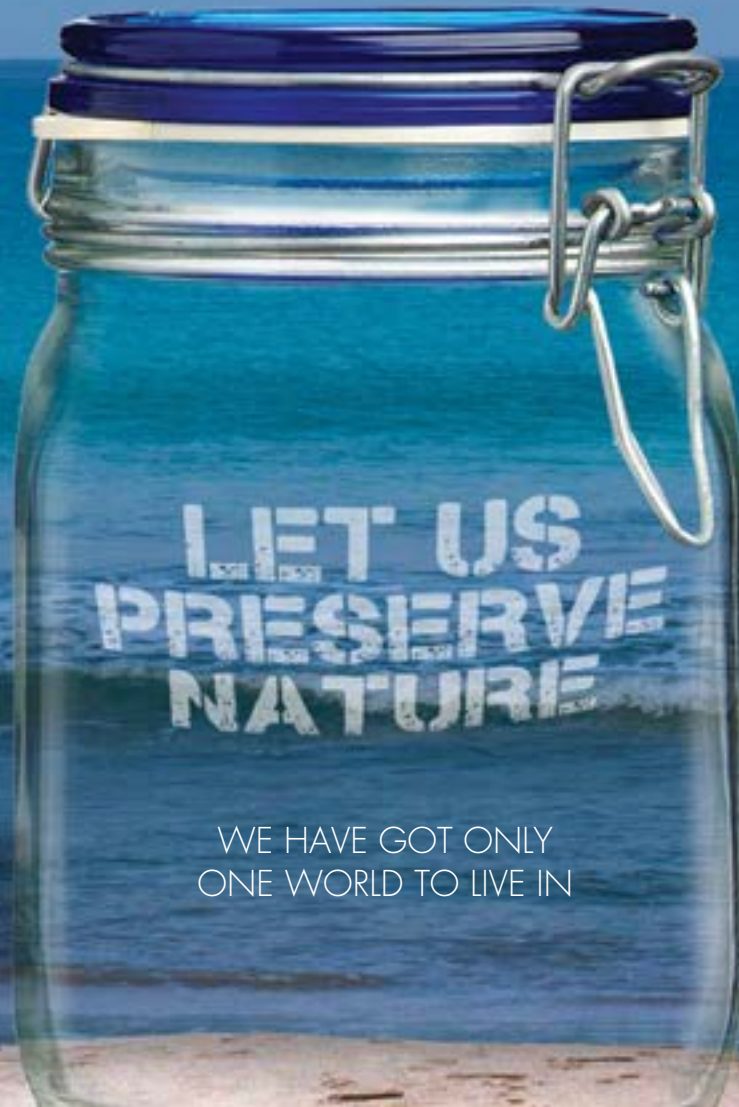


GNC

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 4  
MAY 2016

# CONNECT

FOR MEMBERS OF THE GANDHINAGAR CLUB ONLY



WE HAVE GOT ONLY  
ONE WORLD TO LIVE IN



**DEAR MEMBERS,**  
What a month May 2016 is turning out to be. First the totally unexpected wet weather that brought temperatures

down and drenched Chennai like it was our North East Monsoon. And then the big election to the State Assembly that turned out to be a cliff hanger. And for us at GNC, May 2016 also marks the beginning of the great transformation – a project that will address the one short coming at our otherwise beautiful club, the grand renovation of the deck and lobby area.

At the end of the three month time-line that the project entails, we will be welcomed into a truly world class lobby cum lounge and a beautiful sports bar/ café/lounge, something that all of us can be truly proud of. I'm sure that a lot of you are as excited as I am by the potential this project offers and I can hardly wait for late August/ early September, by when the project would be complete.

Back to GNC Connect, this May issue has plenty to pique our readers interest. Pavithra Venkatagopalan continues with her multi part series of her trip to beautiful Ladakh and this one makes for quite a read. RV Rajan is back with a humorous take on something that seems to have taken over our lives, the 'smart' phone. Thanvi Srikant interviews the Tennis marker, Saravanan (also known as Yesu)

in our special series covering the long serving employees of GNC. Running this series has been especially meaningful – for the happiness it brings to our staff, knowing that we care about them enough to know more about their lives and achievements, to understand better their world and the hardships that they face. Babu Jacob chronicles his near death experience in 'My narrow escape from a wild elephant'. And as always, two outstanding recipes that are apt for the summer months with kids at home, from the kitchens of Ruchira Ramanujam and Rajani Sivaram. All this and lots more in this May issue of GNC Connect.

*Regards,  
KP Balakumar (B103)  
Committee Member – Library, Magazine, Website and PR.*

**Team GNC Connect:** *Thanvi Srikant Vinay Kamath Sowmya Kumar Arjun Janani Govindankutty Karthik Athreya*

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**Dear Members,**

For Members of GNC 1st May 2016 will be remembered as one of the finest days in the chapter of club’s history.

We understand that ever since inception never has an EGM been conducted on the day convened. It has always been postponed for want of quorum to the following week. This record was broken and the EGM was held at 10 am on 1st May 2016. By 10 am, the time fixed for quorum, around 140 members signed the register and within the next few minutes a total of 217 members signed the register. The meeting hall was overflowing and many members could not be seated for want of seats. No AGM / EGM has ever had such a gathering at the hall and resolutions taken up & decided with such huge presence. The presence of such large numbers goes to prove that members are very keen in the development of the club and will come forward when called for such occasions.

This is in direct contrast to the EGM held on 13th March 2016 convened for the purpose of presenting the annual revenue budget for the period 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017. The meeting had around 20 people signing for the quorum.

As a result the meeting was postponed to 20th March 2016. Here again we had 26 members signing the register and only 7 of them attending the meeting. With 9 committee members being present the total was only 16 in the meeting hall. Bit surprising considering the fact that the budget prepared & circulated revealed a deficit of Rs.12,94,439/ and a note warning that it is expected to increase in the coming years. The budget was passed as presented in the EGM held on 20th March 2016.

This committee is committed to prepare & present a paper on the Challenges & Imperatives on the financials of the club - year 2020 based on current income levels & would be expenditure levels factoring the unavoidable annual increase year on year due to inflationary costs in labour, maintenance & replacements. Alongside we would also propose measures to counter the deficits and trust that the members come forward and attend the meetings to choose the best way forward as they may decide fit. This meeting is planned in August 2016.

Coming back to happier times, we are delighted to inform that the General Body has sanctioned the request of the General Committee which was brought in by way of Resolutions in the EGM held on 1st May 2016 with overwhelming majority.

The Resolutions that were tabled for approval were:-

1. To approve financial sanction of Rs.1.4 crores ± 10% for the renovation and refurbishing the following areas.
  - a. The main Entrance to the club
  - b. Lounge
  - c. Main Deck area
  - d. Area overlooking the lawn
2. To approve financial sanction of Rs.45 lac for the repairs and relaying of the 3 Synthetic Tennis Courts damaged during the floods in December 2015.

3. Admission of 50 Resident Members at Rs.8 lac + taxes.

All the resolutions were passed by overwhelming majority of members. For the resolution on taking New memberships the General Body approved admission of 50 Resident Members at an entry fee of Rs.8 lac + tax in open category.

This was truly a memorable meeting and will go down in the annals of GNC history as one of the best attended General Body meetings.

We were humbled by the presence and participation of such large number of Members and the General Committee expresses its hearty thanks to each one of the members who attended the EGM.

While on the one end we deem it as unstinting support to the performance of the General Committee, we are aware of the responsibilities & expectation on us. We assure that we will leave no stone unturned to repose the confidence placed on us, by hard work, performance, commitment and transparency at all times.

We expect to commence the renovation by the 20th of May and complete the entire work between 75 to 90 days. During the period of renovation we will endeavour to ensure that minimum inconvenience is caused to members. We request you to kindly bear with us during this period.

The proposed project will enhance the functional features of the LOBBY & DECK with 32 seats in the lounge area and 51 in the sports bar. Additionally the bar counter in the deck would have 6 seats. Kitchen would be equipped to provide snacks & beverages during the day both in the Lobby and deck area.

“Through the day usage” of these areas gives scope for additional revenues. We wish to create a mini library space in the renovated Lobby area to facilitate usage by elders, subject to availability of space. The Tennis courts which have been extensively damaged by the flood is being taken up for complete renovation and will be ready by 2 months from the date of commencement of work.

Request letters for Resident Membership has been received from 107 aspirants for the available 50 openings. Application forms will be issued in the first week of June and filled in forms will be received and processed on a First Come First Served basis. Upon admission of 50 resident members, the club would get an additional funding of Rs.4 crores by way of entrance fee. This amount would offset the expenditure of around Rs.1.50 crores for the renovation of Front Entrance, Lobby & Deck area and around Rs.45.lacs for the renovation of tennis courts. The balance funds of around 2 crores would help to add up to the corpus of the club.

The next two months will witness a lot of activities in the club. Painting of exteriors will be taken up in the first week of June. A mini Health Spa comprising of massage, Pedicure & manicure is proposed to be set up in the basement area of the swimming pool toilets.

Automatic rescue device is being fitted to the Lift. This would facilitate the lift move to the nearest floor and for the doors open when there is a power failure thereby ensuring the safety of the members/passengers.

Few of the staff from accounts, bar, catering & sports have been elevated and given increments in consonance with their new positions.

This we are sure would motivate all other employees to perform better and make themselves eligible for such recognition in future.

Surveillance cameras will be fitted on both Western & Southern side of the compound walls to enable the club & the Police to monitor the movement of people on the Fourth main road & Crescent Park road. This committee has to the best of abilities strived hard to provide “Excellence” in all spheres. Excellence is achieved ONLY through hard work and perseverance. The committee has pursued its dream of uncompromising standards in its offerings, be it Facilities, Service, Infrastructure and Connect to Members. We are proud to have raised the standards to the levels of “envy” amongst some of the best clubs in the country. We are in no doubt that GNC will occupy the pride of place once the proposed project of modifications is taken up & completed.

We promise a transformed club in the next three months. Requesting your continued support & co-operation in our efforts to make GNC the most sought after destination by our own members.

#### **Note on Renovation of Front Entrance, Lobby & Deck area**

#### **Objective**

The intention is to utilize the large space in the lobby & deck by incorporating facilities and make the space functional. Front entrance will also be better utilised by having a ramp on one side and easy paced stairs on the other. The areas taken up for renovation would ad grace to the building commensurate with the stature of the club.

#### **Features**

- Front entrance will incorporate a ramp
- Broad and easy paced stairs will lead to the reception
- Lobby will have wooden flooring with lounge seats & TV station
- Picture windows will provide a view of the lawn and sports bar
- Entry and exit doors opposite each other will facilitate smooth movement
- A walkway will lead from the entrance to the Lobby through to the lawn and to the swimming pool
- A Mini library and aquarium will complete the lobby that would have 32 Lounge seats
- The deck will host a Sports Bar, Leather Furniture, TV Station, Leo Coffee Bar with 51 seats.

#### **Highlights**

- Architect of international repute – M/s. Natraj & Venkat Architects, Chennai.
- Contracts Only through transparent tendering process
- Execution in 3 months from the date of commencement
- Installation of Energy Saving equipment
- Minimum discomfort for member usage during renovation

#### **Benefits**

- Creation of additional space & facilities,
- Day time usage of Lobby & Deck area.
- Will attract more foot falls
- Guaranteed increased revenue earnings.
- Aesthetic Entrance, Lobby & Deck area
- Maximum view of lawn & Adyar River

Thanks & best wishes.  
*Ashok Sarrangan*  
– Secretary (AI29)

# RENOVATED FACILITIES AT GNC

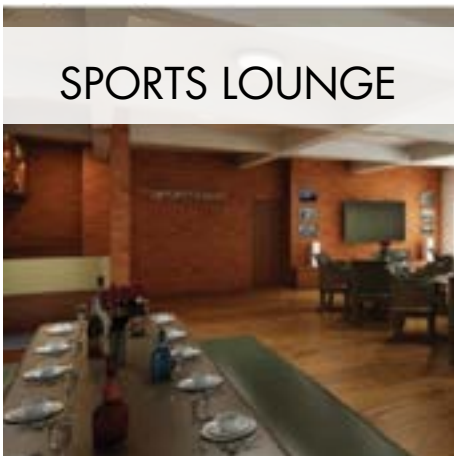
ENTRANCE VIEW



SPORTS LOUNGE VIEW



SPORTS LOUNGE



LOBBY VIEW



OFFICE ENTRY VIEW



TROPHY WALL - LOBBY



LAWN VIEW





# YOGA FOR KIDS!

*Shwetha Seshadri  
D/o R Seshadri (S 170)  
Kindergarten teacher & yoga trainer  
with special training in Kids Yoga*

From my past experience as a Kindergarten teacher I've noticed that children, even the pre-schoolers get worked up if they find an activity difficult. They either start crying or run away from the activity and refuse to try again. At times like this, I bring out my special trick: EASY FUN YOGA POSTURES! It works like a charm. The children think I'm playing a game with them, in a way I am. While they have fun, they also unknowingly channelize their negative emotion into something more positive. They forget what happened ten minutes ago and are more open to revisiting the task. It's a win-win for all!

*"Quick Yoga breaks" in the classroom have helped kids to refocus and release tension.*

Our kids live in a world today where school pressure, iPad and television have taken over their lives. Yoga can help them unwind and bring out their innate joy. It helps kids physically by improving their balance, flexibility, coordination, strength and emotionally by bringing a sense of calmness and peace and in addition, it improves concentration.

A simple Breathe in and Breathe out can work wonders in the classroom but it's about how to make this more fun and keep the kids interested!

While creating a Yoga plan for my kids, I keep in mind Dr. Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligence. I include lots of music, games, stories, art & team work to make it a wholesome experience.

Many schools now provide Yoga few times a week, making it compulsory for the kids. If your child's school doesn't have one look up a studio nearby that offers "kids yoga".

Until then, here are a few effective yoga postures you could try at home. Do it along with your child and remember to make it fun and interesting! For example, you can play a 'Freeze' game using the below postures. Play their favourite song and allow the kids to dance/jump/run. Now pause the song somewhere in between and call out a posture, 'Camel' (Ushtrasana), for instance. The kids freeze in Camel for ten seconds and rest in mouse for another ten seconds. Don't forget to follow up every back bend with a forward bend.

### **Yoga @ home for kids:**

Begin with a whole body warm up by rotating the joints, starting with the neck and ending with the ankles.

Follow up with two rounds of Surya namaskaar and continue with the following postures. It would be better to do it in the same order.

### **Vrikshasana (tree)**

Benefit: This balancing posture helps improve focus and concentration.



### **Simhasana (Lion)**

Benefit: This posture strengthens the throat and helps improve pronunciation and speech.



### **Ek-pada Rajakapotasana (Swan)**

Benefit: This posture massages the intestines and help in digestion and relieving constipation.

Counter Pose: Relax in the same posture but stretch your arms out in front of you.

### **Ushtrasana (Camel)**

Benefit: This posture helps to open the shoulder, chest and back. Regular practice will help improve posture.

Counter Pose: Relax in mouse posture, with both arms stretched in front of you and feet below your thighs.

### **Shalabasana (Locust)**

Benefit: Similar to Ek-pada Rajakapotasana. This posture also exercises the back and abdominal muscles.

Rest comfortably with one cheek on your palm and stay still in this posture for at least five minutes.

While staying still in the posture, bring your awareness to your breath and feel the way your body expands and contracts with every breath.

# MY NARROW ESCAPE FROM A WILD ELEPHANT

- Babu Jacob (J126)



Image Source : Brad Wilson

At the age of 30, I became the first Branch Manager of Kainatty ADB of State Bank of India during the period 1973-77. (ADB is the acronym for Agricultural Development Branch and Kainatty was part of Kalpetta, now the District Head Quarters of Wayanad District, Kerala). The area of operation of my branch was the entire South Wayanad (then part of Kozhikode District), bordering both Karnataka and Tamilnadu, spread over a vast area of more than 600 sq kms in 3 taluks. The more backward North Wayanad was then part of Kannur District.

On the inaugural day of my branch on 28th August 1973, there was a festival in Wayanad. The meeting was held in Vijaya Talkies,

attended by thousands of people, thanks to the huge publicity through newspapers. Wayanad being a coffee belt, the SBI invited Mr Reddy IAS, Chairman of Indian Coffee Board Bangalore to inaugurate the branch. For the first time in Kerala, may be even India, (and perhaps the last time!), two of the oldest Malayalam newspapers carried banner headlines with a big photograph of Mr Reddy lighting the lamp, with Yours Truly standing next to him, and that too in the FRONT PAGE!

To start with, I had a contingent of a dozen staff, most of whom were officers. My boss had reposed his faith in my ability to live up to his expectations. 101 loans were disbursed on the inaugural day.

Within four years, my branch could sanction more than 15,000 agricultural loans with 97% recovery, and was second only to Palghat ADB, which had a head start of three years, compared to my branch. One day, a group of about 12 farmers from a very remote, non-descript village came to meet me, after they came to know through newspaper reports about the good work done by my branch, especially the ease of getting loans at very reasonable rates of interest. Their village, on the banks of river Kabini, near the Karnataka border had no electricity and to reach the village one has to traverse several kilometres through a dense reserve forest. The villagers cultivated paddy in rich soil. Water was plenty thanks to the proximity to river Kabini.



They wanted my bank to give loans for purchasing diesel pumpsets for over 100 farmers, all Wayanadan Chettys.

I called Mr Cherian Xavier, the field officer in charge of Pulpally village, the nearest village from which these farmers came. Everybody called him just Cherian.

"Cherian, I want you to visit their village and give me a report about the feasibility of extending loans to these farmers. Please tell them when you are going"

"Sir, with due respect to you, I am sorry to tell you that I will not undertake a hazardous journey to a village located inside a dense forest, infested with wild animals, especially wild elephants".

*However, our joy was short lived. The wild tusker got wind of our presence (He might have heard the noise of the jeep shifting gears), and came charging! It was a nightmare!*

I said, "Cherian, don't be a coward. Be brave",

"Sir, I have a family to support and I am their sole bread winner. If something happens to me, who will take charge of them?"

"Cherian, I will come with you. We are going tomorrow". Cherian could not say anything.

On a sunny, pleasant Wayanadan morning around 9 AM, Cherian and I set out on our journey in a jeep driven by owner cum driver Madhavan Nair. He too, I was told later, had his own reservations and apprehensions about this adventurous trip, but chose not to give vent to it. I noticed Cherian carrying a small clothe bag.

I have never seen him carrying such a cheap looking bag when he used to go for inspections. I wondered why he is carrying it and what it's content was, but did not ask him about it.

We passed through Meenangadi, Sultans Battery and Pulpally, all small towns en route. After covering more than 50 kilometres, we reached an undulating forest track, an apology for a road, hardly 8 ft wide. Tall canopies of forest trees masked the sunlight and it was dark even at noon.

And then-----"Sir, a wild elephant" whispered driver Madhavan Nair. Yes, we could see a huge pachyderm, on the forest track about 100ft ahead of us, with its rear side facing us and its tail swaying to both sides, merrily munching on palm leaves! Luckily for us, the wind was blowing from the pachyderm's side and so he did not hear the jeep sound. (If the wind was blowing from our side, or if he was facing us, instead of his back facing us, we would not have a chance to escape). It must have been a male tusker from its huge size, and a loner too. Such wild male loners, referred to as OTTAYANS in Malayalam are feared by villagers as they are ferocious and can attack humans without provocation. I was sitting in the front seat, to the left of the driver. We could hear our own breaths in the stifling silence. I signalled to Nair to reverse and he did. But there was no space to reverse to the direction we came, since it was a very narrow stretch. However, we were lucky to spot a spot which barely allowed the jeep to turn back.

We heaved a sigh of relief and thanked God for saving us from an ottayan!

However, our joy was short lived. The wild tusker got wind of our presence (He might have heard the noise of the jeep shifting gears), and came charging!

It was a nightmare! Nair was a smart driver. He accelerated the jeep and reached an unbelievable speed, incredible for an old jeep like this! The angry husker came charging at breakneck speed and the gap between him and our Jeep was narrowing steadily. And then, Cherian Xavier became our saviour! He took out a few fire crackers from his clothe bag, ignited them one by one and started throwing at the mammoth creature in hot pursuit of our Jeep, chasing us relentlessly. On hearing the sound of crackers bursting, the startled elephant stopped, hesitated for some time and beat a hasty retreat! Cherian saved us. Or God saved us and Cherian was just an instrument in the hands of God! Perhaps he had a premonition of what was in store for us and hence thought of carrying a few fire crackers, just in case! He did not tell me: "I told you-----". But the expression on his face did not conceal what he did not say in so many words! I thanked him profusely for saving me.

We heaved a sigh of relief and thanked God for saving us from sure death. We reached the branch by evening and narrated our harrowing experience to the staff and officers present. Cherian became a hero! He saved not only himself, but also the Branch Manger and the driver from sure death. Cherian Xavier became Cherian the Saviour!

The next day I was laid up with fever and had to take leave! The fright got me the fever! And the next day's newspaper had a story "Wild elephant kills a farmer in the forest north of pulpally"-Yes, most probably it was the same wild tusker which scared us!

# CAN WE GIVE UP ON THE COMPOUND WALL?

- Zoyab Alihussain (Z-101)

**“Stick no bills”, “Bill stickers will be prosecuted”** - sometimes in English, sometimes in Tamil are cries often seen on the compound walls of Chennai. But no pleas, or warnings, or threats of prosecution (and I dare say, or even of execution) can deter the determined ‘Bill Stickers’ of Chennai. With a single-minded agenda of disfiguring the city, they are a vapid, secretive breed - moving around in the darkness of night, rarely seen but always felt - in constant search of virgin territory to conquer.

But this essay is not about them. It's about the Compound Wall.

The compound wall is perhaps easily the most ignored element of any building - until such time it has been badly disfigured. And then it becomes an eyesore. Very rarely does it get a second look for its own sake. The best ones may be remembered as reference points or serve as landmarks. But beyond that, it is difficult to imagine a compound wall ever winning any awards, medals or trophies in a beauty contest.

Interpreting a compound wall design is somewhat similar to analysing a person's handwriting.

At a micro level, it can tell much about the background of its owner or builder and even about the neighbourhood. At a macro level, it holds up a mirror and can make or destroy the image of a city. And that's the theme of this write up.

But how can a humble compound wall be held responsible for the image of a city? What harm can it possibly do?

The very first message that a compound wall sends out is the physical staking of territory - a natural and primitive instinct common to all living beings. There can be no debate on this. “Keep out. This is my turf”. In Chennai, as in most Indian cities, this message is vehemently accompanied by an additional corollary “..... And keep out of my sight as well”.

And that's when things start getting bad for the city.

To begin with, there are high, blank compound walls - for example, as on Boat Club Road - that are arrogant, snobbish and unfriendly.

To keep the bill stickers at bay they generally capture some additional public space in the guise of landscaping that in cheerless Chennai can actually be a good thing - not that the rich and powerful should be allowed to get away without suitable compensation. To take away footpaths and force pedestrians to walk on the road is very nearly criminal.

The second type and by far the vast majority are medium height compound walls, just tall enough to prevent eye contact with people on the street. In fact, just about right to serve a variety of nefarious purposes as well.

\* If it is a sensitive locality, goons of political parties take it as their birth right to disingenuously paint oft-repeated messages and pictures - a form of visual tyranny - that nobody really wants to see. Show me a civil servant who has the guts to prevent this and I will show you a gladiator.

\* If it is a run down locality, or better still, a long stretch of an “orphaned” wall of some public building, then what better use can anyone think of than to go and pee on it.





Image Source: flickr.com

Further, since it is not likely that anyone will take issue, it is perfectly alright to dump the street garbage there as well, and then crib and wait for Exnora (or someone similar) to step in to clear the mess.

\* If it is a mixed residential locality, then all kinds of vendors - from the ubiquitous ironing man to unlicensed eateries - find the compound wall a very comforting backdrop. It's good to face business head on and not have surprises popping out from behind. Over time they build up such a fair customer base, that if the issue of their removal is ever put to vote, they would win by a handsome margin. The common refrain would be "Poor chaps! Where will they go?" thereby missing the whole point - why can't the whole business be regulated? Who will clear away the paper cups and plates?

\* If it is a labour intensive commercial or industrial locality, then the compound wall offers a very robust shoulder for pavement dwellers to pitch their little huts against. Why bother about commuting or renting a place when it is so easy (and completely cost free) to live next to your work place.

The rest of the family can just fend for themselves and create all the nuisance they like; being fully aware that the sympathy vote will be with them. Agreed that this is an over simplified and rather a dehumanising version of reality. But any discussion on that is beyond the scope of this essay whose central figure is the Compound Wall.

The third type of Compound Walls are the ones that commit suicide by disfiguring themselves, long before anybody else can do it to them. Like a chicken pox infected face, their surfaces are covered with small sharp stones that are not easy to paint or stick upon.

If medium sized cities in India (like Surat, Nashik, Mysore and a few more) have managed to get their act together, the scene in Chennai appears to be getting worse and completely out of hand. Not satisfied with mere compound walls, the bill stickers are now gleefully attacking flyovers, grade separators, subway walls, metro rails, lamp posts and even public transport - with callous disregard for aesthetics, public opinion or safety.

A great game of see-saw is being played out. "The more walls and columns you put up, the bigger our canvas becomes."

In parting, it may be of interest to know that in neighbouring Sri Lanka, the call from its most famous architect Geffory Bawa, to bring new ideas on compound wall design, has brought a refreshing change to the image of its capital city of Colombo. In all public buildings, parks and gardens walls have been replaced by "see-through" steel grills that allow views both ways. In our own Chennai, wherever this has been tried - Nageshwar Rao (Luz) and along the Marina, for example - there is a "feel good" atmosphere created that a compound wall just cannot generate.

The World's most guarded buildings - The White House, The Buckingham Palace, The Rashtrapati Bhavan, (their vast grounds, notwithstanding) - are all enclosed by high security steel grills that allows views both ways. In a figurative sense, they create an atmosphere of trust and transparency.

# PRINTS IN THE SNOW

- Pavithra Venkatagopalan, PhD (P229)



Image Source : Rahul Ogra, Mystic Himalayan Trails Manali

Do you hear the silent roar?

Home. You are safe. You are protected. What if your home was a flat rock at 4000 meters above MSL. You get to and from home by walking on a narrow ledge and there's a precipitous fall on either side? There's harsh cold winds that attack you from all sides. Sometimes, there is snow and ice. A single mis-step can send you crashing down onto the unforgiving slopes. Stumbling is not an option. Food is sparse. You hunt and carry your prey up the slope to keep it safe from the wolves. You don't have a cave. You raise your cubs on the flat, narrow ledge you live on.

This is the home of the snow leopard- *Panthera uncia*. This cat has evolved so well to adapt to these conditions that sometimes you question if it wasn't a creation of God, meant to rule the Himalayas.

I am going to refer to the snow leopard as a "She" because a creature this independent, efficient, poised, graceful and fearless is surely a "She". This medium sized cat weighs between 35 and 52 kgs (female and male, respectively). Compare this to our Bengal tiger (*Panthera tigris*) which often weighs above 250kg! Her tail is as long as her body and among all the big cats, the snow leopard has the longest tail as compared to its body. This long tail helps her maintain balance while she has to traverse narrow rocky ledges and climb up 70 degree slopes. She has been seen using the tail to cover her nose and mouth to protect against the punishing cold!

She preys on the local herbivores- the Ladakhi urial, the Himalayan Ibex, the Blue Sheep and sometimes a baby yak from the local herder. Her thick, greyish brown coat has dark rosettes that help her camouflage beautifully in the mountainous terrain.

She identifies her prey, waits patiently on a ledge above. She is a clever hunter. When she is confident she can make the kill, she uses her powerful hind legs, pounces on the prey and sinks her teeth into its jugular. Her kill is precise, almost clinical. Once the prey has succumbed, she carries them up the slope and eats patiently. Did I mention that all the prey that she hunts are more than 3 times her body weight?

She can't roar! She is the only big cat who cannot roar! Her mating call is a slightly loud meow. When the female snow leopard is in heat, she stands in the middle of a natural amphitheatre in the mountain and makes her mating call. Could she get any more fascinating?

People have tried many ways to study her, understand her ways. Radio collaring, popular among the big cats in the plains, fail on snow leopards because they affect their balance. Moreover, they have to be sedated for the collaring. Can you imagine walking up on a ledge, groggy and unable to find your balance? Sadly, some of them lose their footing and fall down the precipitous slope. The best way to learn more about them is to just watch from a distance and learn!

Previously, I had left you wondering if we had seen the elusive snow leopard or not. I hope this explains why a bunch of ordinary humans from Chennai, Trichy and Bangalore, so ill equipped to deal with the altitude and extreme weather would go to great lengths to catch a glimpse of this extraordinary creature.

Now, let me take you back to Ulley, where we saw the Tibetan wolf. After we spot the Tibetan wolf, we are ushered into the lovely homestay by Acho Norbu, our spotter and his son.



If you recall, Ulley is a tiny hamlet of about eight houses. We quickly settle in for the day with some butter tea and share exciting stories around the bukhari.

Because there is barely anyone around, the snow leopards are known to move about freely around the village. The next morning we leave by van, with very high spirits and head out into the Spongo valley. We are dropped on the side of the road and we climb down into the valley. The Spongo chu is frozen and we have to take careful steps crossing the river. It is daunting to keep your feet on a sheet of ice and walk confidently while you hear the gurgles of the Spongo chu flowing beneath your feet. The guides distract us with humor, lend an ever helping hand and the river crossing is done. Phew!

Acho Norbu suggests we walk upstream along the Spongo chu, based on prey movement. We walk about half a kilometer when the valley forks. We go on the right fork and go about 2 kilometers. We are continuously walking uphill, albeit a gentle slope. The frigid winds and the lack of oxygen keeps us slow and winded. It is about half past one and we stop for lunch, which is just as well, because we don't see any fauna- no birds, no prey and no predator. But it was a lunch with a view! A cold lunch we will never forget. We spend some time chatting while our spotter scans the valley. At a distance we spot a herd of Ibex, but nothing more exciting. By about 3 pm, we turn around and head to our van. Spongo valley has high walls and once the sun goes down, temperatures drop almost instantly and we have to get back before that. A little disappointed, a little cold we head back to Ulley and stay in for the night. Our low spirits are lifted a little when it starts snowing in the night.

The next morning, we pack all our bags and try to head to the next village, Hemis Shukpachen. On the way, we drive past the Spongo chu, when all of a sudden Acho Norbu shouts- Shun!

(Ladaki for snow leopard). We see fresh pug marks on the snow. He gets out of the van and notices that the pug marks lead into the same Spongo valley where we spent the previous day. He is certain that the pug marks are only a few hours old, and we have a very strong chance of a sighting. In our excitement, we all rush out of the van, some of us forgetting our water bottles, sun glasses and run into the valley, with new found energy. With the wisdom of an experienced tracker, Acho Norbu asks us to walk slowly while he goes ahead and scans the mountains. We walk alongside the pugmarks, unable to believe our luck.

Our trip leader, Rahul, is a man who loves the Himalayas. He works with a snow leopard conservancy program and strongly believes that the snow leopard is his spirit animal. He walks with us, and points out that the pug marks are actually not just of one snow leopard, but two. A mother and her cub. When we look closely, we see that the cub walks in the mother's steps! Oh! The prospect of seeing not one, but two snow leopards, and that too, a cub! Our excitement knows no bounds now!

As we walk up Spongo Valley again, Rahul points out a snow leopard scrape. It's how they mark their territory. As we are walking, we notice a different, smaller pug mark in the snow that is alongside the snow leopard pugmarks but a few feet away. It's the pug mark of the Himalayan Red Fox. The Himalayan Red Fox likes hanging around a snow leopard because it can steal some of the snow leopard kill. We have now reached the fork in the valley that I mentioned earlier. The snow leopard pugmark continues in the left fork and the fox's pugmark goes away in right fork of the valley. Rahul thinks that the snow leopard probably saw this little scavenger coming along, hissed at it until it went away. I didn't know that there was so much you could learn from prints in the snow!

In the mean time, Acho Norbu has climbed up a snow covered steep hillock nearby and set up his spotting scope there. After searching for 30 minutes, he signals us to come up. "What do you mean, come up? Where is the path? There is no route!", we ask. He shrugs and says, "if you come up, you can see them", with a broad grin. Not one to give up, each of us make our own path to the top of the hill. While we are struggling to find confident footing, the rest of the helper staff (all Ladakhis, who are as surefooted as a mountain goat) have already made it to the top and cheer us on. Our beloved cook Acho Tashi gives us a helping hand in the last few steps to the top. There is a mad scramble for our turn at the spotting scope. When it's my turn, I finally see the snow leopards, on a rock about 600 meters away. It's so overwhelming, I tear up. This magnificent creature, not that much bigger than a Labrador, in this hostile environment, sitting like the overlord of the mountains!

She knows we are there. She has spotted us. Any attempt on our part to get any closer to her would be pointless. She will just walk away. Ramanan uncle jokingly asks all of us to walk on all fours, and pretend to be ibexes hoping to lure her closer. Of course, she is no fool. We spend about 2 hours watching her, taking turns on the scope. And finally make our way back to the van and wolf down our lunch.

I don't have great photos of her. She was too far away. I got some grainy shots of her on my phone through the spotting scope. But I don't need those photos. I close my eyes and I see her whenever I want to.

This brought an end to the rather successful animal safari portion of our trip. Next we were off to other valleys to interact with the descendants of Alexander the Great himself! Alexander's descendants in India? What are you talking about? You'll just have to wait till the next edition to find out!

# THREE IN ONE DAMS —

## THIRUMOORTHY, AMARAVATHI & ALYAR

- K.Natarajan (N-134)

### PRELUDE

Coimbatore in Tamilnadu is strategically located adjoining the Western Ghats that has umpteen numbers of picnic spots and interesting places for short visits that could be planned in a very short time. The Nilagiri Mountains on the North West and the entire stretch East of Western Ghats on the South with its own greenery & beauty are all places to be visited and enjoyed including a number of Dams built on the small rivers and catchments. This is apart from the interesting tourism locations in Kerala and Karnataka.

In my previous article, I touched the eight hour picnic by seniors to the Malampuzha Dam site and now I wish to recollect the three dam sites I made it in a full day all alone myself from the photography angle.

While it is interesting to enjoy visits in a group, sometimes it is preferable to travel alone to observe every detail that could be noticed and pictured for a better concentration and also that others don't feel annoyed due to the time taken by one person.

The drive all along was simply great observing the whole route surrounded by Sunflower gardens, Coconut groves, Paddy fields and Wind Mills, in addition to the Mountain views. If you are lucky, you can enjoy a film shooting going on in these lovely surroundings / locations. One can even recall the numerous film shoots seen in many Indian films in the Pollachi region and the famous Kathalika Neramillai film shot at Aliyar Dam & surroundings with the contribution of two greats for the masterly direction of Sridhar with the astute & classy photography of Vincent.

THREE IN ONE is generally a relishing and welcome statement in general and the same is applicable in this article covering three dam sites of THIRUMOORTHY AMARAVATHI AND ALYAR from Coimbatore from eight in the morning till nine at night. I am sure that this write up with limited photographs will give a good clue for anyone to plan their trip alone or in groups, while more details could be gathered from the net.

### FIRST – THIRUMOORTHY, ANOTHER THREE IN ONE OF DAM, FALLS & TEMPLE

Thirumoorthi Dam is situated about 80 KM from Coimbatore via Pollachi and 20 KM from Udumalpet. The dam itself is an excellent building monument, with the major objective being irrigation & flood control clubbed with hydro-power generation.





The dam's reservoir is a moderately small & productive one at the tail end of the Parmabikulam Aliyar System and the construction of the same was completed around the year 1966.

The Thirumoorthi reservoir has the dam on one side bordered by the hills on the other three sides and offers an excellent scenic look. One can even enjoy a good Boat ride / Parisal ride during the season watching the different fish species playing around happily. It had well laid out gardens earlier in the sixties and early seventies but not maintained well nowadays, that is a pity.

A nice waterfall known as the Panchalinga Falls is located some distance away on a small climb. The walk to the falls may be a bit tough for elders & kids physically, and for everyone to be aware of plenty of monkeys to snatch your things away. The flow in the water fall is very strong, but enjoyable for a nice bath to refresh, especially under the sun.

There is a renowned ancient temple at the foothills, just by the side of a boulder fallen from the mountains. It is said that - Touch the Boulder, embrace it and feel the blessings of our Rishis. Some say, the drawings on it were etched by Jain Sadhus, which appear to be upside down. It is also believed that Jain priests known as Samanar lived in the hills when Jainism flourished in Tamil Nadu. The huge rock which is worshiped as Thirumoorthy has a sculpture of a Jain priest. A popular belief is that this rock rolled down from the hills few centuries back during a flood. This is supported by the fact that sculpture carved is upside down on the rock.

To add to the Divine atmosphere amidst the nature's beauty of hills and the falls, one can worship at Sri Amaralingeswarar temple, adjoining the perennial flow from the falls.

It is believed that Athari Maharishi along with his wife Anushaya Devi lived here offering their Prayers to the Lords and pleased with their prayers, Lords Shiva, Vishnu & Brahma came in disguise to test their devotion. Beleaguered by their appearance, the couple offered them tribute. Thus came into existence the gracious temple with a great Divine atmosphere with the three LORDS present in one Sanctum Sanctorum. Visiting the temple after a nice shower in the falls should be relaxing the Mind, Soul & Body, that is beyond the description in words here. Universal Peace Sanctuary and Paranjothi Naturopathy Hospital can be seen while returning from these locations for another holy atmosphere, for those interested in such activities.

## SECOND - AMARAVATHI DAM

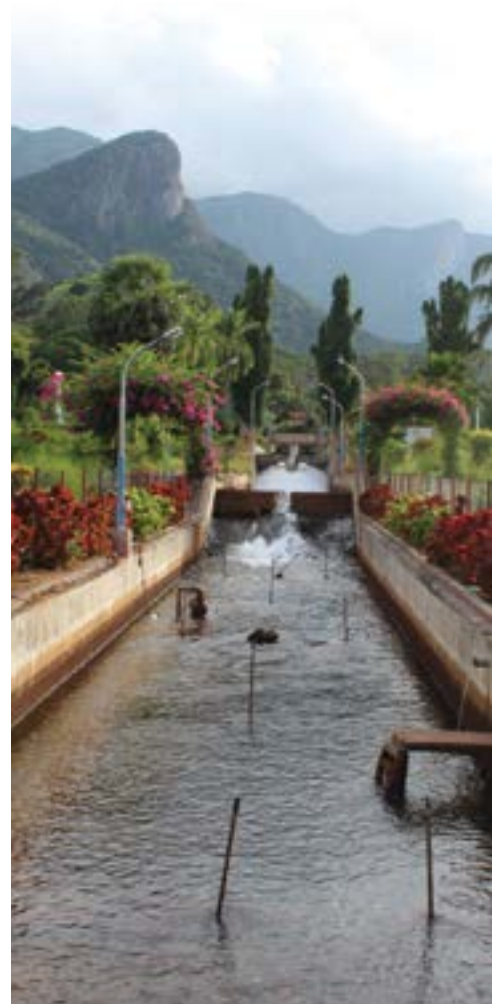
The Amaravathi Dam is situated within the premises of the Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary, at Amaravathi Nagar, 25 KM South of Udumalpet. It was built in 1957 across the Amaravathi River creating a reservoir storage covering an area of around 9.31 Sq Km for a maximum depth of 33.53 M, to cater to local irrigation and flood control. It has 4 MW Power Generation installed initially with another 4 MW added subsequently.

There is a well laid-out park and climbing the steep steps on the sloping dam structure, one can have a picturesque view north of the plains below and south to the Anamalai Hills & Palani Hills. The place was also developed as an excursion centre for tourism with extensive gardens initially, however, due to lack of interest and bad maintenance, it is just a so-so. Boating for tourists in the dam reservoir is possible but not much of this activity was observed.

In the reservoir, the non-indigenous Tilapia fish was introduced in the early days and subsequently this reservoir had highest fish yield in the state by the 1970s. Tilapia now accounts for a major portion of the fish caught in the reservoir. Cast Nets are commonly used for subsistence fishing and the current trend is not known. Other fish predators here include Oriental Small-clawed Otters, Indian Cormorants, Indian Flap-shelled Turtles, etc.

Mugger Crocodiles - This reservoir provides habitat to a significant population of Mugger Crocodiles.





The largest wild breeding populations of crocodiles in South India live in this reservoir, and also in the Chinnar, Thennar, & Pambar rivers that drain into it. These broad-snouted Muggers crocodiles, also known as Marsh crocodiles and Persian crocodiles are the most common and widespread of the three species of crocodiles found in India. They eat fish, other reptiles, small & large mammals and are often dangerous to humans. Their total wild population here is significant.

Amaravathi Sagar Crocodile Farm is about one kilometer before the Amaravathi dam site and is the largest crocodile nursery in India, and many adult crocodiles have been reintroduced from here into the wild ones. Eggs are collected from wild nests along the perimeter of the reservoir to be hatched and reared at the farm.

Many crocodiles of all sizes can be seen basking in the sun and suddenly making a stride or piled up on one another. All these are maintained in captivity here by the Forest Department personnel who manage and maintain the centre.

A Sainik School was also seen close by.

### THIRD – ALIYAR DAM

Aliyar (AAZHIIYAAR) dam is about 65 KM from Coimbatore via Pollachi located in the foothills of Valparai in the Anamalai Mountain Range and in the Anamalai Tiger Range of the Western Ghats.

The Aliyar Dam was constructed during the fifties / early sixties, across the river Aliyar mainly for irrigation purposes with hydroelectric power generation added subsequently as a part of Parambikulam Aliyar Project (PAP).

The dam is about 2 KM long totally in three angular faces to create a huge reservoir with the Western Ghats surrounding the rest of the periphery of the Reservoir with mountains surrounding three quarters of the reservoir in a gigantic manner. It stands majestically with a lovely Green-Spread Mountains and forests all around.

PAP consists of a series of dams & reservoirs like Aliyar, Parambikulam, Thunakadavu, Peruvaripallam, Sholayar, Upper Nizar & Thirumoorthy, all interconnected by tunnels & canals for harnessing all the waters for irrigation & power generation. Aliyar Reservoir receives water from Upper Aliyar Reservoir of Valparai through the hydroelectric power station in Navamati and the Parambikulam Reservoir through a contour canal.





The reservoir is a huge one extending to nearly 50 Hectares of surface area with a maximum depth of 41 Meters. The panoramic view seen in the photo will give an idea of its vastness, which even has an island in it. The discharges from the reservoir are let out through three sets of Sluices / Canals namely Pollachi canal, Vettaikaranpudur Canal and the river Sluices. The irrigation discharge through the sluices of the Aliyar Dam is utilized for power generation in a Power House at the toe of the dam.

The PAP scheme in totality is an outstanding engineering skill. Just imagine how all these were implemented by the dedicated engineers in the 50s & 60s with the then available facilities & equipments under the able leadership of dedicated engineering bosses & contractors and political leaders of that time. We could even recall at this stage the excellent water management and network created by the ancient Chola & other dynasties. (Unfortunately it is a shame to see the handling of public works in Tamilnadu during the past fifty years and also that we are not even able to maintain these marvelous infrastructures & facilities).

Tourist attractions in and around Aliyar dam site is plenty with its surroundings offering absolutely beautiful sceneries. The view from the dam top is so pleasing to see a green carpet kind of a coconut tree tops in a vast stretch on the Northern side and at the Southern, Western & Eastern side it is a huge sheet of water with the mountains in the background. At the far away Eastern side, if one has a concentrated look, the Wind Mills tops can be observed behind the greenery all the way. A camera with high power zoom / telescopic lens will help for wonderful shots. Around the dam there are visitor attractions like a Park, Garden, Aquarium, Play area and a Mini Theme-Park maintained by Tamil Nadu Fisheries Corporation.



One can spend enough time in all these places, though they are not up to the mark. Boating in the reservoir waters is a very interesting time-spend and also to enjoy the total scenery from all angles. The boat trips are well organized with all safety precautions and are not to be missed.

Monkey Falls is another attraction at 6 km from the dam site on the road to Valparai near the Forest Department Check post, where one can have an enjoyable bath / shower, where the water is not as forceful as the Thirumoorthis falls. The rocky location with hidings is all the more interesting for youngsters and lovers.

Arutperunjothi Nagar nearby boasts of a Temple of Consciousness for Meditation Practice in the name of World Community Service Centre (WCSC) for World Peace through Individual Peace run by Shri Vethathiri Maharishi may not be interesting to everyone, but good for those interested in spiritual teachings & practices.

## CONCLUSION

Now finally I wish to close this write up by suggesting that the three dams and connected places are worth the visit for a full day. The scenic enjoyment, the shower / bath at the waterfalls and a brief divine worship in between for a change and the relaxation of viewing the dams, hills / mountains, gardens, the road side views are so exciting that one may not feel tired even at the end of 12-14 hours, including the taxi ride. For food, finish your breakfast at Coimbatore or Pollachi and carry Sandwich, Fruits and some Munching stuff which can be substantiated with light local Snacks, Elaneer & fruit juices as required. Dinner at Pollachi or Coimbatore would be fine.

Please enjoy the photographs along with this write-up, which are restricted in numbers due to space constraint. I hope to share more about other places in my next article.

Image Source: Freepik.com



## TRADING THE MARKETS *Part - 3*

KP Balakumar (B103)

Just when it looked like the bottom was falling off the markets in Jan and Feb, came a stunning counter trend rally in March. After making a low at 6825, the Nifty snapped back all the way to 7700 as FII flows turned positive once again. And as it happens ever so often, the rally was led by the same set of stocks that were leaders on the downside...banks, metals and other economy sensitive stocks like Autos.

In earlier articles in this series, we looked at a few methodologies being employed by market participants to trade the markets, namely, Technical Analysis and Arbitrage. Active traders also use a mix of Futures and Options to take directional bets on the market as well as to minimize potential losses from open positions.

So what are Futures and Options and how does one use them to trade the markets? Read on.

Futures and Options are derivative instruments used to trade an underlying Index or security. While the pay-off from a Futures contract mimics the underlying, albeit with a far lower capital outlay (explained in the next segment), Options are designed to offer outsized pay-offs while keeping risk moderate by allowing the trader to know upfront what his maximum loss would be – sort of trading with a built in insurance policy.

### **Futures:**

Futures contracts are designed to offer the trader significant pay-offs, with commensurate risk as well,

since they offer significant leverage potential with margin requirements typically in the range of 10% to 20% for Index and Stock Futures.

What this means is that a trader with Rs 100,000 of starting capital can take a position of value Rs 500,000 for stock futures (20% margin, 5x leverage) and Rs 10,00,000 for Index Futures (10% margin, thus 10x leverage). The following example will show how outlays differ when trading with Futures v/s Cash. If a trader wished to buy 1000 shares of Tata Steel, the costs and outlay would be the following:

### Cash Market:

1000 Tata Steel at 320  
 Brokerage @ 0.25% (Rs 0.80)  
 Net outlay for the above position –  
 Rs 320,800



## Futures Market:

1000 Tata Steel Futures at 320  
Brokerage @ 0.10% (Rs 0.32)  
Margin for the above position @ 20%  
Net outlay – Rs 64,064 (20% \*  
(320.32\*1000))

With a far lower initial outlay, the trader now mimics the same pay-off as buying in the Cash market. The residual funds could potentially earn interest in a liquid fund, thus enhancing returns. Of course, if the trader wishes to leverage, then the same initial capital/outlay allows the trader to buy upto 5x the position v/s the cash market. While this seems enticing on the face of it, given that a mere 20% move in the right direction could double a trader's money, one must not lose sight of the downside. A similar move against the position will wipe out the trader's capital. The same can be explained below:

Tata Steel stock price: 320

Capital available: Rs 3,20,000  
Stock Futures margin: 20%  
(and hence 5x leverage)  
Max position value: 16,00,000 (320,000\*5)  
Tata Steel Futures bought:  
5000 shares (16,00,000/320)

If stock moves up by 20%:

Settlement price: Rs 384  
Gains: Rs 320,000 ((384-320)\*5000))  
Gain on Initial Capital: 100%

If stock moves down by 20%:

Settlement price: Rs 256  
Losses: Rs 320,000 ((256-320)\*5000))  
Initial Capital Wiped Out!

Hence, while Futures allow you to speculate with outlandish pay-offs (if one uses the leverage), very few experienced traders would take what is referred to as 'naked' Futures position, i.e., buy/sell Futures without a hedge position via Options due to the downside risk such positions expose the trader to.

## **Options:**

Options are derivative instruments that give you the right but not the obligation to buy/sell the underlying security/index at a specified price on or before a specified date. The specified price is the Strike Price and the specified date is the Settlement Date (when the contract expires). Options are of two kinds:

1. Call Options
2. Put Options

Call Options allow the buyer to participate in the upside of a stock/index by paying a 'premium'. The premium is the cost incurred to enter the position and also reflects the maximum loss to the buyer, should the stock/index fail to move up/moves down. While the buyer of the Call option is betting on an increase in the price of the underlying, the seller of a Call option believes the opposite and is betting on a drop in stock price (or at the least, the stock price failing to go above the strike price where the Option has been sold). Put Options, on the other hand, allow the buyer to participate in the downside of an index/stock. Buyers of Put Options are betting on a fall in stock price while the seller of the Put Option believes that the stock will not fall below the strike price where the option has been sold. As in any trade, both parties to the trade believe they are right :)

Options are always bought or sold at a Strike Price.

For example:

Tata Steel trades at 320 in the Cash Market  
Strike prices available to trade 300,310,320,330,340 (prices at which options can be bought/sold)  
Strike prices that are below the current market price are referred to as 'In the money' Options  
Strike prices that are above the current market price are referred to as 'Out of the money' Options

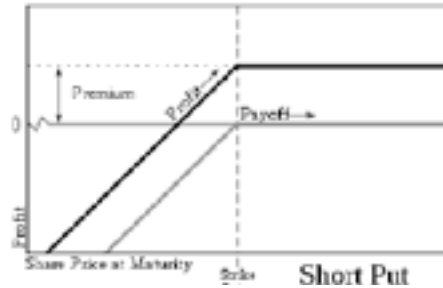
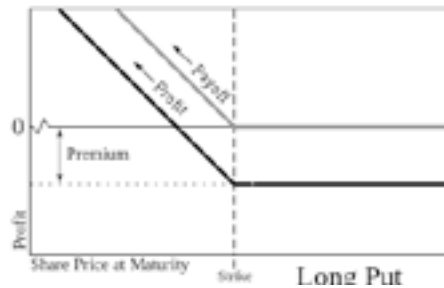
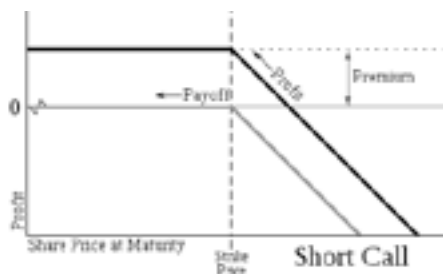
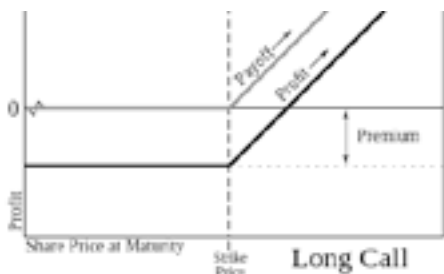
When the strike price is equivalent to the price of the underlying security, it's termed as an 'At the money' Option.

The premium to be paid at each strike price is based on a combination of factors – whether it is Out/In/At the money, the volatility of the underlying, time to expiry etc. For the buyer of the option, the maximum loss is the premium paid to enter the contract while for the seller, the losses are potentially unlimited. This can be explained with the following example:

CMP of Tata Steel: 320  
Lot Size: 1000 (minimum number of shares one must buy/sell)  
Strike Price at which the buyer and seller of Call Options trade: 340  
Premium: Rs 5

### For the buyer of the Call Option:

The price of the underlying, the Tata Steel stock, has to go past Rs 345 (Strike Price+Premium paid) for him to make any money. If the stock closes at or below Rs 340, he loses the entire premium he has paid. While he recovers some money for a closing price between 340 – 345, his profits are potentially unlimited as the price moves beyond 345. Thus for the buyer of the option, the maximum loss is the premium paid \* the number of shares he buys at that Strike Price. If he has bought 1000 shares at the 340 Strike, his maximum loss, should the price fail to go up, would be 1000\*5=Rs 5,000. Thus, the trader is very aware of his worst case scenario at the time of initiation of the trade. If the stock were to go up substantially, for example, to 400, the pay off to the trader would be 1000\*(400-345)=55,000!! So easy, right? Like anything else in life, it's never this simple. The example stated is to provide you an insight into the potential pay-off and the possibility for outsized returns.



On the 360 Call Sold:  $1000 \times (362 - 400) = \text{Rs } 38,000$  loss  
 Net Gain: 17,000

Rs 17,000 represents the maximum gain on the trade at any price at or above 360 (i.e. the strike price where the option was sold). If the price at settlement is 340 or below, the maximum loss is Rs 3,000. For any price between 340 and 360, the pay off would be a combination of the money made on the Bought Call option and the premium earned from the Sold Call Option.

Trading the markets can be especially dangerous when one takes positional bets that expose you to potentially unlimited losses – For example, a long/short Futures with no hedge (selling/buying options on that position) could expose the Trader to rather dramatic and painful consequences. Similarly, selling options can also expose a trader to potentially unlimited losses. The best strategies involves using Futures and Options or a combination of Options together to maximize pay-offs while limiting risk. There are a multitude of strategies that can be deployed using these derivative instruments and I hope this primer has given you an insight into how they can be used. For further reading, a simple Google search will throw up multiple sources from where one can learn more.

For the seller of the Call Option:

The seller is betting on the stock price of Tata Steel failing to cross 340 (Strike where the Option was sold) and wishes to pocket the premium he earns by selling the Option (for taking the risk of the stock moving against his position). Any move beyond 345 (Strike+Premium) will result in potentially unlimited losses. For example, if the stock price drops to 300, the maximum gain to the seller is only the premium he earned by selling the option. But as in the previous example, if the stock price runs away to 400, the trader's losses swell to Rs 55,000! So for the seller of Options, the pay off is limited return with potentially unlimited risk.

So who in their right mind would sell Options, given the disproportionate nature of the pay-off? Sellers are mostly institutional investors and large prop desks/professional traders given their more sophisticated trading strategies and ability to withstand losses. Buyers of Options tend to be mostly retail traders.

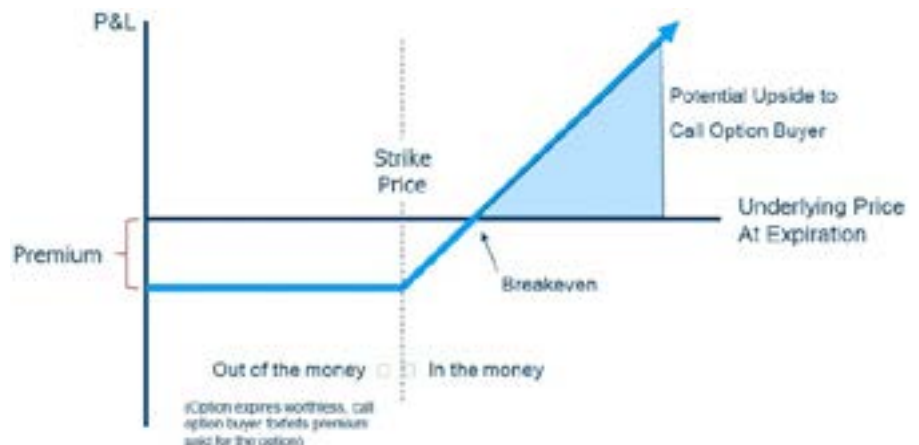
Options can be used either individually or together. For example, if I was bullish on Tata Steel but also wanted to reduce my cost of acquisition of my position, I could do the following:

Tata Steel price: 320  
 Lot Size: 1000  
 340 Call premium: Rs 5  
 360 Call premium: Rs 2

I could choose to buy the 340 call and simultaneously sell the 360 call. By doing so, I lower my cost to the extent of premium received by selling the 360 call while capping my potential gain. So the trade off here is limited gain-limited risk. How would the pay off be for such a strategy?  
 Buy 1000 340 Call:  $1000 \times 5 = \text{Rs } 5000$  (paid)  
 Sell 1000 360 Call:  $1000 \times 2 = \text{Rs } 2000$  (received)  
 Net Cost of the above position: Rs 3000 ( $5000 - 2000$ )

Pay-off:

If stock price goes to 400:  
 On the 340 Call Bought:  
 $1000 \times (400 - 345) = \text{Rs } 55,000$  gain





# `OVER` SMART PHONES

-R.V.Rajan( R-143)



Image Source: plus.google.com

I have at last joined the legion of `smart` people. Yes, I am now a `not so` proud owner of a smart phone presented to me by my son. I am yet to get used to it's `over smart - super fast` response to my hard touch, resulting in many frustrating moments that I face with the phone every day.

A major problem which I face is in keying the name to go with a new number or storing a caller's number. I keyed the name Ashok Dey and after carefully checking the spelling when I tried to store the name it became `A shot Dey`. Similarly Madhu became ``Madhuri` and Nanayam Kumar became `Narayan Kumar`. Since I have not yet mastered the art of editing/correcting the matter, it is quite frustrating when I have to retrieve the number of a person. My son tells me it is because of the `auto correct` feature of the phone which decides what should be the spelling of whatever name I am typing, irrespective of what I have keyed in! I thought that is stretching the smartness of the phone too far.

Another problem has to do with WhatsApp. As the senior most `don` of the `Matunga Mafia` (as my family WhatsApp group is called) I have very frustrating moments. Since the keypad for typing WhatsApp messages is even smaller than the keypad for keying in caller`s names, my problem is compounded. It takes a lot of time to compose even a simple message correctly. With the result I often do not respond.

What `got my goat` recently was a message I saw flashing on my mobile which said that I had already used up `XXX` MB space in my mobile and that the system was getting hot and slowing down the operation. I was aghast. I had hardly used the phone for 10 days and had not even downloaded any programmes. How could I have used up so much space? Is somebody hacking my phone? I got worried. My son solved the problem by deleting a whole lot of Apps, which I was not likely to use.

Irritated by the frequent `beeps` I get, informing me about some message or the other, I keep putting the instrument on silent mode. Invariably I forget to return to the normal mode resulting in many near and dear ones complaining that I am not picking up the phone when it rings. Forgetting to end a call or inadvertently calling wrong numbers leading to people whom I have called cursing me has also become a regular feature. With so much frustration piling on me am I planning to give up my smart phone? It looks unlikely. But I do hope I don't become a smart phone addict like the younger generation of today.

As a frustrated mother complained the other day` I can never get my daughter on the phone. But whatever message I send her on WhatsApp gets replied instantly`

Feedback welcome  
on rvrajan42@gmail.com or 9840392082

# A GOURMET JOURNEY IN THE STREETS OF CHANDNI CHOWK

- Janani Govindankutty (G - 175)



Image Source: blogs.reuters

Initial apprehensions about wading through the human-clogged streets of Chandini Chowk were cast aside—the perk being a food trip as opposed to shopping which made me want to end my life than die of agoraphobia on my first visit to Delhi’s intensely populated streets. A chilly winter afternoon with warm sunshine proved to be an impetus for me and my brother to head out for our street food-gorging ordeal. Relying on the GPS on our mobiles to guide us towards Parathewala Gali, we stepped out of the Chandni Chowk Metro Station.

Well, agoraphobia engulfed me momentarily, I dragged my brother to a cycle rickshaw wala and begged him to take us to our destination. My brother scoffed at my absurd idea, quite unwilling to ride on a cycle rickshaw for the next 400 meters that would have been comfortably achieved by walking.

The rickshaw wala just dragged his rickety vehicle, finding niches in the road asphyxiating with every form of motor vehicle and human species. In less than two minutes, he stopped abruptly and gestured towards an invisible road.

Hopping off the rickshaw, we walked towards the human veil that cloaked the entrance to the Parathewala Gali—an entry into a labyrinth of narrow streets and criss-crossing lanes, all winding towards an unknown terrain bursting with shops. As we manoeuvred through the Gali, head-butting to avoid being squished by several of our own kind, we finally stopped at one shop that looked promising and is highly recommended—P T Kanhaiyala Durga Prashad Parawthe Wala. It was surprising to see a tiny shop acutely organised. One of the staff ensured that people queued for a table. Service was immaculate and quite quick.

As we sat on our assigned tables, the staff boy came with plates—aloo subzi, pudina chutney and pumpkin subzi. My brother dipped one finger in the pumpkin subzi and licked it off, exclaiming, “Appetising, they should bring the parathas in a jiffy.” Another bowl of what looked like vegetable pickle was placed on our table. Enticed by my brother’s visual taunts about the subzis’, I decided to try the pickle. An array of orange, white, red and green cut vegetables glared at me, glistening with the chilli flakes and lime juice sprinkled on top. The inquisitiveness high as on the table, there was just another couple, who could not identify the white-narrow strip mixed with the carrots, tomatoes and beans. After a little argument on whether it could be raw mango or pumpkin, I pulled out one white piece from the bowl. With three inquisitive pairs of eyes staring at me, I declared, “It is fresh winter produce—radish—crunchy, spicy and tender at the same time.”

Before everyone could get their hands on the pickle bowl, came our hot, sizzling parathas. I and my brother had ordered rabri and chilly paratha. After tasting my chilly paratha and repelled by its spicy flavour, my brother bit into the half-moon shaped lump of his rabri paratha, his jacket tasting the rabri, as it oozed out of the fat lump and giving him a spotted jacket. "Yum," he said. Tempted by the rabri paratha, we stepped out to try something sweet.

A few meters down the lane, we found a hawker with his stand encompassing of what looked like a huge pile of white snow with streaks of yellow, as if stained by the sun. It was Daulat Ki Chaat, strategically located close to the paratha shops to lull customers to end their meal on a sweet note. We were aroused looking at the heap of milky white substance. In the chaat bowl, along with several layers of the white substance, the hawker garnished it with jaggery and dry fruits. The white chaat just melts in your mouth, the dry fruits making the ride a bit crunchy and jaggery adding a strange twist to the sweetness of the white chaat. We got more jaggery sprinkled as we loved the quirky sweetness. 'Lost our senses' while indulging in Daulat ki Chaat would summarize our experience. We had got a free ride to heaven from the crowded streets of Chandni Chowk—yes, sugar can take you to great heights. Driven by a sudden whim for a change in flavour we hunted for hot and spicy chaat. We came out onto Nai Sarak and spotted a chaat wala who seemed to be making French toast. Curious as to what chaat that was we approached him, to let us taste buds decide. Swiftly blending a half-yellow coloured liquid which he poured over slices of bread, we asked him if it had eggs. As he shook his head in disagreement, we asked him to make some chaat for us.

The half-yellow coloured liquid-coated bread was fried on the tawa. Aloo tikka was smashed right on top of the bread and was covered with the pudina and tamarind chutney, onions sprinkled and the chaat was ready to be devoured. Surprisingly, the Indian French toast seemed to celebrate our desi needs and both of us voted for the indigenous version of the bread-based dish.

Alternating between sugar and spice seemed the norm of the day. I scrounged for a dahi-papri chaat, my brother following me ardently for the mere pleasure of this gastronomic endeavour of street food. Ignoring the huge Haldiram shop, we trudged forward, moving towards the sole street vendor who was passing dahi-bhalla chaat to hovering customers. The vendor was smart and had several bowls ready—just pay and eat. My brother got the chaat and we moved to a relatively less-crowded spot on fringe of the road and let the dahi soothe our spiced-up digestive tract and system. We were surrounded by garbage, thrown by Indians ignorant of the clean-India drive by the government—or rather lack of civic sense—a trait inseparable from our genes, probably. If we don't dump garbage, the government would not have to toil for cleaning the city. We hunted for a garbage bin to dump our bowl. Luckily, it was time for tea and we found a tea stall while looking out for a bin. Hot ginger tea—the usual fair—lots of milk and sugar, the ginger adding a zest of spice after you gulp your tea, lingering for a fleeting moment before you sip your concoction again. Tea cannot be drunk in isolation and has to be accompanied by pakoras. My brother pointed at the bread pakoras and said, "Doesn't the filling look slightly different than other tea stalls?" That was my cue to buy him bread pakoras to munch on with his tea.



Though unwilling at first, I pinched a small portion and tasted the pakora. The paneer and spicy aloo seemed like a simple fair but definitely worth relishing. Sometimes, simple food can do wonders and bread pakoras with tea would satiate your cravings—subtly blissful. The alternating norm came into play and we asked random people for the jalebi wala. Nestled in a corner along the Nai Sarak, we ordered for hot jalebis with rabri. In a paper plate came the twirled, crunchy orange-coloured sweet topped with half-white rabri. "God!" my brother exclaimed. I was coming back to reality after biting into the jalebi and sported a questioning look. Inferring that I wanted an explanation, my brother said, "God, is an IIT-Bombay lingo while enjoying scrumptious food. So, let's say God!" We chanted "god, god" as we walked back to the metro station. My brother happy that I'd not hailed another cycle rickshaw for a ride. My brother wasn't done with his gourmet walk yet. A few meters before the metro station he stopped near a fruit-chaat wala. After all the junk, we needed some nutrients too, right? So that was our final chaat as we culminated our food walk through Chandni Chowk.



Grilled fresh vegetables, al dente pasta and a garlicky yoghurt dressing make this pasta a firm family favourite. It's perfect for the summer heat, since it is light and cooling, waist-friendly and comes together quickly. And if you need a dish for a potluck or picnic, this Creamy Pasta Salad with Grilled Veggies works well since it tastes wonderful at room temperature as well.

Special Equipment – Grill pan or outdoor grill, or use an iron tava or even an OTG

FOR THE GRILLED VEGETABLES –

- Marinade –
- ¼ cup thick yogurt
- 2 cloves garlic, mashed to a paste
- 1 teaspoon tomato paste
- ¼ teaspoon freshly grated pepper
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning or mixed dried herbs
- ¼ teaspoon red chilli flakes, or to taste
- Salt to taste
- 1 onion
- ½ zucchini
- ½ red pepper
- ½ yellow pepper
- 3-4 baby corn
- 8-10 asparagus spears or 3-4 spring onion greens
- 1 tablespoon oil

1. Mix together all the ingredients for the marinade in a small bowl.
2. Peel and then cut the onion into wedges, keeping the root intact so that the pieces stay together. Cut the zucchini into 4 sections length-wise. Cut the peppers into 1" thick strips. Slit the babycorn lengthwise. Trim away the woody asparagus ends or if using spring onions, cut them lengthwise.
3. Preheat a grill pan on medium heat, and brush it with a little oil.
4. Toss the veggies in the marinade and immediately place them on the hot grill. Do not crowd the veggies on the grill, you can grill them in batches instead. Remember to clean the tava with a paper napkin and then drizzle oil before you grill the next batch. Grill the veggies on both sides until softened and starting to char, but still crisp.
5. Once grilled, cut the veggies into smaller, bite-sized pieces. Set aside to cool.

# CREAMY PASTA SALAD WITH GRILLED VEGGIES

- Ruchira Ramanujam



FOR THE SALAD –

- 1.5 cups macaroni or farfalle
  - 1 Tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
  - 1 cup thick yoghurt
  - 4 cloves garlic, mashed to a paste\*
  - ½ teaspoon lemon juice
  - 1 teaspoon honey or sugar
  - ¼ teaspoon freshly grated pepper
  - Salt to taste
  - ½ cup fresh basil, loosely packed
  - A few lettuce leaves, cherry tomatoes, olives and pickled chillies for garnish
1. Boil the pasta as per the directions on the package, taking care to keep it al dente. Drain and then toss the pasta with the extra virgin olive oil. Set aside to cool.
  2. To make the dressing whisk together the yoghurt, garlic, lemon juice, honey, pepper and salt until smooth. Taste and season if necessary.
  3. Put the pasta in a large mixing bowl. Add the fresh basil, tearing up the leaves into bite-sized pieces. Reserve a quarter cup of the dressing and pour the rest over the pasta. Toss well. Add the grilled veggies to the bowl and mix very gently.
  4. If you are not serving the pasta right away, refrigerate it and the reserved dressing separately in closed containers. Mix in the reserved dressing just before serving. If serving immediately, add in the reserved dressing only if the salad looks dry.
  5. Transfer the salad to a serving bowl lined with lettuce. Add cherry tomatoes, olives and pickled chillies for garnish, as desired.

# VEGGIE BURGERS

- Rajani Sivaram

It doesn't get easier than this to make veggie burgers. Cooked beans mixed with rice and some veggies thrown in will end up looking like these delicious burgers. Breadcrumbs help hold it all together without falling apart, oats add some nice texture and spices make it really lively. Feel free to experiment with your favorite veggies, add more grains or play with the rice: breadcrumb ratio.



## Ingredients:

- 2 teaspoons oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped fine
- 1 red capsicum, chopped fine
- 1 carrot, grated (optional)
- 1.5 cups cooked beans (red kidney beans/black beans/chickpea etc)
- ¾ cup cooked rice
- About ½ cup breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup oats, optional
- 1 teaspoon chilli powder
- Salt and pepper
- 2-3 tablespoons oil
- 4 burger buns
- 4 teaspoons mayonnaise mixed with 1 tablespoon ketchup
- Sliced tomatoes, cucumbers and onions

## Method:

1. Heat oil in a pan and cook the onions till pink. Add the capsicum and carrot. Cover and cook until the vegetables are done.
2. Drain the cooked beans well. Mash it with a fork. You want most of it mashed, but not all.
3. Add the rice, oats cooked vegetables and chilli powder. Season with salt and pepper. Mash them all well together.
4. Add the breadcrumbs. The quantity of breadcrumbs needed will depend on how well the beans mixture holds together without falling apart. So adjust the quantity accordingly, somewhere around the ½ cup mark.
5. Divide the mixture into 4-5 equal parts. Shape each one into a nice flat patty.
6. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a pan and cook the patties on medium-low heat. Cook both sides and drain on a kitchen napkin when done.
7. At the time of serving, spread the mayo-ketchup mix on the burger buns. Top the bun with cucumbers, burger patty, sliced onions and tomatoes. Cover with the other half of the bun with a teaspoon of mayo mix spread on it. Enjoy!

# MARKING' HIS DEDICATION TO GNC

## An Interview with our club's Tennis coach **Mr. Saravanan**

- *Thanvi Srikant (S563)*

It's a hot Tuesday evening when I decide to set foot on our club's tennis courts. I see a group of men indulge in an intense game of doubles when one of the on-court staff members acknowledges me. Having been informed earlier about his interview, Mr. Saravanan Arumugam, better known to members as 'Yesu' greets me with a wide smile.

It is not often that we as members of the club, take the time to talk more than just a few words to the assisting staff in charge of all the facilities. As I hear Mr. Saravanan's story, I'm filled with immense respect and admiration for this tennis coach who has been a part of GNC for the last 22 years.

**CC (Club Connect):** How did your tennis journey begin?

**SA (Mr. Saravanan Arumugam):** My dad worked at the Madras Club as a Room-boy for nearly 30 years. As a 10 year old, my frequent visits with him would be very special because I would enjoy watching the tennis matches being played. Unfortunately, we faced monetary difficulties and I eventually sacrificed my studies to support the family, working as a ball boy at the same club.

I have worked at tennis courts in Rajarathnam stadium (Egmore), ALTA (Kotturpuram), the T.Nagar Ladies' Club, RANSA (R.A.Puram), and at a tennis club in Anna Nagar.

I am thankful to Coach Gunasekar (T.Nagar Ladies club), Coach Guruswamy (Anna Nagar) for teaching me the tennis strokes and my 'Guru', Marker Sundar (Madras Club) who took the effort to train me after working hours as well.

**CC:** How has our club changed over the years?

**SA:** I have seen the club from its very early days, when it constituted of merely four clay tennis courts. Right from when the founders laid the foundations for the club in 1993 till today, the club has seen tremendous growth. What began as 10-15 members playing tennis regularly, has turned into a successful club with nearly 2000 members.

Through these years, I have always strived to perform my duties diligently. My journey began from being a Ball boy to Senior Ball boy, Assistant Marker, Senior Marker and now Coach. Being where I am today gives me a lot of happiness.

**CC:** As Coach, what are your various responsibilities?

**SA:** I take charge of registering the names of the members and guests who play, the court maintenance, training the ball boys, training the Markers and managing the entire tennis court facility. Over course of my time here at the club, I have also learnt English.

**CC:** It's been a few years since the club changed the tennis courts from clay to synthetic. How advantageous has this transformation been?

**SA:** The clay courts were very difficult to maintain. During rains, it would get very messy. On the contrary, synthetic courts require less attention. When it rains, we have a fibre machine for draining out the excess water. We also wash it once a month for maintenance.

In tennis terms, the ball moves faster on synthetic courts, but you can't skip on it like how you do on a clay court.

**CC:** What gives you the most happiness as a Coach?

**SA:** Playing and watching tennis is very exciting, especially during tournament season. I have also had the chance to play in a few tournaments, winning a few.

**CC:** Is this where you imagined you would be, right from your childhood?

**SA:** I never even dreamed of getting an opportunity like this. In fact, many years after I had established myself as a tennis marker, I decided to take a break. However, my stint at a different profession only made me realise that tennis was my true calling.

When Mr. Saravanan first started out as a Ball boy in our club, the then-coach of our club Mr. Perumal was so impressed with his dedication and humility, that he gave his daughter's hand in marriage to him.

Today, Saravanan takes great pride in telling me that he has two daughters. While the older one is pursuing her 2nd year of B.A. English, the younger daughter is studying in 12th grade.

**SA:** My wish is to ensure that they study well. I always tell them that seeking knowledge is more important than earning money. They know how much I have struggled in life to be where I am today.

His daughters are also sports enthusiasts; the younger used to be a swimmer and her older sister plays college-level volleyball.



**CC:** Apart from the regular groups of men, how often do ladies and kids play tennis at the club?

**SA:** There are only a few ladies playing, currently. However, the courts are open to anyone who is interested. I have trained several ladies, myself. Many of them develop an interest in the sport when they drop their kids for coaching classes.

We offer coaching classes during the summer every year for nearly 2-3 months. I would say that the age to join would be four and a half years at the earliest, when the child can learn to develop strokes. By the age of 9-10, he/she will have the confidence to enter the competitive arena. We even send some of the talented students in the U-12 and U-16 categories for tournaments. I still remember training Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan at our club when he was around 10 years old. Moreover, sports are necessary for a healthy lifestyle and all-round development.

**CC:** Our club recently hosted the ITF Tennis matches. How was the experience?

**SA:** It was truly a big honour for our club. Of course, lots of work had to be taken care of. Apart from the court maintenance and organization, we had to arrange accommodation for the players. We recruited 6 ball boys from outside the club especially for these matches. Players such as our very own Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan and Vishnu Vardhan took part in the tournament. Mr. Saravanan also plays other sports such as volleyball, football and badminton. He gets along well with other staff members at the club, his close friends being Mr. Manohar (swimming coach) and Mr. Shivakumar (squash coach). He is also very grateful to some of our club members who have acknowledged his service through the years.



He was recently given a cash prize for commemorating the last 10 years of his service and in the past, has also been awarded 'Best Staff Member'. He admits that those moments were truly memorable.

**CC:** How much damage did our courts see during the recent floods in Chennai?

**SA:** We had water logging to a level of 3 feet. The centre court was damaged completely as the water seepage caused undulations and bubbles. The backside of the baseline was damaged in the third court as well. We will be closing the courts for the next 3 months in order to renovate them and lay new synthetic flooring.

**CC:** What are your plans for the future?

**SA:** I want to learn more and wish to train more people. I might start a new business or a tennis centre. Both my brothers manage tennis centres in Chennai and Coimbatore. I am very grateful for my family's constant support.

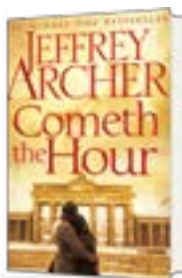
I sincerely wish to earn more for the benefit of my kids, to provide them access to good education and get them happily married.

**CC:** What makes GNC special?

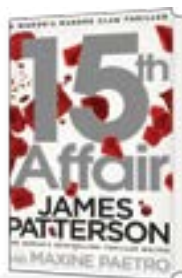
**SA:** This club is well-established and is very popular in Adyar. It has all the facilities, good service and active participation from its members. They keep striving to make it better (you can see posters of the new construction plans near the front desk) and that's what makes it stand out from other clubs. I wish we continue nurturing our zeal for success!

As we wind-up the interview, I realize that it has truly been a privilege to interact with the people who are GNC's pride. These people aren't just the members, but the staff as well.

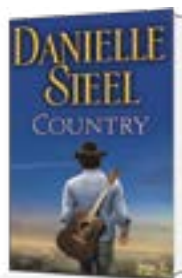
The next time you visit the club, do try making a conversation with the staff members at any facility. You might just hear a story that will leave you inspired.



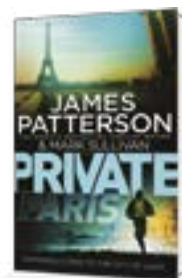
**Jeffrey Archer**  
Cometh The Hour



**James Patterson**  
15Th Affair



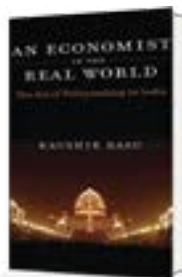
**Danielle Steel**  
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**James Patterson**  
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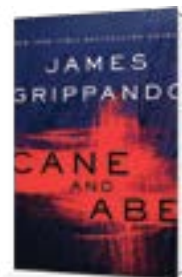
**Lynsay Sands**  
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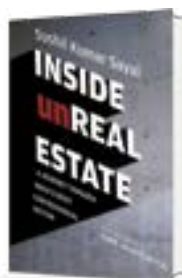
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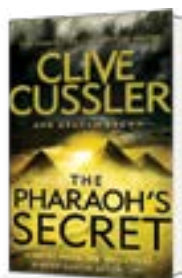
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Distrust Yourself



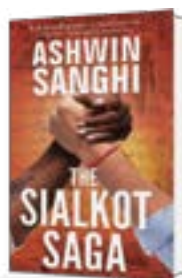
**James Grippando**  
Cane And Abe



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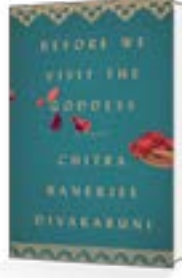
**Judy Balan**  
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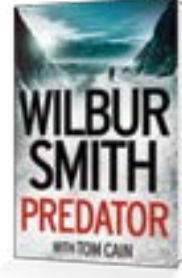
**Geronimo Stilton**  
Attack Of The Dragons



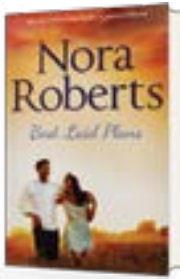
**David Baldacci**  
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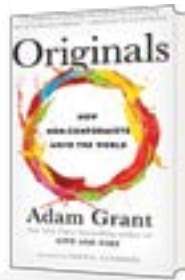
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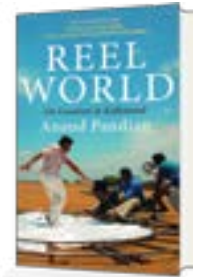
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**Samit Basu**  
Resistance



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