

# Chronicler of turf wars

K. Arumugam is a unique hockey historian. The writer of 11 books on the game has never, in his life, held a hockey stick!

Vishav Bharti

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**H**is health is failing and his hair is turning silver grey. But K Arumugam has refused to grow old— his bespectacled dark face is full of determination. With unbounded energy, he sometimes marches on the streets to save our national game from the 'Super Cop's' might and, at times, he can even be seen wandering town to town, ground to ground, documenting the memories of the glorious past of Indian hockey.

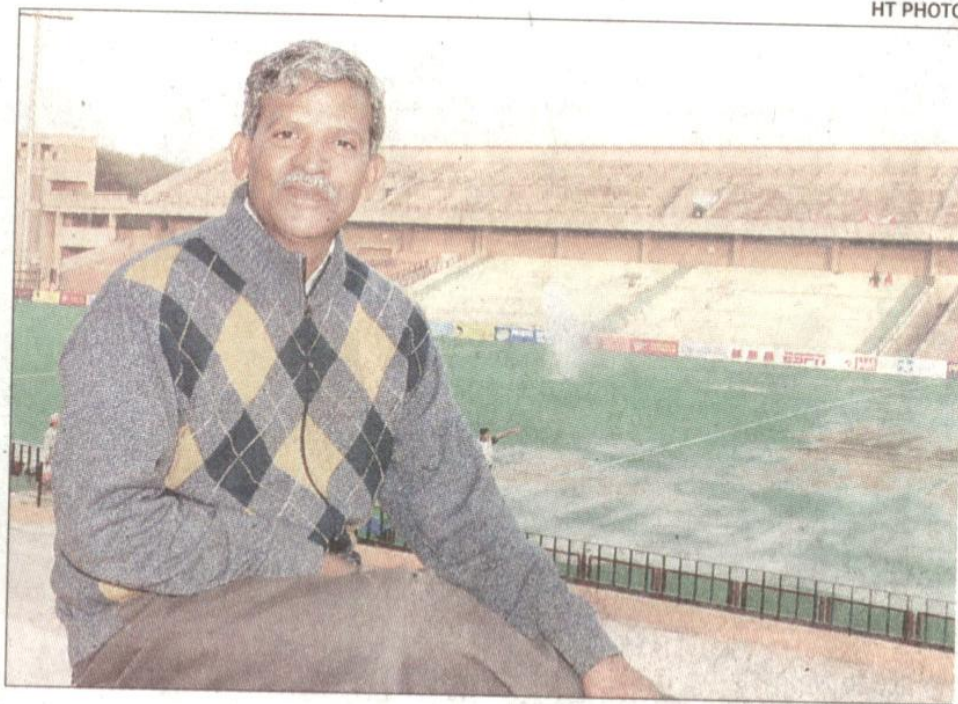
These days, Arumugam, the Delhi-based hockey historian, is in City to chronicle the PHL tournament. He shares with us his passionate journey. Arumugam tryst with hockey began in 1980, when the Indian team had come back with a gold medal from the Moscow Olympics (the last gold India has won till date).

During those days, young Arumugam was a student in Presidency College of Chennai. "V. Bhaskaran, the captain of the team, was from Madras. So hockey was in the city's air," he says. Out of sheer curiosity, Arumugam began collecting newspaper cuttings, sports magazines and initiated a correspondence with the players and the coaches.

Soon, hockey became the love of his life.

Interestingly, Arumugam, a trained geologist, has never held a hockey stick in his hands. "In our country, science students often do not enter the ground."

He says the same applied to him. But he stayed nearby, by the grounds,



collecting hockey's memories, documenting the history of hockey, which he later put into 11 books. "Otherwise, except myths and oral memories, we don't have anything like a hockey history," he laments.

Only romanticism and pride for the past, Arumugam feels, can't save history. "History demands authentic documentation."

Those unbelievable goals, memories of those historic wins and men with blessed hands have somewhere been lost. This is a tragedy. Not many visual, historical or other records are available. But Arumugam does not want the contemporary history of Indian hockey to fade into oblivion. That is why, in the first month of every year, he comes up with a hock-

ey yearbook. For this, he keeps collecting writing, rare photographs and memories of the past. With a strong belief that his efforts won't go into the trash bin of history, he says, "it will help the coming generations in knowing about themselves".

And it's not just the past he dwells upon. Arumugam is equally concerned about the present. Fearless, he questions KPS Gill's hegemony over the Indian Hockey Federation. "If he was good in police, it does not mean he will also be good in hockey. Moreover, hockey and police are different fields."

"This once undefeatable team is today struggling to qualify for the Olympics," he adds.

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