

CHASING DOWN THE PAST

X ENTREPRENEURS AND PHILANTHROPISTS ARE FINDING A GROWING MARKET FOR ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY BANDEEP SINGH

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ncient India is attracting big money these days. Fuelled by a sense of lost history at a time when India dreams of yet another stab at superpower status, entrepreneurs are funding projects that translate, simplify, and highlight achievements of Indian history for a postmodern generation.

These enterprises are both philanthropic and commercial but the goal is the same—to help Indians understand their own civilisational values and skills. Rohan Murty's \$5.2 million (Rs 32.8 crore) Murty Classical Library series of books published by Harvard University Press, or NIIT founder Rajendra Pawar's university courses under the Asian Lens Forum, or Mohandas Pai's yet-untitled project—these are all businesses that come from a deep-seated sense that modern India has little sense of its historical importance.

Manjul Bhargava, professor of mathematics at Princeton and winner of one of the world's biggest mathematics prizes, the Fields Medal (and recently awarded the Padma Shri), sensed this lack of interest in history at the 102nd Indian Science Congress earlier this year. While the congress had Nobel Prize-winners and senior academicians from across the world presenting papers and chairing sessions, the me-