

Tania Sachdev — Queen of the board

If anyone asked a seven-year old Tania Sachdev what she wanted to be as an adult, the answer would unwittingly come without any hesitation. One word. One word that would define her commitment and the brilliance she knew she had even at that age. The answer that invariably came was the word "Grandmaster."

That seven-year old has now grown up into a woman with a continually increasing list of achievements that have come to be associated with her. Becoming a Woman Grandmaster was just one step in the journey. Now, Tania Sachdev is a well-established name not only in the Indian chess circuit but also globally. Not only is she a grandmaster, but she is also a chess commentator of repute. And as long as we are counting her achievements, achievements, add the Reykjavik Open and Commonwealth Chess Championship titles in 2016 to the list.

Being a sportsperson in a country like India is never easy. For the longest time, the vast discrepancy between the two genders when it comes to chess has been quite glaring. Out of the top 100 chess players in the world, a very insignificant number is made of women, and the trend extends in India as well. For her part, Tania has done well to break the preconceived notions enough to carve out a place for herself. Even the story of how she came to take up the game is something that one does not hear quite often.

"It started with my father. He didn't know how to play, but he taught himself from one of those instructional booklets that came with a set we were given. It's funny because he first tried to teach my older brother how to play. I guess he didn't think that a five-year-old would be interested, but I sat there watching them, and I thought that it looked like an exciting game. I picked up the rules, and two or three days after that I asked my dad for a game, and I beat him."

In her own words, chess happened by chance. But once it did, there was no looking back. When she did take up chess at the age of 5, Indian chess was still reeling from one of its landmarks and probably the most significant achievements to date. Five years had gone by since Viswanathan Anand, the unassuming Tiger of Madras had achieved his grandmaster title and, in a few years, we would see him embark on an undisputed throne of being the World



Champion for periods of varying length soon after. And while the culture of chess is not as developed in the Northern part of the country as it is in the south, Tania still found a way around it. With her quick and calm temperament and the ability to learn new things in the wink of an eye, the 5-year-old who was introduced to chess with the intention of making it into a hobby won her first major international tournament at the age of seven. What is it about female sportspersons and the necessity that is thrown on them to prove yourself constantly. One single achievement is never enough.

Even when you establish yourself as a credible name in the circuit, it is still not enough. When it comes to chess, statistics and the people indulging in them have made it a mission even to suggest a male "superiority" that assures better results from them. But that was debunked quite recently. A study published by the Royal Society found that men's superiority over women at chess at the top levels can be explained by population size. Since many more men play, there's a broader range of abilities, meaning more individuals at the very top. Such a simple explanation.

On numerous occasions, Tania has been quoted as saying something similar. "There have been many comments made to me in a joking way," she tells me, "but they all contain this underlying current of saying that women do not make great chess players. They're saying over a glass of wine, or over dinner, and it's subtle, but it's always there. You get someone saying to you, "I would never have made that move. That was such a girl move to have made." It happens to me continually, and it's hard not to let it get to you."

For her part, Tania never misses an opportunity to give back to the chess world all that she has gathered in experience. Taking the first steps towards achieving your dream at the tender age of seven is never easy. Dealing with the undue amount of expectations that come along with it is never easy. With the average age for taking up and achieving in chess rapidly decreasing, any one with the relevant experience voluntarily guiding the young prodigies must be appreciated. And Tania has five simple steps for someone seriously following the sport.

Practice, she says. Just pure, simple and dedicated practice. "Spend some time every day solving a couple of combinations. Keeps the brain working and improves tactical vision," she explains. But merely perfecting your game is never enough until you get a sense of your contemporaries and opponents. "Follow all the top tournament games. This is very important, and all professional chess players do it. Every. Single. Day. And yes, do it without an analysing engine on. Try and guess moves," she says. And last but not the least, "Play tournaments and analyse your games. If done regularly, this will rapidly improve your game. Also, play blitz! Cause sometimes you just want to have fun."

Kids Craft: DIY Cactus Pet Rocks



Materials

Rocks with a flat surface
Googly eyes
Acrylic paint (green, white & bright green)
Mini terra cotta pots
Hot glue gun

Directions

First, select your rocks. As mentioned above, you want to look for rocks that are flat on one side so the eyes will go on smoothly. You can even see if you can find some extra details that may give the rock a mouth.

Clean your rocks before painting.

Paint with outdoor paint if you want to place outside. Otherwise, regular acrylic paint works well. We did 2 coats of the lighter green to ensure we got complete coverage.

Once you have the green painted, use the white to create different cactus designs! We did dots, hash marks, lines and stars. Our favorite is the hash marks.

Paint details on rocks

Now glue on your googly eyes! Use hot glue or glue dots.

Now they are ready to go into their pots!

If you'd like them to stand higher in their pots, use a little bit of paper towel or foam in the bottom of the pots.



FUN RIDDLES

I don't have money,
though I do have banks.
I feed others, though I don't eat.
Cross me if you can,
I won't be mad.
What am I?

English Proverbs and Meanings

* **Familiarity breeds contempt.**
Knowing somebody very well may lead to a lack of respect for them.

* **Half a loaf is better than none.**
You should be grateful for something, even if it's not as much as you wanted.

* **He who plays with fire gets burnt.**
If you behave in a risky way, you are likely to have problems.

* **Home is where the heart is.**
You call home the place where the people you love

are.
* **Honey catches more flies than vinegar.**
You can obtain more cooperation from others by being nice.

* **In for a penny, in for a pound.**
If you start something, it's better to spend the time or money to complete it.

* **It is always darkest before the dawn.**
The most difficult time is just before a problem is solved.

* **Knowledge is power.**
Knowledge makes it possible for you to act.

Mini Carrot Coriander Idlis



Onions – 1, medium sized, peeled, finely chopped,
Coriander leaves – 1 tbsp
Red chili powder – ½ tsp
Dhaniya powder – ½ tsp
Salt – to taste

How To Make:

Soak idli rice and urad dal separately for 3 to 4 hours after washing thoroughly in clean water. Grind rice with water in a food processor or blender until it becomes smooth.

Grind urad dal with a little water. Add more water when required to make the batter fluffier.

Mix both the batters and season with salt to taste. Keep aside for about 8 hours to allow fermentation.

How to Proceed:

Saute onions in a little oil until it becomes golden brown. Add carrots, onions, green chilies, and coriander leaves along with the spice powders to the idli batter. Grease the mini idli pans with very little sesame seed oil. Add a tbsp each of the batter on each of the space in the plates.

Steam for about 10 to 12 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the centre of the idli comes out clean.

Serve hot with tomato ketchup.

Ingredients

For Idli Batter:

Idli rice – 1 cup

Urad dal – 1/3 cup

Salt – to taste

Others:

Carrot – 2, medium sized, peeled, finely grated

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Paneer Dosa



Ingredients:

For Dosa

Whole wheat flour – 1 ½ cup

Salt – to taste

Water – enough for making batter

Filling

Paneer – 1 cup, crumbled

Onion – 1, medium sized

Turmeric – A pinch

Red chilli powder – 1 tsp

Green chilli – 1

Salt – As needed

Coriander leaves – 2 tbsp, chopped

Oil – 2 tsp

Cumin seeds – 1 tsp

How To Make:

In a deep kadai, heat oil and allow cumin seeds to splutter. Add onions and green chilies and fry until golden brown. Add spices and give a quick mix.

Add crumbled paneer and coriander leaves and cook for 2 more minutes. Keep aside.

Mix water with wheat flour and salt to make a batter of pouring consistency.

Heat a griddle and brush a little oil.

Pour ¼ cup of batter on the griddle kept on medium heat and spread out in concentric circles.

Drizzle a few drop of oil and cook until the bottom portion turns golden. Flip over and cook for 2 more minutes.

Once again, flip. Take about 1 tbsp of the filling and spread it on one side of the dosa. Fold dosa into half and press the edges.

Serve hot with spicy mint coconut chutney.