

Aussie pacers rip through New Zealand

Cummins leads the charge with a five-for; hosts bat again to extend lead beyond 450

NZ IN AUSTRALIA
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE
New Zealand was facing a massive run chase to save the second Test and the series after it was dismissed for 148 in Melbourne on Saturday, with Australia batting again to rub salt in the wounds and extend its lead.
At the close on day three, the home team was 137 for four, building on its first innings 467 to be 456 runs in front.
First innings century-maker Travis Head was not out 12 and Matthew Wade was on 15, with skipper Tim Paine so far resisting the temptation to declare.
New Zealand began the day already in trouble on 44 for two. It didn't survive long with a world-class pace barrage from Pat Cummins, James Pattinson and Mitchell Starc destroying the middle

order. Paine could have enforced the follow-on, but opted to bat again and Australia raced to 62 without loss before Neil Wagner tempted David Warner into a drive on 38 and he was caught by Blundell.
Form-player Marnus Labuschagne was run out for 19 and spinner Mitchell Santner snared opener Joe Burns for 35, caught behind off a bottom edge.
When Steve Smith departed for seven, Wagner's 200th Test wicket, the Black Caps were on a roll. But Head and Wade steered them to the close, leaving New Zealand with a monumental task.
Boult ruled out
New Zealand pace spearhead Trent Boult fractured his non-bowling hand on Saturday and will miss the third Test against Australia in a big blow for the Black Caps.



Breathing fire: Pat Cummins was virtually unplayable on the day, as Henry Nicholls discovered. ■AP

SCOREBOARD

Australia – 1st innings: 467.
New Zealand – 1st innings: T. Latham c Paine b Cummins 50, T. Blundell c Paine b Cummins 15, K. Williamson c Paine b Pattinson 9, R. Taylor c Burns b Cummins 4, H. Nicholls lbw b Cummins 0, B-J. Watling c Burns b Pattinson 7, C. de Grandhomme c Warner b Starc 11, M. Santner c Paine b Pattinson 3, T. Southee c Paine b Cummins 10, N. Wagner (not out) 18, T. Boult b Starc 8; Extras (lb-4, b-4, w-2, nb-3) 13; Total (in 54.5 overs): 148.
Fall of wickets: 1-23, 2-39, 3-46, 4-46, 5-58, 6-97, 7-112, 8-116, 9-124.
Australia bowling: Starc 12.5-4-

30-2, Cummins 17-5-28-5, Pattinson 15-2-34-3, Lyon 9-1-35-0, Wade 1-0-13-0.
Australia – 2nd innings: D. Warner c Blundell b Wagner 38, J. Burns c Watling b Santner 35, M. Labuschagne run out 19, S. Smith c Southee b Wagner 7, M. Wade (batting) 15, T. Head (batting) 12; Extras (lb-4, b-4, w-2, nb-1) 11; Total (for four wkts. in 45 overs): 137.
Fall of wickets: 1-62, 2-100, 3-110, 4-110.
New Zealand bowling: Boult 9-0-30-0, Southee 10-3-24-0, de Grandhomme 5-0-14-0, Wagner 13-1-39-2, Santner 8-0-22-1.

India U-19 clinches series

IANS
JOHANNESBURG
India U-19 on Saturday beat South Africa U-19 by eight wickets to take a 2-0 lead in the three-match series here on Saturday.
SA put in to bat was bundled out for 119 in under 30 overs.
Yashasvi Jaiswal took four wickets in 3.5 overs while Akash Singh, Atharva Ankoekar and Ravi Bishnoi got two wickets each.
Jaiswal then went on to star with the bat as well, scoring 89 off 56 balls after India lost two early wickets.
The scores: South Africa U-19 119 in 29.5 overs (J. Bird 25, Yashasvi Jaiswal 4/13) lost to India U-19 120/2 in 16.2 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 89 n.o., Dhruv Jorel 26 n.o.).

Knighthoods for Lloyd and Greenidge

England's World Cup winners receive honours

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON
Ben Stokes and several of his England Cricket World Cup-winning teammates were recognised in Britain's New Year Honours list announced on Friday, as two West Indies greats, Clive Lloyd and Gordon Greenidge, received knighthoods.
All-rounder Stokes was made an OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire).
Meanwhile, Eoin Morgan, who captained England to World Cup glory, was named a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire), one rank below a knighthood.
Wicketkeeper Jos Buttler and Test skipper Joe Root were both awarded MBEs (Members of the Order of



Clive Lloyd. ■FILE PHOTO



Greenidge. ■FILE PHOTO

the British Empire), the level beneath an OBE.
Australian Trevor Bayliss, England's World Cup-winning coach, received an OBE.
Lloyd, the forerunner of today's modern power batsmen and brilliant fielders, hit a superb century as the West Indies beat Australia in

It's Dhoni's decision: Ganguly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI
BCCI president Sourav Ganguly on Saturday said Mahendra Singh Dhoni has "surely" communicated his future plans to India captain Virat Kohli and selectors. Dhoni has been on a sabbatical from international cricket since India's semifinal exit in the ODI World Cup, leading to speculations about his future.
"He's had communication with the captain, I am sure he has had communication with the selectors, and I don't think this is the platform to discuss about it," Ganguly said during the latest episode of 'Inspiration' on India Today.
Ganguly said "it is his (Dhoni) decision what he wants to do. I haven't spoken to him, but he's a champion, he's been an absolute champion in Indian cricket."
Ganguly further said, "You won't get another MS Dhoni very, very soon, but what he does – whether he wants to play, whether he doesn't want to play, is up to him."

Mary Kom sets the record straight

Outclasses Nikhat 9-1 in an ill-tempered trials face-off

BOXING
UTHRA GANESAN
NEW DELHI
It was a bout that had the entire boxing community in India hooked, but the final result was on predictable lines.
Mary Kom proved herself the best in the country in the 51kg with an impressive 9-1 win against Nikhat Zareen in an ill-tempered bout at the trials for the Olympic Qualifiers here on Saturday.
Simmering issue
The differences between the two had been simmering for over four months, ever since the Boxing Federation of India decided to not hold trials for the World Championships in October and Nikhat cried foul, writing to the sports minister and demanding a face-off.
Saturday, therefore, was about both wanting to prove a point.
The bout itself, though, had little in terms of excitement. While the first round was about opponent assessment, the second and third saw a lot of clinching with few clean ones landing from either boxer.
There were words exchanged during the bout and even afterwards. Nikhat claimed Mary refused to even shake hands and used foul words as well.
"The result is a different issue, it definitely was not 9-1. Anyone can see that the first two rounds were clearly mine while the third was equal, I managed a lot more clean punches. But I am hurt that someone who is so senior and is my idol behaved in this manner," the 24-year-old said.
Supporters of both boxers were vocal with A.P. Reddy, claiming to be from the Telangana Boxing Association, getting aggressive in his protests at the decision and declaring they would approach AIBA.
He and his supporters were asked to leave ringside,

with BFI president Ajay Singh stepping in to control the situation.
Mary Kom retorted that she would respect those who respect her. "I don't like controversies. Why should I shake hands or hug? First you say so much outside the ring, talk too much before the bout. I will respect you if you respect me," she said.
Action elsewhere
With the Mary-Nikhat bout taking precedence, the other four bouts on the day were overshadowed, but there was no lack of action.
Simranjit Kaur overwhelmed 37-year-old veteran Sarita Devi 8-2 in the 60kg. Youth World champion Sakshi Chaudhary got the better of Sonia Lather 9-1.
The results: 51kg: Mary Kom bt Nikhat Zareen 9-1; 57kg: Sakshi Chaudhary bt Sonia Lather 9-1; 60kg: Simranjit Kaur bt defeated Sarita Devi 8-2; 69kg: Lovlina Borgohain bt Lalita 10-0; 75kg: Pooja Rani bt Nupur 10-0.



The best: Mary Kom is declared the winner after the bout against Nikhat Zareen. ■R.V. MOORTHY

Blasters, NEUFC share points

Controversial penalty to the aid of North Eastern side

ISL
STAN RAYAN
KOCCHI
Was that a penalty?
That was the talking point for a major part of the second half as NorthEast United, down by a goal towards the end of the opening half, came back to hold Kerala Blasters to a 1-1 draw after a controversial penalty in the Hero Indian Super League at the Nehru Stadium here on Saturday night.
That piece of action came five minutes into the second half when referee Rahul Kumar Gupta punished Seityasen Singh for what he thought was a handball. But it appeared to be the midfielder's head that was in contact as he attempted to deflect a Rakesh Pradhan cross to his goalkeeper and not his hand. And NorthEast striker Asamoah Gyan, who had missed a couple of good chances earlier, converted the penalty with a shot to the right which goalkeeper Rehenesh could do nothing about.
Blasters take lead
Blasters' goal, which gave it the lead, also came through a penalty seven minutes earlier. Captain and forward Ogbeche moved into the box after receiving the ball from



First strike: Kerala Blasters' Ogbeche, left, celebrates after scoring against NorthEast United FC. ■H. VIBHU

Mario Arques and goalkeeper Subhashish Roy rushed to thwart the Blasters striker. But in the process, his follow-through appeared to bring Ogbeche down and seconds later, the Frenchman placed the ball neatly to the right corner to give the home side the lead. Subhashish, however, appeared to be very upset with the referee's decision. With the crowd thinning at the Nehru Stadium here – today's count at 12,168 was probably the team's lowest this season – Blasters needed a win desperately to move up from its ninth spot in the league.
And the home side started well. In the eighth minute, K. Prasanth's attempt from just outside the box was pushed out of danger by NorthEast

Solid Burns raises England's hopes

The visitors need 255 more runs to go ahead in the series

ENGLAND IN SA
REUTERS
CENTURION
A battling 77 not out from Rory Burns on Saturday gave England a fighting chance of improbable success as it needs 255 more runs for victory in the first Test against South Africa at SuperSport Park.
Set an imposing 376 runs to win the first of the four-match series, England reached 121 for one wicket at stumps on the third day after a positive start to an enormous task.



Key player: It would serve England's cause well if Rory Burns can bat in the same vein as he did on Saturday. ■GETTY IMAGES

Good start
Burns and Dom Sibley put on 92 for the opening wicket before Sibley (29) chipped the ball back to spinner Keshav Maharaj for a caught and bowled.
Burns, who survived a review in the first over, played an attacking innings with Joe Denly (10 not out) in a supporting role.
South Africa, which will have to take nine wickets to end a run of five successive Test defeats, was bowled out for 272 in its second innings, just before tea after frustrating England in the field.
With 15 wickets falling on a lively pitch on Friday, England would have been ex-

pecting to wrap up South Africa a lot earlier after it resumed at 72 for four overnight. But the home side extended its overnight lead of 175 runs by 200 as debutant Rassie van der Dussen scored 51, Vernon Philander 46 and nightwatchman Anrich Nortje 40.
Five-for
Jofra Archer did bag a five-wicket haul but it cost him 102 runs, including a bashing from Quinton de Kock who smacked him for three sixes in a cameo of 34 runs.

SCOREBOARD

South Africa – 1st innings: 284.
England – 1st innings: 181.
South Africa – 2nd innings: A. Markram lbw b Anderson 2, D. Elgar c Buttler b Archer 22, Z. Hamza c Buttler b Broad 4, F. du Plessis c Curran b Archer 20, H. van der Dussen lbw b Archer 51, A. Nortje c sub b Archer 40, Q. de Kock c Bairstow b Stokes 34, D. Pretorius c Sibley b Stokes 7, V. Philander c Bairstow b Curran 46, K. Maharaj c Curran b Archer 11, K. Rabada (not out) 16; Extras (b-5, lb-3, nb-2, w-9): 19; Total (in 61.4 overs): 272.
Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-25, 3-29, 4-62, 5-153, 6-170, 7-177, 8-220, 9-250.
England bowling: Anderson 13-1-47-1, Broad 11-2-42-1, Archer 17-1-102-5, Curran 12.4-3-51-1, Stokes 8-1-22-2.
England – 2nd innings: R. Burns (batting) 77, D. Sibley c & b Maharaj 29, J. Denly (batting) 10; Extras (b-4, lb-1): 5; Total (for one wkt. in 41 overs): 121.
Fall of wicket: 1-92.
South Africa bowling: Rabada 9-0-48-0, Philander 10-2-20-0, Nortje 6-1-20-0, Pretorius 6-1-12-0, Maharaj 10-3-16-1.

Wolves dent Man City's title chances

Guardiola's men surrender two-goal lead

PREMIER LEAGUE
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WOLVERHAMPTON
Manchester City's faint hopes of retaining the Premier League title was left in tatters as it blew a two-goal lead and had Ederson sent off in a dramatic 3-2 defeat at Wolves on Friday.
Pep Guardiola's side recovered from Ederson's 12th-minute dismissal to take control thanks to Raheem Sterling's double either side of half-time.
But City's fatigued stars were unable to go the distance as Adama Traore's goal started a thrilling Wolves fightback.
Raul Jimenez equalised with eight minutes to go and Matt Doherty hit the winner to send Molineux wild in the



Hail the hero! Mates converge on Matt Doherty, second from right, after he scored Wolves' match-winner. ■AFP

89th minute. Third placed City trails runaway leader Liverpool by 14 points.
The results: Wolves 3 (Traore 55, Jimenez 82, Doherty 89) bt Manchester City 2 (Sterling 25, 50); Brighton 2 (Jahanbakhsh 3, Mooy 79) bt Burnemouth 0; Newcastle 1 (Schaer 56) lost to Everton 2 (Calvert-Lewin 13, 64); Southampton 1 (Ings 74) drew with Crystal Palace 1 (Tomkins 50); Watford 3 (Deeney 42, 67-pen, Sarr 71) bt Aston Villa 0.

Arrows stun Churchill

I-LEAGUE
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MARGAO
In the first big upset of this I-League season, Indian Arrows rallied to beat the in-form Churchill Brothers FC 2-1 in its own backyard here on Saturday.
Reaping the benefits of the tactical brilliance of head coach Shanmugam Venkatesh, the substitutes of the Arrows proved to be the game-changers.
This was the first win for Indian Arrows, the developmental side of the All India Football Federation, in four matches and the first defeat for Churchill Brothers in three games.
The result: Churchill Brothers 1 (Abu Bakr 42) lost to Indian Arrows 2 (Givson Singh 78, 90).

TV PICKS

Australia vs New Zealand: 2nd Test, Sony Six (SD & HD), 5 a.m.
NBA: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 5.30 a.m.
South Africa vs England: 1st Test, Sony Six (SD & HD), 1.30 p.m.
Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m. & 10 p.m. & 12 a.m. (Monday)
ISL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Dragic helps Heat pip Pacers

LOS ANGELES
Miami's Goran Dragic drained the game-winning basket with 6.8 seconds remaining as the Heat edged Indiana Pacers 113-112 in a wild NBA finish on Friday. Heat took their league-best home record to 14-1, but the injury-hit Pacers made them work every step of the way.
The results: Cleveland Cavaliers 129 bt Cleveland Cavaliers 117; Oklahoma City Thunder 104 bt Charlotte Hornets 102 (OT); Orlando Magic 98 bt Philadelphia 76ers 97; Milwaukee Bucks 112 bt Atlanta Hawks 86; Miami Heat 113 bt Indiana Pacers 112; Golden State Warriors 105 bt Phoenix Suns 96.
AGENCIES



Giving it his all: Mohammad Siraj makes a vain attempt dives to catch Jonty Sidhu. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Delhi completes the formalities

Hyderabad, however, manages to deny the hosts a bonus point

RANJI TROPHY

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Hyderabad denied Delhi a bonus point but could not prevent the host from registering a seven-wicket triumph in the Ranji Trophy match at the Ferrozshah Kotla ground here on Saturday.

Resuming at 24 for no loss in its pursuit of 84, Delhi

reached the target following a cautious approach after a delayed start of two hours owing to poor visibility.

First win

Delhi's first win in three matches raised its tally to seven points. For Hyderabad, the defeat was the third in as many outings. Mohammad Siraj had Kunal Chandel caught behind to dash Delhi's hopes of a bonus point.

Thereafter Delhi lost skipper Shikhar Dhawan and Nitish Rana, both to Ravi Kiran.

Dhruv Shorey and Jonty Sidhu took Delhi past the finish-line without further damage. In the fourth round, beginning on January 3, Delhi plays Punjab at Mohali and Hyderabad hosts Kerala.

The scores:

Delhi — 1st innings: 284.

Hyderabad — 1st innings: 69.

Hyderabad — 2nd innings: 298.

Delhi — 2nd innings: Kunal Chandel c Sumanth b Siraj 6, Shikhar Dhawan c Sumanth b Kiran 21, Dhruv Shorey (not out) 32, Nitish Rana c Thyagarajan b Kiran 6, Jonty Sidhu (not out) 7; Extras (b-4, lb-7, w-1): 12. Total (for 3 wks. in 27.5 overs): 84.

Fall of wickets: 1-24, 2-46, 3-52.

Hyderabad bowling: Mohammad Siraj 13-3-33-1, Ravi Kiran 11-4-29-2, C.V. Milind 3.5-11-0.

RANJI SCORES: ROUND 3, DAY 4

GROUP A
Kolkata: Bengal 289 & 46/0 in 21 overs drew with Andhra 181 in 69.2 overs (C.R. Gnaneshwar 74 n.o., Ishan Porel 4/50). **Points: Bengal 3, Andhra 1.**
New Delhi: Delhi 284 & 84/3 in 27.5 overs bt Hyderabad 69 & 298. **Delhi 6, Hyderabad 0.**
Nagpur: Vidarbha 338 drew with Punjab 408/5 in 97.5 overs (Sanvir Singh 82, Shubman Gill 100, Gurkeerat Mann 149, Mandeep Singh 59). **Punjab 3, Vidarbha 1.**

GROUP B
Mysore: Karnataka 166 & 296 in 108.3 overs (Devdutt Padikkal 99, Karun Nair 64, B.R. Sharath 42, Rishi Dhawan 5/83) drew with Himachal 280 & 34/2 in 16 overs. **Himachal 3, Karnataka 1.**
Indore: Tamil Nadu 149 & 377/7 in 131.4 overs (N. Jagadeesan 54, M. Kaushik Gandhi 154, K. Mukunth 52 n.o.) drew with Madhya Pradesh 333. **MP 3, TN 1.**
Rajkot: Saurashtra 331 & 120 in 42.1 overs (Harvik Desai 50, Saurabh Kumar 6/55) lost to Uttar Pradesh 523. **UP 7, Saurashtra 0.**

GROUP C
Jammu: Jammu & Kashmir 460/5 decl. drew with Assam 82/2 in 29 overs. **J&K 1, Assam 1.**
Jamshedpur: Haryana 371 drew with Jharkhand 408/5 in 119.1 overs (Kumar Deobrat 161, Utkarsh Singh 48, Saurabh Tiwary 152 n.o.). **Jharkhand 3, Haryana 1.**
Pune: Maharashtra 289 & 149/3 decl. in 69 overs (Ruturaj Gaikwad 76, Satyajeeet Bachhav 52 n.o.) drew with Chhattisgarh 286. **Maharashtra 3, Chhattisgarh 1.**

garh 1.
Cuttack: Uttarakhand 117 & 195 in 52.1 overs (Dikshanshu Negi 40, Dhanraj Sharma 50, Suryakant Pradhan 5/63) lost to Odisha 253 & 63/0 in 21.4 overs. **Odisha 7, Uttarakhand 0.**

PLATE
Dibrugarh: Manipur 196 & 215 bt Arunachal Pradesh 143 & 184 in 65.4 overs (Rahul Datal 84, Rex Singh 6/58).

Manipur 6, Arunachal Pradesh 0.
Patna: Bihar 326 & 162/1 in 49 overs (Indrajit Kumar 71 n.o., Kumar Midul 56 n.o.) drew with Goa 470 in 129.4 overs (Aditya Kaushik 73, Amulya Pandrekar 42, Amit Verma 89, Suyash Prabhudessai 135, Darshan Misal 55, Ashutosh Aman 6/99). **Goa 3, Bihar 1.**
Kolkata: Mizoram 73 & 113 in 33.4 overs (Pratik Desai 45) lost to Pondicherry 458/5 decl. **Pondicherry 7, Mizoram 0.**
Bhubaneswar: Sikkim 274 & 133 in 35.5 overs (Bibek Dyalali 42, Nagaho Chishi 4/20, Imliwati Lemtur 4/37) lost to Nagaland 296 in 61.4 overs (Stuart Binny 135, Nagaho Chishi 40, Ishwar Chaudhary 5/133) & 113/1 in 12.2 overs (Yogesh Takawale 43 n.o., Shrikant Mundhe 45). **Nagaland 6, Sikkim 0.**

Mangaldoi (Assam): Day 3: Meghalaya 148 in 48.2 overs (Puneet Bisht 84, Shreshth Nir-mohi 5/30) & 118 in 29.4 overs (Puneet Bisht 54, Gurinder Singh 4/44). **Chandigarh 7, Meghalaya 0.**



Efforts on to make the 'biggest youth event' memorable one: Sonowal

KHELO INDIA

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
GUWAHATI

The Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal stated the government was making the best possible efforts to make the "biggest youth event", the third Khelo India Youth Games, a memorable experience for all participants.

Interacting with the media at his residence here on Saturday, former Union Sports Minister Sonowal said the State government's focus was on making Guwahati the country's Sports Capital.

He cited the successful conduct of the National Games, South Asian Games, Under-17 football World Cup and World youth women's boxing championship to emphasise his point.

The Games, being held on a budget of ₹104 crore, with ₹34 crore coming from the Centre, would be held from January 10 to 22 and shown live for about 11 hours every day by Star Sports.

Big opportunity

"It is a big opportunity for us to host the Khelo India Youth



Getting ready: The Sarusajai Sports Complex, the main venue for the Khelo India Youth Games in Guwahati. ■ KAMESH SRINIVASAN

Games," the CM said, underlining the fact that a major part of the budget would be used to provide quality accommodation for the athletes.

The State Sports Policy formulated by his government offered ₹1 crore to Olympic gold medalists apart from suitable jobs. Around 500 play grounds were being modernised in

Assam, and sports was being encouraged in every panchayat, he said.

Talent hunt launched

A talent hunt was being launched to identify 1,000 youngsters and provide them ₹50,000 for their sporting needs.

"We can strengthen society through sports. Sports has to become a way of life," said

Sonowal. Efforts were on to establish a Sports University, construction was underway for archery and football academies and a Sports school, he said.

The Chief Minister announced ₹1 lakh for gold medal winners from Assam in the Khelo India Youth Games, with ₹75,000 and ₹50,000 for silver and bronze medalists.

Will respect those who respect me: Mary Kom

UTHRA GANESAN
NEW DELHI

The war of words between Nikhat Zareen and M.C. Mary Kom has been brewing for some time now – the latter a legend, owner of an Olympic medal and multiple World titles, and the former considered her successor.

Mary has all along refused to even acknowledge Nikhat. But, on Saturday, after a 9-1 win in the trials for the Olympic Qualifiers here, she finally spoke, expressing her angst and explaining, for the first time, the entire controversy around the trials.

Not the first

"How many times am I going to prove myself? This is not the first time, I have beaten her many times. I don't like to speak outside, you just have to prove yourself in the ring," she said.

Foreign coaches Santiago Nieva and Raffaele Bergamasco had at first announced that international gold winners would not have to attend trials, Mary said.

This was later changed to exemption for gold and silver medalists, before BFI

president Ajay Singh further altered it to all medalists, she said.

"The BFI makes rules and I only follow them. Then it became an issue. Now trials have been held, it's over," she said.

Nikhat had claimed she was hurt by Mary's language during the bout and her refusal to shake hands afterwards, but Mary defended herself.

"Why should I shake hands? First you say so much outside, create this entire issue with the media and talk too much before the bout. Then you expect me to shake hands and smile? I don't like this nature, I ignore it.

"I will respect you if you respect me. Keep whatever you feel inside and challenge in the ring, prove yourself and then speak," she said.

Asked about future plans, Mary said it would depend on how she felt beyond Tokyo. "I am only focusing on upcoming big competitions. If you go by age, then Tokyo should be my last Olympics. But I will stay connected to boxing in some way," she signed off.

Agni for feature event

HYDERABAD: Agni runs with a good chance in the first division of the Mayor's Cup (1,200m), the main event of the races to be held here on Sunday (Dec. 29).

1 MUSICAL MORN PLATE (1,200m), 2-y-o only (Cat. II), (Terms), 1-15 p.m.: 1. Conscious Gift (6) I. Chisty 55.5, 2. Waitoma (5) A.A. Vikrant 54.3, 3. Amyra (7) Ajit Singh 51.5, 4. Attica (1) Akshay Kumar 51.5, 5. Mark My Day (3) Nakhat Singh 51.5, 6. Spicy Star (2) Irvan Singh 51.5 and 7. Artemis Arrow (4) Rafique Sk. 50.1. **CONSCIOUS GIFT, 2. MARK MY DAY, 3. WAITOMA**

2 NEXT MOVE PLATE (1,600m), 3-y-o & over, rated 20 to 25 (Cat. III), 1-45: 1. Dillon (1) Rohit Kumar 60, 2. Silver Dollar (3) Surya Prakash 59, 3. Rasika (2) Mukesh Kumar 57.5, 4. Ultimate Risk (5) Ajit Singh 57, 5. All Star General (6) Akshay Kumar 54 and 6. Golden Faraska (4) N. Rawal 53.5. **1. DILLON, 2. ALL STAR GENERAL**

3 MAYOR'S CUP (DIV. II) (1,200m), 3-y-o & over, rated 60 to 85 (Cat. II), 2-15: 1. Tootsie Roll (3) I. Chisty 60, 2. Super Dart (7) Gopal Singh 58.5, 3. Mon General (1) Ashhad Asbar 57, 4. Honest Hunter (2) B.R. Kumar 56, 5. Warrior Supreme (6) A.A. Vikrant 55.5, 6. Guiding Force (5) N. Rawal 55, 7. Miss Lily (4) Surya Prakash 55 and 8. Top Link (8) Santosh Raj 55. **1. TOP LINK, 2. MON GENERAL, 3. MISS LILY**

4 HUSSAIN SAGAR CUP (1,600m), 5-y-o & over, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 2-45: 1. Somerset (3) Ajit Kumar 60, 2. Hope Is Eternal (9) Aneel 59.5, 3. Desert

Moon (5) Deepak Singh 59, 4. Lancashire (10) Irvan Singh 59, 5. Joy Of Giving (6) G. Naresh 57.5, 6. Valee Tiger (8) Akshay Kumar 56.5, 7. Limousine (2) B.R. Kumar 53.5, 8. Rutilant (1) Kuldeep Singh 53.5, 9. Vijay's Empress (4) Surya Prakash 51 and 10. Wood Bridge (7) Nakhat Singh 51. **1. VALEE TIGER, 2. LANCASHIRE, 3. RUTILANT**

5 MAYOR'S CUP (DIV. I) (1,200m), 3-y-o & over, rated 60 to 85 (Cat. II), 3-15: 1. That's My Class (4) Nakhat Singh 60, 2. Magical Skill (2) Jitendra Singh 54.5, 3. Southern Legacy (1) Ashhad Asbar 53.5, 4. Mr. Baahubali (8) Ajeeth Kumar 52, 5. Agni (3) Akshay Kumar 50.5, 6. Asteria (7) Afroz Khan 50.5, 7. Her Legacy (6) I. Chisty 50.5 and 8. King Maker (5) Surya Prakash 50. **1. AGNI, 2. THAT'S MY CLASS, 3. MAGICAL SKILL**

6 SWEET GIRL PLATE (1,600m), 3-y-o & over, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II), 3-45: 1. Midnight Dream (2) I. Chisty 70, 2. Miss Marvellous (7) Kuldeep Singh 60, 3. Zamora (8) Ashhad Asbar 58.5, 4. City Of Blossom (4) Rohit Kumar 58, 5. Gustly Look (6) Akshay Kumar 58, 6. Sporting Smile (6) Jitendra Singh 57, 7. City Of Wisdom (1) Afroz Khan 54.5, 8. Mahira (3) Aneel 54 and 9. Platino Classz (5) Rafique Sk. 54. **1. GUSTLY LOOK, 2. MIDNIGHT DREAM, 3. CITY OF WISDOM**

Day's best: **GUSTLY LOOK**
Double: **CONSCIOUS GIFT** — AGNI
Jkt: 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6; Mini Jkt: 3, 4, 5 & 6; Tr (I): 1, 2 & 3; (II): 4, 5 & 6; Tla: all races.

Attorney General obliges in Stewards Cup

BENGALURU: Pradeep Annaiah trained Attorney General (Srinath up), won the Stewards Cup, the feature event of the races held here on Saturday (Dec 28). The winner is owned by Sohna Stud Farm Pvt Ltd rep. by Mr. Gautam Thapar & Sultan Singh & Mr. Rajan Aggarwal.

1 BUGS BUNNY PLATE (1,200m), maiden 2-y-o only, (Terms): **FOREST FLAME** (David Egan) 1, Golden Oaks (Nathan Evans) 2, Drusilla (I. Chisty) 3 and Stone House (Vaibhav) 4. 5-1/2, 4-1/4 and 3-1/4. Im, 13.59s. ₹13 (w), 10, 14 and 12 (p), SHP: 32, THP: 31, FP: 36, Q: 30, Trinella: 76 and 40, Exacta: 744 and 627. Favourite: Forest Flame. Owners: Poonawalla Racing & Breeding Pvt Ltd rep. by Mrs. Behroze Z. Poonawalla, Mrs. Simone Poonawalla Pandole & Mrs. Deina Z. Poonawalla, Mr. Mukul A. Sonawala, M/s. DT Racing & Breeding LLP rep. by Mr. D.R. Thacker and Mr. Chanduranga Kanthraj Urs. Trainer: S. Attaollahi.

2 AMATHOS PLATE (DIV. II), (1,100m), rated 15 to 35: **RADIANT BEAUTY** (Chetan K) 1, Orogenesis (Chetan K) 2, Smile Around (M. Naveen) 3 and Anakin (Bhanu Singh) 4. Not run: Zafina, 3/4, 3 and 2. Im, 09.11s. ₹126 (w), 23, 12 and 39 (p), SHP: 30, THP: 120, FP: 376, Q: 216, Trinella: 3,727 and 2,995, Exacta: 89,836 (carried over). Favourite: Orogenesis. Owners: M/s. Blazing Saddles (PF) rep. by Mr. Niraj Tyagi & Mr. Vikas Sachdeva. Trainer: S. Narreddu.

3 AGUMBE PLATE (1,200m), 3 rated 0 to 20: **SHOW GIRL** (Vaibhav) 1, Kanthaka (Sai Kiran) 2, Turf Prospector (Darshan) 3



Rewarding success: Ramesh Rangarajan, left, presents the S. Rangarajan Memorial Trophy to Arvind Ganapathy, trainer of Mighty Red owned by M.A.M. Ramaswamy Chettiar of Chettinad Charitable Trust represented by A.C. Muthiah, in the presence of BTC chairman Vinod Shivappa, second from right, and senior steward Hari Mohan Naidu. ■ G.P. SAMPATH KUMAR

and Daring Sweetheart (Chetan K) 4. Nk, 1/2 and 3/4. Im, 15.61s. ₹91 (w), 25, 23 and 19 (p), SHP: 74, THP: 49, FP: 1,176, Q: 473, Trinella: 2,252 and 1,485, Exacta: 15,650 and 5,030. Favourite: Daring Sweetheart. Owners: Mrs. Mahima Shailesh, Dr. Dayananda Pai P. Mr. Daulat Chhabria and Mrs. Vedrahes Madhusudan. Trainer: Irfan Ghatala.

4 KUNIGAL STUD PLATE (1,400m), rated 45 to 65, 4-y-o & over: **BERNARDINI** (C. Umesh) 1, Colonel Hartly (R. Anand) 2, Excellent Sorrento (Chetan K) 3 and Sahara (A. Imran) 4. 8-1/2, 1 and 1. Im, 25.59s. ₹25 (w), 12, 25 and 52

(p), SHP: 68, THP: 104, FP: 360, Q: 278, Trinella: 5,652 and 2,422, Exacta: 47,391 and 5,803. Favourite: Bernardini. Owner: Mr. Arun Alagappan. Trainer: Irfan Ghatala.

5 S. RANGARAJAN MEMORIAL TROPHY (2,000m), rated 30 to 50: **MIGHTY RED** (Donoghue) 1, Crack Of Dawn (Nathan Evans) 2, Dreams United (Rayan) 3 and Ozark (David Egan) 4. 1-3/4, 10 and 1. 2m, 06.89s. ₹21 (w), 13 and 12 (p), SHP: 27, THP: 37, FP: 42, Q: 22, Trinella: 285 and 124, Exacta: 229 and 46. Favourite: Mighty Red. Owner: Mr. M.A.M. Ramaswamy Chettiar of Chetti-

nad Charitable Trust rep. by Mr. A.C. Muthiah. Trainer: G. Aravind.

6 STEWARDS CUP (1,200m), rated 60 & above: **ATTORNEY GENERAL** (Srinath) 1, Cerise Noir (Indrajit Singh) 2, Side Winder (Arvind Kumar) 3 and Depth Charge (Sai Kiran) 4. 1-1/4, 2 and 3/4. Im, 13.48s. ₹17 (w), 11, 14 and 19 (p), SHP: 31, THP: 42, FP: 47, Q: 37, Trinella: 15 and 59, Exacta: 566 and 277. Favourite: Attorney General. Owners: Sohna Stud Farm Pvt Ltd rep. by Mr. Gautam Thapar & Sultan Singh & Mr. Rajan Aggarwal. Trainer: Pradeep Annaiah.

7 NATIVE CHIEFTAN PLATE (1,400m), rated 15 to 35, 4-y-o & over: **WHIZZO** (C. Umesh) 1, Hidden Soldier (R. Anand) 2, Dreams United (Rayan) 3 and Zhu Zest (J.H. Arul) 4. 9, Shd and Nose. Im, 27.18s. ₹26 (w), 13, 46 and 18 (p), SHP: 192, THP: 39, FP: 922, Q: 781, Trinella: 4,101 and 1,070, Exacta: 13,515 and 3,686. Favourite: Whizzo. Owners: Mr. Clinton Miller, Mr. Sujay Chandras and Mr. Dean Stephens. Trainer: Azhar Ali.

8 AMATHOS PLATE (DIV. I), (1,100m), rated 15 to 35: **SANDARINA** (J.H. Arul) 1, Dragon Mountain (M. Naveen) 2, Dallas (Arvind Kumar) 3 and Sadaqat (Arvind Shinde) 4. 1-3/4, 2-1/4 and 4. Im, 08.22s. ₹52 (w), 18, 12 and 19 (p), SHP: 47, THP: 148, FP: 129, Q: 52, Trinella: 328 and 183, Exacta: 2,291 and 1,651. Favourite: Dragon Mountain. Owner: Mr. T.S. Suresh. Trainer: S. Attaollahi. Jackpot: ₹874 (623 tkts.); Runner-up: 88 (2,665 tkts.); Treble (I): 524 (38 tkts.); (II): 205 (247 tkts.).

Vinay Kumar's distinction

ASHWIN ACHAL
BENGALURU

With a three for 24 haul in Mizoram's second innings, R. Vinay Kumar has become the highest wicket-taker among fast bowlers in Ranji Trophy history.

Vinay now has 412 wickets, going past Pankaj Singh (409 wickets). Vinay has 474 wickets in 133 First Class matches, at an average of just over 23.

Most wickets in Ranji Trophy (top 10): 1. Rajinder Goel (637), 2. S. Venkatraghavan (530), 3. Sunil Joshi (479), 4. Narendra Hirwani (441), 5. B.S. Chandrasekhar (437), 6. V.V. Kumar (418), 7. Vinay Kumar (412), 8. Pankaj Singh (409), 9. Sairaj Bahutule (405), 10. Bishen Singh Bedi (403).

Lifter Seema banned for four years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

India's Commonwealth Championship silver medalist weightlifter Seema has been slapped with a four-year suspension for a doping violation.

In a statement, the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) said Seema's dope sample was collected this year during the 34th women's National weightlifting championship in Vishakhapatnam.

DDCA ombudsman's plea for Sunday's AGM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi and District Cricket Association (DDCA) ombudsman has ordered the Annual General Meeting to be held on Sunday to stick to legal norms.

Acknowledging complaints received from many members of the association, Justice (Retd.) Badar Durrez Ahmed said, "Several applications have been received from members of the DDCA as well as some from the Apex Council of DDCA expressing concern with res-

pect to the conduct of the AGM to be held on 29-12-2019."

The Ombudsman, in his order, added, "It is expected that the AGM shall be held in a free and fair manner and in strict compliance of the law, including the Companies Act as well as the Articles of Association of DDCA."

Justice Ahmed concluded, "In order to obviate any complaint from any quartet, it would be appropriate if the proceedings are video recorded."

AICF confirms poll date

SPORTS BUREAU
BHOVAL

In the battle for one-upmanship against All India Chess Federation president Venketrana Raja, secretary Bharat Singh Chauhan evidently rode on "majority support" in the crucial General Body meeting here, with the house endorsing every decision to his liking.

The meeting chaired by Raja, confirmed the election on February 9 in Ahmedabad. On December 14, Raja announced the election on February 10 in Chennai.

For the first time after the feud broke out between Raja and Chauhan, the supporters of both sides came face to face in a meeting, attended by Government Observer Satyajit Sankrit.

It may be recalled that Raja's supporters attended the GB meeting in Chennai on December 14 and those backing Chauhan reached the Central Council Meeting at Gurugram on December 22.

According to Sports Ministry's December 16 directive, the GB meeting called by Chauhan on December 22 stood postponed to this day. As a result, the agendas of the GB meetings called by

Raja and Chauhan were combined.

On the matter of "forgery" in the Utilization Certificate submitted to the Ministry with regard to the 2018 National sub-junior chess championship in Kolkata, complainant Grandmaster Dibyendu Barua and defendant IM Atanu Lahiri presented their case.

It was decided AICF will file a FIR against Lahiri. Ironically, in October, a three-member AICF enquiry committee gave Lahiri a clean chit.

According to AICF joint secretary Naresh Sharma, "The house accepted Chauhan's detailed response to the show-cause notice issued by Raja and treated the matter as closed. It rejected the four-member committee formed on December 14 to assist the President till elections. The proposal on Chess in Schools was passed."

The minutes of the GB meeting held on December 14, the Central Council Meeting in December 22 and the one held here on Saturday, will be presented to Madras High Court when the matter comes up for hearing on January 3.

Punjab, Railways triumph

SPORTS BUREAU
LUDHIANA

Punjab men and Railways women emerged champions in the 70th senior National basketball championship here on Saturday. Punjab overcame Tamil Nadu 93-75 while Railways tamed Kerala 68-55 in the well-contested finals.

Uttarakhand men and Madhya Pradesh women

took the third place

Magazine



SPOTLIGHT
In this age of the Anthropocene, artists engage with the environment using satire, science and nostalgia **p5**



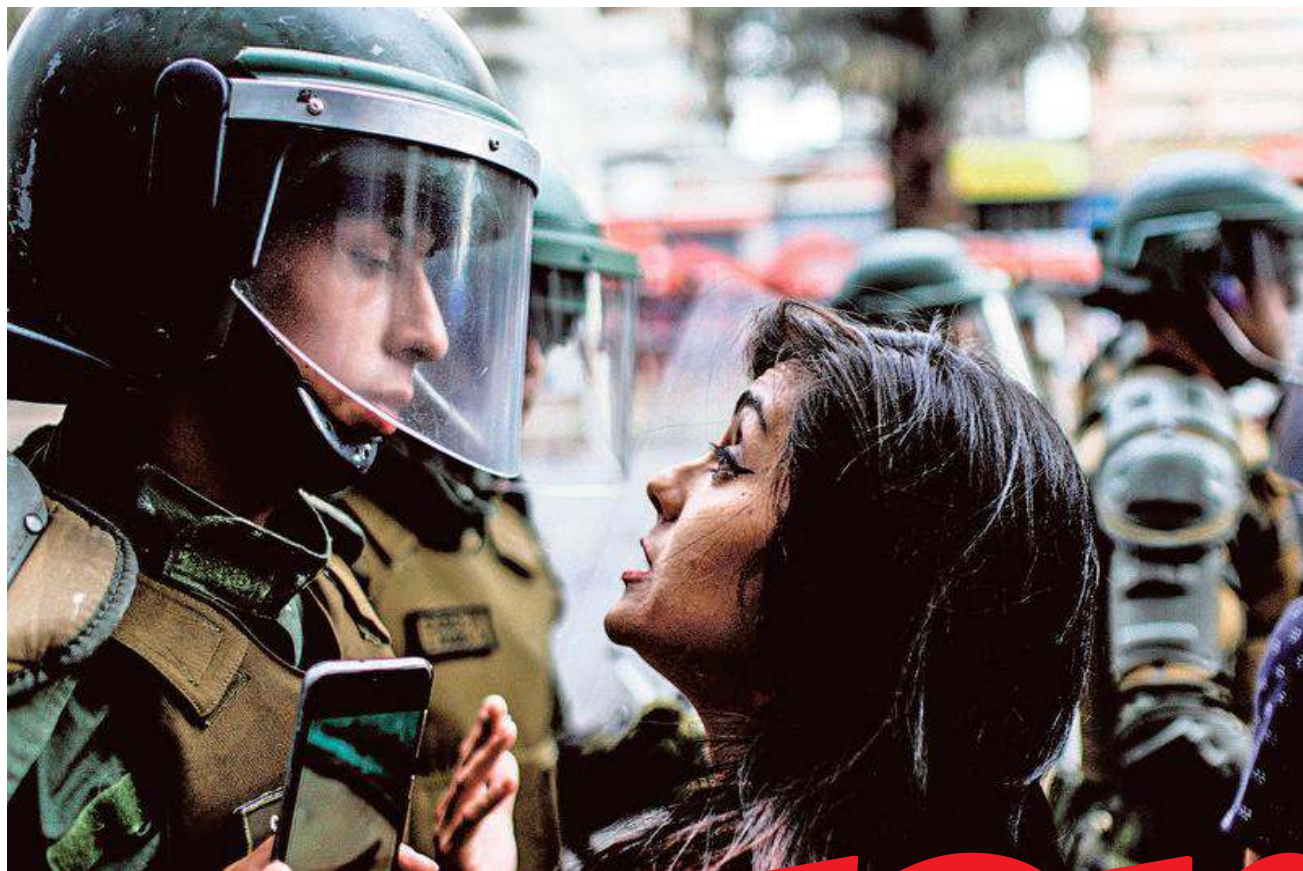
SOCIAL MEDIA
What made the last decade nothing like India has known before? Well, it is WhatsApp, writes Anita Nair **p6**



GOD'S COUNTRY
The decade of the unholy 'godmen' — and the sordid stories that tumbled out of their closets **p12**



LITERARY REVIEW
The literature of the decade is all about change — from the rise of the Right to bringing minority voices to the fore **p8-9**



United we stand Scenes from protests held across the world in the past decade. • REUTERS, NYT, THULASI KAKKAT, AP, SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA, VIJAY BATE, NISSAR AHMAD, AFP & KIRAN BAKALE



SPECIAL ISSUE

The decade of

As we enter a new year and a new decade, images of incredible courage and resolution are imprinted on our minds. Going to press, the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the proposed National Register of Indian Citizens still rage across the country. Two actions, designed wholly to divide the country along religious lines, have resulted in uniting people in one strong voice that says loud and clear that it won't allow India's secular fabric to be rent.

This is the voice of protest. The voice of resistance. The voice that says, enough is enough. And over the last 10 years we saw this voice raised aloud in country after country, for cause after cause.

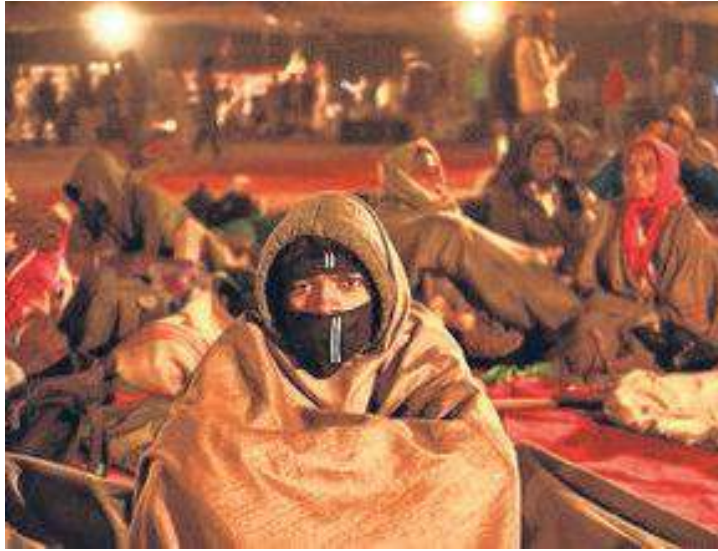
From the 'Occupy Wall Street' protesters to the millions worldwide who marched against climate change to the unprecedented citizen protests in Hong Kong, it was the 'push-back' decade. Millions took to the streets against Chile's President Piñera and millions marched to protest China's treatment of Uighur Muslims. Dalits and farmers marched, women marched, Muslims marched, gay people and students marched.

And so, a decade marked by the rise of the Right was also a decade when people fought back. And they managed to make tiny dents everywhere. Some laws were changed, some repealed, some guilty punished, some systems established.

Each protest echoed over and over again that there will always be singing, even in the dark times. Each protest sowed hope. And in the years to come, we will wait to reap it.

Protest





In a crisis A farmer gears up for the night at Ramlila Maidan during the Kisan Mukti March in November 2018. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

When the farmers marched

In November last year, around 35,000 farmers from 24 States marched to New Delhi to demand legislation for a guaranteed minimum support price (MSP) and freedom from debts. The rally saw land-owning and landless farmers come together in a rare show of unity that received widespread attention and also support from the Opposition parties. In March that year, some 40,000 Adivasi farmers in Maharashtra walked from Nashik to Mumbai, a distance of 180 km, to demand implementation of a loan waiver scheme, land titles, and implementation of the Swaminathan Commission recommendations, among others. India's agrarian sector has been in a state of flux for a few decades now and the situation has been worsening each year due to a host of reasons, including unpredictable weather, high production costs and inadequate compensation. The crisis has resulted in several farmer suicides over the years, and the two major rallies, and a handful of smaller ones across the country, were desperate attempts to push the government to take welfare measures. Despite promises, however, the farm sector is yet to see radical changes.



New dawn Protesters celebrate inside Tahrir Square after Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's resignation on February 11, 2011. • REUTERS

When the Arab Spring heralded a heady summer

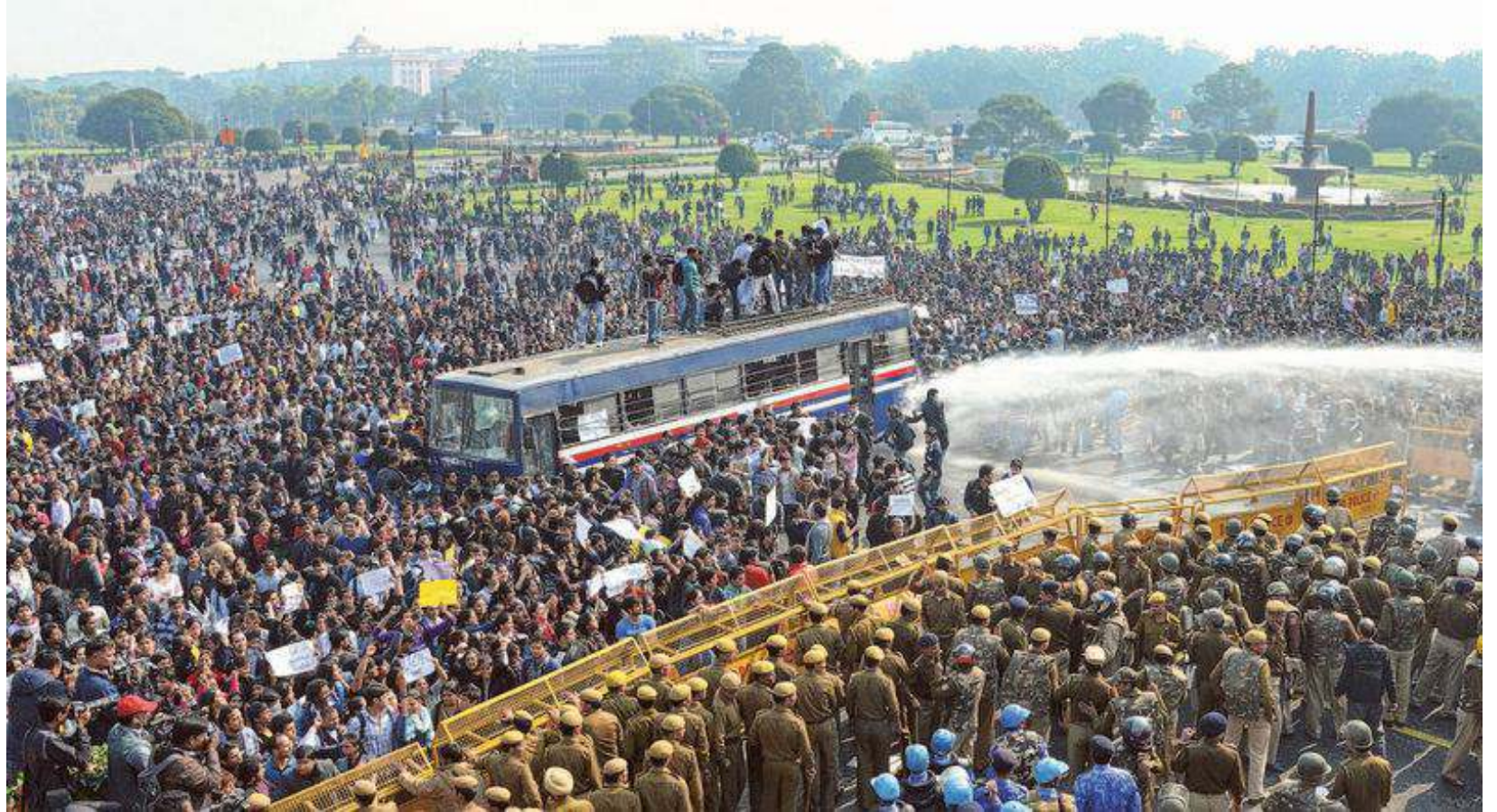
What started as protests in Tunisia against poverty and an oppressive regime soon spread like bushfire across West Asia to envelop Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain. Suddenly, there were street demonstrations, riots and popular uprisings. Authorities attributed the rapid spread of the protests to social media and shut down connectivity in many places. Across the Arab world, the slogan *ash-sha'b yurid isqat an-niz* (the people want to bring down the regime) became a catch phrase. In some countries, regimes were toppled; in others, authorities shut down protests with violent reprisals. Large-scale reforms, however, did not ensue as expected. As the decade ends, unrest and rallies continue in Algeria, Sudan, Iraq, Lebanon and Egypt. The Arab Spring still blooms.

• GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK



Right to privacy made a fundamental right

A historic judgment by the Supreme Court on August 24, 2017 made the right to privacy a fundamental right for 1.3 billion Indians. In a landmark case that was debating a 2015 decision on whether the controversial Aadhaar scheme was constitutional, the nine-member bench held unanimously that "the right to privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of the right to life and personal liberty". Overturning a long-held belief that privacy was the privilege of the rich, but not the concern of the poor, the judgment held that "every individual irrespective of social class or economic status is entitled to the intimacy and autonomy which privacy protects." The fallout of this milestone ruling will be seen in years to come. For example, the judges ruled for data protection. The ruling will impact how the state looks at unlawful surveillance, illegal data harvesting and more.



For justice Police use water cannons to disperse the huge crowds gathered at Rajpath on December 22, 2012, to demand immediate action against the rapists in the Nirbhaya case. • R.V. MOORTHY



When Nirbhaya shook the nation's conscience

In 2012, the heinous rape and murder of a young woman, christened Nirbhaya in the aftermath of the incident, became a watershed moment in how the crime of rape would be adjudicated and perpetrators punished. The country witnessed an outpouring of anguish and anger like

never before, as people poured out into the streets in hundreds of thousands demanding justice. The protests forced the government to set up the Justice Verma committee, as a result of which several new sexual assault laws were passed, including a mandatory minimum sentence of 20 years for gang

rape. Six new fast-track courts were set up. Most important, by bringing the discussion of rape and its punishment into the mainstream, it emboldened more women to speak up. Today, Nirbhaya has become a potent symbol of women's resistance and their ongoing fight for safety.

Bhima Koregaon protests and the aftermath

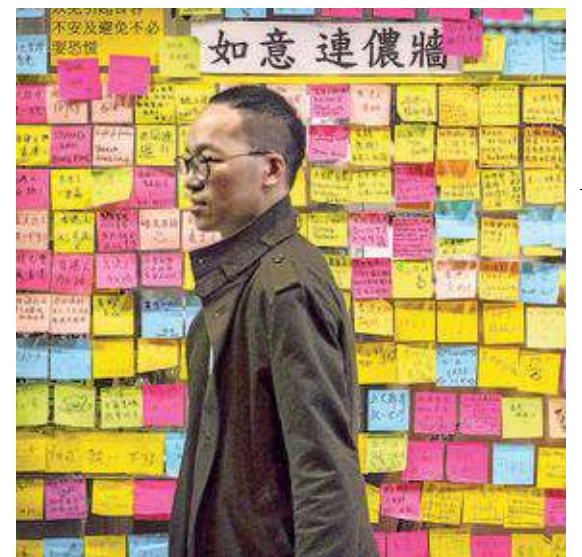
Each year, in a tradition started by Ambedkar, Dalits collect at Bhima Koregaon in Maharashtra to commemorate the Battle of Koregaon, when Mahar soldiers of a British Army unit defeated Peshwa Baji Rao II's forces. Last year, the 200th year of the battle, lakhs of Dalits gathered. Infiltrated

by some rogue elements, it soon turned violent. As Maharashtra erupted in protest, FIRs were filed against two Hindutva activists, Sambhaji Bhide and Milind Ekbote, for having incited the violence. Soon, however, a 'think-tank' cleared the two men and blamed 'Maoists' instead. Police then arrested a series of

activists, most of whom work for Dalit and tribal rights, on the flimsiest charges. They were Surendra Gadling, Sudhir Dhawale, Rona Wilson, Shoma Sen and Mahesh Raut; followed by Varavara Rao, Arun Ferreira, Sudha Bharadwaj, Vernon Gonsalves and Gautam Navlakha. Many of them are still in prison.



Voice of dissent After the Bhima Koregaon clashes, Prakash Ambedkar, leader of the Bhartiya Republican Bahujan Mahasangh, at a rally at Azad Maidan last year, demanding the arrest of Sambhaji Bhide. • PRASHANT WAYDANDE



Right side A tea shop in Hong Kong with a 'Lennon wall' covered with Post-Its. Shops that openly support the pro-democracy protests are called "yellow shops" and are winning more customers. • AP

Uber-rich to uber-angry

As the decade wound down, the world seemed to wind up tighter. In 2019, the stylish and wealthy city-state of Hong Kong erupted in an uprising that's still burning. It began with the introduction of a bill that would have allowed the extradition of criminal fugitives wanted in territories with which Hong Kong does not have extradition agreements, including Taiwan and mainland China. Fearing the bill would allow authorities to deport dissenters and put islanders under mainland Chinese law, students and citizens launched massive marches, blocking streets and facing off with the police. The clashes have slowly become violent, with police firing live bullets and protesters attacking officers and throwing petrol bombs. The bill was withdrawn but protesters want other conditions met before backing off, including for the protests to not be labelled as riots and amnesty for arrested protesters.

Dalit pushback

In July 2016, seven members of a Dalit family who were skinning dead cows were attacked by a group of people claiming to be 'gau rakshaks' (cow protectors) in Una, Gujarat. The video of the brutal incident went viral and set off a slew of protests across the State; Dalits came out in large numbers to decry the government's inadequate response and the discrimination against the community. The largest of these demonstrations was the Dalit Asmita Yatra, led by activist Jignesh

Mevani, in which some 20,000 Dalits marched from Ahmedabad to Una over 10 days. They vowed to give up their traditional livelihood of disposing cow carcasses and demanded land from the government. Dalits across the country have been subjected to oppression for decades with hardly any recourse to justice. Their coming together in large numbers and the rise of young leaders such as Mevani and Chandrashekhar Azad in U.P. signals the beginning of a new era of Dalit pushback.



Outrage Dalits gather in Ahmedabad to protest the Una violence. • VIJAY SONEJI



Speaking up An anti-CAA protest in Mumbai. • VIBHAV BIRWATKAR



A fight for the Constitution

The ongoing nationwide protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA) are unprecedented. A spontaneous popular uprising of this kind has perhaps been seldom seen since Independence. The exclusion of Muslims from the

Act, coupled with the prospective all-India National Register of Citizens – a sequence of events the Home Minister has reiterated several times – feeds into the Hindu Rashtra dream of the BJP. Exclusions based on religion go against the tenets of inclusion and secularism of the Constitution, and

are against the very idea of India. Citizens, led by students, are protesting in every town and city. In UP and Mangalore, the police responded with shocking violence. So far, thousands have been arrested and 25 killed. But there seems to be no stopping the protests now – India has risen.

The Greta effect

In August 2018, a 15-year-old Swedish schoolgirl stood outside the country's Parliament with a placard that said 'School strike for the climate'. Within a year, Greta Thunberg's solitary protest would galvanise millions over the world to take to the streets to demand action against one of the biggest catastrophes of our times: climate change. 'Climate strikes' – by young and old – erupted across the globe this September; close to four million people are estimated to have marched. Addressing world leaders at the UN Climate Action Summit, Thunberg minced no words: "We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!" she said, in a fiery speech that went viral. Earlier this month, she was named *Time's* Person of the Year for 2019 – the youngest person ever to be named so by the magazine. Thunberg, who has Asperger's syndrome, has said she considers it a 'superpower'.



Greta again Thunberg holds a placard saying 'School strike for the climate' outside the Swedish Parliament. • REUTERS



Brute force A police officer detains a Kashmiri student outside a Srinagar college, where students gathered in solidarity with the nationwide protest against the Citizenship Amendment Bill on December 17, 2019. • AP

How silent is my Valley

On August 5, 2019, the government revoked the limited autonomy granted under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution to Jammu and Kashmir. It also simultaneously bifurcated the State into two Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh. The move was accompanied by massive security deployments and a communication blockade that involved imprisoning prominent political leaders and shutting off Internet and telephony. As this goes to press, leaders are still in jail and the Internet is still blocked. Stripped of connectivity, stripped of liberties, under the constant eye of gun-wielding forces, the ordinary Kashmiri has been rendered voiceless. It's left to others to record, transmit and protest the unspeakable from the Valley. To point out that the government has behaved like nothing but a brutal occupying force.

Rise of the Right

The decade saw the rise of right-wing populist political movements around the world, seen as a backlash against the perceived failures of the largely liberal-capitalist world order and the complacency and greed that led to the great financial crisis of 2008. Anger against globalisation, deindustrialisation, immigration and the growing refugee crisis contributed to this extreme reaction in the West, while elsewhere strongmen leaders, muscular nativism and heightened culture wars were ubiquitous features. Leaders such as Hun-

gary's Viktor Orbán, with his euroscepticism, his anti-refugee policies and espousal of "illiberal democracy" were harbingers of the trend. Protest votes by this disgruntled electorate played a major role in the U.K.'s Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump in the U.S. Majoritarian sentiment in India saw the rise of Narendra Modi with two thumping election victories that established the BJP as the dominant party. Similar but even more extreme rhetoric and policies found favour in Brazil and the Philippines as well, with the victories of Jair Bolsonaro and Rodrigo



Lashing out U.S. President Donald Trump at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania in 2018. • AP



Freedom The LGBTQIA+ community celebrates the historic verdict on Kolkata's streets. In September 2018, the Supreme Court overturned a regressive 158-year-old colonial law that criminalised gay sex. • ASHOKNATH DEY

A historic judgment for queer rights

In July 2009, when portions of Sec 377 of the Indian Penal Code were struck down by the Delhi High Court, the queer community in India rejoiced. But in December 2013, the Supreme Court overturned this judgment, saying that amending or repealing Sec 377 should be left to Parliament, throwing everyone into gloom. Finally, it was on September 6, 2018, that the Supreme Court gave the historic judgment that once and for all decriminalised same-sex relations. In powerful language, the judgment held such criminalisation under Sec 377 to be "unconstitutional, irrational, indefensible and manifestly arbitrary". The ruling gave a huge boost to LGBTQIA+ rights, it allowed queer people to come out to their families, it gave them access to public spaces, it gave them their identity back. It has since opened up possibilities for queer literature, queer lit fests, queer art and more.



Fall from grace Once powerful and now disgraced film producer Harvey Weinstein leaves Manhattan Criminal Court after a hearing on December 11, 2019. His case sparked the worldwide #MeToo movement. • AFP

Across the world, women said #MeToo

The phrase 'MeToo' was first used on social media by Tarana Burke when she wrote about the sexual harassment she had suffered. But it was only when multiple charges surfaced against Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein that #MeToo became a viral, global trend as more and more women began to put #MeToo as their social media status to show how widespread the menace of workplace sexual harassment was. It led to wide-ranging discussions across nations, forcing institutions and companies to take sexual harassment seriously and establish mechanisms for complaint and redress. Starting with showbiz and media, the movement spread to other industries including music, sports, law, politics and advertising. In India, the movement was spurred in October 2018 when actor Tanushree Dutta accused actor Nana Patekar of sexual harassment, leading to a barrage of charges across professions.



Iconic art 'Season's Greetings', a mural by Banksy, stencilled onto a garage in Port Talbot, Wales, in December 2018. • CREATIVE COMMONS

The face on the wall

An unknown graffiti artist from Bristol was already the talk of London by the late 1990s, but it was in 2010 that *Time* magazine put Banksy in its list of the world's 100 most influential people, where he jostled for space alongside Barack Obama and Lady Gaga with a paper bag over his anonymous head. He went on to become an iconic figure, converting graffiti from mere vandalism into a politically charged, democratic art form. In 2018, Banksy's 'Girl with Balloon' sold at a Sotheby's auction for \$1.4 million. Just as the gavel fell, the painting slipped out of its frame and shredded to pieces. Banksy had fooled the world again. Challenging authority and notions of 'high art', Banksy is a quintessential people's artist. He said once, "This is the first time the essentially bourgeois world of art has belonged to the people. We need to make it count."

TRENDS



The art of liberty

Hong Kong's great pro-democracy movements gave rise to an outpouring of art. Colourful umbrellas and the 'Umbrella Man' statue achieved iconic status as symbols of the 2014 protests, while the hard hat – and statues and figurines of 'Lady Liberty' wearing the same – was emblematic of the 2019 movement. Both produced a bevy of installations, sculptures, murals and posters.



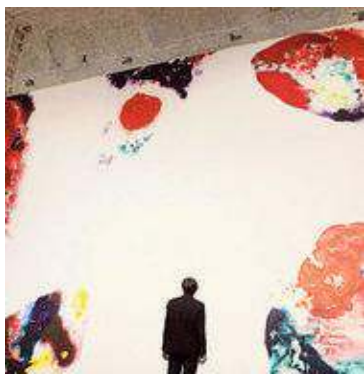
Atrocities acknowledged

Belgium's Royal Museum for Central Africa reopened in 2018 after a restoration that tried to transform it from a colonial relic into a modern institution with greater acknowledgement of atrocities. Similarly, a major exhibition in Brazil, 'Histórias Afro-Atlânticas,' (2013) looked at the country's involvement in the slave trade and engaged with artists from the African diaspora.



Highest bidder, ever

A 2017 auction at Christie's, New York, saw Leonardo da Vinci's 'Salvator Mundi' (c. 1500) sell for \$450,312,500 – making it by far the most expensive painting ever sold at a public auction. The so-called 'Male Mona Lisa', rediscovered in 2005 and restored, depicts Jesus Christ as the saviour of the world. It was reportedly purchased by Saudi Prince Badr bin Abdullah.



West coast wonders

'Pacific Standard Time', a research initiative funded by the Getty Foundation, has had a major impact on the art world. Focusing on unrecognised art from Los Angeles from 1945 to 1980, the first edition in 2011 unearthed a number of works that resulted in some groundbreaking exhibitions, while the 2017 edition transformed the understanding of Latin American and Latinx art.



Namrata Joshi

Social media and independent cinema may not seem to have much in common; but in 2010, shortly after I joined the then-fledgling platform called Twitter, I got to e-meet Srinivas Sunderrajan there. He had just made a 70-minute feature film with a paltry sum of ₹40,000. It was a self-reflexive film – about making a film.

The Untitled Kartik Krishnan Project, starring Kartik Krishnan, Vishwesh K, Swara Bhaskar and D. Santosh, was made without any studio support. Shot in 30 days, guerilla style, over a year, at various Mumbai locations, most of the film's budget was spent on hiring equipment and props and on post-production. The film's frames were of impeccable quality. It was picked up and released by PVR Pictures but didn't quite get the eyeballs and strong push in the indie niche.

Cut to 2019 and you have Bhaskar Hazarika's *Aamis*, a thought-provoking portrayal of unusual relationships in which forbidden food gets intertwined with proscribed passion. The film got a rare, robust release both offline and online, through MovieSaints, a streaming platform and a distribution solutions provider for independent cinema. Meanwhile, Prateek Vats' *Eeb Allay Ooo!*, an absurd take on societal and human condition, centred on a monkey repeller working in Lutyen's Delhi, is all set to travel to Berlinale early next year after its opening at the Pingyao Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon International Film Festival.

Black and white

The decade just gone has seen a steady sprinkling of interesting indies – *Kshay*, *Loev*, *CRD*; from the South, *Lucia* and *Aruvi*; from Bengal, *Gandu* and *Asha Jaor Majhe*; and from Haryana, *G Kutta Se* – fighting against the odds to establish a niche for themselves, away from mainstream cinema.

Most have been debuts by young filmmakers such as 23-year-old Achal Mishra's Maithili indie, *Gamak Ghar*, where the protagonist is his own ancestral home.

They have brought in a diversity of stories, ways of telling, languages and cultures. Pushpendra Singh's *Ashwathama* was as much about a young boy reconciling with loss and grief as about the Braj language and patriarchy. Karan Gour's *Kshay* looked at how faith turns into superstition and eventually becomes a dangerous obsession; but the ingenuity lay in the use of black-and-white cinematography, and in the background score and sound design



BIG SCREEN

An independent decade

Now, everyone can make an indie film, thanks to streaming platforms, social media and labs that support production



New voices Stills from (clockwise from above) *Asha Jaor Majhe*, *Loev*, *The Untitled Kartik Krishnan Project*, *Aruvi* and *Eeb Allay Ooo!*.

that lay bare the human mind's steady dissolution.

If Aamir Bashir's *Harud* provided a relentlessly grim, ringside view of embattled lives in Kashmir, Ashim Ahluwalia's *Miss Lovely* showed the grime and debauchery behind the glamour of the film industry. Amit Masurkar's *Sulemani Keeda* (before he went on to making the celebrated *Newton*) cast a

glance at the backroom boys and girls of Bollywood who live in Andheri-Ver-sova-Oshiwara, their struggles with landlords as much as with the process of writing itself.

Understated approach

Sudhanshu Saria described his film *Loev* as a post-gay film – Gay 2.0 – where sexuality and sexual orientation is matter-of-fact and understated rather than questioned or made a big deal of. Set in the world of college theatre, Kranti Kanade's *CRD* has multiple ideologies play off against each other even as the linearity of time collapses. A dense and complicated narrative, which throws open more questions than answers, it explores the fascism and fierce competition in the world of arts and the obsession with success. Sandeep Mohan's *Shreelancer* captured the lives of freelancers in little details, be it at home or at the many cafés that fill in as workstations.

Then there have been reclusive filmmakers, such as Amit Dutta, who has been making experimental films sitting in Himachal Pradesh, like *Nainsukh*, on the life of an 18th-century painter from Kangra; *Sonchidi*, about two travellers in search of a flying craft they believe will help them get rid of the cycle of birth; and *The Museum of Imagination*, an abstract portrait of art historian B.N. Goswami. Gurvinder Singh's *Anhey Ghorhey Da Daan* looked at caste politics among Sikhs, and *Chauthi Koot* was all about the at-

mosphere of doom in Punjab, after Operation Blue Star.

The indie wave has come riding on digital technology – it has been a big enabler, helping keep costs in check. So you have a Rima Das, a one-woman filmmaking army, who came up with *Village Rockstars* and *Bulbul Can Sing*, where she handled everything from camera to direction to editing and production. In fact many filmmakers from the Northeast have been fiercely independent, such as Pradip Kubah, Dominic Sangma or Kenny Basumatary.

Forums like the NFDC Film Bazaar have helped nurture indie talent since 2007, and in the last decade these efforts have truly borne fruit. It has shaped films such as *The Lunchbox*, *Tili*, *Thithi*, *Court*, *Chauthi Koot*, *Qissa*, *Ship of Theseus*, *Village Rockstars*, *Balekempa*, *Miss Lovely*, *S Durga*, *Soni*, *Moothon*, *Bombay Rose*, *Aamis*, *Eeb Allay Ooo!*, *Aise Hee* and *Nimtoh*. At one level, South Asia's biggest film market brings in international buyers, distributors, sales agents and festival programmers together with filmmakers, and at another the Screenwriters' Lab and Work-In-Progress Lab help support filmmakers in the development stage of their projects.

Films for everyone

Social media has played its own unique role. For filmmaker-actor Rajat Kapoor, it also helped bring in the moolah. When producers were noncommittal about his new film *Aankhon Dekhi*, a tweet reached Manish Mundra, the CEO of a petrochemical company based in Nigeria. He decided to bankroll the project. Mundra went on to support other small, independent, off-beat films like Neeraj Ghaywan's *Masaan* and Masurkar's *Newton*. Today, he has started a Bollywood company of his own called Drishyam Films.

Technology has ensured democratisation too. Everyone can make a film and about issues that get buried in the mainstream. Dakxin Chhara, an Ahmedabad-based theatreperson and filmmaker, belongs to the Chhara denotified tribe, and aims to use cinema as a tool to empower his community. Bhaurao Karhade, a farmer-turned-filmmaker from Maharashtra, makes cinema about the agrarian crisis.

The Ektara Collective of Bhopal made a 'community' film, *Turup*, on caste, class, gender, religious politics against the backdrop of rising fundamentalism. In 2017, several indie-spirited films emerged from the mainstream: *A Death in the Gunj*, *Anaarkali of Aarah*, *Lipstick Under My Burkha*, *Gurgaon*, *Mukti Bhawan* and *Ribbon*.

But the indies are still grappling with viable platforms to take the films to the audience. Many have remained confined to the festival circuit. Then you have a Sandeep Mohan who literally takes his films by the collar to the audiences, organising independent screenings in small cafés and bookshops everywhere.

One remarkable success story is Bardroy Barretto's modest Konkani film, *Nachom-ia Kumpasar* (Let's Dance To The Rhythm), a fictionalised account of the popular Konkani jazz singer Lorna Cordeiro's love for the famous saxophonist, trumpet player and musician Chris Perry. Made with contributions from 101 of Barretto's family members and friends *Nachom-ia Kumpasar* premiered in Goa in 2014 and has had hundreds of housefull ticketed screenings organised by the makers themselves. The idea behind the staggered, non-conventional release was that the film should reach audiences, gain critical mass steadily, and remain relevant for two years, not just two weeks. This indie is now referred to as *Sholay* of Konkani cinema. The irony couldn't have been sweeter.



Musical topper

The Book of Mormon grossed over \$500 million to become the most successful musical of all time. It debuted on Broadway in 2011. The show was awarded nine Tony Awards, including Best Musical, and a Grammy Award for Best Musical Theater Album. The Broadway cast's recording of the musical, written by Trey Parker, Robert Lopez and Matt Stone, topped the Billboard charts.



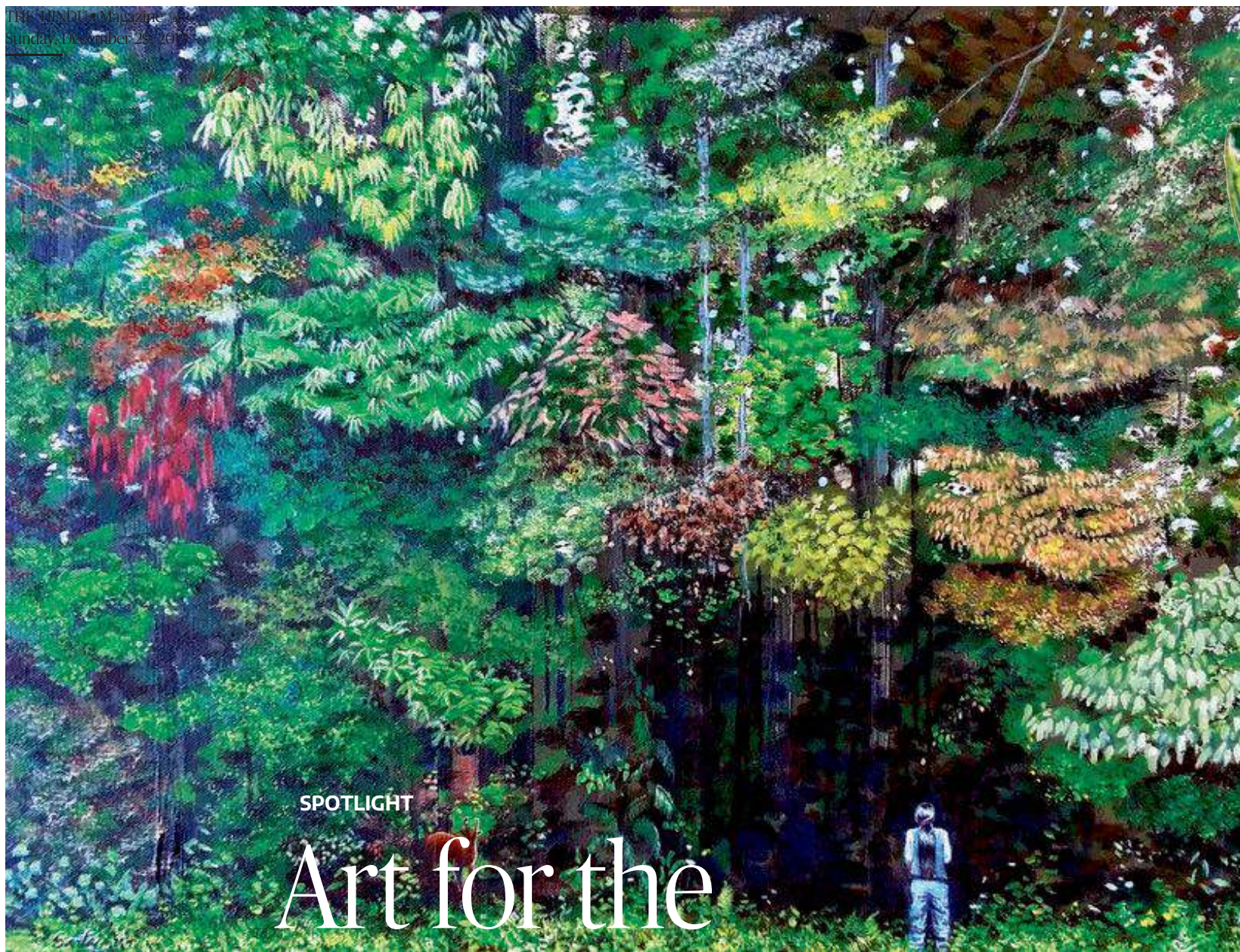
Heroes of the decade

Avengers: Endgame, part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, grossed over \$2.7 billion worldwide, becoming the highest-grossing superhero film of all time and the highest-grossing movie of all time, surpassing 2009's *Avatar*. Displacing war films, musicals and historical dramas as the most popular genre, superhero films became box office leaders during the last decade.



Not just one album

Music streaming services like Apple Music, Spotify and SoundCloud became popular during this decade. Digital music sales exceeded CD sales in 2012. These platforms became popular as they offered music streaming on the Internet without the listener having to download files. Spotify, one of the most popular of these streaming services, had its Indian launch in 2019.



SPOTLIGHT

Art for the



Anthropocene

A new wave of artists is returning to the wild, and using science, satire, protest, to jolt us back to the natural world, or to what remains of it

Divya Gandhi & Anusua Mukherjee

Like an airborne samurai, talons drawn, green eyes squinting fiendishly, a thing of beauty swoops down on its panicked victim. There's a brief pursuit. Feathers fly. You can almost hear a clamour of cymbals, and then it's all over. It was no match. The crested hawk-eagle, with its crown feathers fanned, sits victoriously on its vanquished prey – a jungle fowl.

This could have been an animation short, only it's an illustrated sequence from *Bird Business*, the latest offering from Hyderabad-based cartoonist Rohan Chakravarty. But the 32-year-old's stint at an animation studio – developing characters, storyboarding, directing films – have rubbed off onto his comic style, he says. And you can see, in the economy of the panels, in the way he 'directs' the action sequences, the influence of his biggest idols from the animation world, particularly Genndy Tartakovsky, the creator of *Samurai Jack* the adventure-action series set in a dystopian future.

Chakravarty is part of a growing legion of Indian artists – cartoonists and painters, filmmakers and sculptors – who tell vital, sometimes cautionary, tales of the wild before all is lost in this age of the Anthropocene, the earth's new epoch brought on by our own human recklessness. And they do so with great idiosyncrasy: some unabashedly anthropomorphise their subjects, others paint them with a scientific eye, some with the yoke of nostalgia others with the sting of satire. Some turn their

focus on the dystopian urban environment, others draw our attention to the politics of human displacement.

Chakravarty is better known for *Green Humour*, a cartoon strip where wild animals get speech bubbles, and in which they call out humans on their environmental follies: "Ah! so you're the big foot!" exclaims a leopard visibly dumbfounded by the large sloppy footprints left behind by a man walking by his side; "Nah, that's just my carbon footprint," declares the biped.

"When I started out, I just wanted to draw something on wildlife and have fun as a cartoonist. I wasn't very serious about messaging. But then as I started getting responses from scientists and the public, I realised I have a responsibility to live up to," he says.

Touch it, study it

Sangeetha Kador carries a scrapbook with her wherever she goes. In it are sketches of moths and seeds, birds and leaves, rendered with such startling empiricism that you can feel the powdery pigment on the wings of the brown-and-orange *Eudocima* moth; the weight of the chandelier of fruits on a fishtail palm; the papery edges of the *Pterocarpus* seed.

When Kador made a switch from

Draw of the jungle (Clockwise from top) 'Barking deer' by Sartaj Ghuman; 'Oleander hawk-moth' by Sangeetha Kador; 'Tropical sundew' by Nirupa Rao; an illustration from *Bird Business* by Rohan Chakravarty.

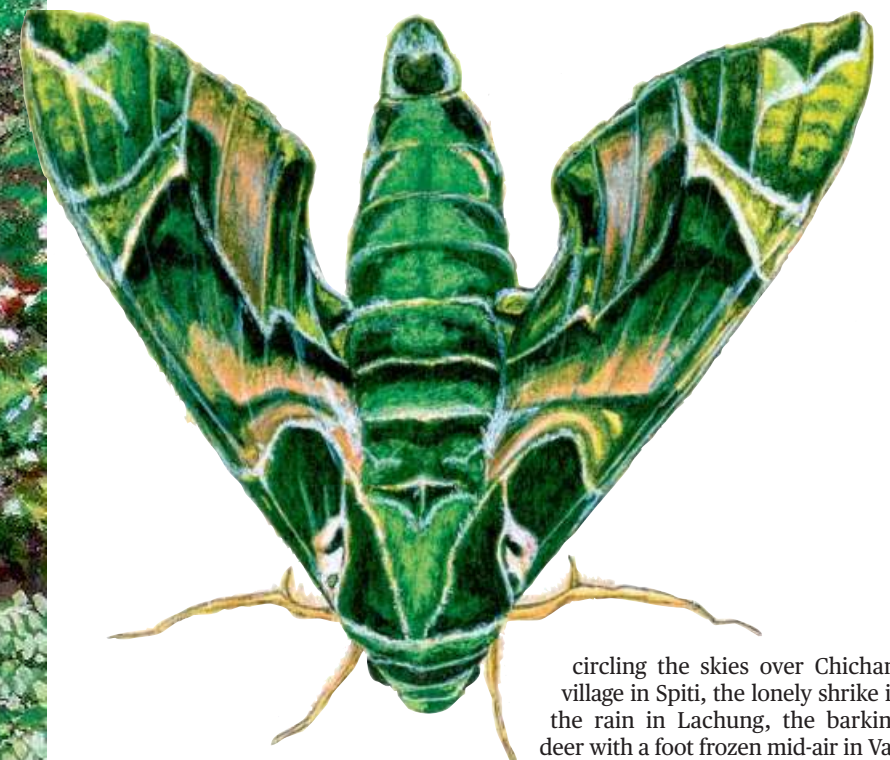


psychology to art, she found herself less keen on the abstract form that her fine arts college was pushing her towards – "My heart was in realism," she says. "My work is as much about art as it is about science." And nature journaling works as a reckoner she dips into for her projects – be they wall murals commissioned by environmental NGOs, coffee table books or paintings on canvas.

One such project was an acrylic portrait of a monitor lizard perched on a rock, its forked tongue surveying its semi-arid world. "I remember I spent an entire day at the Bannerghatta zoo observing its anatomy, the way it moved, sketching it." Then she made sure she got an even closer look at a preserved

specimen at the Bombay Natural History Society. "I wanted to touch it, study its scale pattern – I noticed the scales are arranged differently around its mouth than they are on its tail."

Kador now takes nature journaling to children through her GreenScraps project where they can hold and study



and sketch from nature. "It's projects like these that I love most – where I can bring stories from the natural world closer to people. To me art is not just about having a show in a gallery."

At first glance, it's just a lovely water-colour of the Tropical Sundew: those beautiful carnivorous plants that make death look attractive. There's the flower on a long thin stem, and the leaves with long, sticky tentacles that ensnare passing insects. Here the devil is in the detail, literally – look closely and you see the mosquitoes and bugs getting swallowed up by the leaves. The illustrator of this image, Bengaluru-based Nirupa Rao, adds an interesting fact: "The long stem helps keep the flower well away from the leaves – so pollinating insects don't get caught, and can carry pollen on to other flowers." Speak of nature's perfect design.

Hidden kingdom

Rao's most recent book, *Hidden Kingdom – Fantastical Plants of the Western Ghats*, where this image is from, can be called India's answer to *The Lost Words* by Robert MacFarlane and Jackie Morris, the book that has kicked off an ongoing movement in the U.K. to bring children back to the disintegrating natural world around them. Like *The Lost Words*, *Hidden Kingdom* too has illustrations set to rhyme, explaining the characteristics of given plants. Rao has also illustrated *Pillars of Life: Magnificent Trees of the Western Ghats* by naturalists Divya Mudappa and T.R. Shankar Raman, as well as the stunning cover of Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island*.

For inspiration, Rao looks to Albrecht Dürer's nature studies, to miniature and Japanese scroll paintings, and modern artists like S.M. Khayyam from Pakistan, whose 2018 exhibition, 'Art for Climate Change,' had drawn international attention. If Renaissance artists like Dürer were documenting the hitherto undocumented natural world, what are modern-day ecological artists aiming to achieve? Rao thinks that the return to nature is a response to the loss of the wilderness but professionals and hobbyists alike are also using their art "as a means to slow down and rethink our lifestyles."

Listen to the silence

Pillars of Life also features sketches by Sartaj Ghuman, who is introduced in the book "as a trained wildlife biologist who prefers poetry to academics." He confirms that when we meet him, telling us that his breathtaking paintings are just art, and if he uses science, it's for composition's sake. A scientist, mountaineer, birder, painter, explorer and writer, Ghuman has worked extensively with the Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) in its various projects all over India. As part of the NCF's outreach programmes, he also paints birds and beasts on school walls to educate children. Showing us images of the walls he has decorated in Spiti schools, he says there's value also in the bonhomie that this builds up with local communities.

Yet it's not the hum of busy voices but solitude that pervades his paintings. In that silence, you can hear nature breathe: there's the Himalayan griffon

circling the skies over Chicham village in Spiti, the lonely shriek in the rain in Lachung, the barking deer with a foot frozen mid-air in Valparai. But the rest of nature is not mere backdrop: it heaves as the forest floor shifts, leaves drop, shrubs, orchids push upwards towards the light – it is nature as a sensate being, with its own memory, its own intents – a visual counterpart to a novel like Richard Powers' *The Overstory*, which makes us see and feel the life of trees.

Hungry city

Gigi Scaria's installations and videos, sculptures and photos are preoccupied with the oxymoron that is the urban environment – especially Delhi, where he lives. It is a metropolis obsessed with cleanliness but is the very detritus that chokes River Yamuna; it is a hungry city that bursts at the seams but also segregates and excludes as it grows.

In his video 'Panicle City', he constructs an animated panorama of the unequal city, shot in sections from the minaret of Jama Masjid. Big buildings muscle through modest neighbourhoods; they ominously rise and ebb, like slumbering beasts, to the disorientingly beautiful crescendos and diminuendos of Vivaldi. "The urban landscape has always interested me, especially the hierarchies. It is a microcosm of the larger environment around us – increasingly fragmented, but also fighting for a sense of cohesion," says Scaria.

Politics of loss

Filmmaker and artist Amar Kanwar takes up the politics of loss – of land, water, livelihood, life – in his work. His multimedia project, 'The Sovereign Forest', ongoing from 2012, brings together films, texts, books, photographs, seeds (the multiple varieties of rice that once grew in Odisha), to highlight the conflicts between local communities and the government and corporations over the control of agricultural lands, forests, rivers and mineral resources in Odisha.

Leaders of primarily non-violent groups of peasants, fishermen and tribal people can be heard speaking in 'The Sovereign Forest' – the idea is to build up evidence against the crime committed and also to ask vital questions: can an artist intervene in this scenario? Can 'poetry' be presented as 'evidence' in a criminal or political trial?

Yet Kanwar wouldn't like to categorise himself as artist/ activist/ artist-activist. "It is more important to respond – either to the question of violence or to our inner contradictions and perhaps even our desire for violence and revenge. To question, reconfigure our understandings of ethical and moral positions, and introspect – that's our responsibility," he says.

The American biologist E.O. Wilson has warned that we are entering "The Eremocene", the Age of Loneliness, as more and more species go extinct and swathes of landmasses disappear. By making us appreciate what remains, these artists are urging us to conserve, and so to delay, if not stave off, the Eremocene. And yet we must ask: can a work of art, however beautiful and powerful in its message, bring about change? Perhaps not. But there's value in the fragments they have shored against the ruins – it's art as evidence, art for keeps.



The web's play

House of Cards, an American web television series created by Beau Willimon, was the first original web series to receive major Emmy nominations. This drama is considered to have redefined how television series are produced because of the strong performances and sure-handed direction. It is based on a novel by Michael Dobbs.



Back home

In 2018, French President Emmanuel Macron, after receiving a report that called for the return of African artworks looted during the colonial period, announced the repatriation of a number of pieces to Benin. This set a precedent and sparked debate. It was also found that about 90% of Africa's cultural heritage was outside the continent.

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Communal fracture BJP leaders L.K. Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi at Ayodhya in 1992. • THE HINDU ARCHIVES

HISTORY OF HATRED

The nation's slide into fear, hate and bigotry did not begin ex nihilo five years ago. It's the climax of a hundred-year campaign against the kind and pluralistic ethos of the freedom struggle

Battle for India's soul

Harsh Mander

A hundred years have passed since a battle was launched for the soul of this ancient land. At stake was the country we would together build after the British left our shores.

This was the time when Mahatma Gandhi returned from South Africa to join India's freedom struggle. In his leadership of three decades, a majority of Indians – Hindu, Muslim and of other faiths – shared his vision of a country resolutely inclusive and humane, which would welcome people of every belief and ethnicity to be equal citizens with equal rights. This ideal lay at the foundations of the constitution of the new republic, crafted in the care of Babasaheb Ambedkar.

This goal was bitterly contested all these hundred years by the Hindu Mahasabha, founded around 1915, and by the RSS in 1925. Their vision for India was of a nation exclusively for India's Hindu majority, in which Muslims and Christians would be 'allowed' inclusion only as second-class citizens. Though less explicitly enunciated, people of disadvantaged castes and tribal ethnicities would also be lesser citizens.

The turbulent combat eventually took a toll of over a million lives, including that of Gandhiji, and caused the largest cataclysmic displacement of human populations in history.

Today, we find ourselves at a decisive phase of this same battle. We are led today by men who have spent all their adult lives as staunch members of the RSS. They believe their time has come,

to remould India into the muscular and resentful nation of their imagination.

Ideals of the past

I was born eight years after India won her freedom. I recall a childhood in which the idealism of the freedom struggle, although rapidly unravelling, still endured. We were raised without bigotry, taught to be thrifty and kind. Friendships across religion were common (though much less, I realise now, across caste). Our cinema, our poetry, music and theatre, celebrated our plural identities. It was an unequal India, but comfortable in its diversity, stirred with the hope of building a better future for all our people.

Today, my grandson is being raised in a worryingly altered India. From the time he will make sense of his world, he will routinely hear conversations of bigotry and exclusion, in living rooms, in classrooms, on his phone and laptop, on his television screen. He will join a section of the world that is complacent in its comfort and vulgar overconsumption, indifferent to the stark penury and want outside its doors.

India did not suddenly change in recent years. The slide started much earlier. In college, idealistic students of earlier batches had disappeared into the countryside to fight rural oppression. We fought against the corruption and authoritarianism of the Congress government and against the Emergency. The 1980s saw vast fractures crack India's plurality: calamitous communal massacres, regressive mobilisation against the rights of Muslim women, a violent campaign to destroy a mosque

in Ayodhya, to demonise the Muslim, and to construct a sense of permanent grievance in the Hindu people.

Since 2014, however, India has hurtled far more rapidly downwards to become a country increasingly dangerous and unwelcoming to minorities, especially its vast Muslim populace. Fear and hate have become inseparable from public life, for both minorities and for those who stand with them. Elected leaders flaunt hate speech, legitimising and valorising bigotry and hatred, which have become the dominant

I recall a childhood in which the idealism of the freedom struggle, although rapidly unravelling, still endured. We were raised without bigotry, taught to be thrifty and kind

markers of social life. Crowds gather to lynch Muslims and Dalits in the name of protecting the cow, and proudly post videos of the lynching on social media. Relationships between Muslim men and Hindu women are stigmatised as love jihad. Christian priests, nuns and shrines are attacked. Dissenters are pilloried as anti-national. A new slur bandied by even the Prime Minister is something called 'Urban Naxal'.

Vortex of fear

In the midsummer 2019 elections, the BJP government won an expanded mandate, despite economic collapse, mounting farm distress and unemploy-

ment peaking to a 45-year high. This has been interpreted by the leadership as a mandate to implement their alternate vision for India as a land only for Hindus. They have moved with resolve and swiftness, hubris and recklessness. Diminishing Kashmir to a Union Territory, the law criminalising triple talaq, and the judicial ruling for a Ram temple at the site of the demolished mosque, all fulfil the long-prized agenda of the RSS.

The next pivotal step for this raging juggernaut is to create by law, for the first time, a hierarchy of citizenship rights based only on religion, which bars only India's Muslims. This, if followed by the National Register of Citizens that has been pledged repeatedly by Home Minister Amit Shah, will thrust India's Muslims into the same vortex of permanent fear and desperate insecurity that has been the fate of Bengali-origin people of Assam.

Then, like a sudden flash of brilliant light in a stormy night, the revolt led by students across the country has broken through the darkness. By refusing to allow their nation to be divided by hate, young people are challenging the government's hubris. The movement might or might not sustain. But the fact that it has happened reassures us that our young have the moral fibre to seize the mantle. They will fight for the kind and equal country that Gandhi fought for a hundred years earlier.

The writer is a human rights worker, author and teacher. His books include *Partitions of the Heart: Unmaking the Idea of India*.

SOCIAL MEDIA

WhatsApp, India?

If you ask me what made the last decade nothing like what India has known before, it is an app that has insinuated itself into our lives

Anita Nair

The alarm rings. It sounds like birds twittering, the morning chorus from the trees and skies, but it is nevertheless an alarm and if I don't shut it up, it will twitter again in five minutes. Soon all the reminders set on my phone will tell me what my day will be like. Sometimes my nights too. It is 5.30 in the morning and already the world is rushing into my life demanding time, attention, wit, wisdom and a good morning.

If you were to ask me what made the last decade nothing like what India had known before, it is WhatsApp. Not technology. Nor even smartphones. All that was inevitable. Technology has only one trajectory: a forward surge. That it would take the world with it was bound to happen.

What made it seamless was an app that insinuated itself into our lives with the insidious stealth of a snake crawling in through a drain hole. One day you were sending text messages or emailing each other and then suddenly there was a messaging service that told you if the person you were chatting to was online, whether they had read your messages or were pretending not to have seen them. The double blue tick gave you the power of righteous indignation. It gave you emojis to show how you felt in case words weren't adequate. And most importantly, was free. (That it cost you via data usage somehow failed to register.) You didn't need a BlackBerry or an iPhone. A plain old Android did the trick and WhatsApp changed Indians forever.

OMG

At first, it was the prelude to Tinder and Grinder. You met someone. You exchanged numbers and then you checked if they were on WhatsApp. Later you sent them a hello or a good morning. The geek, the wallflower and the socially inept came into their own. Quips and witticisms, emojis declaring love, kisses and hugs punctuated what once was the comma and full stop's realm. Where once you waited for the postman to ring the bell or for the trill of the telephone or even the gentle ping of the text message, WhatsApp announced itself with a descending tonal register that in a strange way felt like your intestines descending into the knees. In those early days, e-commerce and work groups had not colonised this messaging service. This was a parallel universe you retreated to every few minutes where you shared the minutiae of your life with a near stranger and received as much if not more in return.

You could even make out on WhatsApp and no one would even know unless you were the noisy kind.

Relationships and friendships between the unlikeliest of people flourished

ing in embarrassment or worry about being judged. You could even make out on WhatsApp and no one would even know unless you were the noisy kind. Relationships and friendships between the unlikeliest of people flourished. And all you had to do was ghost someone to end it. The persistent kind could be muted or blocked. Relationship management had hit a new milestone.

A petri dish

Then family, school and work groups crept into what was once just a personal space. It became a great leveller, decimating hierarchies. As voice notes, voice and video calls were enabled, the messaging service became a political tool. WhatsApp had turned into a petri dish where bigots emerged and spat venom. Soon, it became the most effective way to propagate news, most of which was doctored, and to spread baseless rumours that had far-reaching consequences. And like a forest fire, there was no controlling it. So much so that election campaigns played out on WhatsApp. The irony was that each person sharing fake news thought they were doing their contacts a service by sharing it with them.

For centuries, tantrics have been trying to teach the world how to awaken their kundalini. Suddenly, it seemed that all it took was a WhatsApp message to do so. The energy slowly slithered higher up the spine, letting us take control. WhatsApp taught us to make our phones into an extension of ourselves. We were no longer daunted by technology. We had figured out it was there to do our bidding.

It's 6.30 a.m. I open WhatsApp. I send Ali, a coconut-picker, who lives 500 km away, a message to drop by at my parents' home. An e-commerce site sends me a ticket. An editor forwards an event photo. I share my location with a friend visiting from another city. I send bank transfer details of a payment made to a vendor. Half a dozen people have already said good morning to me. And so have I.

BTW, I still haven't got out of bed or said good morning to my living, breathing family all under the same roof as me.

The writer is the author of several novels.

• GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK



HUNGRY GENERATION

Eating the digital banana

As far as bananas go it was spectacularly ordinary but it was a moment frozen in time

Geeta Doctor

When put on the wall of a Miami art gallery by an artist named Maurizio Cattelan, celebrated for making golden toilets, it auctioned for \$120,000 and became a worldwide sensation. For those who are looking for a new car, this sum, we are told, will buy you a 2021 model of a Chevy Trailblazer.

"I was hungry," confessed David Datuna, a Georgian-born American performance artist. And he picked the banana from the wall and ate it for the cameras. He called the performance 'Hungry Artist'. Man and banana merged. A myth suited for our digital age was born. All it will need is a digital artist to create reproductions of the banana and put it up on walls of art galleries around the world.

The 'Hungry Artist' may be seen as a symbol for the last decade. The digital age has triumphed. Reality and the virtual have become synonymous. Twined around each other, they have become indistinguishable. The body of the three-year-old Aylan Kurdi, who was found lying face down on the sandy beach along the Mediterranean littoral, became a heartbreaking symbol of the refugee crisis. It underlined our collective rage and helplessness, but it also became art. The moment was enshrined in an art installation at the Kochi Biennale the next year. Whatever

his intentions, the artist did not call it 'Drowned Humanity'.

Flashing images

Tragedy as spectacle has often served as a motif for art, particularly religious art. Just as during totalitarian regimes the brute power of the majority is signalled by mass parades of flag-waving people in perfect sync and heroic forms cast in bronze towering over the landscape. Earlier, the statues were bathed in milk and saffron, today strobe lights

Rage is no longer an emotion, it's an emoji, a thumbprint that can transmit anger in an instant across time and space

caress them with dazzling displays of subtly programmed messages produced by digital systems. The different body parts of a bronze hero are crafted and assembled with the expertise of a surgeon re-attaching a severed limb. In both cases, it will soon be possible for robots to replace the trained human component at the press of a button.

Power no longer comes from a gun but lies in the index finger of the digital artist. Without our even being aware of its power, the digital imprint has invaded every tiny crevice and cranny of our thinking lives, including memory. This is true whether we see it as the monetary transactions that we make at a

Raise the flag

Needless to say, none of the double-edged desires that we now term binaries are new. They have been there forever. The question that we must ask ourselves is, how do we legislate these primal needs? There is, for instance, the question of whether we will be able to summon the desire to save our planet. Or whether in our anxiety to grab the resources that we venerated in the past – as the guar-

Performance art
David Datuna eats the installation banana.

• REUTERS



dians of air, water, earth and space – will we fail to rein in our greed? Can we legislate hunger in a more creative way than through greed?

Rage is no longer an emotion, it's an emoji, a thumbprint that can transmit anger in an instant across time and space. The last decade has empowered the collective manifestation of rage and its more intemperate twin, violence. In some cases, as with the Japanese filmmaker Takashi Miike, it can also be a philosophical stance. He has been quoted as saying about the overt violence that underlies his oeuvre, "Ultimately, violence is an expression of love".

One of the strangest evolutionary features of the past decade has been the one legislating human desire. At its best it's been a liberating force. For us in India, the scrapping of Section 377 of the IPC must be seen as one of the most dramatic changes that took place in the last decade. It allows people of alternate sexual orientations to live together as they choose. It has not just broken the shackles that have bound our society, it has also allowed every one of us to think and celebrate what must be seen as the diversity of being human.

As far as flags go, the rainbow flag is a celebration of inclusiveness that has released a spirit of creativity that breaches barriers and walls. It underlines the message the Dalai Lama recommends when life gets too complex. "Let us laugh!"

The media critic and commentator decodes the baffling variety of human behaviour in our global village.

RIGHT TO LOVE

If having a gay friend is the new cool in post-377 India, it is because queer Indians walked the talk when no one else did

I march, therefore I am



AFP

Sandip Roy

The three men wore bright yellow T-shirts with rainbow-coloured footprints. Rafiqel Haque Dowjah wore his on top of a perfectly pleated dhoti, probably a fashion first. The T-shirts celebrated the 20th anniversary of India's first Pride Walk in Kolkata and these men – Rafiqel, Pawan Dhall and Owais – were three of the original marchers. Owais had brought the original yellow T-shirt they had worn back in 1999, a little bedraggled but still historic. Twenty years ago, they didn't call it an LGBTQIA+ Pride March. That seemed too out there. They chose the more innocuous Friendship Walk.

How woke?

When some 15 walkers stepped out on that monsoon day in 1999 they could not have imagined that one day they would be on stage at a "Queer & Inclusive" Rainbow Lit Fest in New Delhi, recounting that story to cheers. There was a catch in festival director Sharif Rangnekar's voice as he thanked them for coming. In India these days having a gay friend seems to be the new cool (at least in some circles). Publishing houses are bringing out "Indian and

gay" novels and memoirs. Corporate giants like Tata are extending benefits to their LGBTQIA+ employees. Karan Johar is promising a *Dostana 2* that will be "accurate, non-caricaturish and on point". It's part and parcel of a more woke post-377 India.

But those three men in their yellow T-shirts were a reminder that these rights did not just emerge fully formed on September 6, 2018, when the Supreme Court read down Section 377, overturning the 2013 ruling that had re-criminalised it, pushing LGBTQIA+ Indians aside as a 'minuscule minority'.

The change happened because over the years, queer Indians, like Pawan, Owais and Rafiqel and many others, walked the talk when no one else did. When I would come to India on my annual pilgrimage from San Francisco, where I worked in Silicon Valley, Pawan and I would chat about what it meant to be gay in India. Once a friend and I brought back videos of queer films in our suitcases and we had a mini LGBTQIA+ 'film festival' in Pawan's living room. It was hard to imagine a post-377 India with a public Rainbow Fest which people would pay to attend.

Those days Pawan ran a group called Counsel Club in Kolkata. I was volunteering as editor for *Trikone*, the world's oldest magazine on



South Asian LGBTQIA+ issues that came out of California. Counsel Club used to distribute *Trikone* in India to save on postage costs from America. One day Pawan got a notice from Customs. They had opened the package of *Trikone* and issued a show cause asking, "Why shouldn't we charge you with corrupting the morals of the nation?" Pawan told me, "I can never forget those words. I still have that notice with me."

'I hear you'

That notice is among the artefacts of India's LGBTQIA+ movement. As are the thousands of letters people like Pawan received from lonely men and women trying to make sense of their lives and desires. In his book, *Out of Line and Offline - Queer Mobilizations in '90s Eastern India*, Pawan shares some of those letters, written "in yellow envelopes, inland forms, open postcards and aerogrammes", some looking for a partner, some just a sense of self. "Sir, I started sensing my homosexuality at the age of 11 though till now I have not had sex with anybody." Two women wrote in, asking for help to flee to Delhi. Otherwise, they said, suicide was the only option. Pawan says he still has 2,500 to 3,000 of those letters. I don't think many of them talked about Section 377. The letters were inevitably about loneliness rather than legality.

Legal change, once unimaginable, eventually happened because people refused to give up. As Owais writes in an essay in his anthology, *Gulabi Baghi*, "Success comes only to that person and only that group which is consistent, which is a *lambi daud ka ghoda*" (the horse for the long run). In 2018, that long run finally bore fruit when the Supreme Court said, "The right to love is not just a separate battle for LGBT individuals, but a battle for all."

The quotes from that historic judgement will be saved, savoured and celebrated, and rightly so. The words were carefully chosen, written with an eye towards history. Panellists quoted them on television shows. But I hope we also never forget that long before judges put pen to paper, there were ordinary queer Indians who answered, by hand, letters strangers sent to a post-box. They probably didn't quote Goethe and Shakespeare and Leonard Cohen. They could not even promise "It gets better." The greatest solace, sometimes the only solace, those at the other end of a post bag number could provide was to pick up a pen and write back to just say, "I hear you."

Long before this revolution was televised, it was handwritten, one letter at a time, stamped with the kindness of strangers.

The writer is the author of *Don't Let Him Know*, and like many Bengalis like to let everyone know about his opinions whether asked or not.

WATCH OUT

Something for everyone

This decade of streaming has done a world of good for pop culture buffs

Aditya Mani Jha

In 2012, back when this writer was still in college, to be a movie buff meant flaunting multiple external hard drives, all chock-full of Hollywood and world cinema classics (Bollywood was infra dig, of course), downloaded either from the Internet or the college's internal file-sharing network. The golden era of television meant, however, that these hard drives would also be stuffed with season after season of American TV shows – everything from prestige fare like *The Sopranos* and *The Wire*, high school stuff like *Gossip Girl* or wisecracking, dialogue-driven dramas like *Boston Legal* and *The West Wing*.

The running joke in my hostel was that one guy, a bit of a jerk who kept mostly to himself, had been watching *The West Wing* nonstop for years (we would hear the show's opening credit music literally every day from his room).

Customised for you

Much before we started using that word, therefore, we were binge-watching. I remain convinced that the 'external hard drive era' (that arrived in the late 2000s, mostly) contributed to the speed with which Indian millennials took to streaming platforms.

By then, most of us had heard of Netflix. But we couldn't understand why someone would pay money to watch old films when there was a vast and wonderful world of Torrents and free downloads, right there for the taking. Eventually, of course, we understood just what Netflix was selling – a curatorial service that would customise user experience, ensuring it has something in the bag for every presumable kind of consumer.

Then in 2015, Hotstar and Eros Now started operations in India and just like that, millions across the country discovered the pleasures of the streaming era. It wasn't a whole lot to begin with – from the beginning, Hotstar was more focused on cornering the sports market than anything else. It would take Netflix another year to set up shop in India, one of 100-plus countries around the world where the company expanded. Circa 2016, Netflix was a bona fide global giant, and it had now entered what could be its biggest-ever market.

The streaming wars had begun in real earnest. By 2018, the Indian consumer had Netflix, Hotstar, Amazon Prime Video, Eros Now, Alt Balaji, Voot, Zee5 and others to choose from – a \$300 million-plus market, by most estimates, a figure expected to triple over the next 4-5 years. And even this might be a conservative valuation, given the rate at which both Netflix and Prime Video are investing in India. The folks at Disney+

are surely licking their lips ahead of their India launch – given the blockbuster appeal of MCU (Marvel Cinematic Universe) films in this country, they have a ready-made foothold in India. Besides, Disney+ content will be distributed via Hotstar, which already has over 300 million subscribers in India (Netflix and Prime combined have approximately 100 million).

It's a dent

But this decade of streaming proliferation has brought its own set of problems. In October, a number of media outlets reported on how Disney is putting hundreds of vintage Fox movies (like *Alien*, *The Princess Bride*, *The Omen* and so on) out of circulation, denying small-theatre owners the chance to spice up their programming with the odd classic. Disney has not responded to media queries on this, but it's anybody's guess what's happening to these films – they are part of a giant stockpile that will service Disney+ in the years to come.

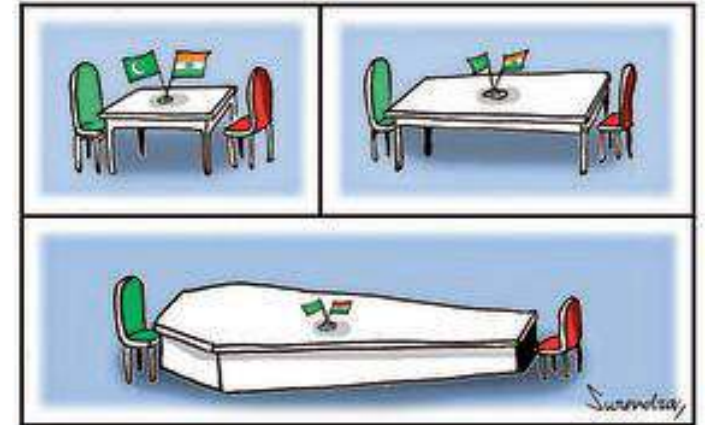
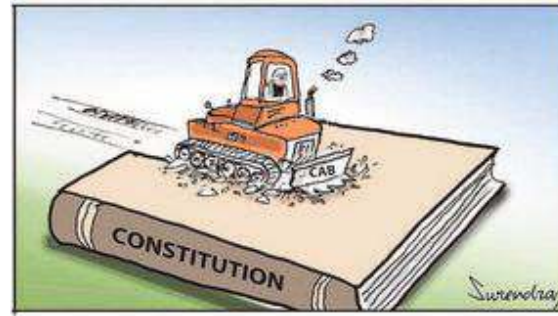
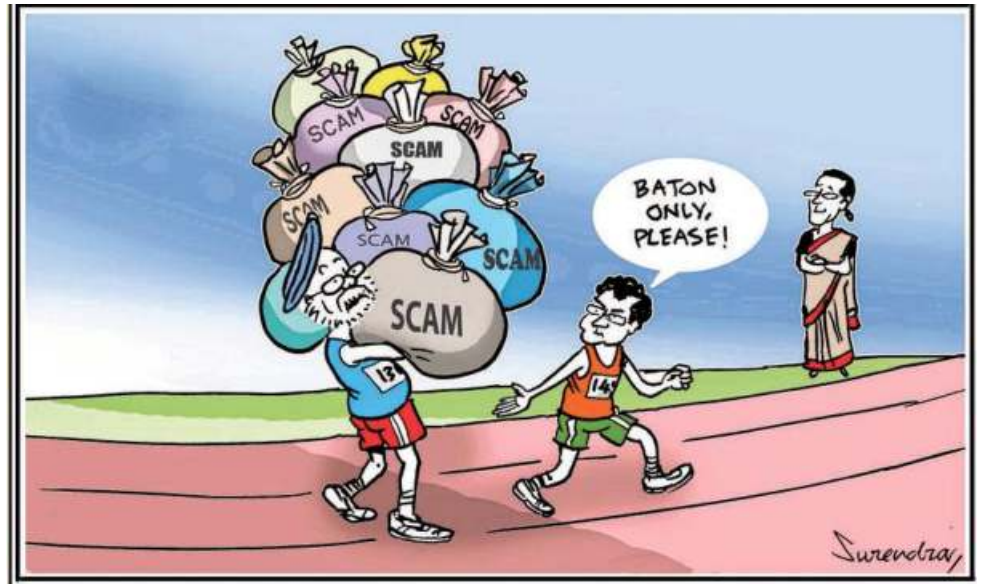
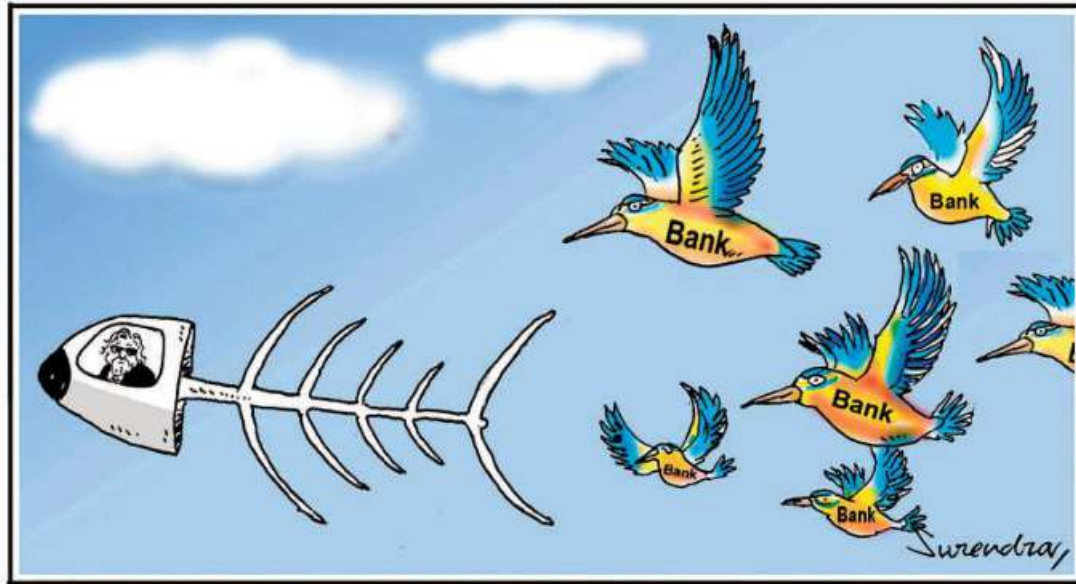
Similarly, networks like NBC are withdrawing their bestselling products – for NBC, that's stuff like *The Office* – from Netflix *et al*, with a view towards launching their own streaming platform. Very soon, if most other networks follow suit, they will essentially be asking people to go back to 1999 and the TV model, when we flipped channels endlessly (a move sure to backfire, for most consumers will prefer buying only two or three services, as opposed to 10 or 12). This each-man-for-himself model is not compatible with the ethos of a good streaming platform – namely the Netflix-pioneered system of 'we have something for everyone'. Sooner rather than later, the big players are going to have to settle this among themselves, or risk losing the market consolidation they have collectively achieved in the 2010s.

On the whole, however, this decade of streaming has done a world of good for pop culture buffs. Unconventional or even avant-garde films and shows are being financed much more readily than before. Films and shows from other languages and regions have never been this accessible to so many. More importantly, Netflix & Co. have made a dent in the hitherto unchallenged supremacy of the feudal, nepotistic movie studios of the world, whether Hollywood or Bollywood. It's not fatal damage, to be honest, but it's a dent and that counts for something.

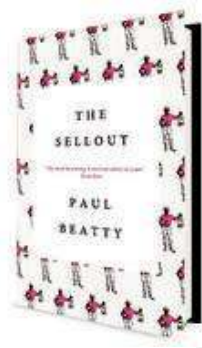
And as we usher in a new decade, film and TV buffs have a lot to look forward to, whichever way you slice it.

The writer and journalist is working on his first book of non-fiction.

A SELECTION OF SURENDRA'S BEST CARTOONS PUBLISHED IN THE HINDU OVER THE DECADE



Literary Review



The Sellout

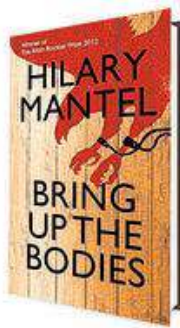
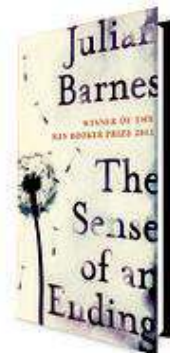
Paul Beatty

This Booker winner means to offend, and how. The satire is scathing, and it spares none. Set in LA, the novel is narrated by Bonbon, who observes and describes his black community with a zen detachment. In the process, the hallowed tenets of the U.S. Constitution are challenged, and the idea of racial equality turned on its head. But Beatty, the first American to win the Booker, fights shy of calling his novel a satire: indeed, he is reluctant to talk about it at all, believing that a work of art should speak for itself.

Sense of an Ending

Julian Barnes

If there's a definitive Barnes, this is the one. This 2011 Man Booker Prize winner gathers in its pages almost all of Barnes's pet themes – an eroded sense of seriousness in the English psyche, class, ageing, mortality, tricky remembrance. The title is a reference to literary critic Frank Kermode's book of the same name, where he explains how writers bring in plot twists to make readers readjust their sense of an ending. Expectedly, Barnes does the same, showing how we restructure memory in the way we want things to happen, while reality might have been otherwise. A novel of ideas, glittering with intelligent insights.



Bring up the Bodies

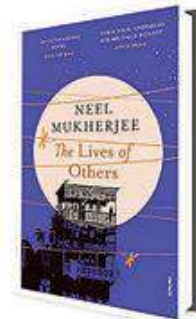
Hilary Mantel

The Tudors never fail to thrill – you have the endless books, movies and television series on them as proof. *Bring up the Bodies* takes up the story from *Wolf Hall*, about the crafty Thomas Cromwell, plotting, fighting, dismembering with gusto. Here his worthy opponent is Henry VIII's mistress, and later wife, Anne Boleyn, who is famous as a flirt but also has a very clever head on her shoulders. Cromwell appreciates her pro-Reformation ideas, and the way she occasions Church of England's break with Rome through her marriage to Henry, till she tries to get rid of him. Her head rolls, of course. Cromwell comes across as dark, deep, self-aware, ruthless, but with flashes of tenderness. Sequels usually disappoint – Mantel's doesn't.

The Lives of Others

Neel Mukherjee

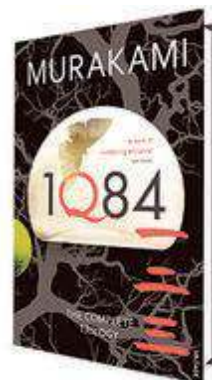
Mukherjee has a genius for imagining the lives of others in their entirety and that skill is honed to perfection in this novel set in the Calcutta of the 1960s and the paddy fields on the edges of West Bengal. The eldest son of the well-to-do Gupta family, Supratik, joins the CPI(M), hoping for a classless society. It's a dream, of course, and the novel shows how class privileges are taken for granted even by Supratik. Food and its lack is a running theme – Supratik, who has berated his mother for the heaps of food she prepares, recognises hunger for what it is when he joins the ragtag bunch of rebels. The descriptions of nature are beautiful and the examinations of inner lives incisive.



There's Gunpowder in the Air

Manoranjan Byapari
trs Arunava Sinha

This 2019 DSC Prize shortlisted novel is remarkable on several counts. Like Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*, this is also set in Calcutta of the Naxalite years, but to read Byapari's fictionalised account is to get the feel of lived experience (Byapari was once jailed for his Naxalite connections). While there is lament for the young lives lost, there is also humour – in the shape of an indomitable cat and a ghost that has made the jail its last stomping ground. In all its delicious irony, jail life comes to resemble domestic life – with a jail guard who resents his duties; a petty thief who finds his real calling when inspired by the idealistic young men around him; there is routine, which becomes a rhythm; there's bad food to wait for, unexpected treats to look forward to. Arunava Sinha's measured translation keeps the flavour of Byapari's no-frills Bengali intact.



1Q84

Haruki Murakami,
trs Jay Rubin, Philip Gabriel

Murakami is cult, and *1Q84*, published in English in 2011, adds to the legions of his devotees. Incidentally, the novel also features a religious cult, the Sakigake, which operates in much the same way as English Socialism does in Orwell's *1984*. The "Q" in the title denotes a "question mark." The world that bears a question. In Japanese, 'nine' is pronounced like 'Q', making the title a pun on *1984*. In the hyper-real sky of *1Q84*, there are two moons, one true and the other false, one good and the other evil. As the song goes, it's a "Barnum and Bailey world, just as phony as it can be". The key to get to the real world? Belief "in me", in love. With its heady mix of old-fashioned tropes and post-modern glitz, *1Q84* whispers just the right things in the ears of Gen Z.

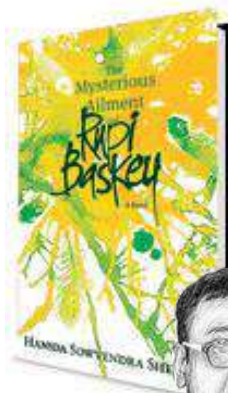


BEST FICTION OF THE DECADE

Books that break out of the rut, books that are heavy with promise of things to come – our list of the best fiction of the decade

Sense of a beginning

The decade did not see earth-shaking changes in fiction-writing. Established writers like Salman Rushdie, Margaret Atwood, Arundhati Roy or Kazuo Ishiguro chiefly wrote along the lines that have made them famous, and the results were not startling. While a few new authors – notably Sally Rooney, Lucy Ellmann, or closer home, Madhuri Vijay, Roshan Ali, Amitabha Bagchi – broke the mould of the expected, most gave in to market forces, and the results, again, were anything but startling. We list here 10 books that stood out over the last 10 years for different reasons – some set a trend, some made history glamorous, while some took India's regional literature to the world.



The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey

Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar

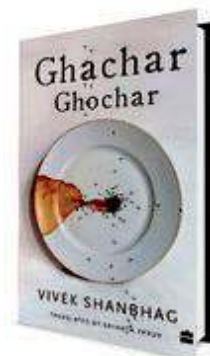
Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar's debut novel, which won him the 2015 Yuva Puraskar, started the roll of awards that was to follow. And foreshadowed the controversies. *The Mysterious Ailment* stands out for its fiery women. Putki Baskey, daughter of the patriarch, Somai, from a Santhal village in Jharkhand, is indomitable. She dresses to the hilt, dances, drinks, drops lovers like handkerchiefs. Her bestie, Della, is as wayward. What marks this novella is its unapologetic realism, also the defining characteristic of Hansda's later collection of short stories, *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*, which the Jharkhand government banned briefly, alleging that it offended the dignity of Santhal women.



Ghachar Ghochar

Vivek Shanbhag
trs Srinath Perur

If there's a translation revolution happening in India now, with works written in regional languages getting almost as much attention as Indian writing in English, *Ghachar Ghochar* can be said to have started it. Originally written in Kannada and set in Bengaluru, *Ghachar Ghochar* was described by Deborah Smith in her review in *The Guardian* as "both fascinatingly different from much Indian writing in English, and [providing] a masterclass in crafting, particularly on the power of leaving things unsaid." The dysfunctional family at the centre is caught in the throes of *ghachar ghochar*, a nonsense phrase that suggests something tangled up beyond mending. Srinath Perur conveys Shanbhag's fine nuances into English with aplomb.



Americanah

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

By now, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a feminist icon, and to read this novel is to know where her appeal lies. She has a way of telling the truth, and telling it straight, so that it hits home with the clarity of a revelation. Ifemelu and her boyfriend Obinze, both from Nigeria, migrate to the West for studies, the former to the U.S. and the latter to the U.K. There is a clinical dissection of the various levels of 'wokeness' that the two encounter in both countries. There is a special emphasis on appearance – hair, especially – which sort of seals the fate of any African immigrant. In America, Ifemelu is assumed to be instinctively part of a 'black consciousness', although she grew up reading Mark Twain and Graham Greene. A deeply felt novel and a landmark for post-colonial studies.



We That Are Young

Preti Taneja

Who could have thought that *King Lear* could be recast in Delhi, that too by a young Indian academic-activist? Preti Taneja plays with all the stereotypes of post-colonial writing in her novel, subverting them smartly. Lear is the ageing tycoon, Devraj, who heads the sprawling India Company. The characters rage, as they must, as does nature – a reminder of the effects of climate change and what we have brought upon ourselves. On the political plane, there are the anti-corruption riots of 2011 in which Devraj's family gets caught. Taneja unabashedly uses filmi tropes to her advantage to notch up the drama. The much appreciated novel won Taneja the 2018 Desmond Elliott Prize.



TRENDS

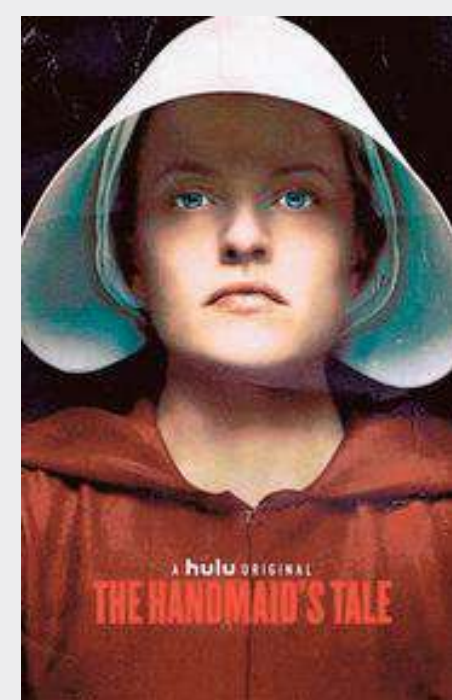
Eco books

For years, climate change activists and denialists have been fighting over its veracity. Now that the results are more evident than ever before, it is making itself felt in literature too. In his non-fiction book, *The Great Derangement*, Amitav Ghosh had argued for the representation of heaving, unpredictable nature in literature and followed it up with *The Gun Island*, where nature shows a will of its own, apart from human design. Internationally, writers like Robert McFarlane are transforming the way we think of nature, taking us to its bowels, giving us the arboreal perspective, as the Pulitzer-winner novel, *The Overstory*, does as well. We can expect more eco books in the coming years as scientists finish mapping the wood wide web – the underground network of microbes that connects trees, on the one hand, and we slide further away from nature, on the other.



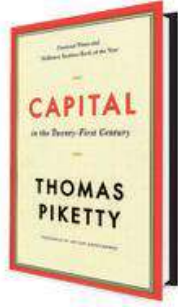
Growing up

If children's literature makes you think of candies, rainbows and neat morals, you are lagging behind in your reading. Contemporary children's literature tackles politics, racial and sexual abuse, dysfunctional families, differently-abled bodies. In India this year, there was *Pops!* by Balaji Venkataraman, where a young boy talks about his trauma resulting from his parents' separation. In Paro Anand's *No Guns at my Son's Funeral*, set in the conflict-ridden Kashmir Valley, violence is just a breath away. In the stunningly illustrated *Lubna and Pebble* by Wendy Meddour, young Lubna arrives at a refugee camp with her father and finds solace in a shiny, hard pebble.



Book to screen

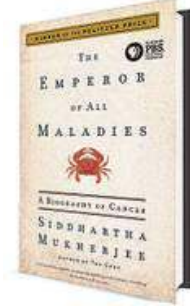
The screen almost took over the written word this decade, with more and more novels being adapted into movies or webseries. How many of us have read *The Handmaid's Tale* or *The Other Boleyn Girl*? If we visualise red-clad women whenever there's a mention of *The Handmaid's Tale*, it's all because of the webseries, which is arguably more popular than the novel. The Netflix adaptation of Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games* had people discussing it everywhere, from the corner chai shack to the hip coffee shop. And now there's no stopping the juggernaut, with authors writing or being commissioned to write specifically with screen adaptations in mind.



Capital in the Twenty-First Century
Thomas Piketty

The publication of French economist Thomas Piketty's book, first in French (2013) and then in English (2014), created waves across the world. After a decade of research and data-crunching, Piketty offered an outlook on global inequality – and conclusions on the relationship between income and wealth. He argues that as a rule, wealth grows faster than economic growth, explaining it with a simple formula $r > g$, where r stands for the average rate of return on capital and g stands for the rate of economic growth. According to Piketty, when the rate of return on capital exceeds the rate of growth of output and income, capitalism automatically generates arbitrary and unsustainable inequalities that radically undermine the meritocratic values on which democratic societies are based. He ends the book by suggesting that governments should levy a global tax on wealth.

The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer
Siddhartha Mukherjee



In 2003, Siddhartha Mukherjee began advanced training in cancer medicine at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. He wanted to initially write a journal, but soon he was on to a book on the biography of cancer. Using the past to explain the present, he delved into the history of the disease to understand the 'shape-shifting' illness; Mukherjee wanted to know why a disease caused by the uncontrolled growth of a single cell was so difficult to battle. Published in the U.S. in 2010, it bagged the Pulitzer Prize the next year, for attempting to answer questions about the larger story of the 'emperor of all maladies': How old is cancer? What are the roots of our battle against this disease? Where are we in the 'war' on cancer? How did we get here? Is there an end? Can this war even be won?

BEST NON-FICTION OF THE DECADE

How the decade stacked up in books on politics, economy, society, sport

End of liberalism and GROWTH OF THE RIGHT



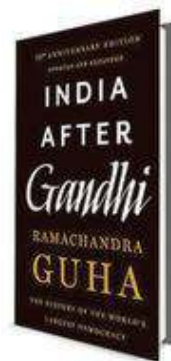
If the first decade of the 2000s was about global terrorism after Al-Qaeda's audacious attack on the twin towers in New York in 2001 and the wars that followed, the second grappled with the rise of the right across the world and the strain on liberalism and democracy as a result. Books reflected the uncertainty and Donald Trump's election as U.S. President in 2016 led to a host of writers trying to make sense of a chaotic administration with Watergate journalist Bob Woodward's *Fear: Trump in the White House* one of the most damaging.

At home, the government of Narendra Modi came to power in 2014 and cemented its presence with an even bigger win in 2019, but its policies particularly on Kashmir, the economy and the social, religious fabric of the country made many writers anxious. In *The RSS: A Menace to India* (2019), leading constitutional expert and political analyst A.G. Noorani argued that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was beyond a doubt "the most powerful organisation in India today" and that its "pracharak (active preacher) Narendra Modi is now Prime Minister of India. Its stamp is evident in very many fields of national life." When Noorani wrote the book, the abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir was yet to happen, neither was the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Bill passed, yet he presciently foretold matters in the introduction, "What is at stake is the soul of India."

In 2014, French economist Thomas Piketty shook the world with *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* in which he tried to answer two key questions: Do the dynamics of private capital accumulation inevitably lead to the concentration of wealth in ever fewer hands, as Karl Marx believed in the 19th century? Or do the balancing forces of growth, competition and technological progress lead to reduced inequalities, as Simon Kuznets thought in the 20th century? Earlier in 2011, Nobel laureates Abhishek Banerjee and Esther Duflo focused on the world's poorest in *Poor Economics*, arguing that "very rich economics emerges from understanding the economic lives of the poor." Historian Ramachandra Guha updated his 2007 treatise, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*, in 2017, taking into account the changes in the republic, the fall of the Congress and the rise of Narendra Modi.

The decade saw a profusion of writing on science and nature, environment and climate change, medicine and sport. As end of 2019 – and another decade – nears, we take a look at the top 10 books, the list by no means the last word on the subject.

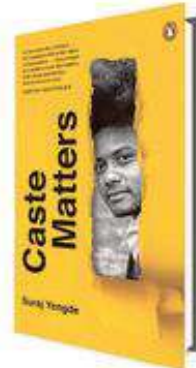
India After Gandhi
Ramachandra Guha



"Because they are so many, and so various, the people of India are also divided." Historian Ramachandra Guha's history of the world's largest democracy, *India After Gandhi*, was first published in 2007. But he updated it in 2017, because in the 10 years since the first book appeared, the Republic had witnessed two general elections; "the fall of the Congress and the rise of Narendra Modi; a major anti-corruption movement; more violence against women, Dalits, and minorities...; a wave of prosperity for some states, regions and classes but the persistence of poverty for others...; comparative peace in Nagaland but more discontent in Kashmir." The manner of the story's telling, he says in the prologue, was driven by two fundamental ambitions: to pay proper respect to the social and political diversity of India, and to unravel the puzzle that has for so long confronted scholar and citizen, foreigner as well as native – namely, why is there an India at all?

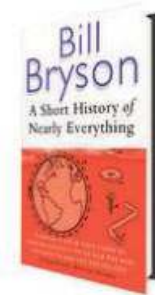
Caste Matters
Suraj Yengde

In 2017, Sujatha Gidla's *Ants Among Elephants* was published, which pulled apart the Indian state for failing to stop the inhumanity its poor and wretched had to endure. Two years later, journalist Yashica Dutt wrote her memoir, a personal story (*Coming out as Dalit*), which was also a powerful social commentary against everyday casteism that often goes unchallenged. Both books talked about "the invisible arm that turns the gears in nearly every system in our country." In July, 2019, Suraj Yengde's *Caste Matters* took the argument forward, wondering when India's progressive Brahmins will take up anti-caste work on a war footing, "for caste in India is an absolute sanction – of the dominant class over the dominated." He writes that despite the academic credentials he had carefully honed – Yengde is with the Harvard Kennedy School in New York – after growing up poor, he was still treated as an "uneducated labourer... vulnerable and unprotected."



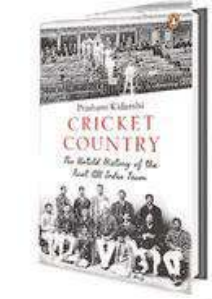
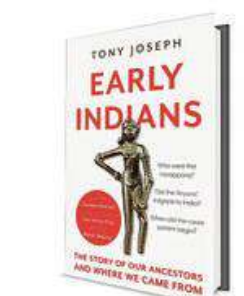
A Short History of Nearly Everything
Bill Bryson

On a long flight across the Pacific, as he stared at the moonlight on the ocean, Bill Bryson (known for his travel books *Notes from a Small Island*, *A Walk in the Woods*, and so forth) felt he knew nothing 'about the only planet' he was ever going to live on. He spent three years researching and finding 'patient experts prepared to answer a lot of outstandingly dumb questions.' The result was *A Short History of Nearly Everything* which is his quest to understand everything from the Big Bang to the rise of civilisation. In his quirky, self-deprecating humour, he tackles the tiniest, 'spatially unassuming' proton, and intimidating subjects like particle physics. He tries to explain how we got from there, being nothing at all, to here, being us. Best known for his travelogues, he makes this a marvellous journey across the universe through science. First published in 2003, it was updated 10 years later in 2013, taking in the major scientific developments of the second decade.



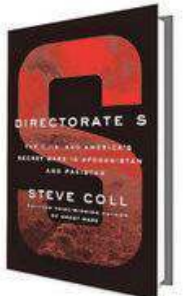
Early Indians
Tony Joseph

The decade saw the science of population genetics advance rapidly and DNA sequencing of ancient remains told us a lot more about where we came from. If David Reich's *Who We Are and How We Got Here* (2018) explained about ancient DNA and the new science of the human past and what we are learning with its help, *Beyond Stones and More Stones*, edited by Ravi Korisettar, (2017) brought our understanding of early human occupation of South Asia up to date. Tony Joseph's *Early Indians*, published in December 2018, makes the point that there was large-scale migration of Indo-European-language speakers to south Asia in the second millennium BCE, and that "it is also true that all of today's population groups in India draw their genes from several migrations to India: there is no such thing as a 'pure' group, race or caste that has existed since 'time immemorial'."



Cricket Country: The Untold Story of the First All India Team
Prashant Kidambi

Ramachandra Guha's *A Corner of a Foreign Field* wove biography with history to chronicle the lives of famous and forgotten cricketers including in the list India's first great slow bowler, Palwankar Baloo, a Dalit who fought against caste discrimination. In Prashant Kidambi's well-researched account of the formation of the first representative Indian team and its tour of England in 1911, two Dalits including Baloo feature. In *Cricket Country* (2019), Kidambi gathers the first all-India team, 'a diverse coalition comprising Indian businessmen, princes and publicists, working in tandem with British governors, officials, journalists, soldiers and professional coaches.' When the side departs to England, it is 'an improbable case of characters,' chosen from several regions on the basis of their religion: six Parsis, three Muslims and five Hindus, including the two Dalits. "The book charts how the idea of India took shape on the cricket pitch," Kidambi writes in the preface.



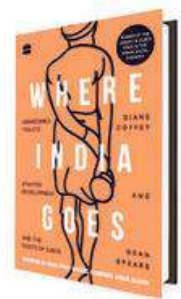
Directorate S
Steve Coll

Journalist Steve Coll gave a first-hand account of America's secret history in Afghanistan (*Ghost Wars*) in 2004. Accessing government files and interviewing senior U.S. officials, he wrote about the CIA's covert funding of a jihad against Soviet forces in Afghanistan, sowing the seeds of Osama bin Laden's rise. In devastating detail, he lay bare the American intelligence's failure to understand the threat from Laden in the years leading up to 9/11. Coll won a Pulitzer, and wrote more books, including a biography of the Bin Laden family. In 2018, he wrote *Directorate S*, the sequel to *Ghost Wars*, picking up the story from two days before 9/11 when the Afghan warlord and commander of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance Ahmed Shah Masood was assassinated, and detailing the CIA and America's secret wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan during 2001-2016. Coll highlights Pakistan's strategy for Afghanistan – join the U.S. war against terror, while also covertly supporting the Taliban, through a highly secretive wing of the Inter-Services Intelligence, known as 'Directorate S.'



Second-Hand Time
Svetlana Alexievich

Second-Hand Time (2016) is Svetlana Alexievich's oral history, the life stories of housewives, party workers, artists, students, soldiers and traders who lived through the fall of the Soviet Union and the two decades that followed it. Awarding her the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2015, the Swedish Academy said her polyphonic words were a monument to suffering and courage. Her books have taken into account the consequences of the nuclear disaster in Chernobyl, the Soviet Union's war in Afghanistan, and the lives of 'Homo sovieticus, who isn't just Russian, he's Belorussian, Turkmen, Ukrainian, Kazakh.' As she records snatches of conversations in kitchens and the streets (1991-2001), we hear one voice saying, "...we finally got the stuff we'd always dreamed of: blue jeans, winter coats, lingerie, decent crockery.... We chose the beautiful life. No one wanted to die beautifully anymore, everyone wanted to live beautifully instead. The only problem was there wasn't really enough to go around..."

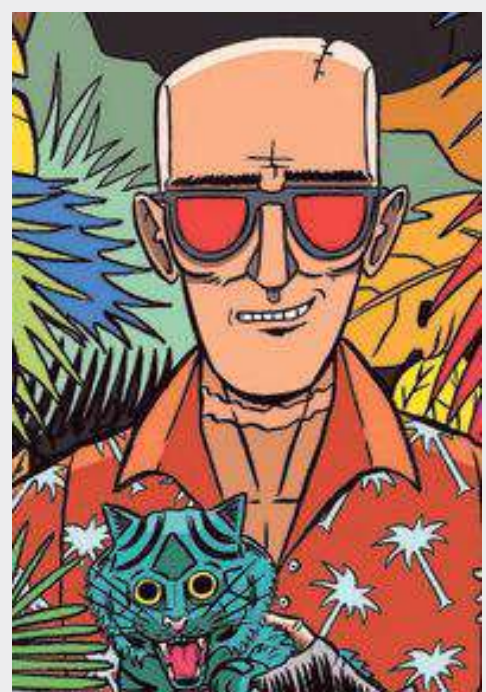


Where India Goes: Abandoned Toilets, Stunted Development and the Costs of Caste
Diane Coffey and Dean Spears

In his foreword to Diane Coffey and Dean Spears' 2017 book, *Where India Goes: Abandoned Toilets, Stunted Development and the Costs of Caste*, the Nobel Prize-winning economist Angus Deaton writes, "It is hard to think of anything more important than how we treat our children... we have come to understand that what happens to children ricochets through their lives and that many of society's ills could be addressed if we were to take more care of the youngest among us. Nowhere is this more true than in India." One of the questions they raise is why economic progress is so incompletely reflected in India's poor infant health. In search of answers they zero in on two – poor sanitation and the reason why it persists in rural India due to unique social forces like caste.

Graphic novels

Gone are the days when graphic novels were considered niche. Authors like Appupen, Amruta Patil, Sarnath Banerjee have been gaining more and more readers in India and then Nick Drnaso's *Sabrina* was longlisted for the 2018 Booker, telling the world that the future of the novel is graphic. With their strong visuals, they create a greater impact than just the written word. The recently released *Aranyaka* by Amruta Patil and Devdutt Pattanaik is creating waves and we can look forward to more of these books in the years to come.



Translations

The International Booker Prize has done much to bring translations to the forefront, with the award money of £50,000 being split equally between author and translator since 2016. The image of Polish author Olga Tokarczuk sharing the stage with her translator, Jennifer Croft, when they won the International Man Booker for Tokarczuk's *Flights* in 2018, became iconic. By that time, regional-language translations in India have already been gaining in popularity and now authors like Perumal Murugan, K.R. Meera, Vivek Shanbhag, Manoranjan Byapari are being read widely in English, thanks to translators like Aniruddhan Vasudevan, Srinath Perur, Arunava Sinha, Ministhy Nair. In the last one year, modern Tamil literature in translation, for instance, has gone global, with the rights of several books being bought by publishers in the U.S. and the U.K.



Small publishers

Olga Tokarczuk's Booker win brought a little known independent publisher, Fitzcarraldo Editions, to the limelight. If in the U.K., the Small Publishers Fair has been taking place since 2002, in India, the Kolkata-based independent publisher, Seagull Books, has been competing with giants like Penguin and HarperCollins since 1982. But it is only in the last decade that small publishers have got the traction they have been waiting for. Navayana, Tara Books, Yoda Press, Zubaan Books are now the go-to publishers for readers looking for something different from the mainstream stuff. This year, Sadia Abbas's *The Empty Room*, published by Zubaan, made it to the DSC shortlist: the small is the new big.

SPECIAL QUIZ

Easy like Sunday morning

Actually, years mean nothing. It's what's inside them: Simon Van Booy

Berty Ashley

1 On January 15, 2001, what began as a side project to allow collaboration on articles prior to entering the peer-review process became active online. What site was this that soon became the most popular point of reference on the internet?

2 On July 15, 2002, this gentleman was elected to be India's First Citizen. He wrote a book, which is dedicated to a young girl whom he met. He had asked her, "What was your dream?" to which the young girl replied, "I want to live in a developed India." Who was this person and what book did he write?

3 On June 10, 2003, MER-A Spirit and MER-B Opportunity were launched and seven months later reached their destination where they would carry out their duty and go where no man-made object had gone before. What is the full form of MER?

4 On June 6, 2004, in a joint sitting of both houses of Parliament, it was announced that a certain language would become the first to be recognised as a classical language of India. Which language was this followed by Sanskrit in 2005?

5 Launched on February 14, 2005, this site was a concept by three former Paypal employees to create a platform on which it would be easier to share videos with others. What site was this whose first video was of one of the founders in a zoo?

6 On August 24, 2006, the International Astronomical Union made an announcement that sparked much controversy.

They had to take this decision because of difference in paths of motion. What happened that downgraded something before a year even passed on it since its discovery?

7 After years of speculation on January 9, 2007, this particular product was released. It was considered to be a revolution in its field as it was one of the first mass-produced to completely do away with buttons. What was this product that now is in its 9th iteration?

8 On September 10, 2008, when this entity was powered up it was, and still is the largest and most powerful of its kind - 27 kilometres long and spans two countries. What entity is this that is basically a long tunnel through which stuff travels close to the speed of light towards each other?

9 In 2009, Indian names took global significance with two individuals winning an Academy Award and a Nobel Prize each. Who were these two people?

10 On January 4, 2010, this building was declared open. A large portion of the building is used for residential purposes, but it is also home to a hotel, corporate offices, and a restaurant. What building is this



Towering (Clockwise from above) Declared open in 2010, this building is the tallest in the world; India's own MOM; and Sanna Marin, the youngest head of state in the world. • REUTERS & WIKI COMMONS

that is the tallest structure in the world?

11 On July 11, 2011, in Africa, a man was operated on for a tumour in his trachea. Since no donor was found, scientists grew his stem cells on a polymer scaffold and eventually planted the new trachea in him. What was this the first instance of in the world?

12 On October 14, 2012, Felix, an Austrian skydiver, broke several records when he stepped off a helium balloon over New Mexico and free fell for 4 minutes 20 seconds. In the process he became the first human to cross a certain speed factor without vehicular assistance. What record did he cross?

13 On November 5, 2013, MOM was launched from a place in Andhra Pradesh and be-

came India's pride and joy. Only the fourth in the world and the first Asian nation to achieve this feat, India also became the only nation to do it successfully on the first attempt. How better do we know MOM?

14 On May 8, 2014, the world's oldest astrolabe, a mariner's navigator tool, was discovered from a Portuguese shipwreck found near Oman. It was supposed to have been used by a legendary explorer on his voyage to India. Who was the owner of this tool from 1498?

15 On March 28, 2015, this lady created a record by becoming the first Indian woman to be world number one in her sport when she beat Carolina Marin. A few weeks later, on April 13, another lady made a history by becoming the first Indian woman to achieve world number one rank in doubles when she and her partner Martina Hingis won the WTA Family Circle Cup. Who were these two outstanding sportswomen?

16 In September 2016, thanks to aggressive conservation efforts by China, this animal was removed off the endangered species' list and moved to 'vulnerable'. With more than 2,000 individuals now, which animal is this that has been the symbol of the worldwide fight for nature?

17 In May 2017, scientists at Ben-Gurion University announced that they had made a breakthrough research in finding a cure for ALS (What Stephen Hawking suffered from). This was hugely, thanks to millions of dollars raised by a 'challenge' which was popular on social media a



year before. Which challenge was this that supposedly made one feel how it was to have ALS for a few seconds?

18 In June 2018, a team known as the 'Wild Boars' went exploring after a practice match but were hit by monsoon rains. They became trapped and after 18 harrowing days, all of them were successfully rescued by an international effort. Which country was this and what sport did the Wild Boars play?

19 On April 19, 2019, the very first picture of one of the most mysterious objects in the universe was seen. Described as "a bottomless pit in the fabric of the universe from which not even light can escape," what cosmic entity did the Event Horizon Telescope take?

20 On December 12, 2019, Sanna Marin was sworn in as Prime Minister. At 34 years of age, she became the youngest ever head of state in the world. She also leads a coalition party where 12 of the 19 cabinet ministers are women of whom three are below 35 years of age. Which country does Marin lead?

A molecular biologist from Madurai, our quizmaster enjoys trivia and music, and is working on a rock ballad called 'Coffee is a Drink, Kaapi is an Emotion'. @bertyashley

LETTER FROM A CONCERNED READER

Decade-old nonsense

Respected Madam/Sir,

Immediately I will ask one question, whether your esteemed newspaper is preparing oho aha whole-decade-has-finished type nonsense articles? 100% you are doing, don't lie. How I know? Because Madam/ Sir, newspaper all young people and youths are only working in the office no? Any retired people are there? Never. Because first of all we are retired. Second of all retired people are not having cool factor and all. Some new film will come in talkies and youth journalist will say this is amazing film, I have never seen such film before, landmark in history of culture. Retired person will say moodu thambi moodu. Your whole life is only 15 minutes long, have you seen Kappal Othiya Tamizhan? No? You have seen nothing. Some buffoon made some stupid film in which people are going into each other dreams and doing Mohiniattam in slow motion means we should forget everything?

What youths are knowing about olden days. Two-three days back I went to photocopy shop to get birth certificate photocopy. In front of me in line two-three youths. I thought what these fellows have come to shop empty-handed? No papers, no nothing. Just standing like that as if museum. But when they came to photocopy man they said, "Uncle, give 2-3 printout, document is in

email." Photocopy man said, "No problem, printout ready."

I went to the boys and said, "Thambis, what and all technology these days. How you people managed before mobile phone and internet and email and all?" They said, "Uncle, what do you mean before mobile phone and email? Ha ha ha. Which period you are from? Whether you are classmate with Raja Raja Chola? Since my birth itself, phone and email and all is there. Life before that I don't care, it is your problem."

Madam/ Sir, this is why I am saying your newspaper will publish some nonsense, ayyo 2010-decade-gone-away type lamentations and jeremiads. Instead you go and ask some retired person. Hello, Madam, how life has changed since last 20 years for you? Seruppu only will come. Same house, same family problems, same fruits and vegetables, same novels, same nonsense films, same traffic jam, same plumber and electrician doing fraud, same Tirupati Balaji listening some days, not listening other days. Same Suhasini has stopped acting in films. Same Goutami has also stopped acting in film. But whether hero actors will stop? Never, till tooth is coming out of nose they will act and act and overact. Same cricket is on TV morning and night. Same children behaving like nonsense. Same housing complex people having same chicanery thoughts. Same onion price rising, decency reducing but news programme shouting same. Same two Olympics gone and India is

thinking next Olympics full medals. Same politician on poster. Same ladies are scared to go out at night. Same NRIs coming and telling I will show how to improve whole country within 15 days. And then after 15 days they are going back because too much humidity.

What has changed? Only date. So please don't put nonsense articles about 2010 decade. Instead you please see whether any improvements can be made in 2020 decade. If we start now maybe 2-3 improvements can happen. Where is zero calorie, sugar-free rose milk? Where?

Yours in exasperation,
J. Mathrubootham



• GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

NORTH			
♠ A Q 8 5 3			
♥ K Q 10 7 2			
♦ J			
♣ Q 6			
WEST			
♠ 10 6			
♥ A 5			
♦ Q 8 4 3			
♣ A 10 9 8 4			
EAST			
♠ K 9 7 2			
♥ J 9 8 4 3			
♦ 7 2			
♣ J 7			
SOUTH			
♠ J 4			
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♦ A K 10 9 6 5			
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GOREN BRIDGE

Unmakable?

North-South vulnerable, South deals

Bob Jones

Three no trump was headed for down one or more, but South came up with a startling line of play when he was able to read the opponents' table action.

South played dummy's queen of clubs on the opening lead after much thought. East hesitated slightly before playing the jack. South interpreted this as a play from a doubleton jack, rather than a singleton. South then ran dummy's jack of diamonds, which held the trick after a slight hesitation by West. South led a low spade to his jack, winning the trick when East played low. Declar-

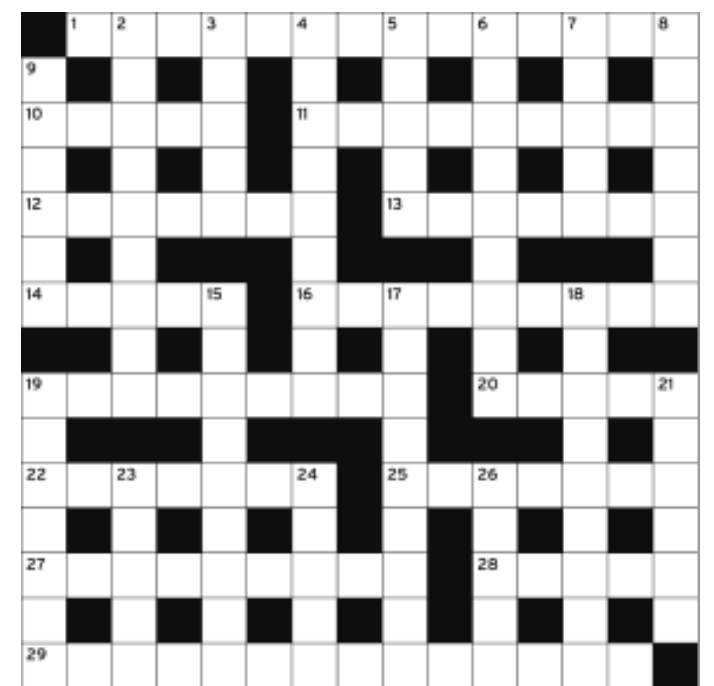


er cashed the ace of diamonds and both opponents followed. South was sure that West had ducked the queen of diamonds earlier. West wouldn't have ducked with only three diamonds, as South, had shown six during the auction. He was already playing West for five clubs after trick one, and now it looked like he also had four diamonds. Should West also hold the doubleton ace of hearts, there was a ray of hope. South led his heart and

West innocently played low - a decision he would soon regret. Dummy's king won the trick. Declarer cashed dummy's ace of spades and exited with a low heart to West's now bare ace, discarding a diamond from his hand.

West cashed the ace of clubs and led a club to South's king, but South led his last club to West. West cashed another club, but then had to lead a diamond into declarer's king-10. Not bad!

THE SUNDAY CROSSWORD NO. 3080



Across

- 1 Account in which a trio of figures are detailed? (5,5,4)
- 10 Not a byelaw broken by archbishop (5)
- 11 To evoke old memory, emulate town crier (4,1,4)
- 12 Son taking protein didn't get up (5,2)
- 13 Unprofessional hairdresser half-smiles, makes uncertain movements (7)
- 14 Bird who wrote satire (5)
- 16 Petitions with legal process stowed in large containers (9)
- 19 The Spanish are heartlessly appropriating legendary Kazakh: it's complicated (9)
- 20 Part of flight in fastest Airbus (5)
- 22 Place that attracts interest (7)
- 25 Excluded slang for 'paw' in large lexicographic work (7)
- 27 Almost always taking bass in lively song (6,3)
- 28 Singer with some frisky Lieders (5)
- 29 Nice bun that guy bolts as a guilty pleasure (7,3,4)

Down

- 2 Evil cheat desecrated font (9)
- 3 Like youngster's first pint in place by the Med (5)
- 4 Direction and date announced to arrive at vast body of water (6,3)
- 5 Dodgy info; Trump's dropping behind otherwise (2,3)
- 6 Insensitive, possibly, Donald's offering

- 7 I will be given a large quantity; perfect (5)
- 8 Alarmingly silent son becomes soldier (7)
- 9 Oliver's family dances (6)
- 15 Chinese way of thinking is superior to every single European PM (9)
- 17 Buy goofier backless pants please (1,3,2,3)
- 18 Conceited fellow's keen to get a Guinness (5,4)
- 19 'Turkey's head,' butcher groaned (7)
- 21 Well-mannered denizen muffling flush (6)
- 23 Laid up, poorly, missing date with a dish (5)
- 24 Bat, seen as it sleeps, by cat (5)
- 26 To be understood, with seconds to spare, finish drawing (3,2)

Solution No. 3079



Statues fall on stony ground

They force the memories of leaders on a hapless people, using taxpayers' money

I.J. Singh

Old soldiers never die, they just fade away. In a 1980 interview with Barbara Walters on ABC's news magazine 20/20, former U.S. President Richard Nixon paraphrased the catchphrase into 'Old politicians usually die, but they never fade away.'

The authoritarian states of the 20th Century had a tradition of erecting larger-than-life statues of dead leaders. Instead of looking stately, they sustained painful memories of the tyranny of dictatorship. With a penchant for outsize statues, India, a democracy, has a few questions to answer.

Should democracies build memorials to dead leaders, have museums to showcase their achievements? Should citizens be co-opted into such political ventures which stink of party agendas? Should taxpayers' money be spent on the construction of statues or should political parties or their leaders come up with their own funds?

It is an irony that the memories of leaders are forced on a hapless people, and it is the taxpayers' money that is being used for constructing and maintaining them.

In 'history books'

Shouldn't these leaders be remembered for their deeds and misdeeds, virtues and vices and unintended and intended blunders only in "history books"? In the present age of in-



SREEJITH R. KUMAR

formation technology, no one needs statues to know the contribution of a leader. Spending precious resources on construction of statues and memorials is a sin in a country where the majority live in inhuman conditions without the basic amenities.

Public memorials incur not just the construction cost but also recurring expenses in their upkeep and security. If the government is interested in building monuments, it must focus on commemorating a concept rather than an individual — for instance, the Statue of Liberty or the Eiffel Tower.

If the state should build mu-

seums, they should be themed on the ideas of great leaders who promoted unity in diversity, constitutional values, nation building, the green and white revolutions, space science and technology, industrial development and reforms in the field of education and medicine.

Political parties still wishing to go ahead with statues of their leaders must spend their own party funds and build them in their own land — surely the size of the statues will reduce. National leaders should write in their "will" that their assets be put to use for construction of hospitals, educational and research institutes

and the uplift of the have-nots. Political parties must come on a common platform and suggest that the land used for memorials be put to use for purposes that add to the Gross National Happiness.

The younger generation is more practical and do not want eco-fragile rivers, beaches and forests to be used for erecting statues of national leaders. Dear politicians, will you fade away for a good cause or will you leave behind a turbulent society with irritants of dynastic frictional syndrome?

inderjit@home-n-home.com

Spending precious resources on statues is a sin in a country where the majority live in inhuman conditions

Embracing imperfection in the Instagram era

Airbrushed faces and plastic smiles are posted to crave attention and seek validation

Megha Mathur

After being bombarded with so much perfection on Instagram and Facebook, I often wonder where have all the real people gone. Airbrushed faces, plastic smiles, manufactured memorable moments and rehearsed spontaneity — I can't help but spot the obsession with appearing perfect at all times.

We are barraged with a volley of images photo-shopped to perfection. We look at picture-perfect relationship moments and postcard-like vacations, feeling sorry for our mundane lives.

We seldom realise these moments and posts are more a projection of how people want us to perceive how their lives are and not the reality.

European vacations, dreamy-eyed couple selfies and professional accomplishments are shared to crave attention, seek validation and acceptance and feel good.

The people who look at these posts rather wistfully, unknowingly start comparing their own lives with that of a person who has posted a snippet from his "perfect" life.

We live in times where we have more, yet we are more dissatisfied. We wear plastic smiles, while our minds are clouded by darkness.



We have a thousand friends on social media, yet we battle loneliness and depression more than the earlier generations.

Race to nowhere

This has made us more vulnerable than the earlier generations. Even as we look happier on social media, in reality we have become more vulnerable to depression. We have reluctantly thrown ourselves into an invisible race of keeping up with the Joneses.

So perfection is the biggest myth that a consumeristic society is selling to us. It is so easy for cosmetic companies, apparel manufacturers, and the beauty industry to play on our insecurities, push our buttons while making money out of our miseries. They won't be able to get under our skin if we were at peace with our imperfections, both real and imagined.

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Putting a name to a face

How not to deceive people into believing that you recognised them and remembered their names

Sourabh Dutta

I was all of 19 when I discovered that my brain had two major defects.

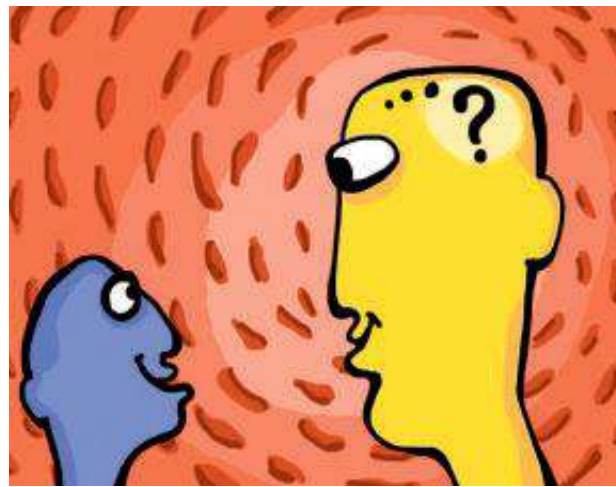
"Agnosia is a medical condition in which the patient fails to recognise familiar things. A common type of agnosia is one in which the patient struggles to remember the faces of people. It's due to a defect in the base of the brain," my professor said in class blandly.

"Another common brain defect is one in which the patient fails to remember the names of familiar people. This problem arises from a defect in the left side of the brain."

It was a moment of truth for me. But, over the years, I perfected the art of deceiving listeners into believing that I recognised them and remembered their names.

The other day, I bumped into my daughter's class teacher. "Hello, doctor," she greeted me with that ring of familiarity which I dread. "Hello, madam," I replied putting on my most ingratiating smile. "So how is my little one doing?" "Doctor," she gushed, "It's very sweet of you to say, 'your little one'."

"The last parent-teacher meeting must have been quite a strain on you," I said. "Oh!" she said puzzled. "But my child is only one year old. Isn't that too early for



SREEJITH R. KUMAR

school?" "Already a year old, is he?" "She, not he. Doctor, I don't think you recognise me at all. How could you forget the little girl who had passed greasy, green potty for more than a month?" "Aha! How could I forget," I said, trying not to gag on my pista ice-cream.

Exclusive club

Another time, I met a doctor who said, "I didn't know you worked in this institute. What a pleasant surprise!" I replied with equal cheer, "Hey! After so many years! And how's the family?"

"I will always remember the wonderful time my family had with you and your wife," he said. "For old times' sake, why don't you join us for dinner tonight," I invited him.

We had a wide-ranging

conversation over a lavish buffet. But he refused to drop any hint. "There, you, in your halcyon days," he showed a photo. For a moment, I panicked, thinking my agnosia had got so bad that I couldn't recognise even myself. Luckily, my wife said, "Oh, come on, that's not him. And honestly, I can't recognise you or your wife."

Finally, I asked him gingerly, "Aren't you Dr. Mahesh Gupta, who had trained in Sydney?" "No," he replied in shock. "Aren't you Dr. Bhajendra Nath Pande, my former colleague from Lucknow?"

Two jaws dropped in unison. I wasn't alone in this universe. "Welcome..." I said feebly, after a pause. "...to the club," he completed.

sourabhdutta1@gmail.com

Depression, the melancholy minus its charms

It stems from a combination of factors; it can't be separated from feelings of inadequacy and guilt

I. Satya Sundaram

In the modern world, more and more people face stress, loneliness, depression and mental breakdowns. Depression is generally associated with desolation, perpetual sadness, ennui and restlessness.

Doctors say depression is the denouement of a combination of factors — over-expectation from parents, friends and self, an unusual dependence on technology and friendship and an inability to handle setbacks.

Depression and feelings of in-

adequacy and guilt cannot be separated. Fluctuations in mood do not constitute depression. So are temporary emotional responses to the challenges of life. Depressed people generally exhibit reduced interest in things that cause happiness.

Genetic basis

Research has revealed that the genetic basis of depression overlaps significantly with that of other psychiatric disorders such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

Very often, the importance of



sleep is underestimated. Dr. Allan Pack of the University of Pennsylvania says in a *Time* magazine article that "sleep is

not just a passive state but a fairly active state on the molecular level."

Depression needs to be handled with the same seriousness as with any other mental aberration. Our goal is to create a healthy society. All of us should maintain a reasonable level of mental health. But individual differences are there. We have to accept the reality and strike a balance between too many rules and no rules. When we face an adverse situation, it is desirable to seek professional help.

It is necessary to develop a

stoic attitude early in life. In his work *Managing Your Mind*, S.H. Kraines has said that life is neither a rose garden nor a garbage dump; it's both.

He declared: "There are arid places that can be removed. We, like our environment, are in process of becoming; we are capable of modification and change."

Kraines offers this advice: "Don't accept anything you don't wish until you have used all your imagination and sincerity and graciousness to make it better."

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FEEDBACK

Letters to the Magazine can be e-mailed separately to mag.letters@thehindu.co.in

Cover story

The vivid description of the police violence unleashed on the Jamia Millia Islamia campus presents a surreal picture of a mythical battlefield ('Beaten, never broken'; December 22). Physical injuries apart, the trauma of otherness the students underwent due to unprovoked police excesses inside the campus cannot be brushed over. The first-person accounts of the victims with the heavily violated campus as the backdrop are upsetting.

AYYASSERI RAVEENDRANATH

The students have shown great courage in confronting the strongarm tactics unleashed against them by the police and have not shown any signs of backing down. Students taking to the streets is a real headache for the dispensations in the States and at the Centre, and tackling them could prove to be an extremely tough proposition.

C.V. ARAVIND

This all happened due to majoritarian politics. The strong protests by people from all walks of life against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) demonstrates the danger of giving a massive electoral mandate to any one political party. There should be an equally strong Opposition in the law-making house. Keep that in mind when you go to the polling booth.

SUNNYKUTTY ABRAHAM

Not only was the police's attack on the Jamia students brutal and atrocious, they broke their own rules when they bludgeoned and baton-charged the students on their upper bodies, heads and hands. Further, entering the campus without obtaining permission from the principal was against all ethics. Even taking for granted that their entry was to flush out anti-social elements, why should they then beat the guards, who were ex-sevicemen?

D. SETHURAMAN

The JMI alumnus Tahir Akhtar should read the full text of the CAA from *The Gazette of India*. It is an absolute canard that he has to prove his citizenship. The CAA does not apply to any Indian citizen. It only applies to those who entered India on or before December 31, 2014, and are currently



in India on temporary papers. No entrant after this cut-off date is covered by the law. The facts are being completely ignored and unfounded rumours are being spread to cause this massive unrest across the country.

RAM

Masseur danger

This is in reference to 'Mystic masseurs' (Photo essay; Dec. 22). Traditional masseurs are not medically well-versed. They blindly apply oil over the body and give massages to relieve pain and stiffness. Sometimes these massages can create complications involving bones, nerves and muscles. One should always take a medical opinion before going to these masseurs.

J.P. REDDY

Dishonour killings

It is a sad reality that in some societies in Asia, women are still considered by the majority of the men as personal property to be owned by marriage, controlled and treated at will (60 Minutes: 'Qandeel was murdered because of people's judgement'; Dec. 22). Hypocrisy and a false sense of honour rule the minds of the men in patriarchal societies, prompting them to resort to honour killings. The case of Qandeel Baloch is very poignant and it is unfortunate that brave women like her are considered "heroes" by society only after their deaths and not in their lifetimes.

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI

Identity crisis

To argue that Hindus have migrated out of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh due to aspirational reasons ('Carving out a South Asian identity'; Dec. 22) is simply laughable. To add injury to insult, the author writes blithely about conversions through marriage. Everyone is well aware how serious the problem of abduction and forced conversion of Hindu girls is in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Even the U.N. has taken note of it and requested Pakistan to take appropriate action — though it never does.

ABHISHEK BAKSHI

More on the Web
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Good design scores in empathy

'Elegant usability' must be the watchword while building public spaces

SRI KRISHNAN

Break the walls, let them fly high

Stop imposing our views on children, give them the right to choose what they want to be

FUHAAR ARYA CHOUDHURY

Celebrate similarities, overlook differences

Simple wisdom from a band of migrant workers in a busy Bengaluru locality

SARITA TALWAI

This page consists of reader submissions. Contributions of up to a length of 700 words may be e-mailed to openpage@thehindu.co.in. Please provide a postal address and a brief background of the writer. The mail must certify that it is original writing, exclusive to this page. The Hindu views plagiarism as a serious offence. Given the large volume of submissions, we regret that we are unable to acknowledge receipt or entertain queries about submissions. If a piece is not published for eight weeks please consider that it is not being used. The publication of a piece on this page is not to be considered an endorsement by The Hindu of the views contained therein.



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GOD'S COUNTRY

The decade of the unholy man

The last 10 years have been an unholy mess for the nation's 'spiritual machinery industry' with the exposure and conviction of a string of godmen

Urmi Chanda-Vaz

Wild Wild West, the Netflix show that chronicled the sordid truths about Osho's life, predictably created a big stir. National embarrassment for us, yes, but who doesn't like a story of the fall of a self-styled godman? Then this November, the world's leading streaming platform decided to tell another grizzly story – *Bikram: Yogi, Guru, Predator* – a documentary on the Indian-born American yoga teacher and founder of Hot Yoga, Bikram Choudhury, exposing the celeb guru's many misdeeds.

And just when you thought you'd seen the worst, it turned out that another 'godman', Nithyananda, had established an entirely new country. If the Kailaasa website is to be believed, this is the place every Hindutvavadi's dream can come true. Sure, we've all laughed at this latest spectacle, sure Ecuador and the Indian Ministry of External Affairs have both denied the existence of such a 'nation', but the sheer audacity invites slow claps. Only an Indian 'godman' could be accused of abduction and rape, be a fugitive from the law, and still make statements like: "No stupid court can prosecute me for revealing the truth." When the truth of his crimes finally catches up with him, he will have to join his infamous cohorts in prison.

The average Indian's 'faith' and gullibility have enabled Nithyananda and his ilk for long. But if crime statistics in the last decade are anything to go by, the tide seems to be turning. Or is it?

Wholly unholy

Nithyananda can be counted among the top three falls from grace in the last 10 years – the other two being Asaram and Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh. Following their arrests, there were violent standoffs between their supporters and the police, triggering curfews, injuries and deaths, before the convicted were finally put behind bars.

Asaram and Singh enjoyed fabulously privileged lives, with millions of followers, tremendous social influence, and colossal material wealth that could put the country's top industrialists to shame. Beneath their deceptively simplistic ideologies, personal charisma and so-called social causes, bubbled an underworld of corruption, sexual exploitation and murder.

That Singh's conviction took 15 years to come through (the first allegations of rape surfaced in 2002), and that at least three eyewitnesses in Asaram's case were killed, shows the extent of the power of such 'godmen'. And these are just the high profile cases. Some others include Rampal Singh Jatun a.k.a. 'Sant' Rampal Ji, who was convicted in 2018 on similar charges of confinement and murder, and Jyotigiri who absconded after videos of him surfaced in August amid allegations of sexual abuse of minor girls and women.

And just when you thought you'd seen the worst, it turned out that another 'godman', Nithyananda, had established an entirely new country

Being shady
The judiciary has lifted the lid on many such criminals in the last decade. Media accounts also tell us of other 'lesser' cases like that of Vijay Kumar a.k.a. Kalki Bhagwan and Nirmal Baba, who were convicted for tax evasion in 2019 and 2014 respectively; and Gurinder Singh Dhillon of the Radha Soami sect who was recently embroiled in the Ranbaxy shares scandal.

These cases of fraud and embezzlement also remind one of Sathya Sai Baba, whose death at the start of this decade was followed by the discovery of unprecedented sums of hoarded wealth. The bushy-haired godman escaped public shaming, but it left millions of his followers confused, betrayed and heartbroken. A lot of the donated money they thought had been used for charity was sitting in their guru's private chamber all this time.

New guru on the block?
The greatest outrage by such 'gurus' has invariably been for their alleged sexual crimes. It's invariably the vow of abstinence from sex that seems to give the Hindu ascetic an unbeatable 'moral edge', so when charges of sexual assault and depravity come to light, it becomes the worst kind of breach of trust.

Curiously, the domino-like fall of many spiritual leaders has occurred mostly under BJP's watch. Did the skeletons in these collective closets get too numerous to hide? Or perhaps the global #metoo movement shook the conscience of a few good men in the judiciary, who finally took action against these unholy men.

Or perhaps it's a case of mass transference of faith. Now that the leader of the nation is styled as an ascetic himself, someone who is charismatic, a great orator, who does 'boulder yoga' on World Yoga Day, 'meditates' in a cave in Kedarnath (so what if there is a cameraman along?), under whose reign the Supreme Court has ensured that *mandir wahin banega*, and one who promises to magically solve the nation's problems, why do we need anyone else to direct our *bhakti* towards? Sure, we still have the Sri Sris and the Ramdevs and the Jaggi Vasudev to go to for breathing exercises or soap opera or *gyaan*, but we all know who the big boss is.

Perhaps the new decade will prove some of us sceptics wrong; perhaps it will make saffron the new black.

The writer is a culture writer and an Interfaith Studies scholar.

Bandana Tewari

In the recently concluded Qatar India 2019 Year of Culture in Doha, the exhibition of nine contemporary Indian clothing brands quickly established what can be seen as a paradigm shift in Indian fashion. With a focus on craft and handwoven textiles, seamless co-creation with the artisanal clusters of India, and most importantly, an overall emphasis on slow fashion, these creatives exemplified Indian fashion's entry into an Age of Nuance.

Relatively young, these designers – Mia Morikawa and Shani Himanshu of 11.11, Sohaya Misra of Chola, Gaurav Khanijo, Santanu Das of Maku, Chinar Farooqui of Injiri, Shreya and Priyali Mewara of Ode to Odd, Pallavi Dhyani of Three, and Urvashi Kaur – represent a certain design mindset that is sweeping across India. They may constitute a microcosm in a much larger industry, but they are, nonetheless, an undeniable chorus of change in the fashion world. While global fashion has accepted that the need of the hour

THE CUT
How green is your gilet?
The biggest shift in Indian fashion in 2019 came not from dramatic variations in cut, colour or sleeve shape but a more conscious way of being that now seems like the only way

is to slow down, streamline production, reduce inventory and edit collections – in India it's this rung of designers – homegrown, small-scale, mindful, craft-oriented fashion businesses – that is leading the way for conscious, not conspicuous, consumption.

Foot soldiers

Fashion, worldwide, has a high energy consumption; according to The Business of Fashion's *The State of Fashion 2020* report, it accounts for 20 to 35% of microplastic flow into the ocean and outweighs the carbon footprint of international flights and shopping combined. We cannot turn a blind eye to this global problem any more.

Of course, we have had pathbreakers from the earlier generation – James Ferreira with his zero-waste ethos, Rajesh Pratap Singh, Abraham & Thakore, Ritu Kumar, Rohit Bal, Tarun Tahiliani, Anamika Khanna, Sabyasachi, among others

– with their exemplary work with artisanal communities of India. But what differentiates most young designers today is their acknowledgement of the negative impact of their profession on the environment, and their willingness to address it at a design level. Most importantly, their focus is not just on the end result – the valuable product – but the entire supply chain, which allows them to address sustainable practices on every level: from sourcing and packaging to the after-life of the products they have created. They may be small-scale businesses, but they are the true foot soldiers of sustainable fashion in India. The year 2019 saw a surge in this dialogue on sustainability; 2020 will be even bigger because, in all honesty, there is no other way out. No one can do business on a dead planet.

Craft champions

What this means is that the first-tier designers of India who have amassed great wealth and success from the wedding and festive-wear industry of India, those who seldom stuck their neck out to address the problems of consumption, pollution and wastefulness in their business practices, need to take a cue from this younger generation of designers. They will be called out for excesses that harm the environment. So far, few have taken meaningful action whatsoever to make a change, in spite of their size and clout. It is the young designers, along with craft champions – Good Earth Sustain, Rahul Mishra, Sanjay Garg, Pero, Anavila,

Slow fashion Actor Sonam Kapoor in a khadi attire designed by Anamika Khanna, Rajesh Pratap Singh and Rohit Bal. • PTI



Take-make-waste

But now consider this: when a 16-year-old Greta Thunberg, a radical climate activist and the latest luminary on the *Time* cover, calls out seasoned politicians and ordinary consumers like you and me for apathy toward climate

change and is able to inspire and galvanise 7.6 million people to protest on the streets in the Global Climate Strike in September, it is time to know the tide is turning and time is ticking for every designer, producer and consumer to be on the right side of history. We cannot continue to cohort with an industry that dumps, according to a statistic by Ellen MacArthur Foundation, one garbage truck of clothes in landfills every second. That is the equivalent of filling one and half Empire State Buildings per day with discarded clothes.

So, as the Indian market grows, it is imperative that we have changemakers, however small, who infiltrate and upend a regressive system of take-make-waste; seek consumer responsibility; and collectively resuscitate a dying ecology.

To reduce this sustainability movement in India to a 'trend' is abominable, to say the least. The young brazen designers of India, working with limited budgets and resources, should be applauded and upheld as the shining example of what can be achieved on a grander scale. Never underestimate the small rumbles that reach a crescendo.

The writer is a lifestyle journalist and sustainability activist.

FLAVOURS

Raise a toast to the momo

It is not just our window to the world, but reminds us, in these difficult times, to keep our doors open

Rahul Verma

Tucked away in a corner of my kitchen is a little bamboo contraption that gave us all great joy once upon a time. It came from Kolkata and was introduced to us as a momo steamer. Shape your momos at home, place them in the steamer, cook them for some minutes – and you can have a plateful of piping hot dumplings to be eaten with a sizzling red chilli-garlic dip.

Even a decade or so ago, momos were not as ubiquitous as they are now, so the steamer came in handy. Today, I don't know where the steamer is, because I don't need it anymore. These days, you can spot a momo stall in every street corner in every city. Someone enterprising steams momos at home, and then makes a small profit selling them on the street side. If and when I have a yen for momos, all I have to do is step out of the house and stop by at the nearest momo stall.

I am often asked if there is a street food item that can be described as pan-Indian. There are quite a few popular dishes you will find across India, including the omnipresent dosa or the tandoori chicken, but I think the humble momo has piped every other dish to the post of being pan-Indian.

Everyone's fancy

It's not surprising to see why the momo has caught everyone's fancy – from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Kutch to Kolkata. It's the seller's dream item, needing neither much capital nor effort. You knead some dough, boil minced chicken with ginger and mild spices, shred it and keep it aside. You make small balls of the dough, shape them into bowls and stuff them with the shredded chicken (or pork in some happy circles) or shredded and boiled cabbage, then close the mouths and steam them. Voila – they are done. Ci-



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ties such as Delhi even have some centralised kitchens where the dumplings are prepared in large quantities for momo sellers to take away.

For those who love their momos, the dumpling is like no other. For one, the name is easy to pronounce: It is a lot easier than, say, katlambe, a fried poori of north India, or radhabollobhi, a stuffed poori from Bengal. Momos are easy to eat – unlike, say golgappas, for

which you need a wide mouth and military-like precision to enable you to pick up and pop the mint-water-and-potato-chickpea-filled ball into your mouth just before it breaks or spills. Momos are easy to customise, too. You like your food hot? Then just smear your momo with the hot sauce that it is usually served with. You like your food bland? Ignore the sauce. If you like fried food, momos ably step in – for you get some delicious fried momos, too. A momo is an otherwise healthy (despite the flour casing) and hearty snack. And a plate of momos (sometimes served with broth-like stock) is a meal in itself.

But what's equally interesting is that the momo, unlike its other street food cousins, also occupies the high table. In

fine dining parlance, of course, it is known as the dim sum or shumai, or the Japanese gyoza. The casing may vary, as may the filling. Sometimes, egg is added to the flour. The fillings can be anything from sautéed shrimps and ground meat to steamed and chopped asparagus or water chestnut and Chinese mushroom. Hotels and restaurants even serve dim sum meals, where you can eat all the dumplings you want.

Bizarre forms

Momos have started taking on new forms as well, some more bizarre than others. They are not just simple steamed dumplings anymore but are dumped in gravies or cooked in a tandoor. I was urged to try out the tandoori momo at a Mussoorie restaurant that served Oriental food. The momos were fiery red in colour, and I wanted to call for a fire brigade when I had my first bite. I am not going back there.

Be that as it may, the little dumpling has a story for us. I would like to think that it shows, in some small way, the opening of doors of our very insular world. I remember the time when the only place we got momos was at a complex that we called Tib Dhabbs (short for Tibetan Dhaba) in north Delhi. Then eateries near Chanakya Cinema started serving momos, and soon some of the Northeastern outlets in Dilli Haat had momos on their menus. Today, the dish that is believed to have come to India across the Himalayas from Tibet is as much a part of our food lexicon as, say, the South Indian vada or the Mumbai pav bhaji, the Bengali phuchka or the North India papri chaat.

Let's raise a toast to the momo. It is not just our window to the world, but reminds us, in these difficult times, to keep our doors open.

The writer likes reading and writing about food as much as he does cooking and eating it. Well, almost.