

Anami



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The Mad, Mad Madras Season is not far away. And it seems likely there will be more, not fewer, festivalmongers in the fray this year. The newer ones, though, may be offering something different from the standard stale fare, like more broadly conceived expressions of culture, using the street fair formula. The fly in the ointment, so to speak, is sponsorship seems somewhat uncertain, like the monsoon.

The month named after Augustus is when the mandarins and mandarinas of the Meccademy make up their mind about who the next esskay should be; or, as it has happened more than once, a few of the manda-s decide for all of them. Hardly anyone who is aware of what's going on-- and also what's not going on-- over there in the corner of Cathedral & TTK is surprised not even the first steps have been taken yet towards selecting the next esskay. Overheard telecons suggest there was resistance to the idea those not caught in the net of court orders could go ahead with the programming of the annual confest and the selection of esskay. One court order of several weeks ago had nixed the legal status of the members of the exon; another had stayed the previous order; and finally a third order has thrown the issue into the lap of a competent authority. Pending decision by the latter, the manda-s are expected to do in October what they should have done two months earlier.

The nebulous state of the exon wasn't apparently the only reason for the delay. Whispers in the gallery suggest, even while wise heads were trying to find a formula to bottle up the internecine battle, the don quixotes in the establishment were busy concocting new calumnies or claiming victories, not paying enough attention to important pending issues. After one such victory claim by one of the dons, the senior legal counsellor was reported wondering whether the hip-hip- hurrayng don was claiming victory because he knew the law or because he didn't. And there was this tale traveling the distance in the gallery about a businesslike bossu charged with executive responsibility wanting to relinquish it, afraid he might become a victim of the secretive and manipulative manner of managing the affairs of the once-haloed academy.

A mandarin overheard in a distant corner of the gallery: "All the problems of the Academy stem from the allergy of the top honcho to a single individual." Intriguing. All? Which individual?

Okay. Says a secret agent, the upcoming esskay will likely be one of the following: a pair of fluting sisters; a (twentieth) century-maker of Carnatica, with roots in the Pandian country; a 'villainist' with big blob of red on his forehead; and an octogenarian lady

belonging to a venerated music family. The last one is apparently being pushed by an already eskayed prima donna, on grounds the octolady is her guru and this has prompted a wisehead or two to ask why she didn't think of her guru before campaigning long and hard to get the crown herself.

This story, doing the rounds in the gallery, suggests humour is still alive in the grooves of the Meccademy. For the benefit of posterity, the following telecon was recorded by a gallerian:

DDG:*Hello, is that the Academy?*

AMV: **[Answering Managerial Voice]:** Yes.

DDG:*I need some information....*

AMV: What's it?

DDG:*I want to know whether vidwan Sivanandam's wife also was given the Sangeeta Kalanidhi when that title was conferred on him.*

AMV: We haven't given any Sivanandam-Kivanandam the title. Where is the question of his wife getting it?

DDG:*What! Hullo, this is DDG of Prasar Bharati calling....*

AMV: Yeah?

Gallerian gleefully guffawing about this was overheard saying, while the recording is not too clear, this is the sum & substance of the telecon.

You can count on tv channels too to tickle the funnybone. This weekly show devoted to dance is the source of gaffemalika almost every Sunday, this teenager talking to some others was heard saying. Not one of the four dancers, all disciples of wellknown dancerina-s, could, on a recent day named after soorya, identify this fabled Bharatanatyam dancer when shown her graf. Nor could anyone identify, a week later, a wellknown TamBrahm terpsichorean living not far from the tv studio.

***Tailpiece* From a Mysore organisation's media release: "... a programme of Tinny Tots...." Really!**