

Amba vilasa palace contribution to the heritage of Mysuru

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Introduction: Mysore is a cultural and heritage city and it documents both tangible and intangible characteristic features. 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 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. Thus Amba vilasa palace has attracted tourists from all over the world due to its unique art and architecture, living custom and tradition. So this article is to throw light on it.

History of palace: The palace had its foundation laid way back in the 14th century by the Wodeyars, the royal family of Mysore. It is believed that Yaduraya Wodeyar, the first ruler of the Mysore Kingdom, built a palace in *Puragiri* the Old Fort during his reign. This palace, which is believed to be the predecessor of the current palace, has been demolished and reconstructed multiple times over a period of six centuries. Initially, the palace was a wooden fortress which was struck by lightning in 1638 and reconstructed under the rein of Kantirava Narasa Raja Wodeyar. In 1793 AD, when Tippu took over the Wodeyar Dynasty, he demolished the palace and rebuilt it. In 1799, soon after the death of Tippu Sultan, the palace came under Krishnaraja Wodeyar 3rd, who redesigned the palace as per the Hindu architectural style. Sadly, in 1897, the palace was destroyed by fire during the wedding ceremony of Princess Jayalakshmmanni. Again, Maharani Kempananjammani Devi and her son Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV decided to rebuild the palace. The task of revamping the

palace was commissioned to a British architect named Henry Irwin, who designed and completed this palace in 1912, at a whopping cost of over 41 lakh Indian rupees. Further expansions were done and a Public Durbar Hall wing was added to the palace under the reign of Jayachamarajendra Wadiyar during the 1930.

Amba vilasa Palace Architecture: Mysore Palace is built in the Indo-Saracenic style with a touch 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. 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.

The three-storied palace along with a 145 feet five-storied tower was built using fine grey granite while deep pink marble was used for the domes. The exterior of this marvelous structure is enriched with two durbar halls, several arches, canopies, columns and bay windows. There is also a sprawling green garden surrounding the palace. The interiors are opulently designed with carved doors, stained glass ceilings, glittering glazed flooring tiles and works of art from all over the world. All the rooms of the palace are stunningly luxurious and quite appealing. Above the central arch, there is a divine sculpture of Gajalakshmi – the goddess of wealth with two elephants. In addition to the three entrances, located on the eastern, southern, and western sides, the palace features several secret tunnels.

There is a fascinating arrangement of things to see in and around Mysore Palace, each of which testifies to the wealth and grandeur of the Kingdom of Mysore. The top things to see in Mysore Palace include The Gombe Thotti or Doll's Pavilion,(a collection of traditional dolls), Golden Howdah, (the Maharaja's elephant seat made of 85 kilo grams of gold), Kalyana Mantap or Marriage Pavilion, (an octagonal shaped hall with stained glass ceiling), Public Durbar Hall,(a large hall from where the Maharajas used to address the public), Ambavilasa, (a beautifully designed hall which was used by the Maharajas for their private audience), Elephant Gate or Ane Bagilu,(the brass gate which serves as the main entrance to the palace), Paintings of Dasara Procession, Portrait Gallery,(a collection of valuable paintings and photographs of the Royal Family), Casket Room containing royal collections, Wrestling Courtyard and Temples inside the palace.

Mysore Palace Light and Sound Show: The light and sound show held in the evenings is one of the prime attractions at Mysore Palace. The entire show portrays the 600-year-old cultural heritage, history, and traditions of the Wodeyar Dynasty in a visually appealing manner.

Mysore Palace illumination: Mysore Palace is lit up in the evening on Sundays and public holidays, and also during the ten days of Dasara celebrations. During weekdays, you can enjoy the illumination after the light and sound show for five minutes. The illumination is done using 97000 electric bulbs, making the palace a sight to behold.

Mysore Palace now: Mysore Palace is managed by the Government of Karnataka while it continues to retain its designation as the Royal Seat of the Maharajas of Mysore. The grand structure preserves various valuable possessions of Wodeyars which includes souvenirs, jewelery, royal costumes, and paintings. Though the palace is open to the public, the erstwhile royal family still continues to live in a portion of it. There is also a museum housed within the walled complex, called the Residential Museum, which incorporates some of these living quarters.

The age-old Mysore Dasara Festival is celebrated here in its full glory. Over 6 million visitors come here annually to experience the rich history of this magnificent monument. In addition to the grandeur of the structure, the light and sound show and the illumination in the evenings are major crowd pullers.

Today 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.

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. But today it is this palace that is recognized first in the heritage of Mysore. This palace building has a heritage cultural history that is still alive today. This has made Mysore famous all over the world.

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