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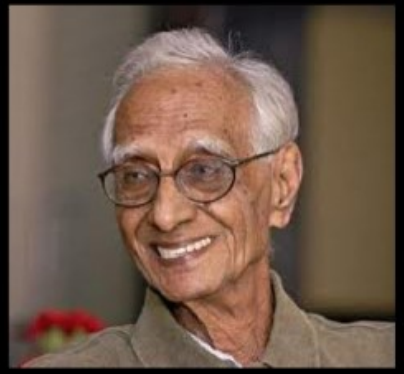
Class-XII

English

Flamingo

Chapter-6



Ashokamitran

Poets and Pancakes

Part - 4

Neha Rajvanshi

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Prohibition : मनाही

Gemini Studios was the favourite haunt of poets like S.D.S.Yogiar, Sangu Subramanyam, Krishna Sastry and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya. It had an excellent mess which supplied good coffee at all times of the day and for most part of the night. Those were the days when Congress rule meant Prohibition and meeting over a cup of coffee was rather satisfying entertainment.

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Barring : अलावा
radiated: बिताना
leisure: खाली समय /आराम
averse : विरोधी
Communism: साम्यवाद

Barring the office boys and a couple of clerks, everybody else at the Studios radiated leisure, a pre-requisite for poetry. Most of them wore khadi and worshipped Gandhiji but beyond that they had not the faintest appreciation for political thought of any kind. Naturally, they were all averse to the term 'Communism'.

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filial : बच्चों के लिए प्रेम
conjugal : विवाह सम्बंधी
compunction : पछतावा
unrest : अशांति
innocent : मासुम
ignorant : अनजान

A Communist was a godless man — he had no filial or conjugal love; he had no compunction about killing his own parents or his children; he was always out to cause and spread unrest and violence among innocent and ignorant people.

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notions : विचार
prevailed : फैले हुए
vaguely : अस्पष्ट रूप से

Such notions which prevailed everywhere else in South India at that time also, naturally, floated about vaguely among the khadi-clad poets of Gemini Studios. Evidence of it was soon forthcoming.

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When Frank Buchman's Moral Re-Armament army, some two hundred strong, visited Madras sometime in 1952, they could not have found a warmer host in India than the Gemini Studios. Someone called the group an international circus. They weren't very good on the trapeze and their acquaintance with animals was only at the dinner table, but they presented two plays in a most professional manner.

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homilies: धार्मिक / नैतिक

Their 'Jotham Valley' and 'The Forgotten Factor' ran several shows in Madras and along with the other citizens of the city, the Gemini family of six hundred saw the plays over and over again. The message of the plays were usually plain and simple homilies, but the sets and costumes were first-rate.



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Madras and the Tamil drama community were terribly impressed and for some years almost all Tamil plays had a scene of sunrise and sunset in the manner of 'Jotham Valley' with a bare stage, a white background curtain and a tune played on the flute.

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It was some years later that I learnt that the MRA was a kind of countermovement to international Communism and the big bosses of Madras like Mr. Vasan simply played into their hands. I am not sure however, that this was indeed the case, for the unchangeable aspects of these big bosses and their enterprises remained the same, MRA or no MRA, international Communism or no international Communism.

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The staff of Gemini Studios had a nice time hosting two hundred people of all hues and sizes of at least twenty nationalities. It was such a change from the usual collection of crowd players waiting to be slapped with thick layers of make-up by the office-boy in the make-up department.

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A few months later, the telephone lines of the big bosses of Madras buzzed and once again we at Gemini Studios cleared a whole shooting stage to welcome another visitor.



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All they said was that he was a poet from England. The only poets from England the simple Gemini staff knew or heard of were Wordsworth and Tennyson; the more literate ones knew of Keats, Shelley and Byron; and one or two might have faintly come to know of someone by the name Eliot. Who was the poet visiting the Gemini Studios now?

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"He is not a poet. He is an editor. That's why The Boss is giving him a big reception." Vasan was also the editor of the popular Tamil weekly Ananda Vikatan.

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surmise : अनुमान लगाना

He wasn't the editor of any of the known names of British publications in Madras, that is, those known at the Gemini Studios. Since the top men of The Hindu were taking the initiative, the surmise was that the poet was the editor of a daily — but not from The Manchester Guardian or the London Times. That was all that even the most wellinformed among us knew.