

# FINANCIAL TIMES

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## 25 Indians to watch

By FT India team

From a political scion and an attacking batsman to a crusading web entrepreneur and a 'Potato Prince', these are India's rising stars



### P olitics



#### Priyanka Gandhi Vadra

The charismatic scion of India's pre-eminent political dynasty has shied away from the family business, preferring to raise her children and study Buddhism. But her election-time appearances for mother, Sonia, and brother, Rahul – and her resemblance to her grandmother, former prime minister



Priyanka Gandhi Vadra

Indira Gandhi – keep Indians tantalised over a potential entry into full-time political life.

### **Arvind Kejriwal**

A former tax inspector turned right-to-information activist, he was the driving force behind India Against Corruption, last year's campaign for a new anti-graft law. Aiming to tap middle-class disillusionment with existing political parties, he is now forming his own.

### **Nitish Kumar**

Chief minister of Bihar since 2005, this veteran socialist politician has brought economic growth, law and order and hope to what was one of India's poorest, most-backward and worst-governed states. His humble persona combined with a strong track record on development mean that many see him as a potential future prime minister in a coalition government.

### **Anurag Thakur**

Former cricketer and BJP member of parliament since 2008, Thakur's ascent through the party's ranks to the presidency of BJP's youth wing put him in the spotlight in 2012. The BJP is said to be grooming him to take on Rahul Gandhi of the Congress party, particularly since Varun Gandhi, another scion within the BJP's fold, has proved rather ineffective.

## **Sports**

### **Virat Kohli**

No one can replace Sachin Tendulkar, but the arrival of this dashing young batsman has softened the blow of the great cricketer's impending retirement. With Bollywood looks to match his bold stroke play, the 24-year-old Kohli helped his cricket-mad country win last year's World Cup – and raised hopes of more to come.

### **Saina Nehwal**

This small-town girl from the northern state of Haryana is a formidable youth icon. Her many international titles have



Virat Kohli

changed the face of Indian badminton and a bronze medal at the London Olympics this year raised hopes for Rio 2016. Will she be able to break through the Chinese wall?

## Entertainment

### Anurag Kashyap

India's answer to Quentin Tarantino, Kashyap makes gritty, personal films about the country's underbelly: terrorist attacks in Mumbai for *Black Friday*; drug use and prostitution in *Dev D*; and eastern India's brutal coal mafia in this year's two-part epic *Gangs of Wasseypur*. He cut his teeth writing *Water*, Canadian director Deepa Mehta's Oscar-nominated film, among others.

### Sneha Khanwalkar

A film composer who eschews the usual Bollywood penchant for cheesy pop, Khanwalkar favours "found sound", which she gathers by travelling the Indian countryside and picking up on obscure – and not-so-obscure – folk traditions. She hosts MTV's Sound Trippin, in which she recreates that experience for viewers more used to Celebrity Big Brother knock-offs. Not yet 30, Khanwalkar already claims two of the best modern Bollywood scores, for 2008's *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!* and *Gangs of Wasseypur*.



Sarnath Banerjee

### Sarnath Banerjee

India's greatest graphic novelist, whose project "Gallery of Losers" was shown on billboards across London during the Olympics. A Goldsmiths college graduate, his books – 2004's *Corridor* and 2007's *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* – detail alienation in both modern and old India and have set the standard for a burgeoning art form on the subcontinent.

### Irrfan Khan

In a sea of "heroes" – as Bollywood's buffed-up supermen are called – Khan stands out as an actor. A master of subtlety and character, he has found crossover success in Hollywood in films including *Slumdog Millionaire* (he played the cop), *A Mighty Heart* (with Angelina Jolie) and *The Amazing Spider-Man*. Up next is a role in Ang Lee's adaptation of the Man Booker prize-winning *Life of Pi*.

## Rohini Devasar

A painter and printmaker trained in New Delhi and the UK, Deveshar uses printmaking and video to explore the rhythms of growth in the natural world, and their digital echoes. Her work, shown widely at home and internationally, stands at the intersection of art and science and is influenced by her passion for astronomy.

## Gauri Shinde

A director of more than 100 advertising films for major Indian brands, Shinde put her focus on the big screen this year with her writing and directorial debut, *English Vinglish*, a blockbuster hit about the massive social fault line in India between those who speak English and those who don't.



Gauri Shinde

## Social/Academia

### Gita Gopinath

One of the youngest women to win a tenured economics professorship at Harvard, Gopinath uses complex maths to probe one of the world's most pressing problems: how to solve sovereign debt crises. Still only 40, she appears frequently as a commentator back home, calling for a radical overhaul of her own government's increasingly precarious financial position.

## Sunil Abraham

India's government has developed a worrying taste for internet censorship, making plenty of work for one of the country's most respected online civil advocates. Head of the Centre for Internet and Society, Abraham is trying to wean New Delhi off its taste for crackdowns in India's fast-growing corner of cyberspace.

## Manoj Kumar

The Naandi Foundation CEO has persuaded big Indian corporations to support programmes that battle hunger and the maltreatment of girls, raise educational standards and provide sustainable livelihoods. His Midday Meal programme feeds 1.2 million each day; and its experiments with social enterprises make it one of India's most innovative charities.



## Abhijit Banerjee





Abhijit Banerjee

A development economist at MIT and author of *Poor Economics*, Banerjee carries out randomised-control field trials to cut through propaganda and evaluate the real impact of programmes to help the poor.

### **Susmita Mohanty**

Literally a rocket scientist. A protégé of Arthur C. Clarke, with stints at Nasa and Boeing, Mohanty was the youngest ever member of the International Academy of Astronautics. She's now an aerospace entrepreneur. Her company, Earth2Orbit, recently launched its first client satellite.

### **Swati Ramanathan**

Could online confessions help to stop India's corruption crisis? This thought inspired [www.ipaidabribe.com](http://www.ipaidabribe.com), a site where those forced to pay up can tell their stories anonymously. Established as part of the Janaagraha initiative that Ramanathan co-founded to improve life in Indian cities, the project has spawned imitators in half a dozen countries.

### **Business**

### **Binny Bansal**

As co-CEO of Flipkart.com – the “Amazon of India” – along with Sachin Bansal (no relation), he has turned a Bangalore-based start-up into the country's most exciting e-commerce business. They have won millions in venture funding and a loyal urban customer base by speedily delivering everything from books to kitchenware.



Swati Ramanathan

### **Phanindra “Phani” Sama**

India's buses are booming, as travel demand rockets but rail capacity stays stuck. Those seeking tickets online are most likely to do so through RedBus. Dreamt up when he couldn't get tickets for a trip, Sama's site stitches together the country's disorganised bus system, and saw its 32-year-old founder sell his 10 millionth ticket this year.



### **Parmesh Shahani**



Parmesh Shahani

Bringing new insights to a stuffy 115-year-old Indian conglomerate isn't easy, nor is being an openly gay man in India's still-traditional business culture – but Parmesh Shahani manages both, in his role as the founder and head of an ideas and innovation laboratory within the \$3.3bn Mumbai-based Godrej group.

### **Anurag Behar**

Engineer and former CEO of Wipro Infrastructure Engineering – a sister company of software giant Wipro – he has previously run the group's charitable initiatives in education. Now Wipro's chief sustainability officer, he is driving diversifications into water and clean energy, part of a new company focus.

### **Cyrus Mistry**

The man with the biggest shoes to fill in corporate India takes the reins at Tata in late December, replacing Ratan Tata, a man viewed as close to a living saint. The first non-Tata family member to run the nation's most important business, he faces plenty of questions about how – and whether – to continue his predecessor's dash for global growth.



Cyrus Mistry

### **Roshni Nadar Malhotra**

The CEO and executive director of the \$5bn Indian IT giant HCL Corporation successfully combines business, social enterprise and philanthropy. Malhotra is the driving force behind Shiv Nadar Foundation's VidyaGyan Schools in Uttar Pradesh, providing free education to children from poor, rural families.

### **Jang Bahadur Singh Sangha**

Known as the "Potato Prince", Sangha oversees one of India's largest and most modern farming operations – and has demonstrated the transformative impact of technology in a country of small-scale subsistence farms. Armed with a master's degree in plant pathology, he has made modern farming profitable – and almost cool.

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