

GNC

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 2
JANUARY 2017

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FROM THE SECRETARY

Greetings to all fellow Members,

Best wishes of the New Year to all my fellow members. When this magazine reaches you, one month of the year would have rolled by. And it's been some month for us Chennaiites. We saw difficult times in December, with the Chief Minister passing away and then being hit by Cyclone Vardah and its aftermath. With the backdrop of a difficult December, GNC hosted a memorable New Year party and we are glad that so many of our members cast aside their woes and came to welcome the New Year in style and with great revelry.

Karthik Iyer and his group offered some soulful music and foot-stomping numbers, followed by the dashing flamenco dancers. The dance floor then had all members, young, old and teens, dancing with great energy and enthusiasm to ring in the New Year. Over 1,100 members were at GNC that night and 800 had dinner at the club. Thanks to all members for making the New Year a great success.

The highlight of our Pongal celebrations was a memorable Carnatic music concert by renowned musician TM Krishna, who enthralled a record audience for over three hours. Over 650 members turned up for the concert and over 300 members later partook of a sumptuous dinner by Chennai's renowned caterer, Pattappa.

We are pleased to announce that the inauguration of the renovated Tennis Court was done by Mr. Kannan Adityan on 1st February 2017, and later opened for members. The GNC cricket team continues to have a memorable run; they were runners-up in the Singaram Trophy. Kudos to the team.

Wishing you and your family members once again a Happy and Prosperous 2017.

Warm regards,

Mahesh Shanbhag
Honorary Secretary
(M216)



MAHESH V SHANBHAG
SECRETARY
(M216)

mahesh@canaragroup.com
9840148000

FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

My Dear Members,

As a member of this prestigious and vibrant club, I have always felt that the office bearers have had one guiding philosophy: To guide the affairs of this wonderful club with the unshakeable policy that "inclusiveness is not an ideology but is a way of life in this club."

We are carrying forward this guiding principle and wish to make every member take ownership of the club and give an unbiased opinion and assessment on issues that concerns the welfare of this association of wonderful people. I have seen members come here alone or with their family, to share lovely moments with others and create an atmosphere of joy all around.

I have noticed that when we come inside this building we learn to deal with the emotions of people. Whether they emerge from the bar or the dining room or from the gym and sports centre, our members are a lively lot. Guests of members say that they find our club's atmosphere soothing and friendly in every way.

We have to understand that the elected representatives discuss and debate every decision before they are implemented and are also prepared to change if members give alternative suggestions that benefit the club.

Let us make our club a home that you would like to spend more of your happy hours and take back precious memories with your family every day, day after day.

My sincere thanks to all our members who have contributed articles to this issue and to the members and their friends who have placed their ads in GNC Connect.

With Warm Regards
Mohan Raghavan
(M161)



MOHAN RAGHAVAN
VICE PRESIDENT
(M161)

mr_sra@yahoo.com
9841044666

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear fellow members,

Best wishes to all of you for the New Year. After all the dark moments we have seen over the past two months, hope the rest of the year turns out to be happy, rewarding and fulfilling.

The dominant debate in the city is dealing with the after-effects of Cyclone Vardah, which destroyed thousands of trees in our beloved city. Our cover story focuses on the city's tree cover, featuring an interview with Shobha Menon of NGO Nizhal and also our Club member, on what the city needs to do to restore its green cover. We are all in for a searing summer, that's for sure.

My sincere thanks to all our members who have contributed articles to this issue in great numbers. We have received a variety of articles on disparate subjects, including a rousing ode to Chepauk by cricket buff P. Ramanath. The highlight of the Pongal celebrations was a melodious concert by Carnatic exponent TM Krishna. K. Rajiv captures that magical evening in his article and photographs.

Thanvi Srikanth wrote an article from Cologne, where she is interning at the renowned Max Planck Institute, while Meghana waxes eloquent on her Lankan holiday, not to mention R. Balaji, who savoured Goan delights on a driving holiday to the coastal State. Read about the club's sporting champs Soumini Srinivas and Girija Venkatesan, both senior citizens but young at heart and in fitness. KP Balakumar is back with his Foodie Diaries and he's been travelling, and, well, eating gourmet cuisine all over, not to mention his tryst with the music season's Sabha canteens.

More articles are in the pipeline which we could not accommodate in this issue and we will publish those in forthcoming issues. Please keep your articles coming. You may mail them to the club mail ID or to gnconnect2016@gmail.com.

With warm regards
Vinay Kamath
(V322)



VINAY KAMATH
EDITOR
(V322)

gnconnect2016@gmail.com

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HOW DEALING WITH STRESS CAN MAKE YOU STRONGER

Life is a constant process of facing up to changes, seeking newer ways to adapt, and finding a balance, says Dr. N. Rangarajan

Adaptive behaviour helps us grow and survive. Maladaptive behaviour leads to maladies. Change always causes stress and destabilises us. But often, pushed by this stress, we make efforts to regain our equilibrium and, in that process, learn quite a few new techniques and skills of living. But for this, we would stagnate and become quite useless. So, a stress-free life may be something that actually makes life, well, rather lifeless!

The gurus who promise a stress-free life to all are perhaps themselves under a great deal of stress to find newer disciples and converts! As a matter of fact, there is no real escape from stress. Having accepted that stress is a constant in life, we need to be able to identify when and why we are being stressed.

Simply put, whenever we are uncomfortable, or angry or irritable, whenever we are out of our comfort zone, we are facing some kind of stress. There may be added indicators, such as a faster heart-beat, sweating, breathlessness, muscle pain, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, lapses in concentration, and so on. We need to find out what is stressing us out.

Take a very honest and unprejudiced look at yourself and your surroundings. Acknowledge the desires that motivate you and the conflicts that happen in your mind when you attempt to fulfil those desires. For instance, you may be looking forward to going over to the club for a drink but may not be able to find a driver to drop you back home afterwards! So, the desire to visit the club and have a drink stresses you out first and perhaps diverts your attention from the task at hand.



Your lawful side prevents you from driving under the influence, and is now in conflict with the desire to have a drink! So the stress builds up. You have now realised you are under stress and the reasons for the state of affairs as well. Now get down to the work of handling it.



You can decide to have a drink at home, but then you would miss the company of your friends. You might then invite friends home but they may not want to miss the club experience, or you may not have the 'domestic support' to do so! Then, you have to work out some means of transport to get to the club and back. You might hire a cab but not be sure of getting one late at night. You may phone a friend hoping two heads might find a better solution than one, but this may end with both being more stressed out than before. Or, you might decide to walk back home after the drink, rather than drink and drive. Or maybe decide not to have a drink after all! In any case, you have resolved the conflict and have actually mastered a stressful situation!

Mastery over acute stress helps the mind and body become stronger and healthier. There's a sense of pride that you now know more methods of handling stress because you have put your mind to work to understand this. Faced with a similar situation again, you might resolve it quicker and better than the previous time!

Because of this stress, and your efforts to identify and overcome it, you have actually grown a bit. Many studies show that acute stress is indeed essential to a healthy life. Avoiding stress or finding escape routes only creates more unrest and brings on stress-induced problems.

Chronic unresolved stress is, of course, another issue! This leads to several physical and mental health problems and needs a good hard look by a professional who can help you cope better with it and resolve it competently! ❀

PHOTO MONTAGE



CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS



HOW GREEN WAS MY CITY



Nizhal is a trust to promote concern for trees in the city. The idea was to bring about awareness on the role of trees in our lives and on the need to plant, propagate and care for trees for the benefit of all. Shobha Menon, a founder-member and trustee of Nizhal, and a member of GNC, spoke on what the city needs to do to recover the thousands of trees lost in the aftermath of Cyclone Vardah.

In your opinion, how many trees and how much of Chennai's tree cover has been lost due to the disastrous Vardah?

The statistics vary...from a few thousands to a lakh, according to some experts! But frankly, lets not worry about how many, but how definitely their loss will lead to soaring temperatures in the coming months. And, what we can each do about that...in terms of working towards a sensitive change for our own environment! It's ironic that even at this point, I see many people thinking more ACs can be the solution to a hotter summer!



Also, grown trees need careful training and pruning in order to help their balance and safety in an urban environment. A systematic tree health management system is to be put in place, particularly in urban areas, where trees that do so much for us, are exposed to great stress and pollution levels!

What are the indigenous species of trees that will go well in Chennai climatic conditions?

The list is long, but needs to be location specific - small, medium, wide roads, coastal locations, each needs different trees. A few are Iluppai, Punnai, Poo Maruthu, Mandharai, Sarakonrai

What can NGOs such as Nizhal as well as ordinary citizens do in the aftermath?

Our team has been involved in restoration work for many trees across the city that can be saved and given a new lease of life. The process involves straightening and propping, applying fungicide to prevent infections, and root growth nutrients to induce new rooting...and, of course, showering tender loving care till the stressed tree gets back new leaves and is well on its way to recovery. It is remarkable to see how some battered trees have resiliently sprung back after Vardah! In a few weeks, we can plan to re-plant too, with the right species for the right locations.



What has the loss of so many trees taught us?

That we cannot afford to take Nature for granted! The more we take Nature and our environment for granted, the greater the backlash will be.

What are the learnings? Much has been written about the fact that native species have not fallen so much during the cyclone against the exotic species of trees? But, dont trees also become ethnic after they have been in Chennai soil for a generation or two

It's not so much about indigenous or exotic...but planting the right kind of tree in the right location. Some exotic tree species have settled in well and are called naturalised. Currently, there is no system or focus on which species, how best to plant, and how to take care till it grows into a mature tree.



What needs to be done to promote a tree culture among Chennai's citizenry?

Begin to care for your environment. Shake the urban citizens out of their self-imprisoning apathy...with a cyclonic fury!



What is being done by the government and by NGOs and citizens to rejuvenate Chennai's green cover that has been lost?

There is a plan to form a Tree Committee and bring in an Urban Green Plan from the Chennai Corporation which will put in systems on which tree are to be planted and where. Which means that all planting will have to fit into a planned system, nothing ad hoc.

What can a Club like GNC, with a disparate membership of people from all walks of life, do to help the green cause?

It's important to remember that whichever walk of life we come from, we all need to breathe clean air to improve our health. And when we take so much care to choose a car or an appliance for our home, why is it that responsibility for your environment is outsourced to government or other agencies?? Find out what you can do, and find ways to do it...because it matters to you!



NEW YEAR'S EVE SWINGING PARTY



PHOTO MONTAGE



PHOTO MONTAGE



WHY SLEEP APNOEA IS A SERIOUS MALADY

Sridhar Rao Chaganti

Sridhar Chaganti (S-174) says sleep apnoea needs to be treated with the same urgency as any other ailment. Good sleep is a blessing.

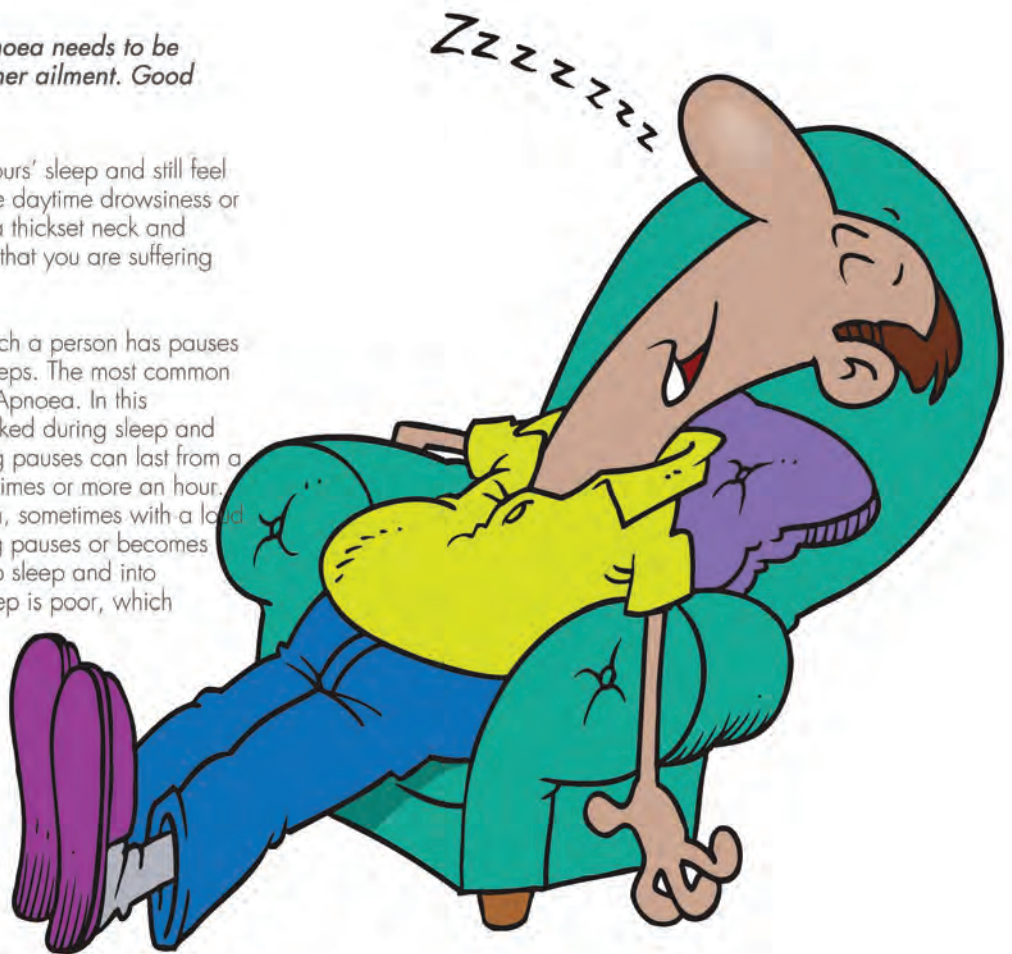
Do you get up in the mornings after 6-8 hours' sleep and still feel unrefreshed? Do you snore? Do you have daytime drowsiness or fatigue? Are you a male, overweight, with a thickset neck and above 40? Then there is a good possibility that you are suffering from Sleep Apnoea.

Sleep Apnoea is a common disorder in which a person has pauses in breathing or shallow breaths while he sleeps. The most common type of Sleep Apnoea is Obstructive Sleep Apnoea. In this condition, the airway collapses or gets blocked during sleep and causes pauses in breathing. These breathing pauses can last from a few seconds to minutes and may occur 30 times or more an hour. Typically, normal breathing then starts again, sometimes with a loud snort or choking sound. When the breathing pauses or becomes shallow, the person often moves out of deep sleep and into light sleep. As a result, the quality of the sleep is poor, which makes the person tired during the day.

Sleep Apnoea is a serious condition that requires immediate attention. Untreated Sleep Apnoea can increase the risk of high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, obesity, and diabetes. It also increases the chances of having work-related or driving accidents, nocturia (waking during the night to go to the bathroom), difficulty in concentration, memory loss, decreased sexual desire, weight-gain, and irritability. The most common symptom of sleep apnoea is snoring. However, not everyone who snores has sleep apnoea. Also, while Sleep Apnoea is more common amongst men, it also affects women.

Sleep Apnoea requires long-term management that includes lifestyle changes, mouthpieces, surgery, and breathing devices.

A very common treatment for Sleep Apnoea is the use of a breathing device called a CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) machine. This machine, which is to be used while sleeping, supplies mild air pressure to keep the airways continuously open in people suffering from Sleep Apnoea. A typical CPAP machine is about 24 x 13 x 13 cm (9.5" x 5" x 5") and weighs about 1.25 kg. It usually comes with a travel case. Most airlines do not count it as part of carry-on baggage.



Many patients of Sleep Apnoea have reported a remarkable sense of well-being after just one night's use of a CPAP machine. Several confess that they never realized how poor their quality of sleep was until they started using the machine.

People who suspect that they may suffer from Sleep Apnoea should consult a doctor in one of the several Sleep Study centres located in hospitals and clinics. The evaluation may require a one or two-night sleepover at the centre.

Sufferers of this malady will do well in attending to it immediately. After all, as Thomas Dekker, the 17th century English dramatist said, "Sleep is the golden chain that ties health and our bodies together."



GOA

रिहो वाया
लहरा वीरुत!

Balaji Rajan (B165) and his wife Tulse Balaji go on a whirlwind trip of picturesque Goa, admiring its sylvan splendour and savouring its culinary delights over many a glass of beer and feni

If Kerala is God's own country, then Goa is where He takes his annual vacation, because even God knows 'what happens in Goa stays in Goa!' This was the impression people had given us over the years based on their travels to this Union Territory.



Our decision to travel by road from Chennai to Goa was driven by stories that the Konkan coast offers breath-taking scenery. We were witness to this majesty at many places during the drive, especially at places like Trasi and Karwar.

Here the road is close enough to the beach that on one side the Arabian sea stretches away into the horizon and on the other side you have glimpses of myriad rivers snaking their way alongside, sometimes hidden from view by vast stretches of coconut plantations up to the foothills of the mountains. There are water bodies everywhere, be it rivers, lakes, backwaters or just small streams flowing down from the distant mountains. From time to time, as we crossed bridges over the rivers, the landscape opened up and we were rewarded with the beautiful sights of the majestic Western Ghats in the distance, with their peaks hidden under a congregation of monsoon clouds. The rains had also ensured the landscape was green and fertile throughout the journey.



My wife and I had long been wanting to visit this mythical place called Goa, where we believed sun, sand, surf, recreational drugs, Feni and Pork Vindaloo had coalesced into forming the backbone of a vibrant economy catering to millions of tourists who travel here every year.

They come to partake of a culture where 'fun in the sun' also means clothing is optional.

They come to experience a bohemian lifestyle where work and play are moot concepts, as one cannot exist without the other.

They come with the sanguine hope of discovering that life itself is a game created in the minds of Gods hoping to while away interminable eternity.

We saw none of this.

Goa, in the off-season, is a no-nonsense, down to earth, bustling area, prone to taking two-hour siesta naps in the afternoon when everything shuts down. This we attributed to the stifling heat and humidity, even though we were closer to winter than summer. Evenings and nights are much cooler and offer pleasant weather for any nocturnal activity you may have planned. We found the people to be friendly and accommodative of our touristy ways but pushed too far they pushed back equally with their impatient honking or brief glance of irritation. And they are a proud people. Goan food is spicy and tasty and they will brook no nonsense of pairing the Chicken Cafreal with Roti/ Naan. Eat it with white rice or Goan bread, or don't eat. Coming from Chennai I was pleasantly surprised to find alcohol abundantly available in all mom-pop shops, restaurants, the local chai house and even the security guards room. I fully endorsed the two-hour afternoon nap after partaking of a heavy lunch of fried fish and cold beer in a small restaurant run out of a local's house—these Goans were just practical, that's all. It's impossible to fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run with a gallon of beer sloshing around in your belly- you need to give it time to settle!



PHOTO ESSAY

They are also a fervently religious people. We had booked our stay through 'Airbnb' in a quiet apartment complex in North Goa. The area had its fair share of Churches and Chapels and during the day time we found a constant stream of people walking in and out of them. Little old ladies in floral patterned dresses hurrying alongside the road, probably trying to get to the next mass on time. Young children and their parents all dressed up carrying flowers and candles. The quaintest thing we saw was a little road side Chapel, with enough space to house 6 people inside, and two guys sitting on a stool outside the door right by the road. The size of the congregation was a poor indicator of the piety with which the audience attended to the words of the priest inside!



The Goan's also drive fast. The roads are neat but small, winding their way through the lush countryside. We were more than once surprised to find our vistas changing from narrow winding roads lined with small neat homes to suddenly having an entire hill or green field with a river running through open up ahead of us. Almost everyone is in a hurry to get somewhere quickly and an abundance of two wheelers and small cars fought for space with an unprecedented quantity of dogs and cows on the road. Many tourists hire motorbikes to get around and it was a common sight to see young couples driving everywhere on their two wheelers. The Royal Enfield seems to have garnered a special place of honour among these tourists - many of these bikes can be heard more than seen, roaring around with their signature exhaust note. As the roads are narrow it is necessary to overtake and cut ahead of vehicles when you get a chance - even if it means driving your fourwheeler like a two wheeler - by which I mean only two wheels are ever on the ground!



Goa has plenty to offer for those in an adventurous mood or those who have recovered from the previous night's hangover. Split into North and South Goa, each has its unique USP. We also found Old Goa, in Velha, home to centuries old churches, built by the Portuguese settlers who ruled this part of the world.



North Goa is plebeian - home to crowded Anjuna, Baga, Vegator and Calangute beaches. Yet no trip is complete if you have not cycled around here to view the luscious green hills drop away steeply into the rocky coast and clean beaches below. Pay a little extra for an organized cycling tour that will take you off the beaten track. You can huff and puff your way upto Aguada Fort and drink in the panoramic vista that opens up from the ramparts of the fortress or sample the eclectic fare at 'Curlies' on the beach, be it breakfast, lunch or dinner. Further east from Goa the mountains are dotted with mighty rivers that offer rafting for the adventurous or tumbling waterfalls for the romantically inclined. Evenings can be spent at crowded Anjuna beach picking up knick-knacks you will never use from the quaint flea market followed by libations you won't remember in the morning.



South Goa is more laid back and chic. Its world class resorts offer access to some of the beautiful beaches along this coast without the trouble of dealing with the junta- ideal for a relaxed getaway from the hustle and bustle of the daily grind.



Go armed with shorts, t-shirts, bathing-suits, caps, sunglasses, suntan lotion and plenty of crocin to prepare yourself for both the beach life and the night life! Last but not least, the finale was a nerve wracking journey back from Goa to Chennai via Bangalore, traversing the bulk of Karnataka in a Tamilnadu registered car, just as the rioting over the Cauvery Water dispute peaked! We travelled back eleven hundred kilometres, taking scenery in North Karnataka, navigating monotonous highways and tackling greedy highway patrolmen, while keeping a wary eye out for anyone with a grudge to bear. Someone up there was looking out for us and the collective prayers of all well-wishers found us back home safe and sound.



Tired, exhilarated and happy, we returned to our monotonous feni-less lives, relishing the memories of our adventures in the land of a thousand Enfield bikes and basking in the glow of having partied in God's own clubhouse! ♣

TENNIS IS BACK @ GNC!

The renovated tennis courts of Gandhi Nagar Club, all in deep blue, were inaugurated on 1st February, 2017, by Mr Kannan Adityan in the presence of the fellow members and was followed by high tea.

The three courts, which look resplendent in the floodlights, are made from synthetic material and have been laid by True Bounce, Coimbatore. The tennis courts are quite sophisticated. They have an asphalt base for the synthetic court with a bituminous concrete layer and on top there are three layers of coarse rubber and two layers of fine rubber with two layers of ultra top colour with a royal blue inner and grass green outer colour which gives the courts their rich look. The court was opened for the tennis lovers the same evening.





MELODIOUS POORVIKALYANI ON A MAGICAL EVENING

K Rajiv (R-194) writes about Karnatic vocalist TM Krishna's brilliant and inspired concert

It was in September 2016 that Mr Sunil Reddy, President of GNC, requested me to sound out Shri TM Krishna about giving a concert at the Club, as many of the members were big fans of the brilliant vocalist. When I spoke to Shri Krishna, I had only one condition for the concert: Shri RK Shriramkumar and Shri K Arun Prakash should accompany him on the violin and mridangam respectively!

When Krishna presented the concert at GNC on January 13, along with these two accompanists, he had a record club audience of over 600, many of whom had started arriving even an hour before the concert. The event was very well organised and the club's management committee can pat itself on the back for attracting unprecedented footfalls.

TM Krishna started the concert with Shri Marimuthu Pillai's song, 'Kaalai thooki Ninru' in the raga Yedukulakhmaboji, followed by Saint Tyagaraja's, 'Hecharika ga rara' in the same raga, but at a faster pace. His next song, in Poorvikalyani, set the tone for the three-hour concert. With Shriramkumar following him like a shadow, the ragmalika gave the audience an insight on the rapport Krishna and he enjoy! Barthidasan's song, 'Pudhiyadhora Ulagam Seivom' was reflective of the high ideals and social activism that Krishna is known for.

The popular krithi 'Chakkani Raaja', in Karaharapriya, was astounding in its embellishments and perfect fusion of vocalist and accompanists! The concert ended with Muthuswami Dikshathar's Nottuswaram, as is typical in many of Krishna's concerts.



As brilliant as the music was the dinner served by Pattappa and his team. The elaborate and mouth-watering menu was appreciated by one and all. Mr. Mahesh Shanbhag (Hon. Secretary), and his team deserve special mention for their tireless efforts in ensuring that all the arrangements were perfect, especially with the turnout being unprecedented. ♣

SWAYED BY SABHA SURFEIT



Join KP Balakumar (B 103) on his gourmet journey from delicious sabha canteen fare in Chennai to the best of fine dining in Pune

December is a month that's looked forward to in Chennai for the many good things it heralds — the relatively cooler climate, music season for the Rasikas and, more importantly for folks like me, the delicious food at the many Sabha canteens that spring up during this time. Very often, the food is as popular as the performances that the season is famous for. Though I've been a resident of Chennai all these years, I've never made the Sabha canteen rounds despite the many recommendations and plans all these years. Until now, that is.

Inspired by a friend's post on Facebook (with a picture of the most enticing ghee roast dosa, glistening and browned in a manner that only an expert of the craft could create, and presented as a cone) I arrived at Narada Gana Sabha promptly the next morning. Rubbing shoulders with the who's who of Chennai is a standard feature at these canteens. Seated two tables away from me was a leading Chennai industrialist. There's quite a hustle and bustle as a swarm of waiters and managers cater to the intense demand. But nothing is missed and everything is served piping hot and super quick.

Over multiple rounds of dosas, vadais and truly the best filter coffee I've had in a very long time, this long pending visit turned out to be truly memorable. Finishing off with what I was trying for the first time, the makhana peda (resembling a gulab jamun but with a beauty of a twist inside - an assortment of dry fruits), I can't but help order a second round, and some for takeaway!

If you haven't been to Sabha canteens during the music season, you don't know what you've missed. While it may be standard South Indian fare, there's nothing ordinary about it. Maybe it's that attention to detail, being prepared in smaller quantities. Maybe it's the extra love that goes into the cooking, given it's the rasikas they are catering to. Or maybe it's all just a game of one-upmanship, with each caterer wanting to be known as the best for that season. I really don't know. All I know is that the December of 2016 turned me into a rasika... of the Sabha canteens.

Dining like a Peshwa

December was also a time of travel for me. I visited Pune for the first time and we stayed in Baner, a suburb. As with any new place, the food and restaurants around town are of great interest to me.

And Pune scored high on these counts. For a suburb, the options to dine and drink in a radius of just a few kilometres were truly staggering. What stood out was the quality of food and beautiful restaurant interiors.



We tried restaurants, bistros and pubs, such as Incognito, Café 212, Effingut Brewerkz, Malaka Spice and The Urban Foundry. Without exception, the food was top class and the interiors were stunningly hip and modern (especially at The Urban Foundry, Incognito and Effingut Brewerkz).



The standouts of those delectable meals were the Grilled Marinated Sole Fish with Tropical Salsa and Coconut Rice (Incognito); Thecha Chicken Kebab (this just exploded on the tongue, the green chilly thecha lent an intense spice that was delicious and eye-watering at the same time); pork ribs (Effingut Brewerkz) and the tiramisu (at Cafe 212 - ridiculously tasty with that strong coffee flavour. This is the best Tiramisu I've ever had — none of that useless whipped cream being passed off as mascarpone, as a lot of places do. The manager told us that this cafe is a part of all Phoenix malls across the country, so can't wait for it to come to Chennai).



If you like your beer then Effingut Brewerkz has to be your port of call in Pune. The beer is brewed in-house and I'm told that there are over eight kinds available on tap. Judging by the crowds thronging the place and our 45-minute wait to get a table at this very large pub, the beer is indeed highly sought after.



In medieval Europe, the average person drank 220-250 litres of beer a year! As it had undergone fermentation, it was cleaner and safer to drink than the water.

After those great gastronomic experiences, Pune will be an off-travelled- to destination in the future.

A wondrous dessert

The final part of this piece is dedicated to a sweet I rediscovered in January 2016. A close friend had long talked about the variant of our pheni (that delicate, stringy, circular sweet consumed with milk and sugar) that she had sourced from Bhikaram Chandmal in Bikaner, Rajasthan, and she sent us some that month.

The variation was called kesar fini, flavoured with saffron and sweetened already. I've had pheni many a time growing up as it was my dad's favourite sweet. He used to buy them only from Bombay Halwa House and, along with Rosogolla, this was a great favourite of all at home. The days he would come home for lunch with those boxes of pheni from BHH were celebration time... all of us, my dad, mom, brothers and me would eagerly wait for the end of the meal to lay our hands on that wondrous dessert — sprinkled with sugar and soaked in cold milk (never hot milk, it ruins the taste, turning the pheni into a lump!), to be relished a mouthful at a time.

As the years passed, the quality at BHH dropped and we stopped buying the pheni. And then came the kesar fini from Bikaner. It was more than about going back in time, it was tasting the beauty of something created by a master chef or, to use a local term, a master halwai. The flavour of the saffron and the hint of cardamom in each soulful morsel drenched in cold milk is hard to describe and must be experienced. The taste and flavour were unlike anything I'd tried before and the quality of ghee used in the preparation was superlative — no icky coating on the palate when legendary sweets are sought to be made cheaper by lesser brands, using substitutes for ghee.

After the fini experience, I searched long and hard for a local supplier, but was told that this is made only during winter time in Rajasthan and one must wait for the December-January season to once again lay one's hands on it. I've tried kesar fini from a few other brands recently, in Pune as well as sourced from mithai shops in Sowcarpet (brands supposedly from Bikaner) but nothing comes close to the one from Bhikaram Chandmal. At the risk of sounding like their brand ambassador, go ahead and give it a try, you'll thank me later.

Technology has made sourcing a lot easier now and, wonder of wonders, the kesar fini by Bhikaram Chandmal is now available on Amazon! As I write this piece, an sms arrives from the courier service saying "your package is out for delivery". I await the arrival of my 2017 stock in great anticipation and the many memories it will bring back with each delicious spoonful.♣



(All images are courtesy the respective FB pages of the restaurants featured.)

LEARNING TO RIDE A CYCLE AT 63!

R. Seshadri



And riding 100 kms in 5 hours at 64, says R Seshadri (S 170) of GNC member Girija Venkatesan



Meet Girija Venkatesan, 65, who proves the maxim "Age is a matter of feeling, not of years" She has been a member of GNC since 2005. A casual encounter with her at the gym in our club recently left me astonished at what a senior citizen can achieve with focussed efforts and application. I noticed that she was executing the tough routine that the gym coach was putting her through with consummate ease. Exercises which would have left even a 20-year-old panting! Her story, I am sure, would be an inspiration to many senior citizens who reconcile themselves to a sedentary life.

Born in Salem, Girija is a Graduate in Fine Arts from Stella Maris College in Chennai. She moved to Australia soon after her marriage in the early Seventies and pursued a post graduate course in design during her stay there for around five years. A mother of two sons (aged 41 & 37) with three grandchildren (aged 16, 15 & 5), Girija plunged into a business in interior design and retail after her husband passed away when she was still young with two small kids. The formidable task of bringing up two children as a single parent kept her busy until her children moved away to pursue their respective careers. Eventually, both of them settled abroad leaving Girija alone at her home in Chennai. "My life-long pursuit of fitness and outdoor activities began from December 2007 after my sons left the nest," says Girija. This means her initial attempts at staying fit started only when she was 56! Living alone in Chennai, her determination to stay fit stems from the fact that she doesn't want to be a burden on any one. "Staying fit has meant so much to me. I get all antsy without time to exercise. It's been my 'alone' and 'meditative' time," states Girija.

Depending on the time of the year and what plateau her body has reached, her activities include cycling, spinning, power walking, running and swimming when it comes to cardio exercises. Besides these, she is into core strengthening and weight training which according to her is also a priority considering her age and the need to prevent bone and muscle loss. "It's important to challenge and confuse your body to stay fit," says Girija matter-of-factly!

Trying out new things to keep the regimen interesting led her to learn cycling at the age of 63! "I bought myself a simple Lady Bird BSA Cycle and got a young boy to teach me cycling." A month later she invested in a Hybrid Cannondale sports bicycle and three months later, in 2015, won a medal for completing 100 kms in five hours in a League organised by the TN Cycling Club in Chennai! Later, riding 40 kms every weekend with her club mates became a part of her routine.

And it was during one such ride that she met with a serious accident when she was hit by a car and was hospitalised. She was thrown off her cycle for over seven feet and fell on a passing van breaking its windshield before landing on the road and passing out! In spite of this, thanks to her fitness level and the protective gear that she was wearing, she had no fractures! But the injuries did prevent her from getting on to her favourite bicycle for the next three months. That's when she joined a Gym to start a new routine of 'spinning' (stationery cycling) to ensure that she kept in touch with the simulated body movement needed for cycling. While such an accident would have scared a lesser mortal into quitting for good, Girija got back to her cycling routine with a vengeance and even participated in a mixed duathlon in 2016 and won the first place in the seniors category.



Swimming is another passion for Girija. She has clinched two Golds and one Silver at the TN State Aquatic 6th Masters Championship held in 2016. At the GNC Swimming pool, doing 40 to 50 laps in one go is a routine for her these days! As a runner she has participated in a few 10 km runs too.

In May 2016 she trekked to the Patalsu peak in the Himalayas. At 13,845 ft, the peak is situated at the head of the Kulu Valley. The trek

Manali and wound past the villages of Shanag, Burwa and Solang and lasted for five arduous days of 10 to 11 hours per day. While some of her much younger co-participants gave up along the way, Girija, the oldest member of the group, reached the peak triumphantly. In September 2016, she also did another trek to Tiger Nest in Bhutan.

"I think of activity as more than just exercise. My motivation is intrinsic," says Girija. Her stay-fit mantra is "Just keep moving". And her advice to other senior citizens who want to stay fit and healthy.... "besides cardio and weight training, eat sensibly and get lots of shut-eye". When prodded about what's next on her agenda, she states casually, "I want to participate in a Triathlon and trek the Annapoorna Base Camp (in the Himalayas) in 2017.

Girija says GNC has provided her a good platform to get to where she is. "The swimming pool and the gym are my favourite spots," concludes Girija.



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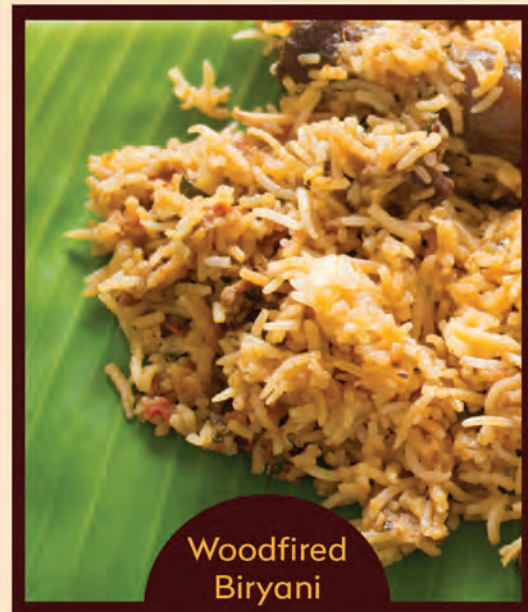
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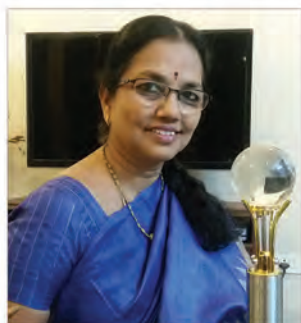
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QUEEN OF THE CUE SPORT



Three-time billiards champion Soumini Srinivas says billiards keeps her active and is a stress-buster too.

Soumini Srinivas, member of GNC, won the Tamil Nadu State Ranking Billiards Tournament for Women 2016-17. Soumini, 64, started playing Billiards at GNC only in 1998. A sportsperson in her younger days, she wanted to pick up a new hobby

after her children both went away to college.

"I had faced problems with severe back pain and decided that a sport would help me to be active, keep physically fit and cope with stress," she recalls.

Her first tournament was the National Billiards and Snooker at New Delhi, in January 1999, where she got to the quarter in a field of 28 women.

And then there was no looking back. Soumini won the Billiards Championship in Tamil Nadu State Ranking for Women in 2002 and 2003.

After that she was a runner-up in the tournament every year, till she regained the title this year. She has been a runner-up in the Snooker tournament too and has participated in 13 National Billiards and Snooker tourneys so far.

Memorable tournament

"My most memorable and special tournament was in April 2003, at Sheffield, UK, where I played in the quarters with Kelly Fisher, the seven-time World Champion in Billiards and Snooker. I got to see professional billiards and snooker being played there and I developed a passion for this green baize sport," she says.

The skills needed for this game, says Soumini, are good sight, concentration, physical fitness and fine motor skills, as in any other sport. Soumini plays and practises regularly with persons of different age groups, men and women and school-children too.

For all ages

"I have not faced many challenges that I could not easily handle, and have developed a passion for this game, especially billiards, and have also inspired other youngsters to learn the game. I find playing with youngsters quite enjoyable, though I lose often to them. Playing with older and experienced people helps me to learn the nuances of the game from them, and pick up tips to improve my performance," she adds.

Having taken up billiards when she was in her 40s, Soumini says that girls and young women should take up some sport or hobby and billiards and snooker are very suitable for all ages. GNC congratulates Soumini on her victory and hails her sterling spirit.

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7	Extra Bed	All rooms		400

Breakfast and Bisleri (1 ltr) water bottle complimentary.

LOVING A LANKAN BREAK

Meghna Madhusudhan (M 220) travels all over Sri Lanka for an unforgettable holiday

Our year-end trip to Sri Lanka happened out of the blue and I was quite thrilled that two of my close friends (and their families) were joining us. First day, on landing in Colombo, we were taken in a comfortable coach, which even had a wifi connection, to our first destination – Yala National Park! This was a long drive nearly six hours including a lunch break. The teens of the group (including me!) whiled away the journey on our respective gadgets and complained about the slow wifi connection.



The second day we had to be up at 5 a.m. for the jungle safari to spot some leopards. Although we were sleep-walking to the jeep, we were excited. The first animal we spotted was a wild boar – I thought of Obelix when I saw it. Then we spotted exotic birds, including peacocks on treetops and rabbits, deer, iguanas and even alligators. The best spotting we did that day was of two leopards, sleeping and later playing and fighting with each other. One even glared at us as if it was blaming us for their loss of environment. We spotted the jungle fowl which is the national bird of Sri Lanka although it didn't look very happy to be seen. The icing on the cake was a pristine beach on the edges of the forest reserve, where we dipped our legs and clicked some selfies.

The hotel stay at Yala was uneventful barring a stray iguana we caught sight of. Next morning we set off for the cool hill station called Nuwara Elia. Before that we were taken (by our parents, of course) to the Kadhigamam temple to pay our obeisance at the famous Murugan temple. We were very surprised to know that the temple complex housed, apart from Hindu gods, places of worship for other religions such as Buddhism, Christianity and Islam too. Another surprising thing was that the Kadhigamam temple Murugan shrine can't be seen by the devotee and we have to pray before the curtain covering the sanctum sanctorum. Very interesting, right?

The drive from Kadhigamam to Nuwara Elia was a long one but the excitement of a hill-station and the cool climes kept us in cheer. We played games like 'names of countries', cards and music on the way to keep things interesting. As soon as we reached our hotel, we were freezing and famished and rushed to the lavish buffet dinner

awaiting us. A day well spent, we stayed up late playing cards before sleeping.

The third day at the hill station was so special... the place itself is so beautiful and relatively un-spoilt. We visited the Victoria Park where we climbed trees, jumped benches, petted a python and played a while. We had a good time, and it got better when it started to drizzle and we went boating on Gregory lake. The name reminded me of the word gregarious; the lake was very calm and peaceful with birds trying to pick their fish. Lunch was at a place called Mount Haven, which was absolutely breathtaking; maybe this is what heaven looks like, I thought to myself.

We were floating amongst the clouds and to be able to see the clouds moving was a surreal experience. It was close to Sita-Eliya, a place where Hanuman met Sita, as mentioned in the epic, Ramayana. We saw the Ashoka Vanam where Sita was held captive, and a drawing similar to Hanuman's feet. Surprisingly, Ravana is not looked upon as a complete villain in these parts of town. There is a Ravana falls and a Ravana cave nearby!



Our next destination was Udawalawe and somehow we were not worried about the long drive before us as we had a lot of interactive games and conversations that kept us good company. Here we spotted a huge herd of elephants (57-plus, someone counted) including a three-week-old calf that kept sticking under his mother's shadow. We even got to see the baby elephants being fed and wild buffaloes having a bath.



With the adventure part of our trip getting over, we proceeded to Colombo, the capital, and our shopping destination. The city is cleaner than Chennai though the traffic can be irksome at peak hours. The beach near our hotel (along the Marina) was very clean with no shops or vendors! We had mixed feelings when we had to get back to Chennai because as usual we did not want the vacation to end.

One thing I learnt from this trip was it is not the destination but it is the journey with friends and family that matters. Don't miss this fun destination with your loved ones!

(Meghna is a Class 8 student of AMM Matriculation Higher Secondary School)

MIND



QUEST

Enigma

1. How does the world better know the **Argentinian Jorge Mario Bergoglio**?

2. What dubious distinction do bowlers **Malcolm Nash, Tilak Raj, Daan Van Bunge & Stuart Broad** share in world cricket?



Stuart Broad

3. What beautiful things would interest an **'lepidopterist'**?

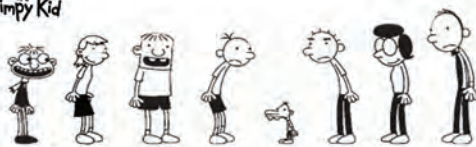
4. In which currency would **Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi** buy a book in her country?



Aung San Suu Kyi

5. In the **'Diary of a Wimpy Kid'**, who started the Cheese Touch?

DIARY
Wimpy Kid



6. Which animal is the largest terrestrial carnivore?

7. In Indian mythology, who was the most noted son of **Visharva and Kaikesi**?

8. In which body of water is the **Sargasso Sea** located?

9. Who was the first film personality to get India's highest civilian honour?

10. How many Surahs are there in the **Holy Koran**?

11. Which Italian cities are served by the **Leonardo Da Vinci** and **Marco Polo** airports?



12. According to the proverb, which single bird does not make a summer?

13. What is the collective noun for owls?



14. The first day of Lent in western Christianity is called...?

15. What is the term for the small diced pieces of bread found in soups?



Visual Questions

1. Name this World Heritage Site.



2. Identify the animal.



3. Which country's flag-map?



4. Which famous character is this?



5. Which Indian company has this logo?



Answers

1. Pope Francis 2. They have all been hit for six sixes in an over by Gary Sobers, Ravi Shastri, Herschelle Gibbs and Yuvraj Singh respectively. 3. Butterflies. 4. Kyat. She is from Myanmar. 5. Darren Walsh. 6. Polar Bear. 7. Ravana. 8. North Atlantic Ocean. 9. MGR, who won the Bharat Ratna in 1988 10. 14. 11. Rome and Venice. 12. Swallow. 13. Parliament. 14. Ash Wednesday. 15. Croutons.

Visuals answers

1. Stonehenge, 2. Badger, 3. Greece, 4. James Bond, 5. Wipro.

WAITING AT A BUSHALTESTELLE ON A WINTER MORNING

Thanvi Srikant

Capturing nature's beauty on a scenic walk to the Max Planck Institute.

Thanvi Srikant (S563) is filled with memories of Chennai even as she interns as a researcher in Cologne, Germany.

It's 8:30 a.m. on a Montag. Beneath three layers of clothing and winter accessories, I make a run to the Bushaltestelle to catch my bus on time. Before I know it, I see it moving farther away. I now have to wait for 15 whole minutes with freezing winter winds for company. Great. A fantastic start to the week!

That's when a Rajni hit plays through my earphones. Almost instantaneously, the Superstar does his magic. I feel a surge of positivity, and smile to myself, as I evoke the visuals of the song and the trademark dance moves. Listening to a Tamil song surrounded by Germans while travelling to work on a Monday morning is not just a 'good feeling'; it is far, far more than that. It's a breath of fresh air reminding you of where you come from, making you immensely proud of your roots.

Chennai. Singara Chennai. Hot, humid, rainy and constantly sunny Chennai.



Ironically, my new home for the next few months has an almost uncanny resemblance to Chennai, with its frequent spells of rain (and extremely rare snow showers). The city centre bustles with people, with a famous Dom (Cathedral) as a counterpart to our Mylai Kapaleeshwarar temple.

Cologne (or Köln in German) is filled with life. Being the capital of the state of Nordrhein-Westfalen, Köln is a melting pot of cultural diversity. Most German citizens here are originally immigrants from other parts of Europe, providing a hospitable and friendly environment in the city.

It's surprising how a hectic routine can make you forget time. It's been more than a month since I came to Köln for a research internship, and yet feels like only yesterday when I bid adieu to the Marina. My frequent video calls to family and friends has made me develop a newfound faith in long-distance relationships. In fact, I feel more socially connected now, than ever!

It's 8:40 am. I still have 5 minutes for the bus, and my mind is preoccupied with all my responsibilities after work today. With around 9 hours spent in the lab everyday, in addition to buying groceries, doing the laundry, bureaucratic formalities, a video call with a close friend, cooking dinner and reading a scientific paper for a lab presentation can be pretty tiring. Sometimes I truly wish there were more than 24 hours in a day!

That's when I remind myself to live in the moment. When that fails, I just pray to survive until the weekend, promising to compensate with plenty of sleep and watch Malayalam movies in peace.

Nevertheless, I am having a fantastic time in Cologne. The public transport system is highly efficient, and it's probably going to take more than the four months of my stay here, to explore the entire city.

I recently attended a piano concert at the University of Music here, and found myself lost for words, developing a genuine appreciation for Bach, Mozart and Chopin. What can I say — if you can't find a December Season Kutcheri, go to a Musikkonzert!

Independence is definitely exciting. A great 'Marvel' movie once taught me that, 'With great power, comes great responsibility', and it couldn't be more true. There is a certain element of fear involved with the weight of the responsibilities that you hold. It took me a long time to understand that it's perfectly okay to make mistakes while learning to adapt in a new environment. In fact, I recommend that you should take the wrong trains and make all the detours you possibly could. Otherwise, how would you know what not to do the next time?

Life is a series of experiments. Being a research student, I have learnt that every small blunder has to be taken in one's stride. Cherish every memory of your attempt at something new. Let go of all your weird inhibitions. Take each as an experiment to test your survival skills. If you pass, that's great! If you don't, even better. Your knack of being clumsy can give you a million stories to tell your grandkids. Speaking of clumsy, I drop my gloves and break my water bottle in a hurry to board the arriving bus, but somehow manage to make a hasty grab for them.

It's a new dawn and a new day. Who knows what's in store?

(Thanvi is a Biotechnology student at Anna University, Guindy, and is on an internship at the Max Planck Institute for Plant Breeding Research, Cologne for her final-year project)



AN ODE TO CHEPAUK

P. Ramnath, R135

It was great to see Big Cricket
Back where it belongs at Chepauk
If you think Chennaiites are talking tall
This ground does walk the talk

Heartening it was to see
Queues snaking around to Bells
So much interest is still alive
Test Cricket still sells

December brings Nature's whims
Chennai's will to test
But the Sports lover here is willing
In adversity he's at his best

On the top tier at the Wallajah Road end
A gentle sea breeze on my back
I could hardly imagine the Vardah storm
But today our team wreaked havoc

At Chepauk we have seen many a deed
Never a dull moment
If you get to watch Test matches here
Consider it heaven sent

In the thirties came first Jardine
Of the infamous Bodyline
Many a great team has been since then
To this hallowed ground so fine

It was here that we saw a Tie
Kapil's iconic shots a la Nataraja
A match indeed we remember
From the same end of Wallajah

Chepauk of that sacred ground
Of Viswanath's ninety seven*
A knock of ethereal beauty
That could only be made in Heaven

And that wonderfully ebullient essay
By the effervescent Engineer
Missing a ton fore lunch
His disposition as always, like a frothy beer

Gavaskar passed the Don
When he made his 30th here
Anf Hirwani's debut sensational
Of such feats we do hear

We thrilled to Viru's triple
Oh that was such great fun
And now we are back at Chepauk
And Karun produces another one

We welcome Cauvery waters
Chennai's need is no doubt huge
And this new star called Rahulkarun
Brought us runs in a deluge

Bemused by the Oriental "Jaddu" man
His wiles the English couldn't match
We remembered Kapil in 83
At Jaddu's stunning backward running catch

Once they did think, the English
They could have Indian batsmen on the hop
I couldn't resist a chuckle
When Broad moved his first slip to long stop!

It was here that Tendulkar
Took on the mighty Warne
Skill and doggedness are on view again
And spectator interest reborn

At the last session after Tea
"Shadows lengthened across the field"
As said Test match commentators of old
When they the Radio mike did wield

And till Chepauk's lights went on
Eager hearts did beat
But our guys prised out all remaining six
And achieved a momentous feat

Sure there were many who did opine
That Kohli should have earlier declared
Our catching could be better, no?
But for today who cared!



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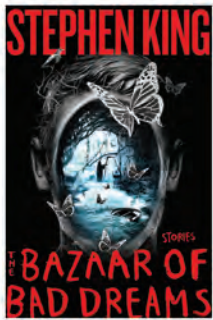
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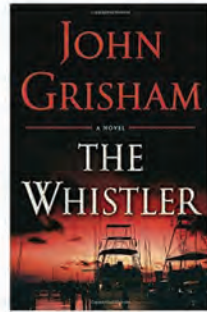
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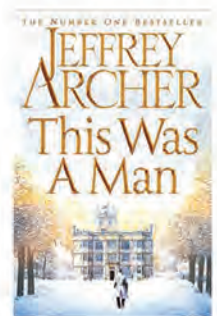
Stephen King
The Bazaar
of Bad Dreams



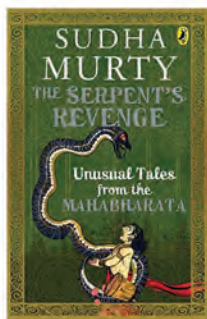
John Grisham
The Whistler



James Patterson
Woman of God



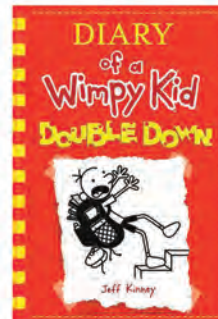
Jeffrey Archer
This was a Man



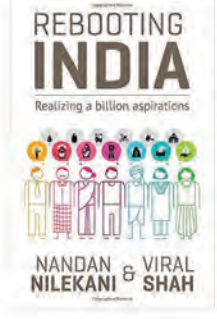
Sudha Murty
The Serpents Revenge



Geronimo Stilton
The Magical Mission



Wimpy Kid
Double Down



Nandan Nilekani
Rebooting India

Other Books

AUTHOR	NAME OF THE BOOK
CHETAN BHAGAT	ONE INDIAN GIRL
NORA ROBERTS	SUMMER IN THE SUN
PAULO COELHO	THE SPY
J K ROWLING	FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM
LEE CHILD	NIGHT SCHOOL
DAVID BALDACCI	NO MANS LAND
RUSKIN BOND	THE EMPTY HOUSE
RUSKIN BOND	WHITE CLOUDS GREEN MOUNTAINS
GERONIMO STILTON	THE SUPER SCAM
GERONIMO STILTON	THE LAKE MONSTER
BALAKUMARAN	AVANI
RAMACHANDRA GUHA	SAVAGING THE CIVILIZED
SHIVSHANKAR MENON	CHOICES
JOHN BRANT	THE BOY WHO RUNS
JOSY JOSEPH	A FEAST OF VULTURES
TWINKLE KHANNA	THE LEGEND OF LAKSHMI PRASAD

AUTHOR	NAME OF THE BOOK
VAIRAMUTHU	VAIRAMUTHU SIRUGATHAIGAL
VAIRAMUTHU	ORU PORKALAMUM ERANDU POKKALUM
VAIRAMUTHU	THIRUTI EZUTHIYA THEERPUGAL
VAIRAMUTHU	ELLA NADHIYULUM EN ODAM
VAIRAMUTHU	KAVI NIRATHIL ORU KADHAL
VAIRAMUTHU	KONJAM THENEER NIRYAE VANNAM
VAIRAMUTHU	PEYANNA PEIYUM MAZHAI
VAIRAMUTHU	VANNAM THOTUVEEDUM THURAM
YASHODHARA LAL	JUST MARRIED, PLEASE EXCUSE
HARPER COLLINS UK	THE GIRL WITH THE LOWER BACK TATTOO
PATTERSON JAMES	DEAD HEAT
PATTERSON JAMES	CHASE
CYRUS BROACHA	5 WAYS TO MAKE A GIRL FALL FOR YOU
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