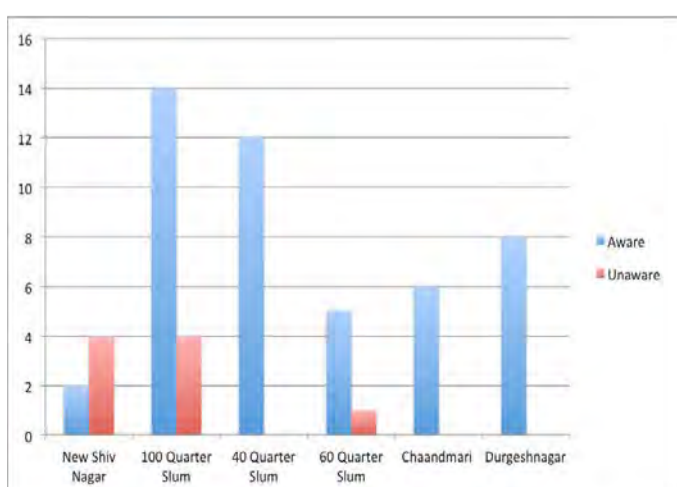e not satisfied with the incentives given to them,". She continued, "No pads were available in Aanganvadi from 4-5 months in New Shiv Nagar.

Because of non-availability of pads, girls and women either use cloth or buy sanitary pads from ration or medical stores. Another reason of preferring medical shops over Aanganvadis is the huge quality gap between the pads made available by both." she added.

Disposal of used cloth or sanitary napkin was another pressing issue. Pooja, a 16-year-old resident of 60 Quarters Slum said, "My mother and I both use cloth. After using it, I wash it and keep it for drying in a shady area where my father and brother can't see it. I feel ashamed once my brother accidentally saw it." These taboos and beliefs have crippled most Indian women with reproductive infections and other health issues.

Despite the involvement of the government the taboo associated with menstruation like staying away from temples as well as kitchens, and not touching male members of the family persist in society. In order to ensure menstrual hygiene, efforts need to be increased both at public and personal level.

Looking into the Spiderverse: Departures from Conventions

Sucharita Ganguly
Shrimayee Thakur

In a category of films that aspires to get closer to reality with evolving technology, in 2019, the Oscar for best film award went to one that broke conventions and webbed in a new style. Spiderman: Into the Spiderverse, through its animation technique inspired by hand-drawn comics, brings in the authentic comic-book feeling.

A style never seen before in an animation film grabs our eye the most and puts the film in a category of its own. Having up to a team of 177 animators at a given point, the film took four years to make. For each of the seven 'Spiderpeople,' there was a different style of animation executed. The characters of Peni Parker and Peter Porker have exaggerated and cartoon anime movements respectively. Although

recreating Spiderman Noir on-screen was an extra challenge owing to the exclusivity of his black-and-white presence, the biggest challenge for animators was a scene with all seven 'Spiderpeople' in frame. Not just stylistically, also in terms of texture they were all very different. Bringing that scene together took them two months.

Head animator of the project, Josh Beveridge said that the challenge was to not emulate reality while also not making it a cartoon. Peter Ramsey, co-director of the film said, "We couldn't rest on the conventions of animated films as we've known them."
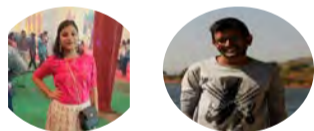
The film resembles a moving comic book – with the inclusion of words over images, using comic onomatopoeia or words expressing sound or motion, accompanying the action. Panel made of webbing like a comic book page, shades and contrast through dots and lines, smear instead of motion blur. They also took liberties with the frame rate – while most animated films are produced at 24fps (frames per second) and animated 'on ones' (where each frame shows one action ensuring smooth motion), Spiderverse sometimes creatively executes 'on twos', keeping an image on screen for two seconds, making for more pronounced actions, therefore visually portraying the character's struggle.

Not only is its stylized representation on-screen being lauded, it also stands out in its narrative choices where the protagonist is Miles Morales, not Peter Parker. Relatively a new addition to the dearth of existing Spiderverse characters – created in 2011, the character addresses racial diversity like never before. Breaking the white-male dominancy, the lanky, black teenager asserts his identity through his black-and-red suit– yet another departure from the traditional red and blue.

"We have seen every superhero narrative possible by now. What worked for this film was its stylistic brilliance, how they keep it going in the future will be something to look out for," says Susruta Mukherjee, an animator from Kolkata. The superhero film market, some believe, is saturated but a film like Spiderman: Into the Spiderverse seems like a breath of fresh air. Repeated tropes however (as in the case of Deadpool sequel) fail in this fast evolving market. In direct competition with giants like Disney and Marvel, Sony's future choices will influence greatly the upcoming animation projects.

'Period. End of Sentence': A Worthy Win

Swastika Mukhopadhyay
Saptak Datta

"I'm not crying because I'm on my period or anything," said director Rayka Zehtabchi, overcome with emotion. "I can't believe a film about menstruation just won an Oscar!" Shy, uncomfortable and embarrassed are a few emotions we often associate with the word 'period'. Just imagine the reaction when a documentary on menstruation won an Oscar.

Netflix documentary Period. End of sentence won the Oscar for best documentary(short) on Sunday 24th February 2019. This 26 minute documentary highlights the stigma on menstruation in rural India and documents a project to create low-cost sanitary napkins. The film is directed by Rayka Zehtabchi along with Indian producer Gumeet Monga's Sikhya Entertainment. It is set in the Hapur district near New Delhi, India.

Menstruation is an unspeakable concept which persists not just in India but worldwide. Due to cultural myths and taboos women are considered impure during periods and are denied participation in social, cultural and religious affairs. They are stripped off their basic freedom.

The documentary accurately portrays the attitude towards menstrual health in rural areas, where many consider it an 'illness' or 'bad blood'. Director Rayka Zehtabchi perfectly captures the emotions and expressions of the women by asking them about periods publicly, thus justifying the hegemonic disgrace of the word. While some giggled others froze in embarrassment, including men.

Due to unavailability, or rather unawareness about hygiene, the women in these areas use cloth instead of sanitary napkins. This breeds various diseases. Young girls endure challenges during their periods which in turn affects their education. According to figures*, 23% girls stated menstruation as a reason for dropping out whereas 28% do not attend school during their periods owing inadequate facilities.

The limited access to sanitary hygiene forced the villagers in Hapur district to take matters into their own hands. They built a machine to manufacture and sell pads. The enterprise uplifted the women's position in the community. They became confident and financially independent.

The documentary illustrates the effort of the villagers in Hapur negotiating with menstruation literacy. The Oscar win has brought up the subject of menstruation globally thus breaking barriers. It is also being seen as a stepping stone to abolish patriarchal views and stigmas around menstruation. During the award acceptance speech, Zehtabchi and Berton stressed on the importance of discussing menstruation openly and that it should not restrict a girl's education.
"A period should end a sentence, not a girl's education," concluded Berton. reproductive health and rights.

Indian Cricketing Festival Set to Begin

Get ready, India

Kartik Mehendru

Yes, its time. It's that time of the year when there will be no such thing called as the Men in Blue. The loud echoing slogans of 'India Jeetega' will take a back seat. India, starting March 23, won't bleed blue. It is the game of Cricket that unites 1.2 billion Indians, and it will again be Cricket that will divide them.

March 23, 2019 marks the beginning of the 12th season of the biggest and the most glamorous league in the Cricketing world, the Indian Premier League (IPL). Started in 2008, the league has only grown bigger and better with each passing year.

Season	Winners	Runners-up
2008	Rajasthan Royals	Chennai Super Kings
2009	Deccan Chargers	Royal Challengers Bangalore
2010	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
2011	Chennai Super Kings	Royal Challengers Bangalore
2012	Kolkata Knight Riders	Chennai Super Kings
2013	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
2014	Kolkata Knight Riders	Kings XI Punjab
2015	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
2016	Sunrisers Hyderabad	Royal Challengers Bangalore
2017	Mumbai Indians	Rising Pune Supergiants
2018	Chennai Super Kings	Sunrisers Hyderabad

The Spin duo of Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal, all-rounders Hardik Pandya and Krunal Pandya and wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant, all of whom help shape the current Indian team, are all finds of the IPL. Over the years, it has been a platform for the youngsters to make the world sit and notice their capabilities. This year, the likes of Shivam Dube (RCB), Shivam Mavi (KKR), Prabh Simran (KXIP) will be among the youngsters looking to leave a mark.

This year's IPL precedes the World cup set to be played in England by just a few weeks. Many doubts loom around the participation of India's core group. IPL takes a lot out of the players both physically and mentally. You wouldn't really want a player like Jasprit Bumrah, Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma or MS Dhoni get injured playing a domestic league prior to the game's most important tournament.

Defending Champions Chennai Super Kings, led by MS Dhoni will take on RCB led by Virat Kohli in the opening match of the tournament. Will RCB 'play bold' or will '#WhistlePodu' trend again.

Marcus Rashford: The Millennial Star of European Football

The 21-year-old broke records of Manchester United's legends Cristiano Ronaldo and Wayne Rooney, scoring 41 goals in his first 150 appearances across competitions
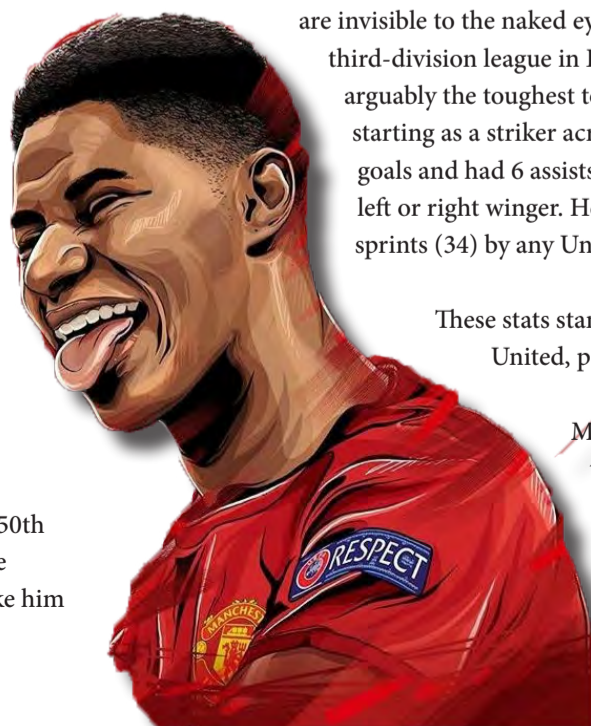
Siddarth S

Manchester United has been in troubled waters since the departure of Sir Alex Ferguson in 2013, who carried the managerial responsibilities for 26 years. Since then, four managers have been replaced over six years. With changing managers comes changing football philosophies and players find it difficult to accommodate. As trophies eluded the club, so did the form of players. Despite all challenges, one man has been exceptional.

Born in Manchester, Rashford has excelled under all three managers, Louis Van Gaal, Mourinho and current caretaker manger Ole Solskjaer, since his debut in 2016. He grabbed the football world's attention on debut, scoring two goals in United's 5-1 win over Midtjylland in the UEFA Europa League.

Fast forward three seasons, Rashford is in the form of his life. Selflessness, killer-pace, calmness and composure has made him the ideal number 10. His work rate has been incredible and maturity levels on the pitch are uncanny. Even Messi had only 26 goals in 60 games for Barcelona at Rashford's current age. After the 1-0 win over Tottenham in January 2019, Rashford had scored 24 goals in 97 Premier League appearances (PL), five more than Ronaldo.

In case of assists, he equals Ronaldo (14) and betters Rooney (10). "The 150th game is a feat in itself, being 21, but with the level of his performance, the maturity in his finishing and his work rate, it's a dream to have players like him in the team," said Ole Solskjaer.

Around 230 academy players have playedfor United. Yet, no one has achieved such milestones at such young age and in short time. Dynamics of his play are incredible, delicate first touch, receiving complicated air-balls, creating space in open-play, eagle- eyed vision and pace. A player of such characteristics is a nightmare for any defender.

He prefers substance over style. His way of play may seem easy, but the complications are invisible to the naked eye. Rashford has not accomplished these feats in a third-division league in England but he has done it in the Premier League, arguably the toughest top-flight competition in Europe. On 22 occasions starting as a striker across all competitions this season, Rashford scored 9 goals and had 6 assists. Additionally, he has 2 goals and 3 assists playing as left or right winger. He topped the charts for making maximum number of sprints (34) by any United player for a PL game this season.

These stats stand testimony to a coveted number 10 position in United, previously held by legends like Rooney.

Manchester United has been in prime form under caretaker manager Solskjaer. Rashford will feed on the philosophy of any new manager arriving at United and continue producing exemplary performances. Undoubtedly, if his form continues, he has the potential to equal the heights of Messi or Ronaldo in goals. Age is on his side and that makes him a lethal force to reckon with in European football. If he continues moving in the right direction, he is a future legend for United.