



GNC

CONNECT

JANUARY 2026



RINGING IN THE NEW YEAR

A message from the President



A. Chandrasekaran

Dear Members,

It gives me great pleasure to present to you the first eMagazine of the year 2026. While the magazine was earlier in printed form, we have now opted for an eMag format, which members will receive as a PDF on their WhatsApp and on email, so they can stay up to date with the Club's activities. Members are encouraged to contribute articles, photographs, artwork, or any other creative content for publication in upcoming issues. Your participation will help make the magazine vibrant and engaging for all.

In other positive news, the Club's finances continue to be robust, and our fixed deposits have grown to Rs.48 crore as of August 2025 from Rs.45.5 crore as on March 2025. Our Secretary, Mr R Sudhakar Rao, and the Treasurer, Mr Sudarsan Ranganathan, have done a sterling job in ensuring the smooth functioning of the club, with the support of the Administration and the Accounts Departments, and have ensured that the corpus has grown steadily. They have also interacted smoothly with the government authorities.

The committee has started preparatory work for the major repairs in the kitchen, guest house, and the tennis court. The basic documentation and the drawings are ready, and we will take up the work soon. Apart from these, we have undertaken major maintenance work in the swimming pool area with the construction of a canopy. Maintenance work will also start in the gymnasium, bar and restaurant.

Our Bar continues to be well stocked and has

good patronage. My sincere thanks to Mr Easwar Prasad for his efforts, especially in ensuring there's a Bar Night held every quarter. Marc and Marcia, Live band with Orlando, Pub quiz night, Mohammed Rafi night, and Live Music by Pramod, are some programmes that were a great success and drew a large number of members as the music was superb.

Our catering department, headed by Ms Lekha Mithra and her team of Chefs and service staff, has ensured that they have kept pace with the greater demands from members with aplomb. Our South Indian, Continental and Chinese menus can easily be rated as the best among the city clubs.

The Club's Sunday brunches with curated menus have become well-attended events with a large variety of food, drink and music. This year we have had major events starting in October 2025 up to January 2026. They were all a phenomenal success, in terms of numbers and patronage. Dandiya night, Diwali night, Christmas night, New Year's eve, and Pongal week have all been fantastic crowd-pullers.

We also successfully tried our hand at new initiatives such as *elai sappadu* and wine and cheese events.

I thank all the staff of the club who have been very co-operative and ensured that the Club has functioned in a smooth manner.

A. Chandrasekaran
President



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A note from the Secretary



R. Sudhakar Rao

Dear Members,

I am extremely happy and thankful to all our members for giving me the opportunity to serve as the Honorary Secretary of the Club for a period of two years, from October 2024 to September 2026. I look forward to carrying forward the good work done by my predecessors, adding many more facilities, improving the existing ones to the best possible extent, and further strengthening the legacy of GNC.

I have previously served as a Committee Member and have also worked as Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Secretary for two terms. Over the years, I have gained a fair understanding of members' expectations, and I will strive hard to meet and exceed them.

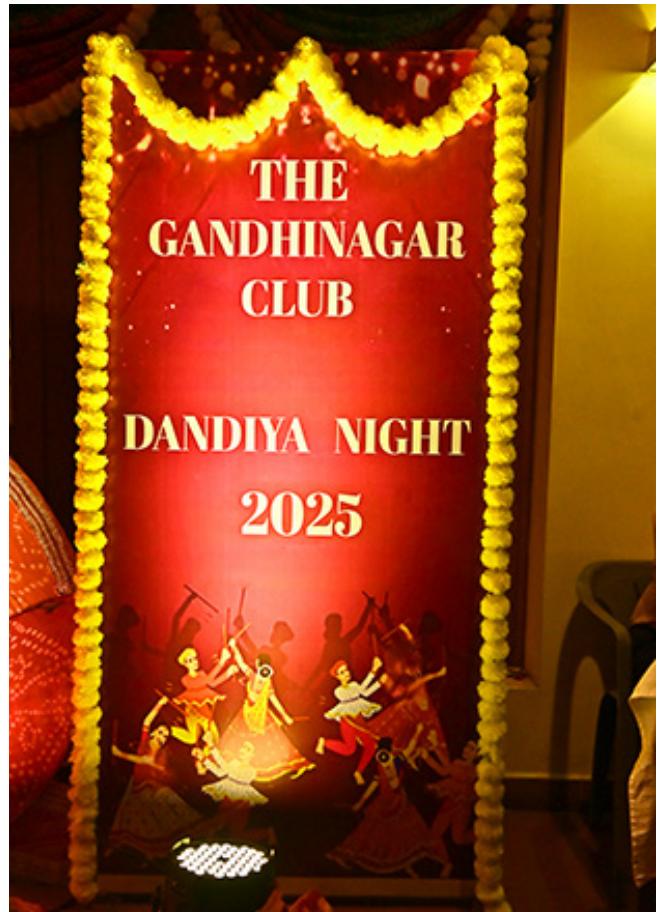
I am supported by a dedicated team of new Committee Members, with whom I will work closely to set high standards across each and every facility. Our objectives of participating in various sports-related events have been successfully met, and we have taken shuttle and tennis to a very high level of participation.

Over the past 15 months, we have ensured quality entertainment programmes, maintained excellent food standards, and introduced a wide variety of bar items. We have actively promoted our cultural events, and their success can be attributed to strong member participation.

Our catering and bar sales have been growing year on year. This growth is primarily due to the dedicated support of our kitchen staff, led by Mr James and his team, and our service staff, headed by Mr Dinesh and his team.

Our New Year parties for 2024 and 2025 attracted a large number of members and their guests. Despite the rain on December 31, 2025, our members and their guests danced their way into 2026, making the celebration truly memorable.

I sincerely thank all members for their active



support and cooperation extended to the General Committee in successfully conducting Dandiya Night, Diwali celebrations, and the New Year events besides many other programmes.

Our GNC has been growing stronger year after year, in terms of financial performance and deposits. We are proud to state that we have not increased the members' subscription, individual facility charges, food prices and bar prices.

We have consistently supported the welfare of all our staff. I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to the Admin staff, headed by Ms. Ruby and her team; the Accounts staff, led by Mr. Subash Babu, and all our sports facility staff. They have risen to every occasion and extended



full support to the Committee in the successful conduct of all our functions. My sincere thanks to each and every one of them.

Today, as the Honorary Secretary of GNC, I am proud to say that our club is spoken of highly among all city clubs for its food quality, strong ethics, and active participation in sporting and cultural activities.

I once again urge my dear fellow-members to actively participate in and contribute to the continued growth of GNC.

I will be glad to address members' grievances whenever they are brought to my notice. As a team, the General Committee for the period 2024-26 has been actively involved in several

development projects, including the creation of a new facility for table tennis and the covering of our swimming pool, enabling members to swim comfortably during the daytime without exposure to harsh sunlight.

We shall shortly be taking up the renovation of the guest house, and the tennis courts will also be re-laid to provide members with excellent playing surfaces.

After going through GNC Connect, I am sure you will agree that we have catered to all segments of our membership be it classical music and cultural festivals, sports activities, bar nights, food festivals, or children's celebrations.

GNC has also been conducting coaching and training programmes for children in tennis, shuttle badminton, and snooker. Our latest initiative in table tennis has already received around 25 entries, which is very encouraging.

I once again thank all our members for the enthusiasm and active participation shown in the various activities of the Club.

R. Sudhakar Rao
Honorary Secretary



Connecting hearts and minds through music

The Reels and Ragas evening was infused by the warmth of melodies and memories that bring people together



Sowmya Kumar Arjun (A-105)

Singing old and favourite melodies in unison brings delight as performer and audience tap into a place of nostalgia and comfort, inspiring one another. Such a bond was evident when Reels & Ragas returned to GNC on November 1, 2025, as the sparkling second edition of a much-loved concept that first delighted audiences on June 8, 2025. Once again, it was a resounding success, with members already asking for the next in the series. The evening's simple, elegant idea was irresistible: present popular songs as seamless medleys, each set of melodies united either by a common raga or an evocative theme — Rain, Flowers, or Penn (women).

Each set featured close to 25 songs, artfully curating a beautiful mix drawn from classical Carnatic repertoire, Tamil and Hindi cinema (both old and new), and a touch of English. The conference hall was packed with enthusiastic listeners who sang along wholeheartedly, turning the program into a joyous collective celebration.

At the heart of the evening was the core team led by me. I'm an All-India Radio — graded Carnatic musician and I've performed across India, the US, and Europe. I was joined by **Anusha Thyagarajan** — granddaughter of singer Musiri Subramania Iyer — also a Carnatic vocalist, chartered accountant, and finance professional by day. Completing the ensemble were **Lavanya Subramanian**, great granddaughter of composer Andavan Pitchai, who learnt Carnatic music young and now runs her own interior design firm, Sankalpam, and **Sujata Tarakesan**, whose life-



The singing quartet: (from left) Sowmya, Lavanya, Sujatha and Anusha

long passion for singing (devotional and English) complements her leadership of the popular Chennai souvenir brand, Chennai Gaga.

They were ably accompanied by **Varun Ramakrishnan** on the keyboard and Chennai's popular drummer, **Drums Murali**, who elevated the soundscape with not just percussion but a variety of instruments that enriched every medley.

The evening started with a prayer to Lord Ganesha by Sowmya and then went on to the first set, titled **Maya Malava Gowla**. This set had 25 songs in the medley — starting with the ever popular Tyagaraja song *Meru Samana*, and traversed through several Ilayaraja songs and Hindi numbers. Perfect, by Ed Sheeran, too made its way into this set, which ended with the Rajini number, *Superstar*.

The next set was Penn — a theme with the woman at the centre. Starting with *Maathe* in the ragam Khamas, the set also featured *Chinanji-rukiliye*, *Kaalangalil aval vasantam*, *Ek ladki ko dekha*, and *Dancing Queen* (ABBA), ending with the popular number *Singapenne*.

This was followed by a charming guest performance by **Sidharth Kumar**, along with his sister, Sowmya. They sang a short medley in Ragam Aberi, adding a flourish to the evening. The song list featured the songs *Kannodu kaanbadellam*, *Singaravelane*, and Tyagaraja's *Nagumomu*.

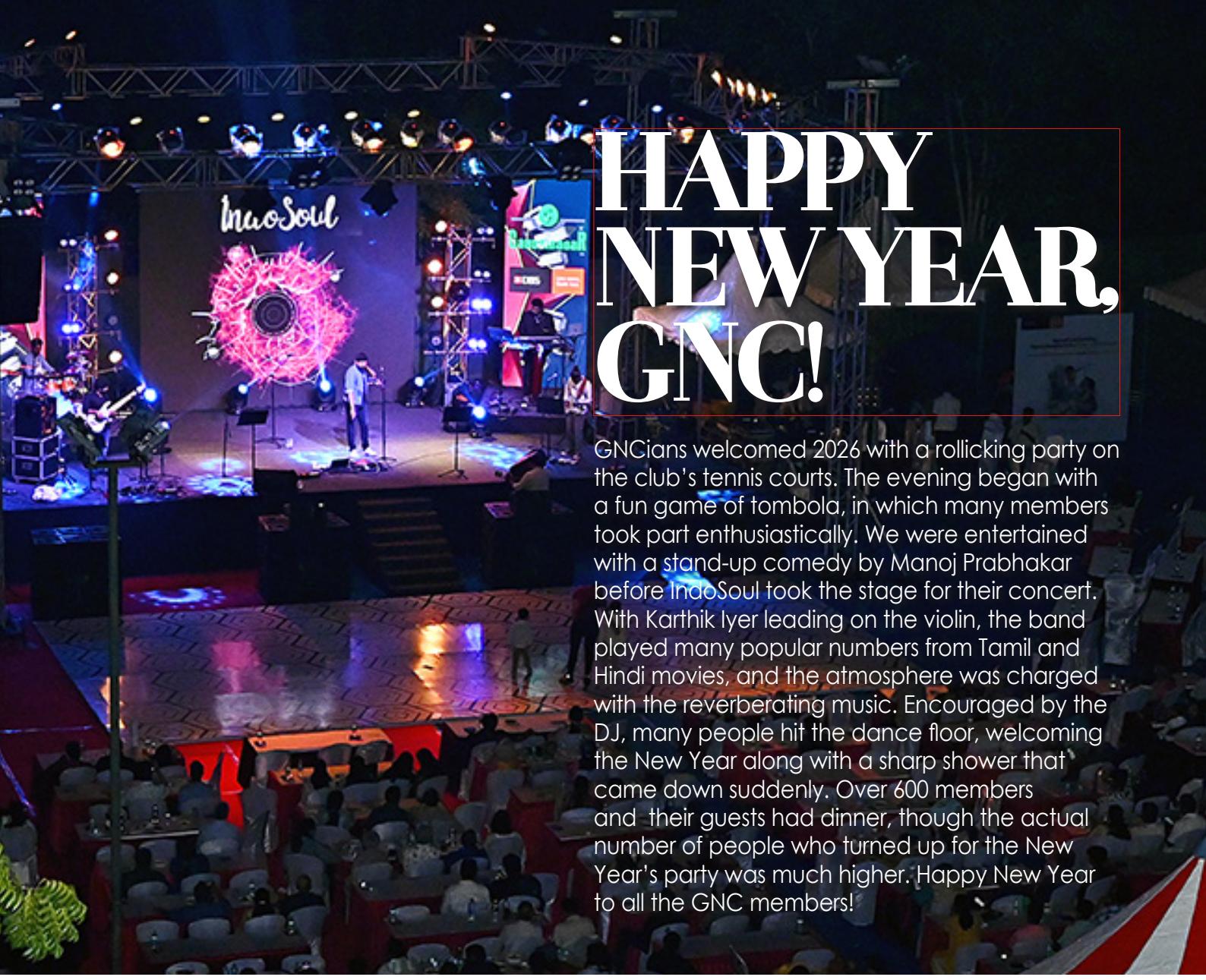
The third set was shaped by the theme Water, and featured songs like *Yamuna aatrile*, *Panivizhum iravu*, *Sagar kinare*, and *Alaipayudhey*, ending with Raindrops on Roses.

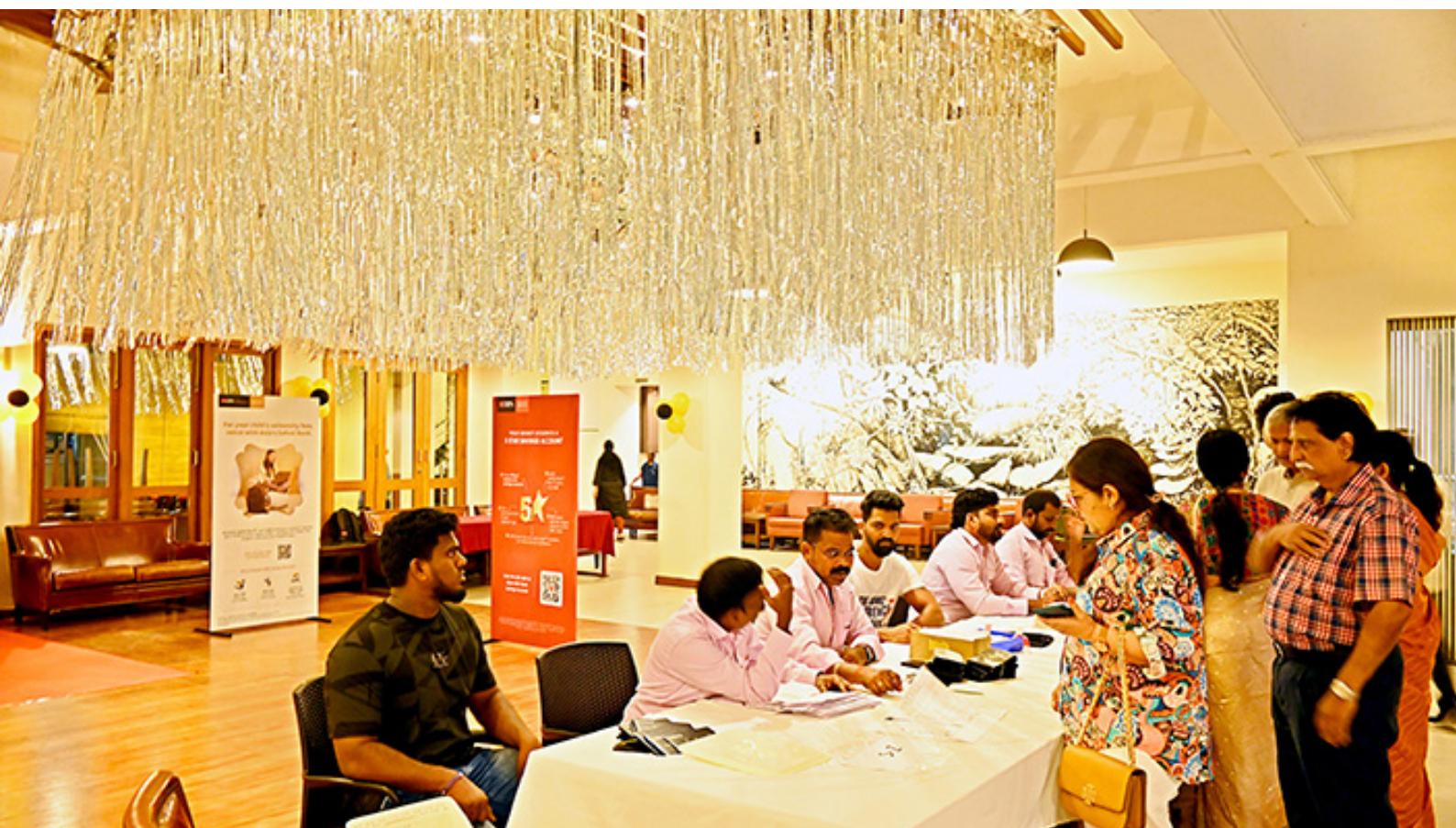
The final set by the quartet was inspired by the theme of Flowers. In this 22-song list were old favourites *Baharon Phool*, *Vellai Taamarai*, *Mallare Mounama* and *Shengbagame*. And the show ended with the ever popular Edelweiss, with the line **Bless my homeland forever**.

There was perfect synchronization amongst the singers and, above all, the palpable camaraderie in their warm interaction with the audience. Having enjoyed the vibrant energy of the evening, the GNC community now eagerly looks forward to Reels & Ragas 3 in the coming months.

HAPPY NEW YEAR, GNC!

GNCians welcomed 2026 with a rollicking party on the club's tennis courts. The evening began with a fun game of tombola, in which many members took part enthusiastically. We were entertained with a stand-up comedy by Manoj Prabhakar before IndoSoul took the stage for their concert. With Karthik Iyer leading on the violin, the band played many popular numbers from Tamil and Hindi movies, and the atmosphere was charged with the reverberating music. Encouraged by the DJ, many people hit the dance floor, welcoming the New Year along with a sharp shower that came down suddenly. Over 600 members and their guests had dinner, though the actual number of people who turned up for the New Year's party was much higher. Happy New Year to all the GNC members!









The Carnatic cross-country challenge

With traffic diversions and parking woes making sabha hopping an ordeal, is it time for organisers to host neighbourhood concerts?



G.C. Shekhar (A-491)

As the December music season draws to an end, no one can doubt the depth of talent on display – the numbers of gifted performers only keep increasing. The geographic spread of the concert venues too expanded, as dance and music performances manifested in new corners of the city, from Vadapalani to Nanganallur.

Though the Mylapore-Alwarpet belt remains the epicentre, closely followed by the T.Nagar sabhas, music lovers were exasperated by the

longer commutes in heavy traffic and exhausted by the struggle to find parking slots. The Metro rail work and resultant traffic diversions meant narrower roads, buses bulldozing their way through residential areas and consequently a really slow crawl to the sabha of your choice.

Even for those leaving early and reaching their destination on time, the next big challenge was finding parking space. With sabhas having run out of parking areas almost a decade ago, the adjacent roads and sometimes even the pavements are usurped by sabha-goers to park their vehicles. So much so, that attending a Carnatic music concert is akin to taking part in a cross-country race.

This brings us to our main question – is it time to decentralise Chennai's kutcheri season?



If more concerts are organized in one's immediate neighbourhood, rasikas can beat the long drives and struggle for parking space. Take, for example, the Adyar neighbourhood; there is no dearth of schools with large auditoriums which can double as concert spaces, at least during the year-end holidays.

But only a handful of schools open up these halls for concerts – like the Sri Sankara Vidyashramam School in Thiruvanmiyur. Till a few years ago, December concerts were held at Kumara Raja Muthiah School in Gandhi Nagar but not any longer as the organisation conducting it disappeared.

At present, only two places in the Adyar area – Kalakshetra and the Indira Nagar Youth Hostel – serve as venues for concerts. The latter, in fact, slots concerts by two organizers, Ragamalika and Hamsadhwani's NRI concerts, during the December-January season. Hamsadhwani remains the only active sabha in the Adyar area. If one counts the Rajarathinam Memorial Hall of Muthamizh Mandram on the Northern end of the Adyar bridge, three venues stage music concerts in the area.

The marriage hall of the Ananathapamanabha Swamy in Gandhi Nagar and the Abirami Chidambaram Hall in Kotturpuram do host

music concerts – but rarely any during the Margazhi season. It is time someone roped them in for regular Margazhi events. Similarly, if more schools opened their doors – mainly, the auditoriums – more Adyar-Thiruvanmiyur residents can attend concerts without having to sweat it out through traffic.

But the biggest question is: will there be enough local support and will artistes be inclined to perform in smaller venues? Barring the full house seen during Ragamalika's concert series at Youth Hostel, other concerts hardly saw any patronage. Ticketed concerts are often cold-shouldered by an audience so used to the "All Are Welcome" sign.

Unless we get strong, committed sponsors willing to pay the auditorium rent, spend on the audio set-up and musicians' fees, including their transport, such a scenario may not be possible. In the last few years, we have seen some corporate hospitals getting involved in the Margazhi season. But their passing presence has been more in the nature of tokenism rather than any long-term commitment to their local clientele or to classical music traditions.

So, are there any takers for a south Chennai version of the 2026 Margazhi season, that is staged entirely for those south of the Adyar river?

Finding new purpose amid stress-free environs

A forthright yet balanced view of life at a senior living community in Coimbatore



R.V. Rajan (R-143)

Twenty-one months have flown by since I moved into a rented two-bedroom apartment in Nana Nani, Phase 4, in Coimbatore. The weather in Coimbatore is very pleasant for ten months in a year, unlike Chennai, where it is hot and humid for nine months.

I love mountains more than the seas! Having lived close to the Bay of Bengal (near Elliots Beach) in Chennai for 50 years, I now enjoy a lovely view of the Marudhamalai, part of the Western Ghats, every morning from my bedroom balcony.

Vibrant community, beautiful ambience

The infrastructure at Nana Nani is top class with all the facilities that senior citizens need available inside the campus. The ambience is beautiful and the entire property is maintained well giving you the feeling of living in a Resort. I am able to lead a very active life without going out, except for attending specific functions, visiting temples or for specialist medical consultations.

Phase 4, where I am staying, is a vibrant community. Residents are friendly and helpful. With a good mixture of seniors and super seniors, the atmosphere is generally cheerful. I have made some good friends here who ensure that I never feel lonely. It is like a big, happy family here.

I find more time to write, and my articles are well-appreciated by the residents here. The icing on the cake- I was conferred the 'Inspiring Writer Award' at the Awards Nite held on 2nd January 2025, as a part of the New Year Celebrations held here.



Movies, meditation, and more

As for entertainment, there is enough to keep residents engaged every other evening. The management arranges to show a Tamil, Malayalam or Hindi film every Saturday evening at the state-of-the-art air-conditioned theatre in the Club House. I have watched 45 films in 21 months, many more than my average of two a year in Chennai in recent times.

Many talented residents provide entertainment in the form of music and dance programmes, plays and other activities like quizzes, tambola, and spiritual lectures, held in the large air-conditioned Meditation Hall with a seating capacity of 250. The hall, fully equipped with a professional sound system and overhead projector, is available free for any residents to conduct any entertainment programmes, but not to hold family events.

Some six to eight programmes are conducted by the residents every month, many of them in professional style. Nonagenarian Hariharan (95), popularly known as Hari Om Mama, organises music and dance festivals and spiritual sessions from time to time – all at his own cost. An inspirational person, much admired by everyone here, he is one of my role models!

Old and new lives

The big Mahalakshmi temple, located adjacent to the entrance gate, is a popular venue for many religious and spiritual activities. The Temple is also the venue for celebrations related to festivals such as Ramanavami, Gokulashtami, Ganesh Chaturthi, Onam, Navarathri, Deepavali and New Year. Though I am not spiritually inclined, I like the uplifting feeling I get whenever I visit the temple and occasionally meditate there.

There is a routine medical check-up done every Saturday at one's home by the nurses to record the basic parameters like BP, Pulse Rate and Oxygen level. The emergency medical service here works fairly efficiently. I was happy with the instant response I got on a couple of occasions when I needed urgent help. I am also satisfied with the maintenance service. Assistants come and clean the house seven days a week at pre-scheduled times. For any other problem, one just has to make a call, and the staff concerned set it right promptly.

Though I enjoy my morning walks here, there are no post-walk group meetings like in Chennai. That happens only before or after each meal session outside the dining hall. I miss the fun time I used to have with friends after my morning walks at Bessy in Chennai, which would recharge my battery for the day!

Food math



The escalating costs are a major issue here. Especially the Rs 400 per day for all meals that the management charges are higher than any other Senior Citizen Homes in Coimbatore. Unlike the 'pay for what you eat' system in other Homes,

the condition that you have to pay for all meals, even if you have a cup of coffee but do not want to partake of other meals, is unfair.

However, the management allows residents to opt out of taking their meals in the dining hall on any day as long as one gives advance notice about the meal breaks. There are many residents who order food from outside caterers, and some cook their meals at home. Whether you take the meals or not, every resident has to pay a small fixed kitchen fee every month.

While most of the dishes served are tasty, at times, the combination of items is unimaginative, and the monotony of eating the same type of food has become a little boring. When I find the menu not interesting, I cook something that I like, and I find the activity therapeutic!

Ideal environment

Having seen and experienced a few other senior citizen facilities in Coimbatore and Chennai before I settled here, I can say with confidence that Nana Nani is by far one of the best in terms of infrastructure and services. It is ideal for those who have fulfilled all their family commitments and want to lead an independent life without responsibilities, in the company of like-minded individuals.

As an Octogenarian at 83, I am enjoying my new avatar as a writer/author while following a policy of making at least one person happy every day. I am financially secure and can manage my affairs without depending on my children. I have discovered the joy of giving, sharing my resources, in terms of cash, kind and my time, for the benefit of those in need.

Staying in a community like Nana Nani, I have found a new purpose and meaning in a life that is free from daily stresses. Since the positives far outweigh the few drawbacks, I have decided to continue my stay in Nana Nani, Phase 4. Besides, I keep visiting Chennai often. Having the best of both worlds, what more can one want in life?

The writer is a veteran adman turned author post retirement

Dandiya night

Over 400 GNC members had a swinging Dandiya night on October 1, 2025.

The reception lounge area was transformed into a colourful dance floor and members, many in colourful costumes, danced like there was no tomorrow. Many kids were spotted on the floor as well, knocking about with the garba sticks. It was a night to remember!











Museum-hopping through the paradoxes of Japan

Exploring Nippon's museums and Zen gardens, busy cities and subway simulators, two travellers discover a country of striking dualities, where contrasts coexist harmoniously



Tara Rachel Thomas (T-129)

Ever since I learnt about Zen Buddhism, Japan has fascinated me. And when I took my first bite of sushi, I knew I had to visit. The longtime dream became a reality in September and, with gratitude to everyone at our nuptials who encouraged and enabled the visit, my husband and I booked tickets, packed our bags, took some last minute Duolingo lessons, skirted a supercyclone, and set out for Nippon.

Our port of entry was Tokyo. The megacity is constantly abuzz with activity, so massive it feels like it has consumed a bunch of other cities within it. We took to it instantly, grabbing snacks at 7-elevens or Family Marts while we went about our days exploring. Somewhere between ordering ramen from vending machines and arguing over the best way to follow Google Maps out of a metro station, we began to discuss Japan as a conundrum. A culture marked by extraordinary politeness, honour, consideration for others, yet less than a century ago, one of the most brutal aggressors, with a long list of oft-denied war crimes. A rapidly aging society facing economic stagnation, yet still largely opposed to immigration. A country whose capital has barely any public trash cans, and yet manages to stay impressively clean!

We were curious to explore these cultural paradoxes, both by soaking in the rhythms of the streets, and by spending time in the coun-

try's remarkable museums. Although we barely scratched the surface, here are impressions from some of the museums we especially enjoyed and learnt a great deal from.

Metropolitan Art Museum

The Tokyo Metropolitan Museum is one of the many situated around Ueno Park, a pleasant green space to pass through at any time of the day. With its buskers and magicians, it seems to move slower than the rest of the city.

The museum doesn't have permanent exhibits, but when we visited, it was hosting an exhibition about the Van Gogh family — his brother, sister-in-law, and nephew, who survived him and over the years ensured he received the recognition from the art world they believed he deserved. It was intriguing to see Van Gogh's admiration for the Japanese in his letters to his family, especially the 'Ukiyo-e' print styles that he drew inspiration from.

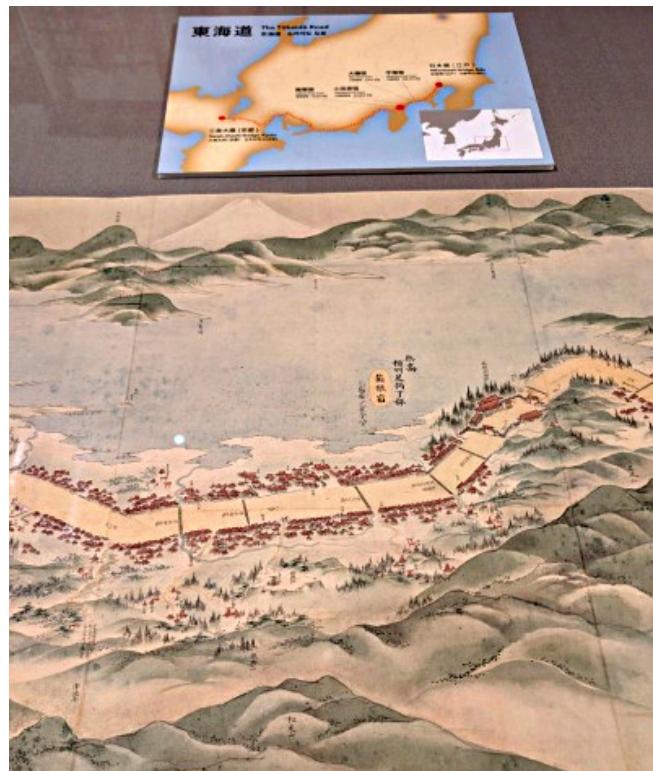


From Kengo Noguchi's 'Ten foot square hut'

At this museum, we caught an exhibition on DIY culture, presenting the work of four artists who celebrate the many ways people create and adapt. In disaster-prone Japan, this also meant adapting to loss of life, shelter, and livelihood,

which Natsumi Seo focused on by presenting drawings, paintings, and texts capturing the lives of people who hold memories of disasters. One photography exhibit I found impactful was Kengo Noguchi's 'The Ten Foot Square Hut' which captures people living on the margins of Japanese cities — both by choice and circumstance, and DIY-ing their homes. It offered an interesting peek into life on the fringes, in contrast to the fast-paced Tokyo salaryman's life.

National Museum of Tokyo



A 200+ year old map depicting the journey from Kyoto to Tokyo

Travelling back in time at the National Museum at Tokyo, also near Ueno Park, one can learn of Japan's rich history. With a focus on ancient and medieval art, the museum houses exquisite pottery from the Jomon period, samurai armour, swords, lacquerware, paintings, Buddhist figurines and religious objects, noh theatre masks, ceramic-ware, and more. Going beyond interpreting the objects and their significance, the descriptions offer incredibly detailed explanations about the intricate processes (such as with lacquerware or sword making) and precision involved in the creation of these objects. Personally, I enjoyed the section on Zen Buddhism, which reminded me how humans often learn to live with, and even thrive on, contradictions.

21/21 Design Sight



Proposed emergency shelters using paper and cloth

Founded by designer Issey Miyake and designed by architect Tadao Ando, 21/21 Design Sight is a gorgeous building, nestled within a park in the upmarket Roppongi neighbourhood. I found it whilst searching for design-focused museums, and it did not disappoint. The exhibit on view when I visited was (interestingly, again) focused on disasters, how one prepares for or reacts to them, and the lore or old wives tales around natural phenomena in Japanese culture. The displays highlighted how architecture and design come together to address disasters, with the construction of paper and cloth-based temporary living spaces to provide comfort and dignity to the displaced victims of natural disasters. I found this to be yet another example of the dualities — striving to create comfort through an experience of extreme discomfort and displacement.

Tokyo Metro Museum

The Metro Museum felt like a must-visit after spending so much of our trip on the various metro lines, often 3-4 storeys underground. Full marks to the museum for keeping the theme of riding the subway alive all through, from the ticket counters that are like subway ticket vending machines to the entry turnstiles, and actual replicas of older train cars.

Beyond the experience and history, there was a focus on the technical aspects of tunnel boring



Role-playing as a Subway Traffic Controller to test our learnings! (Tokyo Subway Museum)

and building, establishing safe protocols (with fun interactive quizzes where you're put to work as a subway controller), the way trains work, and a 'subway play land' where you get to sit in a simulator and drive a train, hitting the brakes to stop at the right stations. Many aspects of the museum are designed for children, but adults can have a truly great time here. It even offered eki stamp pads, a part of Japan's culture of unique stamps at train stations and temples (goshuin) that act as commemorative markers for tourists, who carry around books to fill with these stamps on their travels.

Samurais, arts, crafts and tools

Apart from the museums in Tokyo, we also experienced an ancient Samurai home converted to a museum — with its thick mud walls and zen garden reminding us that even the fiercest of Samurais needed tranquil spaces for contemplation. We also saw a Noh Theatre museum in Kanaza-



Samurai finery, National Museum, Tokyo

wa, the Craft and Design Museum in Kyoto which delved deeply into the crafts of Japan such as woodworking, shibori, and even sake making!

A special memory is from the Takenaka Carpentry Tools museum in Kobe, which takes visitors on a historical journey from saws and hand axes to chisels, fine-tuned planes, and measuring instruments. These are the implements behind Japan's exquisite joinery and woodwork, which are famed for avoiding the use of nails altogether, and characterise its many shrines and temples.



Entrance to the Samurai House - Kanazawa



Types of Sake and models of the Sake making process at Kyoto Craft Museum

So did we find the roots of all that seemed paradoxical about Japan? Not entirely, and we likely found newer contradictions, but perhaps we learnt to appreciate the dualities and multiplicities — in true zen fashion!

The writer is Communications Manager at the DakshinaChitra Heritage Museum, Chennai

MOKSHAGUNDAM VISVESVARAYA

An Engineer and his Blueprint for Modern India

M. Visvesvaraya was known as the patron saint of Indian engineers but he was much more, being actively involved in political discussions since the 1920s

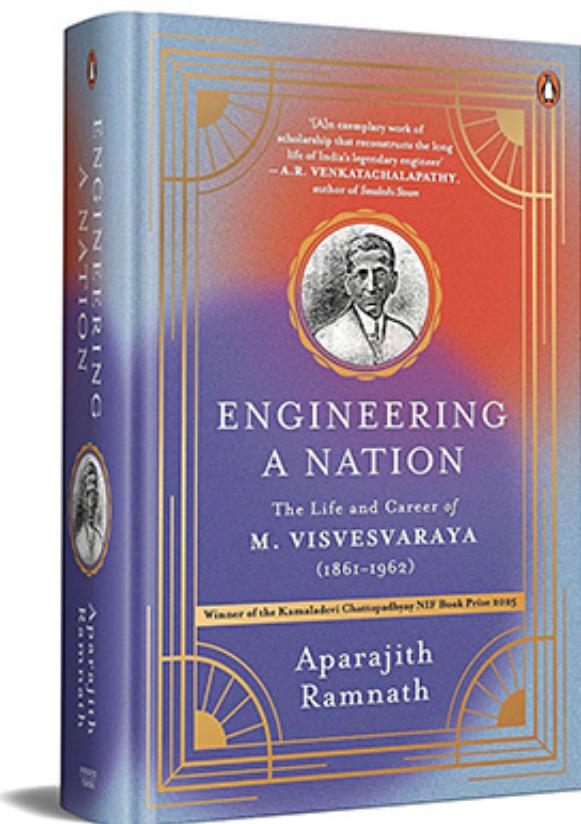


Aparajith Ramnath (A-267)

Pick up any textbook on the history of modern India, and you will encounter political leaders such as Mohandas K Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, and Subhash Chandra Bose. They undoubtedly had a profound impact on our history. But as it emerged, the nation also owed a great deal to individuals from other walks of life—individuals who don't always figure in the broad historical accounts. One of the most important of these was the civil engineer Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya (1861-1962).

Visvesvaraya is, of course, well known as the patron saint of Indian engineers. His birthday is celebrated as Engineers' Day. He is known for helping set up or govern prominent technical institutions such as the Institute of Chemical Technology in Mumbai and the Indian Institute of Science in Bengaluru. He was the face of spectacular engineering projects such as the Krishnarajagagara dam across the river Cauvery. He is also widely acknowledged as one of the key figures behind the modernisation of princely Mysore, of which he served as Dewan from 1912-18.

Yet, as I argue in *Engineering a Nation: The life and career of M. Visvesvaraya (1861-1962)*



(Gurugram: Penguin/Viking, 2024), my recent biography of Visvesvaraya, he was much more than this. He continues to be venerated in Karnataka, but he was really a pan-Indian figure. We often forget the importance of the twenty-five years (1884-1909) he spent as a public works engineer in Bombay Presidency, working on drainage and water-supply projects across western India, and making crucial interventions in the state's approach to irrigation and agriculture.

Contrary to the popular image of engineers as apolitical, he was actively involved in political discussions at the national level from the 1920s onwards. Working closely with nationalist leaders, he made important contributions to the debates on constitutional reform and the place of the princely states in the larger Indian polity. He became a respected voice on questions of economic development. He was one of the early advocates for economic planning, which was to become the bedrock of the post-Independence state.

Most importantly, he exemplified a technocratic imagination that has become key to the shaping of today's India. As we navigate a world that is increasingly shaped by digital technologies, algorithmic governance, and rapid urbanisation, Visvesvaraya's engagement with science and technology holds significant lessons. It reminds us of the enormous potential but also the pitfalls of technology-centric solutions to larger economic and social problems. Finding the right balance will hold the key to our wellbeing in the twenty-first century.

My aim in the book, therefore, is not just to trace Visvesvaraya's life and achievements, but to use it as a lens to understand the broader story of modern India. After all, his life spanned the entire period from the consolidation of colonial rule to the establishment of the independent Indian nation. In studying this exceptional individual, I wanted to explore the social and institutional circumstances that moulded him.



What were the intellectual influences of his early years? Who were the professional sparring partners who helped him find his voice? What role did global trends play in the making of his worldview (he travelled extensively in Europe, America, and Japan)? The book approaches these questions through an in-depth study, conducted over several years, of archival materials, government files and reports, letters, newspapers, and other primary materials preserved in repositories and institutions across India and abroad. The result, I hope, is a nuanced picture of Visvesvaraya and the nation that, both literally and figuratively, he helped engineer.

The writer is an Associate Professor, School of Arts and Sciences, Ahmedabad University. His book *Engineering a Nation* was awarded the Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay NIF Book Prize for 2025



Stunning smashes and deft placements

GNC's Premier Badminton League saw intense competition between six teams with the Avengers eventually coming up trumps

Team Connect

For five days, GNC's badminton hall reverberated to the sound of smashes, groans, cheers and shouts, echoing the players' highs and lows as the Premier Badminton League, now in its 6th edition, wound on. The stakes were high, competition intense, rivalry sharp between six teams but in the end it was a lot of camaraderie and fun.

The six team owners, with 84 players in their fold - Avengers, Chennai Champs, Ninjas, Power House, Spark Smashers and Super SmAAShers - battled it out. The games were of 15 points each,

and some wrapped up in two games, while others went the distance of three games and some down to the wire of a tie-breaker in the final game. Across seven matches, each team got a point - a 'trump' game earned a team two points, if they won their 'trump', and one point deducted if they lost. The teams were divided into categories. The tournament featured players across multiple skill tiers, ranging from A+ (top-level players) to other categories based on parity of playing ability.

The league phase culminated in four teams qualifying for the semi-finals: Avengers, Ninjas, Power House, and Super SmAAShers. The knock-out format ensured high-intensity contests. The



◀ Avengers —
the Winners



◀ Super Smaashers —
the Runners-up

A+ games, especially, dazzled as the competition was intense, with deft placements, thunderous smashes, net dribbles and pinpoint down-the-line accuracy.

Adding to the excitement, the semi-finals and finals featured a new relay format of 21 points, a thrilling twist designed to blend players across categories and genders. The first set of two players each played out 10 points and the next set completed the match.

The finalists who emerged from the bruising semi-final rounds were Avengers and Super SmAAshers. In the finals, it was neck and neck as each team ended up with equal points 3-3 and the winners had to be decided by weighing net games of the tie. It was Avengers who won the tournament eventually, bringing down the curtains on another successful PBL!

An IPL style auction for players preceded the tournament. With a 10 lakh points purse each,

the six team owners and their selected strategists battled it out to pick from 84 talented players across all categories. From 5,000 starting bids to spirited last-minute raises, the night was filled with laughter, drama, and friendly rivalry. Every team walked away with not just players, but stories of bold bids, smart steals, and memorable moments.

The real winners, though, were the members themselves — whether they were cheering in the audience, advising their team strategists, or watching future match-ups take shape right before their eyes.

This year also marked a first in GNC PBL history — the introduction of a Women's Doubles category, bringing the spotlight firmly on women's participation and inclusivity. The enthusiasm and competitive spirit among women members added a fresh, inspiring dimension to the tournament, truly making PBL 2025 a celebration of every player in the club.



Of love all, sets and deuce

Season Two of the intra-Club Tennis Tournament was a grand success

Team Connect

The club's tennis courts witnessed an exhilarating display of grit and community spirit during the recently concluded Intra Club Tennis Tournament (Season 2). Led by Tournament Director N. Raghavendran (Rocky), the event bridged generations, featuring participants ranging from 10-year-old enthusiasts to veteran members aged 75-plus.

Singles: The Battle of Endurance

The Singles category (Nov 19–23) saw 48 entries competing in a rigorous league-cum-knockout format. After 76 hard-fought matches, Srinath emerged as the champion, with Manu Varghese finishing as a spirited runner-up. The tournament opened with honours for Rajagopal and Kumar, and saw the introduction of the Rama Rao Rolling Cup, a prestigious trophy sponsored by member Ramu in memory of his father. The player of the tournament was Arjun Narayanan while the best doubles pair were Narayanan and Prashanth. The rising star of the tournament was Dhurav Vishnu.

Doubles: The High-Stakes Auction

The Doubles segment (Nov–Dec) introduced a thrilling Auction Format that went viral within the club. Six owners bid for 74 players, forming six powerhouse teams. After a massive 75-game round-robin stage, this was the outcome:

Champions: Glen Gladiators (Owner: Sathyanaarayanan)



Runners-up: Madras Mavericks (Owner: Sri Hari)

The other teams that participated were Pioneer Aces (semi-finalist - team owner Sundara Krishnan); Baseline Mafia (semi-finalist, team owner Vishnu). The other two teams were Kasimedu Kings (team owner Santhanakrishnan) and Kashyap Super Kings (team owner Venkatramani)

Grand Finale

The season culminated in a lively Prize Distribution ceremony graced by Chief Guest Ram Prasad Reddy, Deputy Commissioner, GST. The evening transitioned into a high-energy celebration featuring a live DJ and Fellowship Dinner, marking a perfect end to a season defined by sportsmanship and camaraderie.

CHILDREN'S DAY CELEBRATIONS

It was an exciting day for kids at GNC, with fun games, group dances, and competitions. The highlight was the joy of transforming themselves into their favourite superheroes, magical rainbow unicorns and fairy princesses.





My Half Marathon — Half Run, Half Regret

A witty, tongue-in-cheek account of a first 10-k run that, despite everything, was a strangely satisfying experience



V Venkatesh (V-156)

At sixty-six, I look back fondly—well, half-fondly—on my great athletic adventure that began when I was fifty-four. That was the year I decided to test my luck with a half marathon. I chose Coimbatore for my debut, not because of the cool climate or scenic course, but because it was far enough from Chennai to escape the judgmental gaze of my friends. I had no desire to be the subject of their post-run laughter should I collapse somewhere around kilometre three.

The idea was born a year after I had “run” a 10K in Chennai. I say “run,” but perhaps “briskly survived” is more accurate. I completed the 10K in 110 minutes — a time that would make even a tortoise blush. If there had been a category for “slow but stubborn,” I would have proudly taken the gold.

Determined to do better, I began my training on the roads of Besant Nagar. The locals soon got used to the sight of a middle-aged man trotting at a pace that could make a pedestrian yawn. For months, they watched me run and must have wondered whether I was moving forward or merely bouncing in place. After four months, one curious passerby even asked, “Sir, are you training for something... or just warming up forever?”

I gave him a dignified smile and replied, “I’m focusing on consistency, not speed.” What I didn’t admit was that consistency was just a polite way of saying, “This is as fast as I can go.”

A few weeks before the event, my friend—the unfortunate soul who had inspired me into this madness—called to book tickets. We decided to fly to Coimbatore, pretending it was a “business trip.” (And yes, the business was “monkeying around for 21 kilometres.”)

The day before the marathon, we collected our running kits at a local auditorium. Thankfully, we didn’t spot anyone we knew. That was a relief—our secret was safe. That evening, we took a leisurely walk to the starting point, just to “acclimatise.” The walk itself nearly exhausted me. I remember thinking, “If this short stroll is this tiring, what fresh hell awaits tomorrow?”

Race day dawned far too early for civilised humans. As we stepped out of the hotel, we spotted a few fellow runners heading towards the start line, looking disturbingly energetic. I waved at them confidently, pretending I was going to be a fierce competitor. In truth, I was hoping to simply finish before the cleanup crew.

The first forty-five minutes went surprisingly well. I ran at what felt like an Olympic pace (which, later, I realised, was just slightly faster than a power walk). I began to feel optimistic—dangerously so. I even overtook a few runners, which filled me with a smug satisfaction that would not last.

Soon, the runners who had been pacing with me quietly disappeared. A new batch caught up—probably from a later start—and joined me for a while. By the time I reached the two-hour mark, I’d completed about 10 kilometres. I did a quick mental calculation and decided that if I picked up speed, I might finish in under 220 minutes. My body, however, immediately filed a strong objection. My legs refused the order. My lungs went



on strike. My ambition wilted like a week-old banana.

In the end, I crossed the finish line in just under four hours. Four. Hours. I later learned that many seasoned runners complete full marathons in that time. I, meanwhile, had achieved the rare distinction of finishing half a marathon in full marathon timing.

As I staggered across the finish line, my friend greeted me with a half-hearted smile — the kind you reserve for someone who has both impressed and worried you. “Congratulations,” he said dryly, “you didn’t give up.” It wasn’t exactly the standing ovation I had pictured.

But the true humiliation began on the return flight. I had boarded the flight to Coimbatore as a stealthy, unknown participant. My grand plan was to run quietly and come back unnoticed. Unfortunately, fate had other ideas. The flight back was filled with runners. Every few minutes,

someone leaned over and asked, “So, did you finish?”

“Yes,” I replied proudly, “in under four hours.”

There was a polite silence. Then someone muttered, “Oh, that’s nice... my daughter did the full marathon in three hours and fifty.”

By the time we landed in Chennai, I was the cynosure of all eyes — not because of my achievement, but because of my timing. The look on some faces suggested they were calculating whether I might have taken a detour to Kotagiri mid-race.

Yet, despite the aches, blisters, and the existential questioning that followed, I must confess it was an oddly satisfying experience. I may not have run fast, but I ran true. I started, I suffered, I finished—and I lived to tell the tale.

And if anyone asks me whether I’d do it again, I simply smile and say, “Of course not. I’m focusing on consistency, remember?”



A new chapter for table tennis begins @ GNC

Members can indulge in their own ping-pong diplomacy now

Team Connect

The spirit of sport and community came alive on the morning of Sunday, December 28, with the grand inauguration of the club's Table Tennis facility, marking a milestone in the promotion of indoor sports and active lifestyles among members.

The facility was formally inaugurated by our President, A. Chandrasekharan, whose presence and encouragement underscored the management's strong commitment to nurturing sporting talent and providing excellent amenities for members. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from club members, table tennis players, and sports lovers, creating an atmosphere charged with excitement and anticipation.

A.V. Vidyasagar, Executive Committee Member of the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI), the national governing body, was the chief guest. Secretary R. Sudhakar Rao and Sports Secretary B.L. Vignesh played key roles in



conceptualising and supporting the development of the facility. Their efforts in strengthening the club's sporting infrastructure were widely appreciated by attendees.

The newly inaugurated table tennis facility is equipped to cater to players of all age groups and skill levels — from beginners discovering the sport to seasoned enthusiasts looking to refine their game. It is envisioned not just as a place for practice and competition, but also as a hub for interaction, fitness, and sporting excellence.

Addressing the gathering, the office-bearers highlighted the importance of indoor sports, especially in fostering discipline, focus, and camaraderie among members. The inauguration concluded with members expressing keen interest in upcoming coaching sessions, friendly matches, and tournaments.

With this launch, the club takes a confident step forward in its journey of promoting sports and wellness, setting the stage for many memorable rallies and matches in the days to come.



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