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**RVCE Student: India's 63rd Grandmaster at the 37th
Balaton International Chess Festival in Hungary.**

Girish Koushik is India's 63rd Grandmaster

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Girish A. Koushik has taken the long road there but he has finally arrived at the destination of his dreams. Last week, the 22-year-old from Mysuru became India's 63rd Grandmaster at the 37th Balaton International [Chess](#) Festival in Hungary.

Girish had completed his second GM norm in Mallorca late in May, and the third in Budapest the following week. Only 11 Elo rating points separated him from the figure of 2500 (live), and he duly crossed the line in Balatonlelle.

"It's an amazing feeling," says Girish, who becomes Karnataka's third GM after MS Thej Kumar and GA Stany. "I am relieved that I have achieved my goal." But the joy is tinged by a sense of what might have been.

Early in his career, as he amassed one title after another, completing his first GM norm as far back as 2011, Girish was identified as one of India's brightest young prospects.

But while expenses mounted steadily, financial support proved hard to come by. It was becoming too much of a burden. So Girish and his family had a decision to make, and they chose to shift their focus to academics. As he turned 15, Girish quit playing serious chess. For nearly seven years, he remained away from the higher levels of the sport, only indulging his passion occasionally.

Job done

This May, as he completed his Bachelor of Engineering degree in Electronics and Communication (from the city's RV College of Engineering, with flying colours), Girish set off for Europe with eyes on his long-cherished goal. He held one GM norm and an Elo rating of 2444 as he flew out the night of his final engineering paper; despite little preparation, he would return in four weeks' time, the job done.

"Everyone expected that I would become Grandmaster much earlier," says Girish. "Up until 2011, I was possibly the top young player in the country; then I watched as many kids who were behind me became Grandmasters. But I have no regrets. Today, I have a job offer (from a global tech firm) in hand and I am a Grandmaster. I have two careers; others don't."

As Girish contemplates his future, a career in chess again looms as an option. But going upwards from here will be a lot harder. A top coach would have to be a priority (his father, H.V. Arun Kumar, is the only coach Girish has worked with all his life), as would regular participation in major tournaments.

"With the right training, I'm convinced he can get to 2600 and maybe even higher," says Arun. "Seven years ago, we were at a crossroads and we had to abandon his chess dreams. Now, we are at another turning point in his life. If we can find sponsorship, our choice would still be chess. It is my hope."

(With inputs from C.K. Muralidharan)