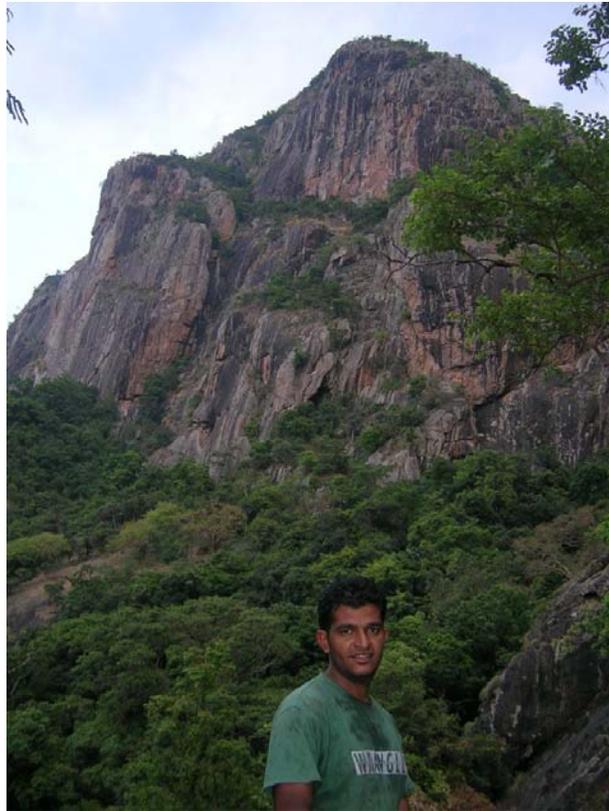


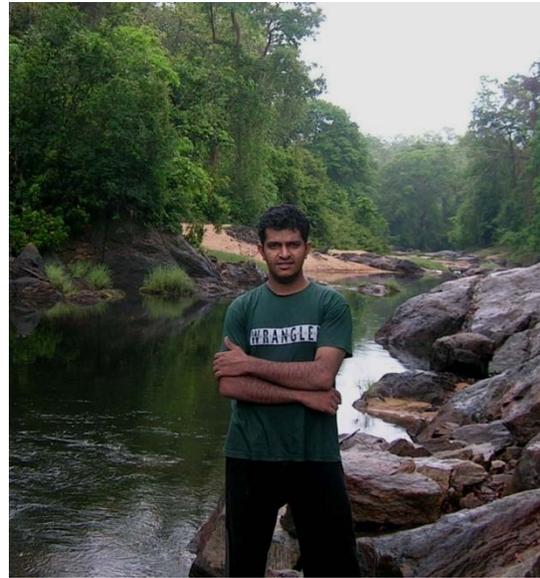
Western Ghat Meets Eastern Ghat



8 to 16 April, 2009

1300 km
(yercaud, kodanad)

I have done over 6000 km of cycling expeditions to date. I have been to jungles and mountains and done wild and crazy things. And **THIS** was my scariest experience ever. Sathyamangalam forest, infamous for its innumerable baffling smuggling routes, had witnessed me crying like a small kid who had lost his way home.



Usual starting point - kulathupuzha

I generally spend long hours studying, planning and defining targets for my expeditions. The targets set this time, yercaud and ooty, were too 'soft' for my liking and I was afraid that the trip might not be exciting enough. How wrong could I be!



Sights in & around yercaud

Reached yercaud on the fourth day. Did the usual things and took the usual snaps but something was seriously missing. My bicycle had burst a tyre around evening but that also failed to create any excitement. That's when I decided that I had to do something about it. I started asking around, without rousing much suspicion, and found about a jungle route through sathyamangalam forest all the way up to ooty! Now that really caught my attention.



**< road ends
(& fun begins)**



< Into the forest

Early start next day took me past forest check posts and police stations into the forest. However, I was stopped several times by officials and finally had to take a detour crossing the moyar river. That was the last I saw of mankind for a day. Beyond it was just me and the jungle.



Crossing the moyar river(at its shallowest spot) was tricky!

The journey continued but the heat and humidity was unbearable. Had halted near a small cave and had setup my camera for a snap. The next thing I remember was the cry of a wild boar as the flash popped. That was the first scare of the day. I had lost my voice! I had a vague idea about the kodanad peak(the point where western ghat meets the eastern ghat) and kept ascending towards it all day.



In the thick of the forest after thengumarahada



I thought it would be easy to just follow the peak – by evening I realised that I was wrong

Near 5 pm I almost (felt) that I reached the top and took a short break, took some snaps and continued towards the peak. That's when everything started going wrong. Thick grass, almost double my height, started swallowing the already narrow path. Soon I felt I was getting into a 'funnel' of overgrowth. Neither could I see the sky nor could I see the path ahead. I was lost. With my voice gone neither could I shout for help. All that was left to do was to pray. And to cry.



Some snaps I had taken before I got lost in the grass land



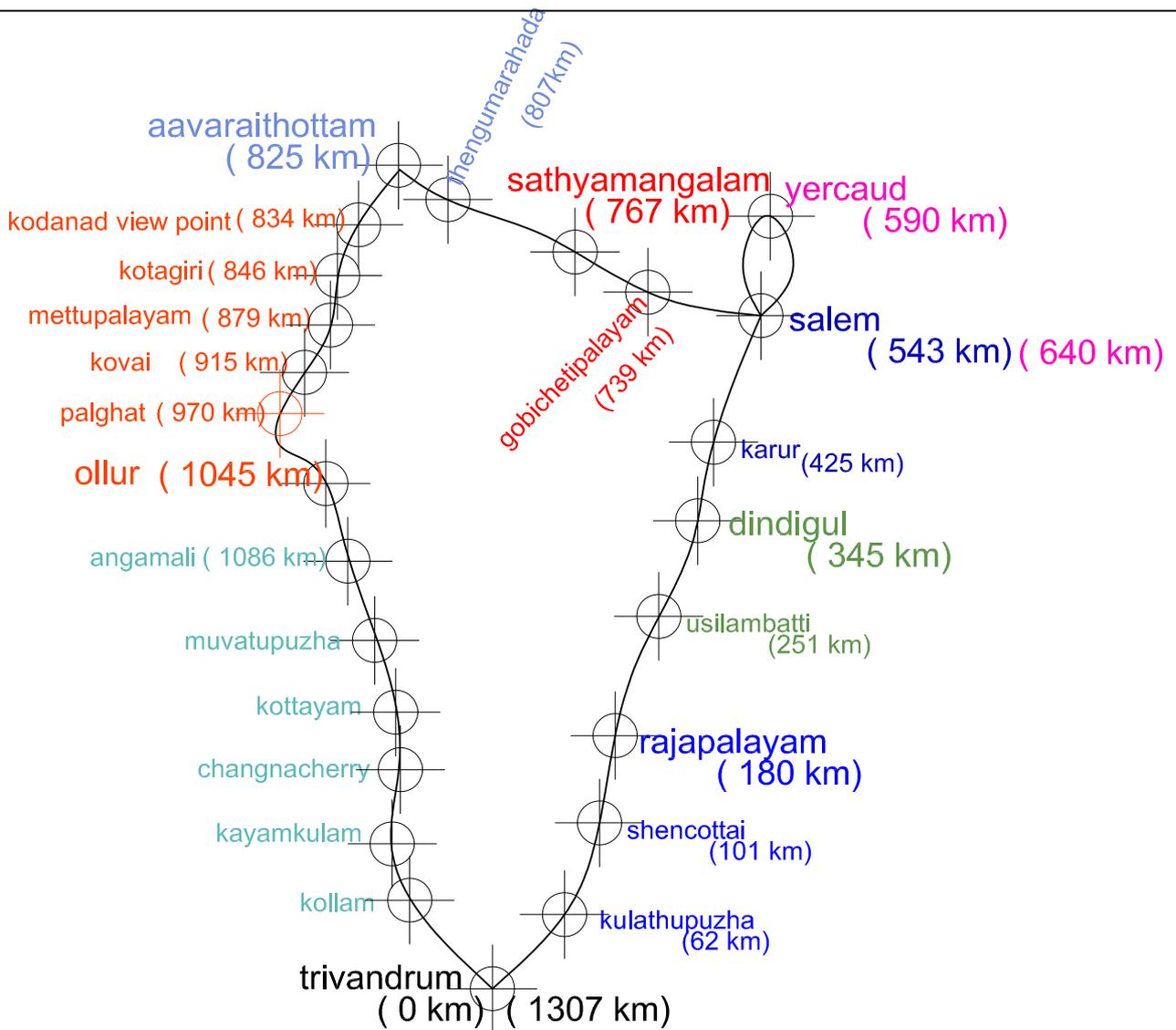
Late at night, when I was coming to peace with myself under the stars, I heard some noise at a distance and found my way to a small hamlet named aavaraitotam.

15th of April 2009 would easily go down in history as the most scariest day of my bicycling expeditions. Next day when I finally got out of the grassland I could see the circles I had made the previous day. It really gave me shudders. Thankfully rest of the trip was eventless, however it took over a week to regain my lost voice.



When I finally emerged from the forest next morning

western ghat meets eastern ghat - distance & time map



<u>day</u>	<u>destination</u>	<u>km</u>
1	rajapalayam	180
2	dindigul	165
3	salem	198
4	yercaud	97
5	sathyamangalam	127
6	avaraihotam	58
7	ollur	220
8	trivandrum	262