

Mysuru gave me a spiritual foundation, purpose in life

WHY I ♥ MYSURU

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Mysuru is a culturally rich city and we still have the ability to negotiate modern democracy. This is one district where the maharajas and the chief minister can come from the same place. An amalgamation of monarchy and democracy is seen though monarchy doesn't exist in the literal sense. Our people revere and respect the Maharajas of Mysore while also respecting politicians.

My connection with the city began 36 years ago when I came to Mysuru as a 17-year-old medical student. I joined the Common Medical College which came to be known as Mysore Medical College later on. I was born and brought up

in Bengaluru and Mysuru was like a glorified village then. I was scared. I had studied at St Joseph's in Bengaluru and was apprehensive and anxious about living in Mysuru. It seemed like a dull place.

Now, Mysuru is a place which makes me complete as it is intellectually stimulating while in Bengaluru everyone is caught up in their own lives and there is no space for emotional connectivity. Mysuru had a role to play in my emotions, cognitive intelligence and social relationships which are so easy to build and sustain here unlike in Bengaluru.

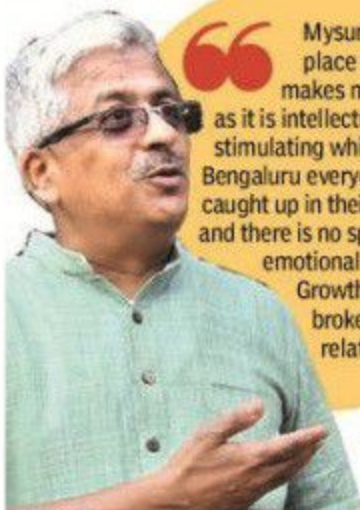
What began as a personal journey moved towards realising my professional goals. I went to H D Kote in 1987 and worked with tribals. Then, Mysuru was just a place of commerce as I used to come here only to purchase commodities for the children of our school or medical supplies for our hospital. My vision of Mysuru changed gradually. Today, after 36 years, despite the growth the city has witnessed, what has not been broken down are the relationships which people have with one another. That is the beauty of Mysuru and I hope it stays that way. My engagement with Ramakrishna mission began in Ban-

galore but it became intense in Mysuru. I had the opportunity of meeting my spiritual guide and guru, Swami Achalananda, a senior monk who was not of the Ramakrishna order but was living in the Ramakrishna Ashram in Mysuru. If I hadn't come to Mysuru I wouldn't have met him and my life would have been ordinary. Mysuru gave me a spiritual foundation. My life's purpose would not have been found had I not come here. I founded the Swami Vivekananda youth movement in Mysuru when I was 19. Had the organisation been set up in a city like Bengaluru, it wouldn't have been able to grow and sustain itself the way it did here.

One thing Mysuru lacks is citizen engagement. People need to ask tough questions. An engaged and empowered citizenry is needed. Mysureans have become like frogs in a pond. There were just over 100 people to protest against the Hunsur road-widening project. We have a population of about 15 lakh but are these 100 people the only ones that live here and are affected by anything?

I travel a lot but there is an unexplainable urge to come back home to Mysuru. For me, home is a place where you feel loved and have a sense of belonging. Mysuru owns me and no other city can own me. All we need to do is create opportunities for the youth of Mysuru and dissuade them from migrating to other cities.

(As told to Shivendra Urs)



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WHAT THE CITY MEANS TO ME
WARMTH AND HOSPITALITY

FAVOURITE SPOT AYYAPPA SWAMY
TEMPLE AT FOOTHILLS OF CHAMUNDI

FAVOURITE FOOD
AKKI ROTTI