



Pursuing the Truth

David Manners first travelled to India to explore stories and secrets from his family's history. The tale he came away with – newly launched as his first novel *In The Shadow Of Crows* – was something quite different.



(Right)
David Manners.

Growing up in Surrey learning Urdu and hearing snippets about a 'hero' uncle and his tribal bride would be enough to drive anyone to investigate their connection to a far off land.

Eastbourne author David Manners said, "I wanted to find out more about Great Uncle Oscar, so my first journey to India was in pursuit of the truth about him, in a way. He was an enigmatic character and I was raised with stories of him and his secret family.

"It was a huge shock to find out so much of it was true."

For David, this was the start of a life split between the Sussex Downs and the Bengal Himalaya. Driven by the loss of his girlfriend and his grandmother in a short space of time, David found solace in proving the family secret to be true. Strengthened with insights offered by an

unorthodox mountain tradition, his path led him to Bindra, who was to become a key figure. Bindra was a leprosy sufferer pushed from her home with her family, and David felt compelled to tell her story.

"The book is the telling of two stories interwoven," David said, days before the London launch of the novel, which will be followed with North American and Australian launches later this year.

"It was the relationship that developed with Bindra that was the catalyst for writing the book. Many women from that underclass come and go and

there's no bureaucratic record of their existence. I wanted to record Bindra's story. I used my own story as a foil for hers."

David, a yoga teacher and remedial masseur to Glyndebourne Festival Opera, was moved to co-found the charity Sarvasubhamikara (Sarva for short), a Sanskrit name meaning 'he who does good to all'. The charity provides medical care, education and human contact for socially excluded individuals and communities on the Indian subcontinent.

The majority of the charity's projects are with people isolated by the stigma of leprosy. A percentage of the publisher's profits from the sale of the book will go directly to support projects run by the charity.

With many describing a filmic quality to his work, David eagerly awaits reaction to his and Bindra's story.

