

Architecture and Heritage Resources of Mysore City

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ABSTRACT

Mysore city is known as the 'city of palaces'. It is an ancient, historical, cultural capital and a heritage city in India. The city has been recognised as a heritage city under the cultural tag both by the state and national governments. The total harmony of architectural buildings, sites, lakes, parks and open spaces and the back drop of Chamundi hills adds to the city's attraction. The city has long boulevards radiating from a well defined central axis, with well recessed public buildings balanced on either side, can be a model for any town planner. Architectural heritage includes not only individual buildings of exceptional quality and their surroundings or group of buildings providing a special setting by virtue of uniqueness of their architectural style, but also all areas and settings of cities which have historic or cultural interests. The city has both tangible and intangible heritage elements; with many urban design elements of built structure to include monuments, heritage buildings, precincts/ heritage areas and natural areas. A very few building have been identified by the State Archaeology Department and Mysore Urban Development Authority. This paper attempts to identify the heritage resources in the City of Mysore for conservation.

Key Words: Heritage Resources, Architectural Buildings, Tangible and Intangible elements.

I. INTRODUCTION

Mysore is the third largest city in the State of Karnataka and it had a population of 7,85,800 as per 2001 census. The name of Mysore was derived from *mahisha* (a demon). Formerly, the city was the state capital and head quarters of the Princely State of Mysore. It is situated at a distance 140kms from Bangalore, on the southern part of Karnataka State at 12° 18' North latitude and 76° 12' East longitude, and at an altitude of 770 mts above mean sea level. The city lies in a saucer shaped basin flanked by Chamundi hills on the south-east and a raised platform near Hinakal village on the west. The city has a salubrious climate and the temperature varies from 12° C to 35° C. It has an average annual rainfall of about 798mm. The city spreads across an area of 128.42sq.kms. The literacy rate is 82.8 percent. A majority of the city's population speaks Kannada language, while other languages such as Tulu, Tamil and Hindi are also spoken.

II. HERITAGE OF MYSORE

Mysore is a cultural and prime heritage city and it exhibits both tangible and intangible elements. It combines the historical facts and anecdotes with a harmonious combination of natural and built heritage. The city is known as 'cultural capital' of Karnataka. It was the capital of Wodeyar Kings who ruled Mysore Kingdom for many centuries and contributed significantly to make the city as a cultural centre including art, poetry and music. The city is as known city of palaces and the museums, art galleries and the festivities that take place during the period of *Dasara* which attract worldwide audience. An image of the Goddess Chamundeshwari is placed on a golden mantapa on the back of a decorated elephant and taken on a procession, accompanied by tableaux, dance groups, music bands, decorated elephants, horses and camel followed by torchlight parade. It has lent its name to dishes; Mysore Pak, Mysore Masala Dosa, art; Mysore Painting and sari; Mysore Silk Sari. Mysore is a classic example of architectural and cultural heritage. The total harmony of buildings, sites, lakes, parks and open spaces including backdrop of Chamundi hill adds to the city's aesthetics with different cultures and different styles of architecture. The heritage buildings have four distinct architectural styles viz. Indo-Saracenic, Traditional Hindu Style, Greco-Roman and Gothic (Pearl). Thus, the city exhibits both tangible and non tangible elements of heritage character, and therefore, the Government of Karnataka recognized the city as Heritage city and Government of India has selected the city for Urban Renewal Project under cultural and heritage tag and now the UNESCO also has shown interest in identify the city under Heritage tag.

Mysore city has both natural and built heritage components. The city has retained its studiously built character of a native princely city. The most imposing and majestic building in Mysore is the Ambavilas Palace, which is the focal point of the city. It was built in an Indo-Saracenic style. The city is characterized by buildings, gardens, boulevards, and planned markets all these were the contributions of Maharajas, Dewans, and their talented workmanship. Their architectural and urban design elements like vistas, focal points, landmarks, avenues, plazas etc., make it undoubtedly the most important tradition city in India. Albert – Victor road is beautifully laid down street, has a pathway beautifully laid within the Curzon park which and hugging the palace gate and fort with a moat on northern side of the palace as a landmark, represents the vista with edges. The

townscape of the city viewed from Chamundi hills present a skyline of clock tower, statues, palaces, mansions depicts the beauty of the city.

III. HERITAGE RESOURCES OF MYSORE

The heritage resources of Mysore are classified in two categories namely *tangible* elements viz. built heritage resources of significant buildings, structures, monuments, installations associated with architectural, cultural, social, political, economic; precincts of environmental significance or scenic beauty of natural areas, hillocks, lakes/tanks, gardens, street pattern, land marks etc., and *intangible* elements viz. culture, events, arts and crafts, festivals, cuisine, customs, dresses, etc., and are given in the following table.

Table: 1 Heritage Resources of Mysore

TANGIBLE ELEMENTS	
Elements	Heritage Areas/Buildings
Built Structures	
Architectural Monuments	a) Indo-Sarcenic: Ambavilas Main Palace, City Corporation Building b) Traditional Hindu Style: All Temples , Jaganmohan Palace c) Greco-Roman: The Deputy Commissioner's office, CFTRI Building, Krishnaraja Hospital d) Gothic- St. Philomena's Cathedral and Hardwick Church e) European Classical Style: Government House, Lalith Mahal Palace f) Traditional Bungalows: Agraharas
Heritage Areas /Precincts	a) The Palace Complex b) Royal Mansions of Mysore c) Deveraja Market d) Vani Vilasa Market e) Sayaji Rao Road Procession Street f) Church Precincts g) Town Hall and Clock Tower Precincts h) K.R.Hospital Area i) Agraharas of Mysore j) Landsdowne Market k) Chamarajendra Technical Institute l) Maharani Government Women's College m) University Campus
Natural Areas	a) Kukkarahalli and Karanji Lakes environs b) Chamarajendra Zoo c) Chamundi Hills
INTANGIBLE ELEMENTS	
Elements	Heritage components
Culture	Royal Culture
Arts and Crafts	Sandal Wood Carving,
Festivities	Mysore Dasara
Spiritual	Yoga, Meditation
Costumes	Mysore Peta, Mysore Silk Sari
Painting, Poetry and Music	Vijaya Nagar Style of Painting, Paintings of Ravi Verma Great Poets like Kuvempu
Dance	Bhartha Natyam
Fragrance	Jasmine
Cuisine	Mysore Pak, Masala Dosa, Chitranna,

IV. ARCHITECTURAL BUILDINGS

The buildings of Mysore city have been influenced by various styles of architecture, and some of the important styles are;

- 1) Indo – Sarcenic style
- 2) Traditional Hindu style
- 3) Greco – Roman style
- 4) Gothic style
- 5) European Classical style.
- 6) Traditional Bungalows.

A. Indo- Sarcenic Architecture

The Indo Sarcenic buildings of Mysore city is led by Ambavilas Palace. Mixtures of Hindu and Islamic characteristics of architecture are found in all these buildings. The Islamic architectural influences found in these buildings, which were used Islamic pointed and cusped arch openings found in the verandas, projecting minarets near the entrance portico, big bulbous domes in the centre and in the corners of the building on their roof level.



Fig.1 Ambavilas Palace

The Hindu architectural features are the curvilinear chatris, banana and lotus stem brackets attached to the column capitals, motifs of the Hindu gods and goddesses in studiously created niches. The interiors of the buildings have colonnaded court yards with Hindu style architectural motifs on the column brackets. The doors of the palace are carved with figures of Hindu gods and goddesses.

B. Traditional Hindu Style

Jagan Mohan Palace building is the best example of traditional style of architecture in Mysore city. The visual effect of the edifice is enhanced by an appropriately deep foreground.



Fig.2: Jagan Mohan Palace

The rich and eye catching facade is composed of triple gate with rich decoration, rectangular and arched niches on the facade with graduated end bays punctuated with decorative pilasters. The shikara dominates the facade giving the temple look to the palace. All temples in Mysore city exhibit the traditional Hindu style of architecture. Each temple has a Garbhagruha, sukanasi, Navaranga and Mukhamantapa. The Agrahara houses are

another example of traditional style with simple and functional buildings with common masonry wall.

C. Greco – Roman Style

A Vatican dome rising on a drum in circular and octagonal shape dominates the elevation in these structures. The column styles were designed on Tuscan, Ionic and Corinthian; arched and plastered colonnades from the two wings. Greek deities define the tier and the balustrade parapet bends are an agreeable addition to a rich composition. The Chaluvamba Mansion and Krishnaraja Hospital are the best examples for this style.

Krishnarajendra Hospital: Built in 1876, this stately building is predominantly Greco-Roman architecture. Column styles, both in the central pediment and at either end of the facade, are varied between the grounds – floor and the first floor- fluted Tuscan, Ionic and Corinthian. Arched and plastered colonnades from the two wings. A huge dome resting on an octagonal drum, dominates the elevation.



Fig.3: K.R.Hospital

D. Gothic Style:

Spire or long tapering roof-like elongated pyramids that are commonly found in churches are the typical characteristics of gothic style. The main hall or nave with multiple moulded columns culminates in stately arches. Alter is set against arched screens of stone works which are in harmony with the arched vertical lines and tapering vaults of the structure. Pointed arches are the features and the external structure. St. Philomena's Cathedral and Hardwick church are the best example of Gothic style of architecture.

St.Philomenas Church: The plan of the church is Byzantine, very typical of any church. The main hall or nave is designed to accommodate 800 worshippers. The floor plan of the cathedral is in the form of a cross. The long parts of the cross are the nave which is the congregation hall. The two arms of the cross are the transepts. The fourth part containing the altar and the choir is the crossing.

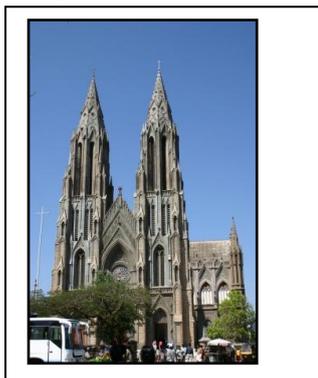


Fig. 4: St. Philomena's Church

E. European Classical Style

These structures have vast garden settings with elegant approach on the front side. They usually consist of a central atrium leading to a banquet hall, with elegant rooms on either side. These structures have an elegant portico. These structures are the royal architectural elements in Mysore.

Lalit Mahal Palace: The building was designed by E.W. Fritchley in 1931 and this was totally aimed at the European visitors coming to Mysore city. The European elements used are regimented pavilion, spherical domes with lanterns placed on colonnaded drums. The building is a two storey composition and it is famous for its twin ionic columns – a projecting porch on the ground floor. On this rests slightly recessed pediment pavilion on the first floor and spherical domes with lanterns, dome which dominates the elevation rises above the circular entrance hall. The interior is highly decorated with stain glass, imported tiles, luxury fittings and Venetian marbles. The interior is a show piece of valuable skills of local craftsman, seen in richly laid decorative motifs on the walls and ceilings, carved wooden shutters and wall panels and myriad details and touches of regal embellishment.



Fig. 5: Lalitha Mahal Palace

F. Residential Architecture

Residential architecture of Mysore city is lead by traditional vernacular architectural buildings with sloped Mangalore tiled houses, colonial bungalows, monkey topped bungalows and a mixture of colonial and Indian decorative style bungalows.

a) Colonial Bungalows : This style of architecture is seen in big bungalows extensively seen in the south east part of the Mysore city. The buildings of the Administrative Training Institute (ATI) campus, Mounted Police building, DGP office are some of the interesting examples of this style of architecture. All these buildings are wooden sloped roof structures and are interesting in terms of their simple planning. The simple variation of roof heights, the use of dormer windows, interesting floral patterns of eve-board and gable end detailing have made the elevations of these buildings look interesting.

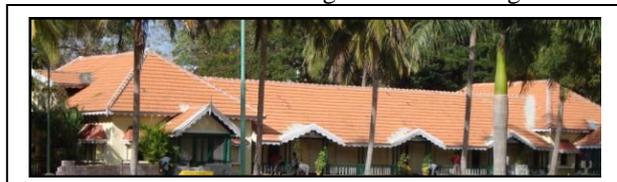


Fig.6 : Administrative Training Institute

b) Monkey Topped Bungalows: Monkey topped bungalows are again a precious part of the Mysore's architectural heritage. The bungalow, as an architectural prototype, has been perhaps the most "endangered species" in the world heritage of architecture. Although, these types of buildings contributed greatly to the architectural image, the most of the privately owned bungalows have deteriorated due to lack of maintenance.

c) Band House: Band house was built in the twenties as a practice hall for the palace band; it now houses the State Reserve Police Mounted Company band. Situated in a garden setting overlooking the Nishat Bagh, the structure is a composition of gables and dormers over the tiled roof and monkey topped lean to verandas. It has a very symmetrical planning which is reflected in the elevation as well.

d) Agraharas: Agraharas which were traditional residential buildings of Mysore, where Brahmins were accommodated. Each of these agraharas was built by the king as a symbol of some important event during his kingship. These are traditional row houses and are predominantly built in Hindu architecture with common walls for a stretch which is then broken at regular intervals. There are many agraharas in the city, viz. Veene Sheshanna Agrahara, Cheluvamba Agrahara, Devamba Agrahara. Srinivasa and Ramanuja Agraharas, which were known for planning and architectural aesthetics.

Ramanuja and Srinivasa Agrahara: Typical residential houses constructed during the first two decades of the century. The plan is in U- shape with landscaped park and around this row houses were built. It also provides facilities for community socializing and play area for children's. Every two room house has a small compound, or veranda and backyard with a common wall construction system.



Fig.7: Traditional Agraharas

V. CULTURAL HERITAGE (INTANGIBLE)

Mysore is known as the "Cultural Capital" of the state and is a fine combination of the historic heritage and contemporary achievements of the city. The Wodeyars were patrons of art and culture and have contributed significantly to the cultural growth of the city. The continuous patronage and support of the kings in every field led to the evolution of a distinct style known as the "Mysore Style" in all the fields like painting, architecture,

music, poetry etc.,. The festivals of Mysore are a fascinating indicator to the cultural unity of the people. Inhabited by people of different faiths and beliefs Mysore becomes a common cultural canopy under which the various social festivals are celebrated by one and all. Dasara festival is a major festival celebrated by the people of Mysore with enough mirth and enthusiasm.

A. Mysore Dasara

Dasara festival has both mythological and historical background and has its origin in the great epic of Mahabharata. The legendary pandava brothers celebrated the festivals to mark of triumph of good over evil. They worshipped hidden weapons which are now being celebrated as "ayudha pooja". The Navaratri is associated with Devi Purnima, celebrated to mark the destruction of evil.

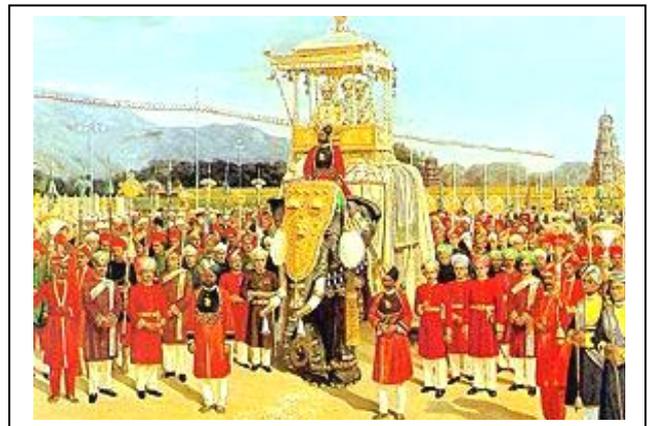


Fig. 8: Dasara Festival

Dasara is the Nadahabba (State festival) of Karnataka state, and Mysore is well known for the festivities that take place during the Dasara period. It is also known as Navaratri (Nine nights) and 10 day festival and it usually falls in the month of October. During this period, various cultural and religious programmes highlighting dance, music and culture of the state of Karnataka are performed. Mysore palace and surrounding areas and buildings are illuminated on all the ten days and prominent cultural programmes are held in Palace and surrounding grounds. The festivities commence with a pooja performed to the goddess Chamundeswari a top the Chamundi hills. One of the main attractions of the festival is Dasara exhibition, which starts during the dasara and continues for around two months. It is held in the grounds opposite to the Mysore palace. The conclusions of the festivities are marked by a colourful Dasara procession popularly known as *Jamboo Savari*. The main attraction of the procession is that the idol of goddess Chamundeswari is carried in *Golden Howdah* on top of an elephant. Various tableaux created by different state organizations participate in the procession. Musical bands belonging to state police lend music to the procession. The culminating program of the Dasara festivities is the torch-light parade and is also known as Panjina Kavayattu held at night in the Bannimantap grounds on the outskirts of the city.

B. Art, Crafts and Cuisine

Mysore is a land of artists and is known to people for their skills. Mysore art and handicrafts reflects the rich heritage and cultural aura of the city which includes paintings, yoga and silk textiles. Mysore region is rich of natural resources like Sandal wood, silk, the best quality Jasmine flowers which are referred to as Mysore Mallige. Mysore silk is woven into a range of cloths, like Mysore peta, shawls, saris etc. The most famous of them are Mysore silk sari and Mysore silk peta (Turban). Mysore cuisine includes a delicious palate of food with rice as the main ingredient, besides common items like dosa, idli, uthapam, vada sambar and different types of dosa are popular. Traditional lunch of Mysore is a splendid spread that includes a cereal salads like kosambari, pappad, palyas (vegetable salads), chitranna (rice with lime), vangibath and pulivogare. Mysore pak is the most important sweets made of pure ghee are very popular. Mysore is an important spiritual tourism destination.

VI. ISSUES AND APPROACHES

Mysore has extremely rich and varied cultural heritage through its tangible and intangible heritage resources. The heritage resources is threatened by many factors namely uncontrolled developments without any harmony, environmental pressures, and lack of inventories of heritage resources, inadequate heritage legislations and development control, low levels of funding, inadequate expertise, and political will. Besides, built heritage including heritage buildings, monuments and areas are threatened by the decay, obsolescence, deterioration, ignorance. The development control includes zoning regulations, building bye-laws and sub-division regulations are not adequate to prescribe the comprehensive heritage rules and regulations for identifying and managing the heritage areas effectively

The State Archaeological Department has identified few monuments in the city for protection and preservation, but it has no control over the areas beyond protected limits. The planning legislations tends to factor the concept of monuments by neglecting the other types of heritage structures such as built environment, urban design elements, built structures, architecture, imageability and landscapes. For planning and conservation of heritage areas, legislative provisions of the Karnataka Town and Country Planning Act, 1961 is inadequate. The conservation of the heritage areas are to be made as an integral part of Master Plan. The plan will be a statutory document which mandates the Planning Authority (Mysore Urban Development Authority) to undertake conservation measures with detailed planning studies, assessment of heritage areas and involvement of all the stakeholders including local authorities, agencies, NGOs and public.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Mysore is an historic city ruled by Wodeyars for many centuries and the Wodeyars were patrons of art and culture and have contributed significantly to the cultural

growth of the city. Mysore city is a classic example of architectural and cultural heritage. The prominent styles of architecture are (a) Indo– Sarcenic style (b) Traditional Hindu style (c) Greco – Roman style (d) Gothic style (e) European Classical style and (f) Traditional Bungalows. As a land of the mighty maharajas Mysore has always been an appealing place of grandeur. The city has living heritage in the form of tangible and intangible resources. The total harmony of buildings, sites, lakes, parks and open spaces of Mysore and the back drop of Chamundi hill adds to the city's attraction. The heritage resources are not been addressed properly. In order to address these issues, the conservation of the heritage areas is to be made as an integral part of Master Plan.

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BIOGRAPHIES

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