



ROYAL TOUR Vikram Sampath

Spinning a royal tale

BOOK Vikram Sampath's book 'Splendours of Royal Mysore - The Untold Story of Wodeyars' is being launched in the city today

He enjoys losing himself to what he writes and now he is happy that people are enjoying it too. Vikram Sampath, whose debut *Splendours of Royal Mysore - The Untold Story of Wodeyars*, which was launched in Bangalore in March this year has been noticed and is on the Crossword's 'Bestseller list.'

A management graduate, Vikram admits to being anxious before the book's release. "Since it is not a historian's point of view, I was more worried as to how eminent historians would react. In India, after religion it is history which evokes a lot of comments and is quite a sensitive issue," he says. *Splendours of Royal Mysore...* is hitting Hyderabad's bookstores as it is being launched in the city today.

Negative depiction

It is very interesting to note that Tipu Sultan, a television serial on Doordarshan set off Vikram on a thinking mode. "The serial portrayed King Wodeyar in a poor light. He was shown as an obese person dancing with courtgirls, which was quite offensive. In the old Mysore state, the king was held in high esteem. People looked up to him and his pictures were placed next to the idols of gods and goddesses. It was the negative depiction of the family of Wodeyars which was disturbing," says Vikram.

As a twelve-year-old, he found his feelings being shared by his family and others too. His journey to spin a royal tale took off as he began to pen his thoughts on paper. Writing became more of a stress-buster and this former Citibank employee began contributing for various journals and newspapers even while documenting the lives of Wodeyars.

As he toured Mysore, Vikram says he discovered new insights for his book. "Talakad, which is 30 km near Mysore is known for its Panchalinga darshana temple. The village is also associated with a strange incident related to the Wodeyars. It is believed that Rani Alimellamma, the wife of Vijayanagar viceroy was harassed by the Wodeyar king. Before committing suicide she cursed the king to remain childless. Villagers believe her wails are heard even now. While rationalists rubbish it, as a writer I had to be sensitive and strike a

balance between people's beliefs and rational thinking," he says.

Penning the tome also helped him find linkages between past and present. "When the queen was imprisoned, negotiations were on and the interlocutors were from the Mysore Iyengar community. The descendants, who have survived reveal that 700 men were hanged at that time during Diwali. While the rest of India celebrates the Festival of lights, for these people it is a mourning ceremony and a grim reminder of the gory past."

Exhaustive research

The research of 15 years has paid off in the form of book and Vikram is satisfied and happy too. "Eminent historian Suryanath Kamath, who has proof read the book has written a foreword so did Princess Meenakshi Devi of the royal family which laid my anxieties to rest," he says smilingly.

He is inspired by the writings of Arun Shourie, Jayashree Mishra and historian Ramachandra Guha.

Next on the cards is a book on Carnatic music. Till then, his destination remains Mysore. "It is a nostalgic getaway especially after the mess Bangalore has landed itself in with all this IT fever."

(*Splendours of Royal Mysore - The Untold Story of Wodeyars* is being launched at Crossword, Banjara Hills today at 6.30 p.m.)

NEERAJA MURTHY

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