

quarterlife

Tech know

Online
groupism

facebook

SUNAYANA SURESH

BENGALURU

Social networking is a concept most of the youngsters today are familiar with. But did you know that social networking began as a concept as early as a decade ago? Surprised? Well, that's the truth. While the trendsetter sites such as MySpace, Facebook, Friendster and Orkut are just over half a decade old, there has always been the idea of networking online and very popular too.

Towards the turn of last century, around 1998-99, the biggest e-phenomenon were online groups. One of the pioneers here was this site called e-groups.com, which was one of the most used website all across the world. The idea behind this site was to be part of groups with members sharing something in common, be it a school they all went to, or a favourite rock band or even the same locality or street they lived in.

Another favourite tool was chat hosts. These chat hosts aren't the messengers that we all use today. Instead, there were these pioneering tools that have paved way to some amazing online programs. Popular tools back then, between 1995 and 2000 were ICQ and MIRC. These clients allowed niche groups such as Bengaluru Quizzers or even specific class groups to chat

A passion well fulfilled

SUCHITRA CHAKRAVARTI
SHEKARY

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Vikram Sampath is the author of the best selling book on the erstwhile Mysore State, *Splendours of Royal Mysore*. Even as a student of science and finance, Vikram felt strongly for the arts, music, literature and painting. "It has always been a left-vs-right brain tussle for me. To a large extent the atmosphere at home created this orientation. The entire credit of instilling the habit of reading in me goes to my father. At almost every occasion would ensure he would gift me with a new book," the 29-year-old says.

Vikram says because of this he now owns a mini library at home. With short stories, poems, articles, and blogs, writing has been an intrinsic part of his life so far. For a first-time author and that too in a genre as specialised as his - i.e. narrative non-fiction history - Vikram has been quite lucky to have Rupa & Co publish his book. "Of course there was struggle and confusion that preceded that. While I did cold-calling to almost all the top publishers of India with the synopsis of my book, very few even bothered to reply. At times that was so de-motivating," he says.

But what finally got his book to the bookshelf was eminent author Shashi Deshpande's guidance. There were others like journalist Aruna Chandaraju who pushed him into getting articles published in dailies and magazines. "By the time I approached Rupa & Co, I already had so many articles published in many newspapers and magazines and that just added to my credentials as a serious writer," he recalls.

Vikram's writings have been influenced in a large way by non-fiction writers William Dalrymple and Abraham Eraly. Their ability to weave a fantastic and riveting story out of what appears as a long, tiresome history got his attention. "Along with their works it is the analytical brilliance and incisiveness of Arun Shourie and a non-judgmental, lucid and extremely readable style of Dr Ramachandra Guha that I find very interesting," says Vikram.

Vikram says he was curious about the portrayal of the Mysore Royal family in the serial *Sword of Tipu Sultan* and that started his obsession. "It was some manic obsession to find out about the king and queens who were portrayed wrongly in the serial. As I read more about them, the interest only seemed to multiply. It was much later that I discovered that there was hardly any book written in recent times with a modern perspective on Mysore history. With all the wealth of information already gathered, I decided to put them all together in a book which revisits the times in a new light," he says.

In spite of all these details, Vikram has made sure the book doesn't read like a text book. "My effort was to ensure the book is readable and someone of my gen-

eration can associate with it. So it doesn't read as an academic account, but is interspersed with lot of dramatized versions and stories, which I think in a way bring life back to these long dead characters," says he.

The author also believes his book would be a valuable reference material for students of history. "The facts and figures have been thoroughly verified and even certified by Dr. Kamath. I do think the book would provide a comprehensive account of the political, social, economic and also cultural aspects of Mysore history to students," says Vikram.

So is his other passion Carnatic music going to be documented by him soon? "I might want to stay on with non-fiction for a while! There is so little documentation on Carnatic music though. I am planning to write one on the journey that this wonderful art form took in the royal courts of Southern India that catapulted it from a devotional art form to a performing art, even as it maintained the religious content."

FOLLOWING HIS DREAMS:
Vikram Sampath



Vikram Sampath was curious about the portrayal of the Wodeyar's in a serial and today he has book about the dynasty...