



At the YMCA.....
Franco, me & Ramu
(left to right).

THE SILENT ONE

BY GEORGE DAS
(SPORTSWRITER)

SILENTLY he walked into the Malaysian hockey team. Hardly anyone notice of his presence or contribution.

Everytime the team won an encounter, others were praised. Accolades were heaped on them. Ramu was not among these players who got the recognition.

He walked away from the cameras and interviews after every match. He never wanted to be in the limelight.

To him he was there to perform on the pitch. A team job and that was it. Ramu believed everyone should give their all for the team. He was just a cog in the wheel.

Whenever we met, he would never speak about how he had featured in the team's victory or defeat. He was not one who would broadcast about himself.

After 50 years, he told me of his greatest disappointment in his career. The day he "fluffed" with the penalty stroke against New Zealand. This was in the opening match of the World Cup in Kuala Lumpur (1975). It ended in a draw.

"I was terribly tensed and nervous. Missing it from the spot hit me real hard."

He admitted that fortunately teammates M. Mahendran and Franco D'Cruz helped him to come out of it and got him back into the stride.

On 23rd September 2024 Ramu sent me the following WhatsApp message and he specifically told me: "Brother, This is for your information only."

Ramu my apologies as I am disclosing it now about what you wrote to me here:

'Brother George, When you started covering sports, the state hockey Associations were very active. Most ran a very well organised annual domestic league.

These state leagues helped develop large pools of players for the nation. I and many others came from these competitive leagues.

Today there are no such activities among the states. Leagues have long died.

MHC, today relies on the Sports Schools for talent to fill the vacuum.

Thus they don't have a large pool of talent for national call up.

One wonders how these young players are selected for the Sports Schools.'

This was the only time he ever made a statement like the above. And that was first and last. He didn't want to be drawn into a long exchange about Malaysian hockey. I did not probe any further either.

Despite meeting a few times in a year, we also had daily exchanges.

Ramu would send some mind pricking quotes which were an emotional stimulus for me.

They were a pleasure and a motivation for me. It activated my cognitive response to trigger.

Here I would like to highlight some of his philosophical quotes:

1. "There will always be people in your life who treat you wrong Be sure to thank them for making you strong."
2. "Before reacting...breathe deeply; Before speaking... listen; Before criticizing...look at yourself; Before writing...think carefully; Before attacking...surrender; Before dying... live the most beautiful life you can."
3. Memories remind us that nothing lasts forever. Time is precious. Enjoy life. Remember don't count the days, make the days count.

Franco and I will certainly miss that "annual" meetings we always had at the YMCA over a cup of tea. Franco, we'll continue with it whenever you fly home from London. We can recollect about our "absent" friend.

Now Ramu has found that everlasting silence FOREVER.