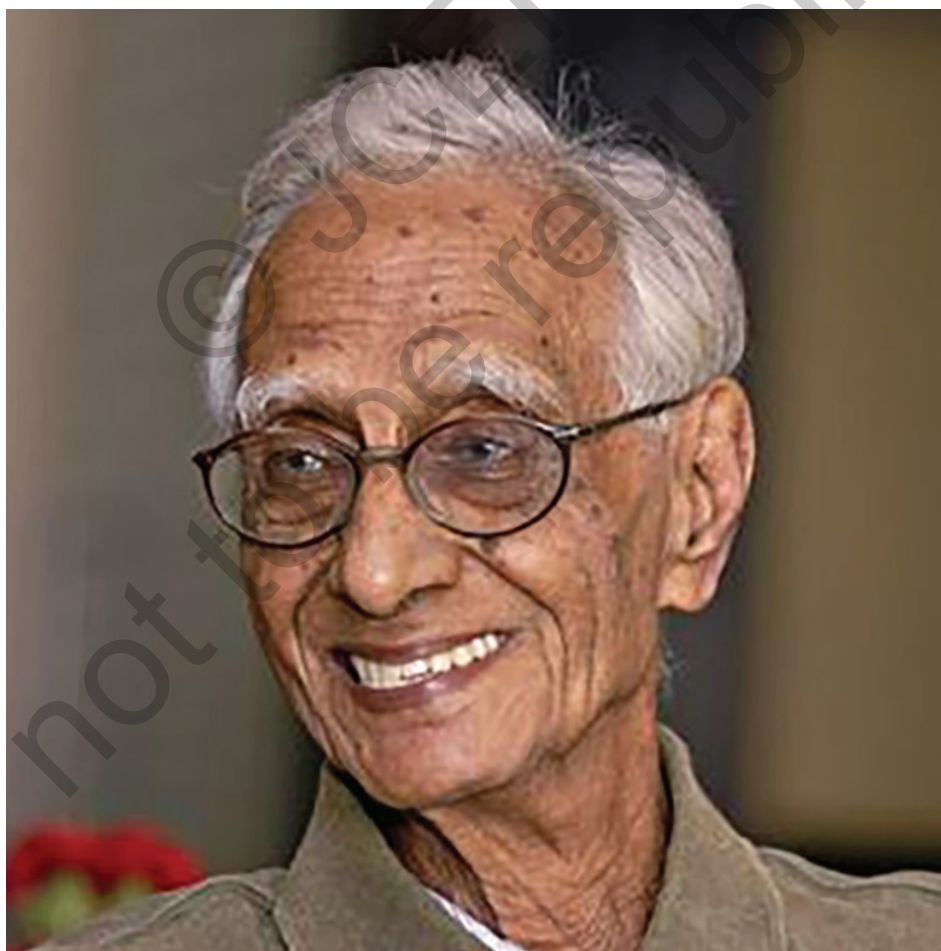


## Poets and Pancakes



**Asoka mitran**



Picture A

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## I. ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Asokamitran (22 September 1931- 23 March 2017) was a famous Tamil writer and Sahitya Akademi winner. He wrote 8 novels, 20 novellas and hundreds of short stories, on a wide range of issues.

‘Poets and Pancakes’ is an excerpt from his autobiographical book ‘My Years with Boss’ which comically describes the functioning of Gemini Studios of Chennai where he was working as a clerk.

## II. WORD MEANINGS

1. Stables-a building set apart and adapted for keeping horses (अस्तबल)

2. Maiden-a young woman or an unmarried girl (अविवाहिता)

single girl

3. Forbidden- banned (निषिद्ध)

taboo

4. Misery-suffering (कष्ट)

pain

5. Integration-unification (एकीकरण)

6. Broadcasting- (प्रसारण)

7. Hideous-extremely ugly (भयंकर)

monstrous, dreadful

8. Potions-a liquid mixture (मिश्रित औषधि)

tonic

9. Cubicle-a small partitioned-off area of a room, compartment

10. Perverts-a person whose sexual behaviour is regarded as abnormal and unacceptable

11. Epics-an exceptionally long and arduous task or activity

12. Covertly-secretly (छिपकर)

privately

13. Woes-distress (संकट)

14. Contrary-opposite in nature, direction or meaning
15. Virtue-behaviour showing high moral standards (सदाचार)  
morality
16. Affluent-wealthy(धनी)
17. Deliberately-on purpose (जान - बूझकर)
18. Dwarfed-short(नाटा)
19. Literary-associated with literary works or other formal writing
20. Critic-a person who judges the merits of literary or artistic works (समीक्षक)
21. Sprawling-spreading over a large area
22. Deftly-effortlessly (निपुण)
23. Subsidiary-secondary (सहायक),  
auxiliary
24. Improvident-a person who does not plan his expenses and ends up wasting money (अदूरदर्शी),  
short sighted
25. Demeanour-manner; attitude (आचरण) also demeanor.
26. Temperamental-तेज-मिजाज
27. Foul-bad (बहुत खराब)  
nasty, awful
28. Struck- shocked, stunned.
29. Haunt-frequently visited by (अड्डा)
30. Leisure- free time (अवकाश)
31. Drudge-a person made to do hard menial or dull work (परिश्रम से काम करना)
32. Averse (प्रतिकूल)- unfavorable, disadvantageous
33. Communism-socialism (साम्यवाद)
34. Filial - faithful,devoted,
35. Conjugal-relating to marriage or the relationship between a married couple (वैवाहिक)
36. Forthcoming-about to happen or appear(आगामी)
37. Homilies-advice, preaching (उपदेश)
38. Bare-empty (खाली)  
vacant
39. Surmise-presumption (अनुमान)
40. Bafflement- confusion, bewilderment (उलझन)

### III. SOME IMPORTANT NOTES

**1. GEMINI STUDIOS-** Gemini Studios was an Indian film studio in Madras, Tamil Nadu. formerly, It was known as Motion Picture Producers' Combines. Later S. S. Vasan bought it from Krishnaswamy Subrahmanyam and renamed it as Gemini Studios .

**2. MY YEARS WITH BOSS-** A book by the Tamil writer Ashokamitran. He recounts his years at Gemini Studios in this book which also talks of the influence of movies on every aspect of life in India.

**3. CHENNAI-** Capital and the largest city of Tamil Nadu, an Indian state.

**4. PANCAKE-** A pancake is a flat cake cooked on a hot surface like a frying pan.

In this text Pancake is the brand name of the make-up material that Gemini Studios brought in truck-loads.

**5. GRETA GARBO-** Greta Garbo was a Swedish-American actress, regarded as one of the greatest actresses to ever be on screen.



**6. MISS GOHAR-** Gohar Khayyam Mamajiwala was an Indian singer, actress, producer and studio owner.

**7. VYJAYANTHIMALA-** is a former Indian actress, dancer and parliamentarian. She is regarded as the “First Female Superstar” of Hindi cinema.

**8. RATI AGNIHOTRI** - an Indian actress, known for acting in Hindi, as well as in Telugu and Tamil language films.

**9. ROBERT CLIVE’S STABLE-** Robert Clive was the first British Governor of the Bengal Presidency.

In this text the make-up department of the Gemini Studios was in the upstairs of a building that was believed to have been Robert Clive’s stables.

**10. ST MARY’S CHURCH-** Is an Anglican Church in Chennai, formerly known in Madras.

**11. FORT ST GEORGE-** Fort St. George is the first English fortress in India, founded in 1639 at the coastal city of Madras.

**12. MADRAS-** Former name of Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu.

**13. A.I.R.** - is the national radio Broadcaster of India.

**14. DOORDARSHAN-** Doordarshan is an autonomous public service broadcaster founded by the Government of India,



**15. INDOOR SHOOTING** - photos or videos taken indoors. The term is hugely used for film -shooting.

**16. OUTDOOR SHOOTING** - photos or videos taken outdoors. It is also widely used for film -shooting.

**17. CUBICLE**- It is a small space with walls or curtains around it, that is separate from the rest of a room.



**18. FRENCH WINDOWS** -door-sized windows, which are usually made of wood and glass.

**19. BRAHMIN** - a caste in Hindu society.

**20. DEVADASIS** - In India, a devadasi was a female artist who was dedicated to worship and serve a deity or a temple for the rest of her life. In addition to taking care of the temple and performing rituals, these women also learned and practiced classical Indian artistic traditions such as Bharatanatyam, Mohiniyattam, Kuchipudi, and Odissi.



**21. SYCOPHANT** - A person who attempts to gain advantage by flattering influential people or behaving in a servile manner.

**22. COMMUNISM** It is a political and economic doctrine that aims to replace private property and a profit-based economy with public ownership and communal control of at least the major means of production and the natural resources of a society.

**23. FRANK BUCHMAN'S MORAL RE-ARMAMENT ARMY** - Frank Buchman's Moral Rearmament Army visited the Gemini Studios in 1952. It was a drama company. In reality, it was a counter movement to international communism. It had two-hundred players and was called an international circus.

**24. TRAPEZE** - a gymnastic or acrobatic apparatus consisting of a short horizontal bar suspended by two

parallel ropes that is held by circus performers.



**25. THE GOD THAT FAILED-** -A collection of essays in which Six eminent men of letters in six separate essays described 'their journeys into Communism and their disillusioned return. These men are Andre Gide, Richard Wright, Ignazio Silone, Arthur Koestler, Louis Fischer and Stephen Spender.

## IV. CHARACTERS

**1. ASHOKAMITRAN, THE PROTAGONIST-** He is the author of this lesson and used to work as an employee of Gemini Studios. His duty at the studios was to cut newspaper clippings on several issues and store them in files. However, anyone who saw him tearing newspapers thought he was doing nothing. So, everyone would barge in his cubicle to deliver some lecture or work to him. The office

boy, who was a bit of a poet, also began to show his literary talent before him.

**2. S. S. VASAN** -Mr. S.S. Vasan, the founder of Gemini Studios was the Boss of the author. Apart from producing films, he was an editor of a popular Tamil weekly 'Ananda Vikatan'. He was a great admirer of scholarly people. Subbu seemed to enjoy an intimate relationship with him. Mr. Vasan is projected as a bit of a showman here.

## 3. WORKERS IN THE MAKE UP DEPARTMENT

- I. A BENGALI
- II. A MAHARASHTRIAN
- III. DHARWAR KANNADIGA
- IV. AN ANDHRA
- V. A MADRAS INDIAN CHRISTIAN
- VI. VAN ANGLO BURMESE
- VII. SOME LOCAL TAMILS

## 4. HIERARCHY IN THE MAKE-UP DEPARTMENT

**5. THE OFFICE BOY** - The office boy in the make-up department, there was an office boy who was not really a young boy, but a grown-up man of forty years old. He joined the studio with a dream of becoming a star. But his dreams remained unfulfilled and he blamed Subbu, the no. 2 in Gemini for his failure. He was given the duty of crowd makeup. His job was an easy

one, still he feels he was an expert and a skilled make-up artist.

**6. KOTHAMANGALAM SUBBU-** He was considered the No.2 at the studio and the most favourite of the boss. Being a brahmin he was given more importance than the office boy. He was a man of many abilities and a kind-hearted person. But the office boy did not like him because of his popularity and often cursed him.

He always looked cheerful and was very loyal towards the boss. He was extremely creative and used his talent to his own advantage and to make his position strong in the studio.

## 7. POETS IN THE STUDIO

1. THE OFFICE BOY
2. K. SUBBU
3. S.D.S. YOGIAR,
4. SANGU SUBRAMANYAM
5. KRISHNA SASTRY
6. HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA



**8. Some other poets mentioned in the poem-** Wordsworth, Tennyson, Keats, Shelley, Byron, Eliot.

**9. A LAWYER-** A lawyer who used to be also a legal advisor was a member of this story department in the Gemini studios. This lawyer caused the end of a brilliant acting career of an extremely talented actress. Eventually, he also lost his job with the closure of the story department.

**10. AN EXTREMELY TALENTED ACTRESS-** This extremely talented actress was also very temperamental and she once blew over on the sets. She was a girl from the countryside and hadn't gone through all the stages of worldly experience that generally precede a position of importance and sophistication. Her brief and brilliant acting career was ruined by the legal adviser after the unpleasant incident in the studios.

**11. OFFICE BOYS, A COUPLE OF CLERKS-** They were the most busy workers in the Gemini Studios.

**12. STEPHEN SPENDER-** He was an English poet who once visited the Gemini studios. The Boss arranged a grand welcome for him but the purpose of his arrival remained a mystery to the workers for a long time. They had never heard the poet's name before and they also did not understand what he spoke. Later the author learnt that the name of that poet was Stephen Spender and he was also the



editor of the periodical called The Encounter.



## V. SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

1. ASHOKAMITRAN WORKED IN THE GEMINI STUDIOS
2. PANCAKES- MAKEUP MATERIALS USED IN GEMINI
3. THE MAKE UP DEPARTMENT OF GEMINI
4. THE OFFICE BOY
5. SUBBU, 2ND IN GEMINI
6. ASHOKAMITRAN'S DUTY - CUTTING AND PASTING NEWS CLIPS
7. THE STORY DEPARTMENT

## 8. POETS IN GEMINI

## 9. VISIT OF MRA

## 10. VISIT OF STEPHEN SPENDER

## SUMMARY IN ENGLISH

The essay, "Poets and Pancakes" is an extract from Asokamitran's book "My Years with Boss." It talks about the famous Gemini Studios and the various elements of each department. Here pancakes means the make-up materials used by the actresses in heavy amounts. These pancakes turned decent-looking characters into monsters.

The make-up department was located in a building which was believed to have been Robert Clive's stable. However, there were several buildings associated with Robert Clive's residence. Here the author gives a description of the make-up department as a symbol of national integration as there were workers from various parts of the country such as Bengal, Maharashtra, Madras, Andhra etc.

In the make-up department, there was an office boy who joined the studio with a dream of becoming a star. But his dreams remained unfulfilled and he blamed Subbu, the no. 2 in Gemini for his failure. This Subbu was a man of many abilities and a kind-hearted person. But the office boy did not like him because of his popularity and often cursed him.

The narrator's duty at the studios

was to cut newspaper clippings on several issues and store them in files. However, anyone who saw him tearing newspapers thought he was doing nothing. So, everyone would barge in his cubicle to deliver some lecture or work to him. The office boy, who was a bit of a poet, also began to show his literary talent before him.

Apart from the make-up department there was also a story department. A lawyer who used to be also a legal advisor was a member of this story department. This lawyer caused the end of a brilliant acting career of an extremely talented actress. Eventually, he also lost his job with the closure of the story department.

Gemini Studios was the favourite haunt of some poets who used to wear khadi and believed that Communists were godless men who had no feelings of love and compassion.

Then the author tells us about the visit of the Moral Rearmament Army (MRA) with two hundred strong people. This MRA presented two plays in a very professional manner. These plays became a good success and left their impression on Tamil drama. Later, we come to know that MRA was actually a counter-Communist movement.

Asokamitran also tells us about the visit of an English poet to the studios. The Boss arranged a grand welcome for the poet but the purpose of his arrival remained a mystery to the workers for a long time. They had never heard the poet's name

before and they also did not understand what he spoke. Later the author learnt that the name of that poet was Stephen Spender and he was also the editor of the periodical called The Encounter.

Years later when the author retired from the Gemini Studios, he came across a book titled, "The God That Failed". It had six essays, one of which was written by Stephen Spender. Thus the mystery of Spender's visit to Gemini Studios was cleared to the narrator. He assumed that his visit was related to his anti-communist perspective.

## पाठ का सारांश

निबंध, "पोएट्स एंड पेनकेक्स" अशोकमित्रन की पुस्तक "माई इयर्स विद बॉस" से एक उद्धरण है। लेखक यहां जेमिनी स्टूडियो और उसके प्रत्येक विभाग के विभिन्न तत्वों के बारे में बात करते हैं। यहां पेनकेक्स का मतलब अभिनेत्रियों द्वारा भारी मात्रा में उपयोग की जाने वाली मेकअप सामग्री का ब्रांड है। यह पेनकेक्स सभ्य दिखने वाले इंसानों को भी राक्षसों में बदल सकता है।

मेकअप विभाग एक ऐसी इमारत में स्थित था जिसके बारे में माना जाता था कि वह रॉबर्ट क्लाइव का अस्तबल था। हालाँकि, रॉबर्ट क्लाइव के निवास से जुड़ी कई इमारतें थीं। यहाँ लेखक राष्ट्रीय एकता के प्रतीक के रूप में मेकअप विभाग का विवरण देता है क्योंकि देश के विभिन्न हिस्सों जैसे बंगाल, महाराष्ट्र,



मद्रास, आंध्र आदि से लोग यहां काम करने आते थे।

मेकअप डिपार्टमेंट में ऑफिस बॉय था जो स्टार बनने का सपना लेकर स्टूडियो आया था। लेकिन उनके सपने अधूरे रह गए और उन्होंने अपनी असफलता के लिए जैमिनी के नंबर 2 सुब्बू को जिम्मेदार ठहराया। यह सुब्बू कई योग्यताओं वाला एक दयालु व्यक्ति था। लेकिन ऑफिस बॉय उनकी लोकप्रियता के कारण उन्हें पसंद नहीं करते थे और अक्सर उन्हें श्राप देते थे।

स्टूडियो में कथाकार का काम था अखबारों से विभिन्न मुद्दों को चुनके उससे काटकर फाइलों में संग्रहीत करना। हालांकि, जिसने भी उसे अखबार फाड़ते हुए देखा, उसने सोचा कि वह कुछ भी नहीं कर रहा है। इसलिए, हर कोई उसे लेक्चर देने या काम देने के लिए उसके कक्ष में घुस जाता था। ऑफिस बॉय, जो थोड़ा हद तक कवि भी था, उसने भी लेखक के सामने अपनी साहित्यिक प्रतिभा दिखाना शुरू कर दिया।

मेकअप विभाग के अलावा एक कहानी विभाग भी था। एक वकील जो कानूनी सलाहकार भी हुआ करता था, इस कहानी विभाग का सदस्य था। इस वकील ने एक बेहद प्रतिभाशाली अभिनेत्री के शानदार अभिनय करियर का अंत किया। बाद में, कहानी विभाग के बंद होने से उनकी नौकरी भी चली गई।

जैमिनी स्टूडियो कुछ कवियों का पसंदीदा अड्डा था जो खादी पहनते थे और मानते थे

कि कम्युनिस्ट ईश्वरविहीन पुरुष थे जिनमें प्रेम और करुणा की कोई भावना नहीं थी।

फिर लेखक हमें दो सौ मजबूत लोगों के साथ मोरल रियरमामेंट आर्मी (एमआरए) की आने के बारे में बताते हैं। इस एमआरए ने दो नाटकों को बहुत ही पेशेवर तरीके से प्रस्तुत किया। ये नाटक एक अच्छी सफलता हासिल किया और तमिल नाटक पर अपनी छाप छोड़ी। बाद में, हमें पता चला कि एमआरए वास्तव में एक कम्युनिस्ट विरोधी आंदोलन था।

अशोकमित्रन हमें एक अंग्रेजी कवि के स्टूडियो में आने के बारे में भी बताते हैं। जैमिनी में कवि के लिए एक भव्य स्वागत की व्यवस्था किया गया, लेकिन उनके आने का उद्देश्य लंबे समय तक कर्मचारियों के लिए एक रहस्य बना रहा। उन्होंने पहले कभी कवि का नाम नहीं सुना था और उनका भाषा भी इन लोगों को समझ में नहीं आया। बाद में लेखक को पता चला कि उस कवि का नाम स्टीफन स्पेंडर था और वह द एनकाउंटर नामक पत्रिका के संपादक भी थे।

वर्षों बाद जब लेखक जैमिनी स्टूडियो से सेवानिवृत्त हुए, तो उन्हें 'द गॉड दैट फेल' नामक एक पुस्तक मिली। इसमें छह निबंध थे, जिनमें से एक स्टीफन स्पेंडर द्वारा लिखा गया था। इस प्रकार स्पेंडर की जैमिनी स्टूडियो की यात्रा का रहस्य लेखक के लिए स्पष्ट हो गया। उन्होंने अनुमान लगाया कि कवि की यात्रा उनके कम्युनिस्ट विरोधी दृष्टिकोण से संबंधित थी।

## VI. OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS

1. Who is the writer of the essay Poets and Pancakes?

- A. Kamala Das
- B. Elizabeth Jennings
- C. Ashokamitran
- D. Kalki

**Ans- C**

2. Ashokamitran was a-

- A. Bengali writer
- B. punjabi writer
- C. Tamil writer
- D. None

**Ans-C**

3. The founder of Gemini Studios was-

- A. Subbu
- B. S.S.Vasan
- C. Kalki
- D. None

**Ans-B**

4. Greta Garbo was-

- A. a scientist
- B. a writer

C. a poet

D. an actress

**Ans-D**

4. The make-up department was first headed by -

- A. a Bengali
- B. a Tamil
- C. a Bihari
- D. none

**Ans-A**

5. The office boy was from \_\_\_\_ department.

- A. music
- B. make up
- C. story
- D. none

**Ans-B**

6. The office boy was in his-

- A. early forties
- B. fifties
- C. teen
- D. childhood

**Ans-A**

7. The Madras Indian was a-

- A. Muslim

- B. Christian
- C. Sikh
- D. Hindu

**Ans-B**

8. The Chief actors and actresses were made ugly by the-

- A. office boy
- B. narrator
- C. Subbu
- D. Chief make-up man

**Ans-D**

9. Fort St.George is situated in-

- A. Madras
- B. Kolkata
- C. Mumbai
- D. Delhi

**Ans-A**

10. Subbu was the boss of the Gemini Studios.

- A. yes
- B. no
- C. may be
- D. none

**Ans-B**

11. Who was in charge of the crowds' make-up?

- A. The chief make up artist
- B. the narrator
- C. The office boy
- D. None

**Ans-C**

12. Subbu's position in the studios was-

- A. 3rd
- B. 2nd
- C. After the boss
- D. Both B and C

**Ans-D**

13. Who is referred to as a tailor-made for films?

- A. The lawyer
- B. The office boy
- C. Subbu
- D. The narrator

**Ans-C**

14. How was Kothamanglam Subbu treated in the Gemini studio?

- A. with hatred
- B. rudely
- C. disrespectfully
- D. with high respect

**Ans-D**

15. What is the example of National Integration in Poets and Pancakes?

- A. Make up department of Gemini
- B. rehearsal room
- C. office of Gemini studio
- D. none

**Ans-A**

16. When did MRA visit Madras?

- A. 1943
- B. 1922
- C. 1952
- D. 1951

**Ans-C**

17. Mr.Vasan was also the editor of-

- A. The Hindu
- B. The Guardian
- C. Ananda Vikatan
- D. None

**Ans-C**

18. The English poet who once visited the Gemini Studios was-

- A. Wordsworth
- B. Shelley
- C. Keats
- D. Stephen Spender

**Ans-D**

## VII. SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. What is the example of national integration that the author refers to?

**Answer:** The make-up department of the Gemini Studios was an example of national integration because people from different regions and religions worked together in that department. The department was headed by a Bengali who was succeeded by a Maharashtrian. The other helpers included a Dharwar Kannadiga, an Andhra, a Madras Indian Christian, an AngloBurmese and the local Tamils.

2. Why did the author appear to be doing nothing at the studios?

**Answer:** The author worked as an employee of Gemini Studios. His duty at the studios was to cut newspaper clippings of several issues and store them in files. However, anyone who saw him tearing newspapers thought he was doing nothing. So, everyone would barge in his cubicle to deliver some lecture or work to him.

3. What work did the 'office boy' do in the Gemini Studios?

Why did he join the studios? Why was he disappointed?

**Answer:** The office boy used to paint the faces of the crowd with a heavy paint during the crowd shooting in the Gemini Studios. He wasn't exactly a 'boy'; he was in his early forties. He entered the studios years ago in

the hope of becoming a star actor or a top screenwriter, director or lyrics writer. He couldn't succeed and was disappointed due to his failure and blamed everything upon Subbu.

4. Why was Subbu considered No.2 in Gemini Studios?

**Answer:** Subbu was a Brahmin with a multi-talented personality. He used to solve each and every problem of Gemini Studios. He was very close to the boss and was always ready to serve him. He commanded all the activities of all the persons related to the Gemini Studios. So the narrator considered Subbu to be the next boss of the Gemini Studios.

5. Why did the legal adviser lose his job in the Gemini Studios?

**Answer:** The legal adviser was a member of the story department in the Gemini studios who caused the end of a brilliant acting career of an extremely talented actress. He lost his job with the closure of the story department by S.S.Vasan, the boss.

6. What was communism according to the poets of Gemini studios?

**Answer:** The poets in the Gemini considered the communists to be heartless and godless persons. According to them, the communists did not love their wife, children as well as relatives. They were always ready for violence and to tease the innocent people.

7. Why was the Moral Re-Armament Army welcomed at Gemini Studios?

**Answer:** The Moral Re-Armament Army was invited to stage two plays, which were more like plain lectures for the Gemini family. It was discovered only later that the group was part of the movement countering international communism and Vasan had invited them under the influence of his political interests.

8. Who was the Boss of Gemini Studios?

**Answer:** Mr. S.S. Vasan, the founder of Gemini Studios was the Boss. Apart from producing films, he was an editor of a popular Tamil weekly 'Ananda Vikatan'. He was a great admirer of scholarly people. Subbu seemed to enjoy an intimate relationship with him. Mr. Vasan is projected as a bit of a showman here.

9. Who was the English visitor to the studios?

**Answer:** The English visitor to the studios was poet Stephen Spender, editor of British periodical 'The Encounter'.

10. What does The God That Failed refer to?

**Answer:** The God That Failed refers to a book that was a collection of six essays by six eminent men. It was a low priced student edition released to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. It dealt with the author's disillusionment with communism.



11. What is 'the fiery misery' mentioned in the essay?

**Answer:** The salon-like make-up room of Gemini Studios had some half dozen mirrors with incandescent lights at all angles around them. The artists would feel the heat coming from these lights. So, the writer uses the term 'fiery misery' to denote the uncomfortable situation of those subjected to make-up.

### VIII. LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. Describe the make-up department in Gemini Studios.

**Answer:** The make-up department of Gemini Studios was on the upper floor of a building that was believed to have been Robert Clive's stables. The make-up room had the look of its hair salon with lights at all angles around half a dozen huge mirrors. The make-up department had people from various parts of the country. There is a kind of hierarchy existing regarding the duties of the worker in this department. The chief make-up man did the makeup for the main actors and actresses; his

senior assistant worked on the second hero and heroine, the junior assistant on the main comedian, and so on. The players who played the crowd were the responsibility of the office boy, who was the junior-most.

2. What was the Moral Rearmament Army? Describe their visit to the Gemini Studios.

**Answer:** Frank Buchman's Moral Rearmament Army visited the Gemini Studios in 1952. It was a drama company. In reality, it was a counter movement to international communism. It had two-hundred players and was called an international circus.

They presented two plays in the most professional manner. The plays represented simple sermons and the costumes and sets were superb. Their play, 'Jotham Valley' impressed the Tamil theater. They imitated the sunrise and sunset scenes in their manner for years. Though the MRA was anti-communist and the anti-communist feeling existed at the Studios, the coming of the MRA had no impact on the attitude of the bosses; their enterprises went on as usual.