

Air Enthusiasts at Aero India 2019



Spinning Magic and Winning Hearts

Aero India 2019: The anticipation for this event starts building months in advance as it opens doors to the public who are treated to some brilliant air displays. With tickets booked well in advance, we were anxiously waiting for the day to catch our pilots in action and taking control of the skies.

Unfortunately, the Aero India show started on an extremely sombre note with a terrible accident which happened just before the inauguration day when two aircraft of Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team (SKAT) collided in mid-air. We were once again exposed to the uncertainty and fragility of life. But as they say, the show must go on and the Aero India 2019 kicked off with a fitting aerial tribute being paid to the fallen.

We were slated to visit the air display on the penultimate day. Given the kind of

traffic that Yelahanka experiences during these five days and our experience of the previous show, we left early and were cautious enough not to miss the entry gates as we neared the base. As we parked our cars and made our way towards the security check, we were pleasantly surprised to see the familiar red and white beauties, the Hawks of the Surya Kirans over us. Instead of their customary nine aircraft, they flew seven and performed for 15 minutes. It was heart-warming to see these men flying in the skies, which is what sets them apart from us, their grit, their commitment and their strength to bounce back within such a short span of time. Our hearts were brimming with awe and respect and even got a little teary eye too as later, we got to know that they performed as a tribute to their friend and teammate.

By this time, we had reached the viewing area which was teeming with people and aviation enthusiasts. Soon it was time for the Yakovlev Aerobatic Team from UK to take over the skies. The Yakovlevs are stunners and their thrilling manoeuvres made the crowd scream at the top of their voices. As the Yakovlevs touched down, we heard a familiar sound of set engines, India's Light Combat Aircraft the Tejas appeared out of the clear blue skies. Oh what a beauty! No wonder it sounded familiar as by now, by virtue of living close to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited we have then flying over us every day. Tejas received its final operational clearance some days earlier and will now be inducted into Indian Air Force.

As the Tejas landed amidst loud cheer from the people, a Sukhoi-30MKI fighter