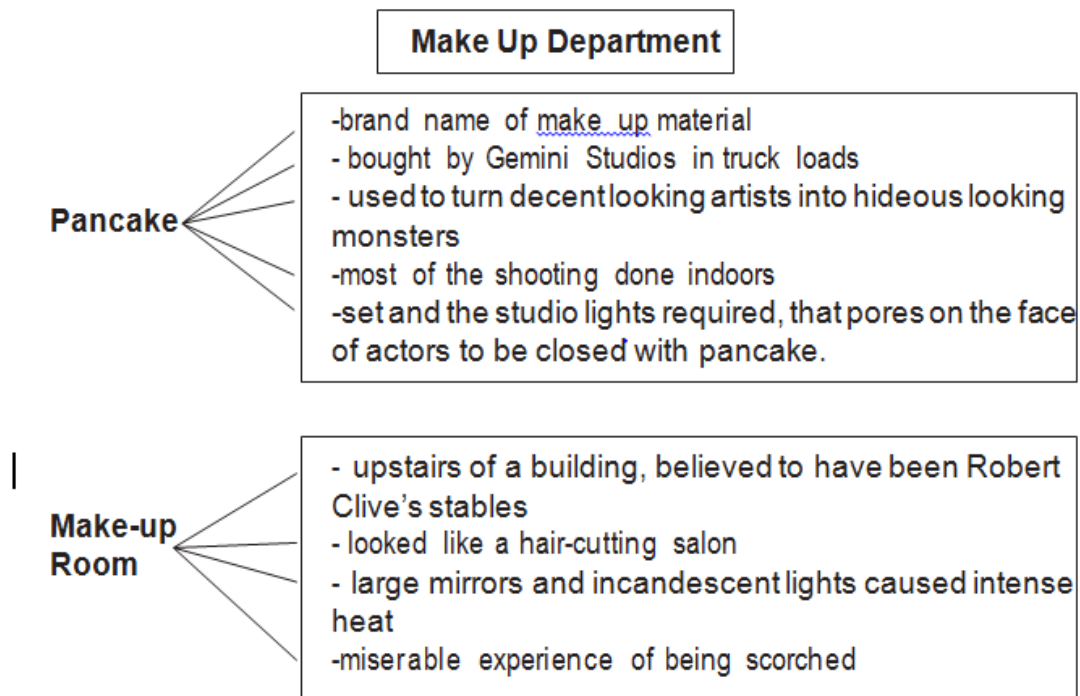


6-POETS AND PANCAKES

-Asoka Mitran

Gemini Studios of Madras (Chennai) and its founder, S.S. Vasan lent substance and quality to the a fragile and unpredictable movie business. Poet and Pancakes, an excerpt from the book *M Years with Boss brings to life, the leading members, their talents and roles, their frustrations and ambitions. It gives a panoramic view of the impact and affiliations of those parts of Gemini Studios with regard to Independent India in its infancy, communism and its counter productive anti- communism.



National Integration

- headed by a Bengali succeeded by a Maharashtrian
- assisted by a Dharwar Kannadiga,
- an Andhra, a Madras Indian Christian, an Anglo Burmese and local Tamils

Hierarchy

- chief make-up man for the hero and heroine
 - senior assistant for second hero and heroine
 - office boy for the crowd
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Office Boy

- not a boy but a forty year old man
- joined studio in hope to become a star, director, script or lyrics writer
- frustrated and blamed Subbu for all his woes, ignominy and neglect

Story Department

Kothamangalam Subbu

- very close to the boss, in fact No. 2 at Gemini Studio
- affluent exposure
- ability to look cheerful in spite of failures
- loyalty, creativity and talent-all for the advantage of his boss
- tailor made for films, film making so easy with Subbu around
- good poet and could write poems of a higher order
- chose to write for the masses
- a novelist, wrote Thillana Mohanambal, created life like characters
- an excellent actor but never aspired for lead roles
- charitable and improvident man and yet had enemies

**Legal
Advisor**

- always wore pant shirt, a tie and sometimes a coat, while others wore khadi dhoti and shirt
- looked alone and helpless- a man of cold logic in crowd of dreamers
- a neutral man in an assembly of Gandhiites and khadiites
- unwittingly ruined the career of a talented actress

**Author
Asokamitran**

- usually seen tearing newspapers
- anybody would walk into his cubicle to give him some work
- office boy wished to impress him and recite poems
- wished for crowd shooting to be saved from epics of office boy

**Arrival of
Frank
Buchmans
Moral
Rearmament
Army (MRA)**

- sort of anti-communism movement, visited Gemini Studios in 1952
- about 200 people belonging to at least 20 nationalities
- two plays- Jotham Valley and Forgotten Factor
- simple message and excellent costumes
- sunrise and sunset scenes imitated by Tamil drama for years
- scenes presented on base stage with white background and flute music
- Gemini family of 600 was highly impressed
- could not the influence the outlook of Gemini Bosses

**Mystery
solved**

- a notice in 'The Hindu' -short story contest by 'The Encounter'
- author visited British Council Library-found copies of 'The Encounter'
- editor of 'The Encounter' - Stephen Spender (Englishman)
- low cost paperback edition on 50th Anniversary of Russian Revolution
- book-The God That Failed with an article by Stephen Spender
- mystery cleared- affiliations of Mr. Vasen for the same God, Communism

EXTRACT BASED QUESTIONS

1.All this shows that there was a great deal of national integration long before AIR and Doordarshan broadcasting programmes on National Integration?

Questions:

- a) Name the chapter and the author.
- b) Why is the phrase 'National Integration' used here?
- c) What place does 'there' refer to?.
- d) Why have 'AIR and Doordarshan' been referred to here?

2.So anyone who felt I should be given some occupation would barge into my cubicle and deliver an extended lecture.

Questions:

- a) Who is 'I' here?
- b) What gave people an impression that he wasn't doing anything?
- c) By whom was he lectured?
- d) Explain 'Barge into'.

3. 'Most of them wore khadi and worshipped Gandhiji but beyond that they had not the faintest appreciation for political thought of anykind. Naturally they were averse to the term communism.'

Questions:

- a) Name the chapter and the author.
- b) What does 'most of them' refer to?
- c) What political affiliation did they display?
- d) Why were they averse to communism?

4.It seemed against Subbu's nature to be even conscious that he was feeding and supporting so many of them. Such a charitable and improvident man,and yet he had enemies!

- a) Who is Subbu?
- b) What trait of his personality has been displayed here?
- c) What does the word improvident means?

d) What is ironical about the above mentioned extract?
<p>5.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.</p> <p>a) Who is being referred in these lines?</p> <p>b) What impression do you form about him from these lines?</p> <p>c) What was the general attitude of people towards such a person?</p> <p>d) Name the chapter and the author.</p>
<p>6.I felt that he too would be singing the same song at the same time -long lost brothers of Indian films discover each other by singing the same in the first reel and final reel of the film.</p> <p>A) Who is 'I' here ?</p> <p>B) When did the bells ring in his heart?</p> <p>C) Why would he be singing the same song at the same time?</p> <p>D) Why has the author made a reference to long lost brothers of Indian films?</p>
<p>7.One day the boss closed down the Story Department and this was perhaps the only instance in all human history where a lawyer lost his job because the poets were asked to go home.</p> <p>A) Name the chapter and the author.</p> <p>B) Whom did the story Department comprise of?</p> <p>C) What happened when it was closed down?</p> <p>D) What was strange about the lawyer losing his job?</p>
<p>8.No one knew what he was talking about and his accent defeated any attempt to understand what he was saying.</p> <p>A) Name the chapter and the author.</p> <p>B) Who is he here?</p> <p>C) Who had invited him to Gemini Studios?</p> <p>D) Why did no one know what he was talking about?</p>
<p>9.The great prose writers of the world may not admit it , but my conviction grows stronger and stronger day after day that prose writing is not and cannot be the true pursuit of a genius.</p> <p>A) Who is the speaker here?</p> <p>B) Why could writing not be the true pursuit of a genius in his opinion?</p>

- C) What is the tone of the speaker here?
- D) Why did his conviction grow stronger and stronger?

10. The poet looked pretty baffled too, for he must have felt the sheer incongruity of his talk about the thrills and tribulations of an English poet. His visit remained an unexplained mystery.

- A) Who is the poet being referred to here?
- B) Where does he deliver the talk?
- C) What does the word 'incongruity' refer to?
- D) Why was his visit an unexplained mystery?

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS (30-40 WORDS) SOLVED

1. Why was Gemini studios a place of national integration in India ?

Ans. There were people from various communities. First, the make up department was headed by a Bengali, then a Maharashtrian. He was assisted by a Dharwar Kannadiga, an Andhra, a Madras Indian Christian an Anglo Burmese and the local Tamils.

2. Why does Asokamitran call Subbu " a Charitable and improvident man"? Ans. Subbu had genuine love for anyone he came across. His house was permanent residence for dozens of relations and acquaintances. Hence the writer calls him charitable and improvident.

3. How did the people of Madras and members of Gemini studios respond to the plays staged by moral Rearmament Army?

Ans. People were terribly impressed. The two plays 'Jotham valley' and 'The forgotten Factor' ran several shows. For some time to come almost all Tamil plays presented the scene of sunrise and sunset in the manner as shown in the plays.

4. What does the lesson convey about the literary taste of the staff of Gemini studios as far as English poetry was concerned?

Ans. The staff at Gemini studios was quite simple. the only English poets known to them were words-worth and Tennyson. The more literate ones knew of Keats, Shelley and Byron. Very few knew about Eliot.

5. Why was Gemini studios a favourite haunt of the poets?

Ans. Gemini studios had an excellent mess which supplied coffee whole day long and most of the night. It provided satisfying entertainment required for poetry where everyone enjoyed and praised Gandhi over a cup of coffee.

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS (30-40 WORD) UNSOLVED

1. What was the fiery misery of those subjected to makeup?
2. Why were all the people of Gemini studios against communism?
3. How was the mystery of the English visitor to the studio solved?

LONG ANS. TYPE QUESTIONS (POINTS ONLY)

1. Subbu was a many sided genius, who gave definition and direction to the studio in its golden years. Elaborate.

Ans. Subbu a man of genius had a separate identity at Gemini studio. He was always cheerful and willing to work for others. He was loyal to the principal and used all his creativity to his advantages. He gave direction and definition to Gemini studio. he composed story poems and novels and carved beautiful characters. He was a highly capable literature writer. He was an amazing character and actor but never aspired for leading roles.

Subbu was a charitable and important person. He supported dozens of near and dear ones. He was quite close to the Boss and was taken as No. 2 of the Gemini studio.

LONG ANS. TYPE QUESTIONS

1.The staff at Gemini studio enjoyed hosting the MRA while the visit of the English poet remained an unexplained mistery. Discuss.

1. Saff of Gemini studio had nice time hosting MRA
2. MRA presented the plays 'Jotham valley' and 'The Forgotten Factor'
3. Gemini family of six hundred saw the plays over and over again.
4. The first-rate sets and costumers used in the plays were highly appreciated.
5. They were terribly impressed by the manner the plays depicted the scenes of sunrise to sunset. A change from the usual collection of crowd players.
6. Visit of English poet just the opposite. Poet very English, very serious, unknown to the staff of Gemini studio. No body understood what the poet said.
7. Audience dazed and silent by the unfamiliar accent. The audience and the poet both parted in utter bafflement.

His visit remained an unexplained mystery

2.Asokamitran retired from Gemini studios, but retained his taste for literature.How?

Ans.

Asokamitran out of Gemini studio with plenty of free time on his hands but no money.

Literature attracted him most .

Hunted for new books on footpath in front of the post office.

Found a pile of books for fifty paisa each - ' The God that faild'.

He read the essays printed in the book contributed by six eminent men of letters.

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