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on Saturday. — Satish B.

History and story-telling complement each other

Guest Column
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I had never heard of Manu S Pillai (in picture) before today morning, when I walked into an Alliance Literary Festival venue hosting a conversation between him and Liju Kuriakose. I was seriously considering walking away, not just because of the hot sun but also because I had been



toiling away at a tough history assignment for two days. The last thing I wanted was history. I did stay, however, and I am glad I did.

Manu S Pillai is as great storyteller as much as he is a fine historian. The entire crowd — and there was a huge one — listening in rapt attention in spite of the scorching heat was proof enough for that. As he pointed out himself, story-telling and history do not

sit in opposition to each other.

All stereotypes exist because they have a political angle, said Manu. For example, all royalty is eccentric, but it is only the brown kings who are made out to be so in popular historical narratives. And on social media, where history is a game of two lies and a truth, how is a common reader to segregate facts from fiction? He said that one should read widely to understand many perspectives and approach all

historical narratives with critical thinking. History is all nuances, after all.

As resistant to history as I was in the morning, I found myself running to buy a copy of his book at the Atta Galatta book stall as soon as the conversation ended. Unfortunately, it was all sold out. It seemed even the sellers did not think that history would sell like hotcakes. Well, I didn't get history or hotcakes but I did buy myself a chocolate cupcake. Fortunately they were well-stocked.