

Reclaiming the heirloom



PIC: BELMOND CHONGTHAM

Vikram Sampath

Connecting with the past is crucial, says first-time writer Vikram Sampath whose book *Splendours of Royal Mysore: The untold story of the Wodeyars* was launched recently

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For someone who has put 15 years of research into writing a book, you expect to see a silver-haired man in his early or mid 40s. But, Vikram is a stark contrast to that image so it is natural to question his age. With a broad grin he says, "Old enough." Great, so this Bengaluru *huduga* has a good sense of humour! While he reaches for the menu I ask why he chose to write a historical book? He nods, as if he knew that this was coming his way too, and says, "The book is coincidental, my fascination with Mysore started when I saw this tele-serial on Tippu Sultan. In the serial, the king and queen of Mysore were shown in poor light. There were protests in the city and that further left the 12-year-old me all confused." That fixation has now shaped into a full-fledged 700-odd page book.

There is a tinge of concern as he says, "There is lot to be documented, especially below the

Vindhya belt. It is sad that there is lots written on the Mughals and other rulers but the south of India, this territory is unexplored." The young writer has a sense of responsibility towards documenting the history he is so proud of and says, "While researching I realised that there were lot of stories that are passed on from generation to generation. My book attempts to bring the facts to the fore. I want this book to have widespread reach." His favourite part in the book and the most challenging is of course, the one that covers Haidar Ali and his son Tippu Sultan, "That's where I found the most conflict. There were three opinions on that period, one that sided with the Wodeyars, the other by Tippu's court historian and the Britishers. I have tried my best to present an unbiased account of that period." He calls himself a rookie at history and says it has its benefits. "I come with no baggage and have approached the subject with a rationale bent of mind."

And how important is a book like this in today's times? "Very important. Primarily because Bangalore is lost in an identity crisis. So this [book], I am hoping will help bring an ability to connect with our past. Also because all this economic, IT boom today didn't just happen in a day, it took time. Its foundation was laid by the Mysore kings."

The book tracks the Mysore dynasty at several levels and is interspersed with pictures that Vikram got from the royal family. This investment banker is hard pressed for time but says he already has his sights set on his next book. So, what can be expected? "Carnatic music. The reason is again the same, a need to document the different styles in Carnatic music. Plus I am into Carnatic music, I perform at music festivals held during Ramnavami. I will focus on music in Mysore, Travancore and Tanjore. Also on the great gurus each of these centres had," he says as a parting note.