

Chronicles of a dynasty foretold

R Edwin Sudhir | TNN

Bangalore-based Vikram Sampath is a Mysorean in spirit. That's the impression one gets on reading his recently released book *Splendours of Mysore: The Untold Story of the Wodeyars*. He's with a banking MNC for his day job. But this 28-year-old is rather passionate about Carnatic music and documenting Mysore in all its glory over the decades.

How do you see Mysore city evolving? Will it go the Bangalore way?

Mysore is no longer the sleepy town, with a colonial hangover; it used to be a decade ago. It is slowly opening up to the influences of the rapid growth of its sister city, Bangalore. The proximity to Bangalore and the expressway connecting them made it amply clear that IT companies were bound to reach Mysore in large numbers sooner than later. Soaring real estate prices, burgeoning vehicular and

Syed Asif



Vikram Sampath

human population and traffic choking the narrow arterial roads have certainly put a great strain on the city's fragile infrastructure.

But Mysore has the advantage of hindsight of Bangalore's haphazard growth saga... Before the situation slips totally out of hand, like in Bangalore, all stakeholders, should work towards regulating the growth. Building an exclusive and self-sufficient satellite town for IT companies and distributing them across various industrial areas could be a starting point to en-



JAMBO SAWARI: The Dasara procession in all its glory

sure they don't clutter the city's core.

Why has Mysore's pre-eminence as a cultural centre waned over the years?

The emergence of any place as a cultural centre is inextricably linked to its political clout and eminence. In the 20th century, Madras' link to the British Presidency ensured that artists, musicians and thinkers migrated there with results for all to see. Chennai today is hailed as the mecca of Carnatic music. Mysore lost out in this power game. After Independence, the pre-eminence of Bangalore, which became the political capital of Karnataka, ensured that Mysore's influence got further obliterated.

While the Mysore maharajah may still be revered in some homes, we don't even have a museum to honour R K Narayan. How do you view this?

This is indeed very sad. Mysore lacks woefully in both preserving its heritage as well as also showcasing its best. Monuments of great importance have been crumbling, both at Mysore and Srirangapatna. Apart from perpetuating the memory of an eminent son of the city like R K Narayan, there are many other artists, poets, musicians and dancers in the old city whose houses can be turned into repositories of a lost history. This would also create a connect with a bygone era and obviously boost the city's tourist potential beyond the Palace and a few other famous monuments.

My favourite Mysoreans

- **Maharaja Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar:** Karnataka wouldn't have been what it is today — a progressive and democratic state — but for the visionary rule of this Rajarishi, as he was called by Gandhiji
- **Bharat Ratna Dewan Sir M Visvesvaraya:** For laying the foundation of economic progress for the princely state
- **R K Narayan:** For immortalizing the Mysorean ethos through his novels
- **Prof. U R Ananthamurthy:** For bringing honour to the Jnanpeth award
- **Javagal Srinath:** For his illustrious cricketing career.

— Vikram Sampath

Will IT be a boon or a bane for Mysore?

It is always a trade-off. IT would help create more jobs for Mysoreans, especially in the ancillary and tertiary sectors, the service industry. In a globalized economy, there is little that can be done to prevent these influences. But the key is, as what Gandhiji said, allow winds to blow from all sides, but don't get blown off by it. Creating a respect and sensitivity for the legacy and heritage might just help the younger generation in Mysore not to get too carried away by these winds of change and lose the connection with their roots.

What's your next project about and why is it important?

It's about another passion of mine — Carnatic music. The art was carefully preserved and nurtured in three major royal courts of the South — Tanjore, Travancore and Mysore. There is hardly any documentation of this era. I hope this work will bridge that gap.